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REVENUE DEPARTMENT

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON THE AGRARIAN LABOUR PROBLEMS OF EAST THANJAVUR DISTRICT

TAMILNADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
வாய்மையே வெல்லும்
TRUTH ALONE TRIUMPHS

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GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
1969


தமிழ்நாடு சட்டமன்றப் பேரவை
TAMIL NADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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To

THE HON. CHIEF MINISTER,
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU,
FORT. ST. GEORGE,
MADRAS-9.

[Report submitted by the Commission of Inquiry into Agrarian Labour problems of East Thanjavur district.]

This Commission was constituted under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, by the Government of Tamil Nadu, for the purpose of making an inquiry into the problems of agricultural labour in East Thanjavur district, the relationship between agricultural labourers and their employers, and relevant issues and submitting suitable recommendations to remedy the existing tension between them. The terms of reference set out above are wide enough to include within its ambit every problem relating to agricultural labour in the eastern half of Thanjavur district.

2. The vast dimensions of the problem to be studied by the Commission could be seen from the facts that out of the total cultivated paddy area of 14,33,205 acres for the whole revenue district, the area comprised in the East-Thanjavur area is 7,47,104 acres. The distribution of this extent taluk-wise and crop-wise is given hereunder :—

	I Crop. (Samba and Kuruvai).	*II Crop. (Thaladi).*
	ACS.	ACS.
Mannargudi	1,04,489	21,530
Thiruthuraipoondi ..	1,04,229	10,890
Mayuram	1,21,491	37,208
Sirkali	64,022	19,412
Nagapattinam	77,156	12,508
Nannilam	1,37,808	36,361

3. The drive initiated by the State Government in recent years ever since the introduction of package programme in this district in 1961–62, to increase paddy production, and the programme launched during the past two years to bring more lands under double crop have resulted in an increase of 1,97,217 acres in the total area under paddy in the

whole district and indirectly aggravated the already existing tensions between land-holders and labourers. This figure of 1,97,217 acres is deduced by deducting the 1961 figure of total area of paddy cultivation (12,35,988) from the latest figure for 1968 (14,33,205).

4. The second aspect of the vast problem relates to sheer size of labour force involved. The total number of agricultural workers of Thanjavur district, which term includes landless agricultural labourers and working agricultural land-owners according to the 1961 census (which is the latest figure available) is 9,40,643. Out of this, as many as 4,45,975 are agricultural workers not owning any land. East Thanjavur area accounts for 2,69,657 landless labourers out of the district total of 4,45,975. The present day figures must be more, as the rate of increase in population since 1961 should be 6·17 per cent on the analogy of the rate of increase noted for the decade 1951 to 1961 in the 1961 census reports.

5. One special feature of the working population of East Thanjavur area is that 90 per cent of it, is classified under the heading Harijans and scheduled castes whereas in the western half of the Thanjavur district not more than half of the working population belong to the classification Harijan and scheduled castes. This dissimilarity is accounted by an unduly large percentage of Harijans in the composition of the total population of the East Thanjavur area. According to the 1961 census, out of the total population of the East Thanjavur taluks of Sirkali, Mayuram, Nannilam, Nagapattinam, Mannargudi and Thiruthuraipoondi nearly 28 per cent are Harijans and scheduled caste people. For the western half of the Thanjavur district this proportion is 17·7 per cent.

6. This distinctive feature of the composition of labour population of the East Thanjavur district has given rise to certain complications and consequences. Firstly, agricultural labour in many villages of East Thanjavur area is well-organised and able to exert pressure by collective bargaining. So far as my enquiry goes, no such condition obtains in any village of the West Thanjavur area. Secondly, the impact of collective bargaining is felt mostly during the rush seasons of transplantation and harvesting; and traditional aloofness maintained in the spheres of lives of Harijans and others has added a touch of bitterness to the conflict. In the western area, labour is not able to exert any recognisable pressure even during these rush seasons because :—

(1) The number of labourers available is comparatively large and

(2) Most of the land-owners in the western area are small farmers who engage themselves directly in cultivation work and therefore do not depend upon casual labourers to the same extent as the land-owners of the eastern area. The number of big land-holders, i.e., those owning 12 standard acres and more in East Thanjavur area is 7,441 while in the western half, this figure is 3,628 according to the books of Agricultural Income-tax Officers.

7. The persistent complaint heard by the Commission during this inquiry was that the availability of labour for agricultural work in Thanjavur district was inadequate and meagre compared to other districts in the State, and secondly during the rush seasons of transplantation and harvesting imported labour from the adjoining districts of South Arcot, Tiruchirappalli and Ramanathapuram has to be depended upon to complete the operations in time. This claim is stoutly denied by labour Associations. To find out how-far there is truth in the assertion by land-owners of shortage of labour, a study was made by this Commission. All figures published by the Director of Statistics, Madras, with reference to the extent of land under paddy cultivation and studies initiated by the Planning Commission on agrarian problems and the figures of labour population compiled

from the 1961 census and other official reports were scrutinised. The result is that the total number of agricultural workers consisting of (*a*) Cultivators (*b*) agricultural labourers per 100 acres net area sown under paddy is given below :—

District.	*Area under paddy I.*	*Agricultural workers.*	*Agricultural labourers.*
State	46,43,932	92,85,904	28,28,181
Chingleput	5,94,718	5,76,228	2,41,254
North Arcot	4,18,035	10,06,393	2,50,670
South Arcot	5,16,167	10,91,282	4,00,359
Salem	1,83,535	13,18,208	2,50,440
Coimbatore	1,64,058	7,88,564	2,69,294
Nilgiris	8,344	56,236	20,695
Madurai	2,93,565	8,62,486	2,92,976
Tiruchirappalli ..	3,63,351	11,19,270	2,56,875
Thanjavur	12,35,988	9,40,643	4,45,975
Ramanathapuram ..	5,47,301	7,83,467	1,67,686
Tirunelveli	2,42,668	6,38,995	2,00,690
Kanyakumari ..	76,202	1,04,132	31,267

Sources.—Official publications of the Director of Statistics, Madras, 1961 census figures, and Planning Commission publications of Land-tenure problems and agrarian problems.

8. The break-up of these figures per 100 acres of paddy first crop land for the various districts of the State is given below :—

District.	*Cultivators.*	*Workers.*	*Agricultural labourers.*	*Cultivators.*
		(*Per 100 acres under Paddy I.*)		
State	64,57,833	200	61	139
Chingleput	3,34,974	97	41	56
North Arcot	7,55,723	240	60	180
South Arcot	69,923	212	78	134
Salem	10,67,768	718	138	580
Coimbatore	5,19,270	480	164	316
Nilgiris	35,541	680	250	430
Madurai	5,69,510	294	99	195
Tiruchirappalli ..	8,62,486	305	70	235
Thanjavur	4,94,668	76	36	40
Ramanathapuram ..	6,15,781	144	32	112
Tirunelveli	4,38,305	263	80	183
Kanyakumari ..	72,865	136	41	95

Sources.—Official publications of the Director of Statistics, Madras, 1961 census figures, and Planning Commission publications of land-tenure problems and agrarian problems.

9. The average number of workers per 100 acres of paddy land in Thanjavur district is 76 comprising 36 landless labourers and 40 owner-cultivators. It is not however clear whether the unit, first crop paddy land, distorts the picture. However, the Thanjavur rate is the lowest in the whole State. The highest average rate in the State prevails in the district of Coimbatore. The State average is 200 workers comprising 61 landless labourers

and 139 cultivator-owners. To appreciate these figures correctly two facts must be borne in mind. In a district like Coimbatore cultivation is mostly carried on with the aid of wells and therefore almost throughout the year some crop or other is raised by the ryot. In East Thanjavur area there is very little cultivation of dry or garden land. The main cultivation in Thanjavur district is wet cultivation with cauvery water and therefore except in the extent roughly one-fourth to one-tenth of the total extent represented by double crop area, the rest of the cultivated area has wet cultivation only for five months in the year. The small acreage under sugarcane may be ignored for this purpose. Bearing these distinctive features in mind, the availability of labour for cultivation work in Thanjavur is not, in my opinion, sufficient during rush seasons like transplantation and harvesting.

10. The different pattern of land-holding in East Thanjavur area as compared with the western part of Thanjavur district is also strikingly brought out by the following figures taken from the books of the Agricultural Income-tax Officers.

PARTICULARS OF THE ASSESSEES UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL INCOME-TAX ACT IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT.

Name of taluk.	*Number of assessees having 7½ to 12 standard acres.*	*Number of assessees having 12 to 20 standard acres.*	*Number of assessees having 20 standard acres and above.*
West Thanjavur District.			
Thanjavur	881	313	247
Papanasam	984	531	416
Kumbakonam	619	563	517
Orthanad	345	150	45
Pattukottai	364	401	208
Arantangi	155	142	95
Total	3,348	2,100	1,528
East Thanjavur District.			
Mayuram	940	750	548
Sirkali	297	315	277
Mannargudi	590	584	567
Thiruthuraipoondi	481	527	334
Nagapattinam	859	703	585
Nannilam	983	1,110	1,141
Total ..	4,150	3,989	3,452
Abstract.			
West Thanjavur district ..	3,348	2,100	1,528
East Thanjavur district ..	4,150	3,989	3,452
Grand Total ..	7,498	6,089	4,980

11. The number of assessees owning 20 standard acres and more in East Thanjavur area is 3,452 while the same in West Thanjavur area is 1,528. The same disparity in numbers is found also in the two other columns. The significance of these figures should

be viewed keeping in mind the fact that the temples and maths which own large extents of wet lands are not liable to assessment under the Agricultural Income-tax Act. If these are also included, the number of big land-owners for East Thanjavur area will be much more than the number given in the above statement. Big temples and maths in East Thanjavur area are comparatively more numerous than in West Thanjavur area.

12. By publishing a notice, the Commission invited memoranda in the form of verified statements from associations of land-owners and labourers and also from interested individuals touching the problems to be enquired into by the Commission. In response to this notice as many as 110 memoranda were received from associations of land-owners and individual land-owners and 31 memoranda were received from associations representing labour. Many of these were not in the form of verified statements as required by the notice. However, the Commission granted interviews to the office-bearers of almost all the associations which had submitted memoranda and heard their views on the points at issue. The methods adopted by the Commission to gather data on the topics germane to the inquiry are the following :—

(*a*) Two field investigation officers and the Secretary of the Commission were deputed to conduct test harvest in 23 fields in 23 villages comprised in 22 firkas in the four taluks of Nannilam, Nagapattinam, Mannargudi and Thiruthuraipoondi. As this work was undertaken by the end of February and during the beginning of March, the crop available for harvest was mainly Thaladi (Second Crop). This work was undertaken to obtain reliable data of normal gross produce of Thaladi (Second Crop) which, in the experience of this Commission, was under-estimated by the representatives of the land-owners. The average gross produce per acre as obtained from the test-harvests made by the Officers of this Commission is given below taluk-wise :—

Mannargudi	.. ..	33 kalams * (per acre).
Nannilam	.. ..	36 ,,
Nagapattinam	.. ..	37 ,,
Thiruthuraipoondi	.. ..	33 ,,

It may be observed in passing that the average yield obtained in the State Seed Farms of East Thanjavur area except one farm in Tiruthuraipoondi taluk correspond with the yield obtained in the test harvests with slight variation.

(*b*) Local inquiries were made by the Investigating Officers of the Commission to obtain reliable data by visits to 40 villages situated in all the six taluks of East Thanjavur area on the following points :—

(i) Cost of cultivation of paddy per acre including cost of seed, cost of manure, cost of fertilisers and pesticides, labour cost of agricultural operations for the each crop separately, Kuruvai, Samba and Thaladi.

(ii) Prevalent wage-rates paid to men and women labourers for different agricultural operations like ploughing, sowing, transplanting, weed clearance and harvesting.

(iii) The average cost of market value of one acre of paddy land of single crop and double crop variety in the villages visited.

(iv) Study of living conditions of labour in the village including the types of labour contracts existing, like annual contract, monthly contract of labour, casual labour, and panniyal system ; number of work days in the year for which labour is employed in the

* One kalam is equal to 24 Madras Measures.

agricultural operations for men and women separately. The villages visited were selected at random at the rate of 2 to 4 villages per block (more villages could not be visited owing to lack of time).

(c) The Investigating Officers were asked to study the accounts maintained by land-owners (if available), in the villages visited by them, and in the State Seed Farms listed below :—

	Taluk.
Orathur	Mannargudi.
Kanchikudikadu	
Kirandhi	Thiruthuraipoondi.
Nedumbalam	
Deivambalpuram	
Moongilgudy	Nannilam.
Sikkil	Nagapattinam.
Thirukadaiyur	Mayuram.
Nagamangalam	

An abstract of the accounts of the State Seed Farms taken up for intensive study suitably classified under the headings cost of inputs, cost of labour, and gross produce is appended as Schedule I to this report. The accounts of land holders gave no reliable indication of cost of cultivation because items extraneous to cultivation were included under the heading expenditure for cultivation. The management expenses found in the accounts of State Seed Farms have been omitted, because such expenses do not occur in the case of an ordinary landholder.

(d) Inquiries were made by the Commission on its local visits to labour quarters in the villages and also by the Secretary and the two Investigating Officers of the Commission to work out a typical family budget for a working class family showing the number of days for which work was available. Income earned by work during agricultural season comprising 5 months in the case of labourers living in villages having single crop lands only, and 7 months in the case of double crop areas. Expenditure was classified for the whole year under suitable heads like food, clothing, housing, medical expenses, festivals and fairs and education. The average budget for a Harijan family and for a non-Harijan family thus worked out separately is found in Schedule II to this report. It must be said that though the number of families covered by the survey is not large the representative character of the average budget is not vitiated because earning opportunities and living conditions do not vary much between one area and another.

(e) For the purpose of comparison, the Secretary and the Investigating Officers were deputed to study the local conditions of agricultural labour and farm practices in selected villages of West Thanjavur area. Five such villages were visited and studied.

(f) Interviews were granted by the Commission to 22 leading persons on the side of land-owners and 18 persons on the side of labourers' associations who were all labour leaders. More persons did not come forward to present their views to the Commission inspite of wide publication of public notice in several daily newspapers. Conferences were held in Mannargudi, Thiruvarur, Kumbakonam and Mayuram. Revenue Divisional Officers,

Tahsildars, Block Development Officers, District Agricultural Officers and State Seed Farm Managers, besides representatives of landowners association were present during these discussions, wherein views were ascertained on specific problems studied by the Commission.

(*g*) Procurement registers maintained by the Civil Supplies Officials in 13 villages lying in six taluks of Mannargudi, Mayuram, Sirkali, Thiruthuraipoondi, Nannilam and Nagapattinam were scrutinized to ascertain the normal gross produce of an acre of single crop and double crop land. Such registers were however found not always reliable because in two villages out of 13 villages, Annavasal and Arichapuram, the surplus available was estimated at 2,567 bags in Annavasal and 2,768 bags in Arichapuram while the quantity actually procured was 4,108 bags in Annavasal and 4,250 bags in Arichapuram village. Surprisingly in both these villages, the rate adopted for estimating the outturn per acre is almost the same as the rate in the six other villages. The Commission did not think that any useful purpose would be served by obtaining explanation of the concerned officials for these glaring discrepancies, though plausible explanations might be put forward.

13. It serves no useful purpose now to undertake a detailed study of the causes for the existing unrest among the labour population of East Thanjavur area because they are easily identifiable. To press the demand for higher wages organised labour boycotted harvesting work and obstructed outside labour doing such work in places where labour was well organised. This led to clashes and violence in many places and the consequent disruption to agricultural operations. This kind of agitational approach for the redressal of grievances of labour has taken an acute turn only during the past 2 or 3 years. Consequently on 8th October 1967 conciliation was effected by the Collector of Thanjavur at a Conference held at Mannargudi attended by representatives of both landholders and labour leaders. At that Conference wages were fixed for harvest operations alone. It was also agreed then that imported labour could be used for harvest work provided local labour was also utilised. On 8th June 1968 another similar Conference was held at Thiruvarur at the instance of the Collector in which wages were fixed for men and women for all agricultural work other than harvesting. Lastly on 16th January 1969, the Collector held a third Conference for bringing about conciliation regarding harvest wages.

14. It is true agricultural wages have been rising during the past decade. This increase is more marked in Thanjavur district than elsewhere. But the increase is to a large extent counter-balanced by the rise in the cost of living although prices of inferior sort paddy have not increased correspondingly.

15. The following table worked out from the Planning Commission studies and other official statistics published by various official authorities illustrates the point :—

Classes of employes.	*Minimum rates of wages per day.*	*Prevailing wages October 1967.*	
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	
1 Employees engaged in ploughing (without bullocks and ploughs).	1 25	2 42	
2 Employees engaged in sowing and transplanting—			
Adults—Grade I*	1 00	2 21	(Men)
Adults—Grade II*	0 87	1 49	(Women)
Non-adults	0 75	1 45	
3 Other Agricultural Employees—			
Grade I	0 87	2 08	(Men)
Grade II	0 75	1 45	(Women)
Non-adults	0 62	1 18	

* Classification of employees into Grades I and II is based on physical capacity and out turn of work.

16. The question of agricultural wages has been studied in the State of Madras (as it was then called) twice before.

(1) First Agricultural Labour Enquiry, 1950–51.

(2) Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry, 1956–57.

These studies yielded no concrete results except that by the notification, dated 29th November 1959, the Madras Government fixed minimum rates of wages under the Central Minimum Wages Act for seven classes of workers employed in agriculture which came into force on 10th of December 1959. Thereafter, these rates have not been revised at all, nor do these rates apply to Thanjavur district, because this district was specifically excluded from the operation of that notification. Official statistics of prevailing wages published periodically are not always cent percent accurate. They are compiled by the Director of Statistics from the reports submitted by the Revenue Officers at the taluk level. The taluk officers have no adequate trained staff to gather accurate data of prevalent wage rates. Yet despite all these imperfections the comparison of published agricultural labour wages taken from the Planning Commission studies and other official publications given below is a useful guidance if viewed in a broad spectrum.

AVERAGE DAILY WAGES (MEN AND WOMEN).

Year.	Men.		Women.	
	State.	Thanjavur.	State.	Thanjavur.
	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
1954–55	1 18	1 24	0 69	0 87
1955–56	1 22	1 31	0 71	0 78
1956–57	1 19	1 37	0 70	0 83
1957–58	1 19	1 34	0 82	0 83
1958–59	1 24	1 38	0 76	0 86
1959–60	1 29	1 37	0 83	0 95
1960–61	1 46	1 48	0 91	1 06
1961–62	1 48	1 53	0 95	1 00
1962–63	1 51	1 82	0 96	1 07
1963–64	1 47	1 53	1 06	1 43
1964–65	1 57	2 71	1 22	1 83

17. The crucial question is not whether agricultural wages prevalent in 1967 in Thanjavur district are not higher than similar wages prevalent in the other districts of the State. Such a comparison is pointless because in other districts like Coimbatore and Ramanathapuram, the number of days for which labour gets full employment is always 10 months and more in a year, while in Thanjavur, the number is between 150 to 190 days. Thus, while the wage rates in other districts may be comparatively low, the total wage earnings for a year of the worker in other districts where enployment is available almost for 10 months and more in a year, will be roughly equal to the total wage-earnings of the workers in Thanjavur. It is common knowledge that employment opportunities are larger in those districts where well irrigation is available and crops are raised successively all-through the year. In canal irrigated wet regions like Thanjavur where paddy cultivation predominates the number of working days for labour is comparatively less.

18. The more pertinent question regarding wage rates is therefore whether the industry of agriculture in Thanjavur is now offering at least a living wage for the workers engaged in it. Our constitution imposes a duty on every State to secure living wages to all workers including agricultural workers (Article 43).

19. If the wages now offered are not acceptable as a living wage, the next consideration is whether the industry of agriculture in Thanjavur can afford to pay any higher scale of wages now without adversely affecting the legitimate interests of the land-owner.

20. In addition to enquiries made by the Investigating Officers of the Commission, Tahsildars of the district were requested through the Collector, to report to the Commission on the prevalent wages obtaining in their areas. The replies received as well as the report of the Investigating Officers indicate roughly the following wage rates as prevailing now :—

Ploughing.	*Transplantation and Weeding (Women).*
Minimum—Rs. 2·50.	Minimum—Re. 1·25.
Maximum—Rs. 3·00.	Maximum—Rs. 1·75.

Harvesting.—Minimum four local measures out of 52 local measures of paddy harvested in a few isolated pockets.

Maximum six local measures out of 54 local measures of paddy harvested in an equally few isolated villages. Under the Thiruvarur agreement of 8th June 1968, the corresponding wages fixed for all agricultural operations other than harvesting were—

Men.—6 litres of paddy plus Re. 1 equal to Rs. 2·68.

Women.—5 litres of paddy plus Re. 0·25 equal to Rs. 1·65. These rates have been generally acceptable to landholders.

21. However, inspite of the Tiruvarur agreement, wages in many parts of East Thanjavur area continue to be low and below the agreed level. In fact during local visits, the Commission and its Officers came across villages where the fact and terms of the Tiruvarur agreement were entirely unknown to the labouring classes. It was a surprise to me that inspite of extensive propaganda by various labour associations this could happen.

22. One method of testing whether the existing wage rates provide a living wage for the worker is to find out the total earnings of a typical agricultural worker's family consisting of husband and wife (both capable of working) with two children, non-adults, and below 15 years of age. In villages where the entire cultivated area is single crop land, the average working family can get work in agricultural operations proper, for a total of five months only. In Egabogam villages also landholders do not often raise a second crop because mainly, the estate is too unwieldy to be efficiently managed. A working month can count as 26 earning days. Even assuming the man earns Rs. 2·68 per day for five months of which 30 days is harvest work (5×26 days$=130$) his income will be Rs. 268·00. Similarly the woman will get full employment for 45 days and will earn $45 \times 1{\cdot}65$, *i.e.*, Rs. 74·25. The total emoluments of man and woman excluding harvest wages for the working period of 5 months comes to Rs. 342·25. To this must be added harvest wages of 30 days (Samba at average yield 40 Kalams per acre and wage 5 measures out of 53 measures and 10 men per acre is Rs. 151·80). The total earnings come to Rs. 494·05 for a working period of five months. The monthly wage for the family comes to Rs. 98·81.

23. Let me take the case of a typical worker's family which gets full employment of 7 months, because of availability of double crop lands in the village. The number of working days for the man in such villages (minus harvest days) is 142 days. His income is 142× Rs. 2·68 per day. It comes to Rs. 380·56. His harvest wages for 40 days at the same rate given in the example quoted above, is Rs. 202·40. The number of working days for the woman is 90. Her income is 90×Rs. 1·65=Rs. 148·50. The total income of the family for seven working months is Rs. 731·46. Monthly income is Rs. 104·50. The minimum total emoluments of a last grade servant of the Government at a firka headquarter station in Thanjavur district is Rs. 124 (basic pay Rs. 50, dearness allowance Rs. 71, house-rent allowance Rs. 3). The comparison with a last grade servant may not be apt, but even unfair or misleading, because the wants of a manual worker like the agricultural labourer in the matter of food is nearly double that of a comparatively sedantary worker like a last grade servant of the Government. Yet, that is the ready comparison which appears reasonable under the circumstances.

Abstract of an average agricultural Harijan Labour family budget for the whole year as revealed by the Commission's enquiry is given below—

Food.	*Clothing.*	*Repairs to House.*	*Medical expenses.*	*Education.*	*Fairs, festivals and functions.*	*Total.*
747	93	31	13	3	33	920

Against this, is given below the demand under these heads made by prominent labour associations—

1,146·20	135	50	25	100	..	1,506·20

24. Both these budgets relate to comparable families as the number of members of the family are equal, *i.e.*, husband, wife and two children. The monthly requirement and actual expense incurred according to the two tables above is Rs. 125·52 and Rs. 76·66, respectively.

25. The present state of the family budget requirement for a year at the present level of expenditure is Rs. 920, but the total average income for the 7 earning months is Rs. 731·46. It was ascertained that the family earns about Rs. 30 per month for 3 lean months, *i.e.*, Rs. 90, thus leaving a deficit of Rs. 98·54 every year. No ready work is available for two months in a year. The calculations of earnings are made on the highest possible income rate and actual requirements of a family are worked out at lowest possible expenditure rate.

26. No doubt, agriculture is a seasonal industry. But, for the seven months for which it provides full employment to a worker's family, should it not, as an act of bare justice, pay at the rate of Rs. 125 per month, for the work of both man and woman? The necessity for an increase of present wage rates is therefore amply made out even if the industry is to pay only a living wage to the worker. I am not unaware of the plight of the small land-holder of Thanjavur to maintain his accustomed standard of living on the inadequate income from his farm and the need to enthuse him to produce more by adopting improved methods of agriculture. In this respect, the land-holder who contributes his own and his family's manual labour for production of his crops is in a better position than the non-working land-holder (who by tradition is averse to manual labour in the fields) because the labour cost of production for the former is lesser and consequently his net income is greater. However on the demand of labour for a living wage of Rs. 125 per month for both man and woman in a working class family for the period of full employment, considerations like the relative hardship to the non-working land-holder by conceding the demand have in my considered opinion, no relevance or validity.

27. Treating agriculture as an industry is the only rational basis for working out a proper wage structure for workers employed in it. Whether it makes a profit or not, the industry is bound to maintain its labour force at a living wage level at least. Assuming that agriculture should be treated on a par with other industries in this respect, the question to be examined is whether agriculture can afford to pay a living wage to the worker after providing for a suitable return on the capital investment made by the land-holder and after providing a suitable management remuneration for the land-holder who does not engage himself in manual work for producing crops on his fields.

28. Let me take a typical example of a ryot owning 5 acres of double crop wet lands. His cultivation expenses can be estimated for the Kuruvai crop and the Thaladi crop as below. This estimate is based upon intensive investigations made by the Investigation Officers of this Commission in all the taluks of East Thanjavur, the result of discussions and interviews, and also based upon the experience of State Seed Farms and other institutions who have maintained accounts.

29. Cost of Cultivation worked out as below for cultivation of Kuruvai crop in one acre (3 Mahs.) :—

	Rs. P.
Ploughing 9 (men) at Rs. 2·75	24·75
Levelling and trimming 4 (men) at Rs. 2·75	11·00
Plucking seedlings and transportation 7 (men) 2·75	19·25
Transplantation 18 (women) × 1·75	31·50
Weeding 9 (women) × 1·50	13·50
Harvest wages $5\frac{1}{2}$ measures per $53\frac{1}{2}$ measures (yield 45 kalams)	63·00
Cost of raising seed-bed	34·50
Farm-yard manure, 5 cart-loads 5 × Rs. 3·00	15·00
Chemical fertilisers	80·00
Pesticides	3·00
Land-tax	20·00
Applying fertilisers and pesticides : 1 man 2·75	2·75
Poradi wages	6·75
Total expenditure	325·00

	Rs. P.
Income.—Average yield per acre at 45 kalams at Rs. 13·50 per kalam	607·50
Poradi yield 3 kalams	40·50
Hay bundles : 30 at Re. 1	30·00
	678·00

Cost of cultivation for Thaladi (Crop II) will be almost the same as for Kuruvai with minor variations in cost of fertilizer input. It is estimated at Rs. 305 per acre. The average outturn for Thaladi (2nd crop) will be 30 kalams per acre. To this must be added the income from Poradi at $1\frac{1}{2}$ kalams per acre. Hay bundles 30 + 24 at average cost of Rs. 1·25. So the total income for Kuruvai and Thaladi will be Rs. 1,140·75. The total expenditure will be Rs. 630·00. The net income per acre is Rs. 510·75. For a land-owner owning 5 acres the annual net income will be Rs. 2,553·75.

30. Valuing the double crop land at the rate of Rs. 3,500 (per acre) and allowing a return of 6¼ per cent as claimed in all the memoranda filed by the Mirasdars Associations, the amount of return should be Rs. 1,093·75, on an extent of 5 acres. The non-working land-holder owning 5 acres is expected to do supervision work, for 8 months in the year if he raises two crops. Allowing at the rate of 45 rupees per month, the management remuneration for 8 months in a year comes to Rs. 360. Out of the net income of Rs. 2,553·75 allowing a 6¼ per cent return of Rs. 1,093·75, balance left is Rs. 1,460·00. Out of this, his management remuneration comes to Rs. 360·00. This land-holder is thus left with a residual income of Rs. 1,100.

31. Let me take the example of a five-acre farm cultivator raising only single crop paddy on his lands. The average outturn for Samba is 42 Kalams per acre. To this must be added hay 30 bundles × 1·25 per acre, Poradi yield 1½ kalams.

	Rs. P.
42 × 13·50	567·00
Hay 30 × 1·25	37·50
Poradi yield	20·25
Total ..	624·75

In the case of 5 acre single crop non-working land-holder, the figures will be Rs. 3,123·75. The cost of cultivation will be same as for Kuruvai except deduction of Rs. 5 in the landtax. The cost of cultivation is Rs. 320 per acre and this works out to Rs. 1,610 for 5 acres. Management remuneration Rs. 270·00 (Remuneration for 6 months at 45 per month). 6¼ per cent interest on Rs. 3,000·00 per acre land value is, *i.e.*, Rs. 938·75. Total Rs. 2,818·75.

	Rs. P.
Cost of cultivation	1,610·00
Management remuneration ..	270·00
Interest on Capital value of land.	938·75
Total ..	2,818·75

Residuary income will be Rs. 3,123·75—2818·75—Rs. 305·00.

32. In this context it is well to remember the following facts : Out of the total extent of paddy cultivation in Thanjavur district, 1,433,205 acres, double crop extent is 500,376·21 acres while the remainder 932,828·79 is single crop land.

33. The residual income left with the non-working land-holder represents what private property in land means in terms of money income to the land-owner after allowing for all reasonable expenses, a return on his capital invested and the remuneration for his supervision work. Looking at the problem in this manner is in strict conformity with the legalistic concept of private property in agricultural land vesting with the land-holder and the worker being a hired labourer who has no interest or share in the produce, of the land. The worker who takes a part in producing the income from the land is not treated as a sharer in this scheme. There is therefore nothing novel or revolutionary in this approach. So long as a living wage is not assured to the agricultural worker, the owner of the land is not entitled morally to claim any part of the residual income. My conclusion is that a living wage is not now secured to the East Thanjavur worker and the average income now earned in the industry of agriculture by the typical five acres owning land-holder is capable of bearing the additional burden of an increase in the wage rates which

I propose to recommend. It needs no stressing that the income shield of the bigger land-holder can well afford the small dent which the increased wage rate will make by implementation of the wage rate recommended. I have taken a five acre land-holder as a typical small land-holder because the Commission found that, by and large, small land-holders owning less than five acres do not normally employ hired labour except on occasions like harvest and transplantation.

34. In recent years, out of cultivation expenses roughly two-thirds is accounted by labour charges. The remaining one-third represents cost of seed and inputs. A common complaint voiced by the Mirasdars is that having regard to the increased cost of both inputs and labour charges, the price of paddy has not correspondingly increased. This problem is outside the terms of reference of this Commission and I do not therefore offer any remarks thereon. If the existing level of wages is insufficient to provide a living wage for the worker, the pertinent question is what percentage of increase will be justified ? True, in other districts of this State, wage levels are generally lower for all kinds of agricultural work and particularly so in harvest charges, than what obtains in the East Thanjavur area. But this is not an argument to deny any increase in wages to East Thanjavur workers.

35. In course of time wages in other areas also must go up. Having regard to all circumstances roughly a 10 per cent increase in wage rates will, in my opinion, be feasible and fair now, although it might not provide the desired income of Rs. 125 per month immediately. But with the expected growing increase in average gross produce per acre, the provision for payment of harvest wages by a share in the produce is a way of gradually bettering the earnings of the agricultural worker in course of time. The method adopted in previous official notifications regarding fixation of minimum wages, by classifying adult labour into Grade I and Grade II based upon supposed capacity and output of work does not appear to me a suitable method which could be applied with any advantage to conditions of agricultural work in Thanjavur district. I therefore recommend fixation of fair wages on the following scale :—

		Rs.	P.
1.	Ploughing without bullocks (men)	3	00
2.	Ploughing where bullocks and ploughs are provided by the labourer (men).	5	25
3.	Transplantation and Weeding (women)	1	80
4.	Levelling the land, trimming bund (men)	3	00
5.	Plucking seedlings (men)	3	00
6.	Off-season maramathu work (Miscellaneous work) (men)	2	50
	Do. (women)	1	75
7.	Wages for all other works during cultivation season (men) ..	3	00
	Do. (women) ..	1	80

These wage rates apply to a day's work. Men 8 hours, Women 7 hours.

36. *Harvest.*—In more than 90 per cent of the East Thanjavur area, the practice is to pay the labourer by calculating a share of the produce harvested by way of remuneration. Land-owners are themselves reconciled to this system. No change in the system of paying harvest wages is therefore necessary. Till three years ago the share of the labourer was four to five measures (local) for every 52 to 53 measures (local) harvested.

During the past three years, this rate has gradually increased, and now the prevailing rates are $4\frac{1}{2}$ measures, 5 measures, $5\frac{1}{2}$ measures and in a few localities 6 measures. Due to the introduction of high-yielding varieties of seeds like ADT 27, C.O. 25 in recent years the outturn has increased on a broad average by nearly one-third. This is an advantage to the labourer also. No doubt, the existing remuneration for harvesting compares quite favourably with the average daily wage which a labourer earns for other work in agriculture. But that is no argument to cut down harvest wages because in a sense harvest work is arduous full day work for a short period under great stress and this earning helps the labourer and his family to subsist for the ensuing workless period after harvest (one month after Kuruvai harvest, and two months after Samba harvest). Harvest wages differ from village to village within a taluk. But these differences cannot be justified on any principle. An uniform rate must therefore be provided. Locational advantage for labour in villages where the yield is high should not also be denied to labour. This is a natural advantage to which the worker is entitled. Having regard to all these considerations, I would recommend 6 (six) measures (local) out of the 54 (fifty-four) measures (local) as the harvest wage. (*See* Schedule IV for equivalent quantities worked out in terms of litres and kilograms.)

37. On the question of harvest wage, two further points must be noted. According to the present practice, 5 measures or $5\frac{1}{2}$ measures of paddy is paid to the labourer as his wage out of the total of 53 measures or $53\frac{1}{2}$ measures of paddy harvested. That means the labourer gets no wage on the quantity of paddy given to him for wage. This is a reasonable complaint. I, therefore recommend that the new wage rate shall be 6 (six) measures of paddy for every unit of 54 (fifty-four) measures harvested: for example if a quantity of 54 (fifty-four) measures is harvested 48 (forty-eight) measures out of it must go to the land-holder and the remaining 6 (six) measures should go to the labourer.

38. Next according to the existing practice, out of the total heap of paddy harvested; deductions are made for Kalavady, remuneration to village servants, like barber, washerman, contribution to village temples and the remainder alone is taken into account for calculating wages due for the labour employed in harvest. This is an unjust practice. The deduction by way of kalavady, it is said, goes ultimately to the pannaiyal if one is employed. It must come only from out of the land-holders' share. Equally contribution to village servants and village temples must not be forcibly levied from the share of the labourer. Therefore no deductions should be made either for kalavadi or for any other expenses mentioned above from out of the harvested heap till the labourers's share is taken out.

39. In determining the harvest wage due to the labourer, a complaint is made by Labour Associations that when paddy is given as wages, it is not measured in litres, but the mamul marakkals are used. The method of measuring with marakkals is by heaped measure which allows manipulation with fingers. Such manipulations are usually to the detriment of the labourer. Therefore the use of litres by land-holders must be enforced. The law is already there for that purpose. But it is not being enforced at present in the case of farmers. The enforcement is now entrusted to the Labour Department. Its enforcement is not however effective. I am not finding fault with the Labour Department for this state of affairs. The problem is too big for the available staff now. I therefore recommend that enforcement may be transferred to the Panchayat Unions who have an adequate staff necessary for strict enforcement and they will be more effective than Labour Department personnel who do not have that amount of personal contact with farmers. Government should take an early decision on enforcement uninfluenced by considerations not strictly relevant because the continued use of marakkals is likely to deprive labour of the

full benefits of the revised wage structure recommended by me. No prosecutions at all had been launched for offences against farmers in Thanjavur under the Weights and Measures Act for the past three years.

40. On the question of wages, certain general considerations may now be mentioned. Firstly whether wage rates should be uniform for all the six taluks of East Thanjavur area or should it vary from taluk to taluk ? Existing wage rates in all the six taluks are generally uniform except for minor variations in certain pockets where labour gets low wages mostly due to abundant supply in excess of demand. These areas occur in Sirkali and Thiruthuraipoondi taluks. Fixing of different rates for different taluks will create unnecessary discontent and encourage unnecesary migration of labour from one place to another. Therefore, I have decided to recommend uniform rates of wages for all six taluks.

41. Secondly, the present practice is that for work unconnected with harvest, wages are paid usually two-third, or three-fourth in kind and the remainder in cash. All Labour Associations demand that this practice should be legalised when minimum wages are prescribed. Land-holders on the other hand, oppose this demand because according to them small land-holders usually find it difficult to pay wages in kind. To stipulate that a fixed proportion has to be paid in kind will introduce a certain rigidity into the wage structure that is not desirable. Usually the land-holder who is ready and willing to pay part of the wages in kind attracts ready labour and the better type of labourer too, for work in his farm. Therefore, it is enough if wages are expressed in cash leaving option to pay partly in kind and partly in cash according to local usage or exigencies of the situation prevailing at the time of employment.

42. A major bone of contention between the parties relates to employment of outside labour. Land-holders complain in a sweeping manner that local labour is generally inefficient and indisciplined and that outside labour is usually more efficient and disciplined. Much of the violence that occurred during the recent years centred round this dispute. The Constitution of our country gives freedom to every citizen to move freely throughout the territory of India and to seek employment anywhere. Therefore it would not be proper or feasible to impose a ban on the movement of outside labour. Usually labour from neighbouring districts moves into Thanjavur during transplantation and harvest seasons. But when a situation of disturbance of public tranquility and public peace arises, the State on its part, can and should invoke section 144, Cr.P.C. or any other available legal weapon in its armoury to maintain public peace. That condition is always paramount. Such extraordinary remedies cannot solve the problems of employment of outside labour on a permanent basis. However, since agricultural labour nurses a grievance on the question of imported labour, I may state that the State has the legal power to restrict the freedom of contract of land-holders to refuse work to local labour totally and to import outside labour by appropriate labour legislation. At present no such legislation is available in the agricultural labour field ; nor is the passing of a statute on the subject desirable in the larger interests of providing employment opportunities to agricultural labour in the three adjoining districts of South Arcot, Tiruchirappalli and Ramanathapuram. Therefore, in an extreme case where a law and order situatiom develops, the State may and indeed should intervene to compel a recalcitrant land-holder to give work to local labour by having recourse to section 144, Cr. P. C. The Collector of the district must be the authority to decide in each individual case on the need and remedy suitable for the occasion subject to such executive directions as the Government may issue from time to time. However, a caution is necessary. Too frequent instructions from above are likely to sap the initiative of the man on

the spot (the Collector) who has the ultimate responsibility to preserve public order so that orderly life in the agricultural sector is assured for ensuring better production. Otherwise the situation as it now stands may be left undisturbed because, the ad hoc conciliation machinery now working, namely, appointment of Conciliation Tahsildars for each taluk during the rush period of agricultural operations, has worked on the whole fairly successfully.

The Role of the Police in Agrarian Disputes.

43. A cognate problem which often arises is the requisitioning of police help by land-holders during the harvest season. The present practice is that the police do not move in unless the concerned Tahsildar makes a request. This is only an informal understanding. The legal right of the individual land-holder apprehending offences such as dacoity, arson, etc., on his land, to requisition police help cannot be curtailed, as the law now stands, by any sustainable legislation or executive order. The existing practice which is more a compromise based upon understanding between the police authorities and the revenue authorities may therefore, be allowed to continue. After watching the situation for one or two more harvest seasons and with the experience thus gained, this question can be examined later by an Expert Committee.

44. The system of Pannaiyal has practically gone out of vogue except in the case of about 5 per cent of land-holders. Neither land-holders nor labourers desire resuscitation of this odious system. However, Labour Associations demand that the wage rates prescribed under the 1952 Pannaiyal Protection Act which have remained unaltered all these years despite the rising cost of living, should be revised. The daily wage rates prescribed under that Act are two marakkals for men, one marakkal for women and three-fourth marakkal for others. Where the Mayuram agreement applies, this rate does not apply. In the Mayuram agreement, the rates prescribed are one marakkal for men and three-fourth for women. The Pannaiyal Protection Act may be suitably amended increasing the wages to $2\frac{1}{2}$ marakkals for men and $1\frac{1}{2}$ marakkals for women and 1 marakkal for others. It was found by the Commission that, probably in order to circumvent the provisions of the Pannaiyal Act some land-holders were entering into annual contracts with labourers agreeing to pay a standard wage throughout the year plus an annual bonus of 15 to 16 Kalams of paddy. If this contract is broken the labourer is left without a cheap remedy because recourse to courts of law is both costly and dilatory for labour which exists at a subsistance level and can ill-afford money for any litigation in Civil Courts. The Pannaiyals Act may be suitably amended to provide for registration, on a compulsory basis of such annual contracts; and to provide for cases where the conditions of contract are broken, the labourer should be enabled to go to the Labour Court or Tribunal appointed under the Pannaiyal Protection Act for relief. The Pannaiyal Protection Act may be amended making the Tahsildar or Labour Court the authority to maintain a register of such annual contracts for enforcement purposes. Suitable rules can be devised to see that both land-holder and labour are compelled to fulfill the conditions of such annual contracts of labour. In my opinion this system must be encouraged to spread because it satisfies a known want of both the land-holder, to have ready labour available for his farm work throughout the year, and of the labourer for security and assurance of employment under a particular farmer for the whole year. This system has the added advantage of being free of the age old, irksome shackles on labour imposed by the Pannaiyal System and it is a simple method which being not cumbersome, can be more effectively enforced to the advantage of both land-holder and labourer. In addition,

this will be, I anticipate, an effective remedy for the oft repeated grievance of the land-holder that labourers frequently go on unannounced strikes during rush seasons for attending meetings, processions and conferences to the great detriment of smooth flow of agricultural operations. Such enthusiasm at the early stages of growth of organised labour s understandable but all the same, they do interrupt agricultural work. It is to be hoped that responsible leadership of labour would see that, as far as possible such conferences, meetings and processions are not organized or held during harvest and transplantation seasons. No legal remedy can be effective for banning such activities. On the whole encouragement of the annual labour contract system would be a powerful corrective to the abovementioned lapses because a labourer bound by such a contract would hesitate to interrupt essential farm work by taking part in strikes without due notice which, if given, would enable, the landholder to make alternative arrangements for carrying out the essential operations like seed soaking, plucking and transplanting seedlings after they are plucked. These operations by their very nature will not brook delay and any delay will throw unnecessary loss on the harassed land-holder. Any annual contract of labour must however, provide for payment of fair wages to labour to be prescribed by the State in accordance with the recommendations made here. In addition to this, the labourer would be entitled to the annual bonus of paddy payment agreed upon between the parties. The quantum of this bonus payment may best be left to negotiation and agreement between the parties. The present bonus quantity is 15 to 18 Kalams of paddy for the labourer and his wife or woman helper. This is paid at the end of the last harvest in the year.

Machinery for enforcement of provisions of the proposed Act relating to Minimum Wages, etc.

45. The conciliation machinery which is now constituted on an *ad hoc* basis is different from enforcement machinery now proposed for the purpose of settling agrarian labour disputes. If the Government accept my recommendation for fixing fair wages for agricultural workers, it is obvious a semi-permanent machinery would be necessary to enforce payment of those wages. I therefore suggest, that at the taluk level a Tahsildar may be appointed Labour Court with exclusive jurisdiction and powers to hear complaints from individual Labourers, Labour Associations, Land-owner Associations, and individual land-owners regarding transgressions of statutory provisions regarding minimum wages, minimum of hours of work, illegal exactions in the nature of unauthorised deductions from wages, etc. This Labour Court will have no jurisdiction over workers employed in or about the house-holds of land-holders on house-hold work including cleaning cattle yards, storing manure in the backyard of the land-holders' houses, etc., because, by its very nature such work is not capable of regulation by law in the present state of our rural society. Every other employment of labour by land-holders pertaining to agricultural operations will come under the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and Labour Court. The Labour Court or the Tribunal should have in suitable cases, power, to appoint a receiver who should be either an Officer of the Revenue Department not below the rank of Revenue Inspector, or an Officer of the Agricultural Department not below the rank of Extension Officer or any other suitable officer under the Control of the Block Development Officer. Giving a concrete example, suppose a land-holder makes a complaint to the Labour Court that despite his willingness to pay minimum wages prescribed by the Government the labourers of his village are not coming forward to harvest his lands. In such a case, after making a preliminary enquiry and satisfying himself about the truth of the complaint,

the Labour Court should have power, to appoint a receiver to take charge of the crop, to appoint labourers of its own choice to harvest the crop, to pay wages to the labourers concerned and to deposit the balance of sale produce of the harvested crop to the credit of the land-holder concerned in the taluk treasury for payment over to him eventually. Similarly, where a Labour Association complains that despite their willingness to harvest the fields of a particular land-holder, he is wantonly refusing to entrust the work to them, the same procedure would be followed by the Labour Court and the harvest operations completed. Expeditious despatch of work by the Labour Court and its officers is very necessary for the success of this scheme. Therefore the Officer appointed as Labour Court should have a Government vehicle at his disposal and adequate staff during transplantation and harvest seasons. The present practice of throwing every additional work on the regular Revenue Inspector should not be allowed, in my opinion, to stand in the way of the success of this scheme. I therefore suggest that a separate Officer called Labour Officer one or two in number, should be attached to each Labour Court for the rush seasons namely transplantation and harvest seasons. This Labour Officer could make the preliminary enquiry under the directions of the Labour Court. He should be responsible for (1) engaging labour where local labour is unreasonably recalcitrant, (2) payment of wages and (3) keeping an account for the money expended by him, and performing other duties to carry out the orders of the Court. An imprest amount of Rs. 500 or Rs. 1,000 should be placed at the disposal of the Labour Court for carrying out its duties. From out of this, labour charges should first be met and later recouped from the land-holder concerned.

46. The labour officer in addition, should have power to make complaints *suo moto* before the Labour Court if, as a result of his inquiry, which he can undertake under the orders of the Labour Court, he finds any actionable wrong committed in any village by any land-holder with reference to the provisions of the special legislation for regulating relationship between land-holders and labour which I hope the Government will bring on the statute book in pursuance of my recommendation. The labour court must have one Assistant independent of the regular cadre of Assistants in taluk offices, otherwise the court work will suffer. I am positive of this because the success of the whole scheme adumbrated above can be wrecked by depriving the Labour Court of adequate and necessary clerical help. The Labour Officer should also be given power to check the weights and measures in use by villagers and farmers, to confiscate unauthorised weights and measures, and to institute prosecutions in suitable cases against persons transgressing provisions of the Weights and Measures Act.

47. An appeal will lie from the final orders of the labour court to the labour tribunal constituted at the Divisional Headquarters. The Revenue Divisional Officer himself may be appointed as Labour Tribunal. But no appeal should be allowed from any interim order of the Labour Court to the Labour Tribunal. This will facilitate the quicker execution of orders of the Labour Court. In my opinion, the very fact that, such a machinery is available will be a powerful deterrent against erring landholders and labour leadership. I anticipate, that at the beginning, many disputes might come up before this court and the tribunal but in the course of one or two years, things would settle down and the flood of numbers will dwindle down to a trickle. The court should have also power to hear complaints from labourers of short payment of wages and award decrees for payment of money due to labourers by individual land-holders. Such decrees will be enforced by the labour court or the tahsildars of the Taluk under the same procedure applicable to recovery of arrears of land revenue.

48. The Collector should have no powers of revision over any orders of the Labour Court or Labour Tribunal but I think it necessary to give such powers to the District Court, in the case of the final orders of the tribunal because, the subject-matters of the disputes affect the civil rights of parties and although, they are properly adjudicatable by officers chosen for the purpose of manning the Labour Court and Tribunal, constitutional properties must also be satisfied. Necessarily, the conferment of exclusive jurisdiction on the Labour Court and Tribunal in regard to agrarian labour disputes and cognate matters will oust the jurisdiction of the ordinary Civil Courts of the land on these matters.

49. Generally, the constitution, powers, duties and status of the courts and tribunals established under the Pannaiyal Protection Act may be followed, *mutatis mutandis*, for the proposed Labour Court and Labour Tribunal also. One word of caution is necessary. The Collector may be specially instructed to select suitable Tahsildars for this work. That is to say, people selected should be energetic (and not merely because they are seniors) should have a judicial frame of mind and should be free from known bias against either the class of land-holders or the labouring class. I am emphasing this because, in a large measure, the success of this scheme will depend upon the character of the personnel chosen for manning Labour Courts and the posts of Labour Officer. To ensure competence in the work of the Labour Officer, he should be of the rank of either a Deputy Tahsildar or a Senior Assistant.

50. Finally, by way of caution, I think the Government should instruct the Collector to watch specially the conduct and integrity of officers appointed to the Labour Court and Tribunal and whenever he suspects any bad work or unfair disposal of cases, disclosing bias or favouritism, he should report to the Government immediately and replace such officers in the case of the labour court himself and to get labour tribunals replaced by the proper higher authorities. Quick action in this regard by the Collector and the higher Governmental authorities is essential.

51. No fee should be levied on applications to the court by any labourer for payment of wages due to him. Such applications for arrears of wages should be made within three months from the completion of work concerned. Other applications before the court or tribunal may bear a nominal stamp fee of Re. 1. The expenditure which the State will bear for the maintenance of these courts and tribunals and their staff will, I hope, be doubly repaid by the smooth functioning of agricultural operations. A time-limit of one month for the disposal of cases by the court and two months for disposal of appeals by the Tribunal should be fixed by the rules framed. This will help quick disposal of cases which is, so to say, the main requirement for the successful working of the scheme.

52. Fixing of minimum wages for agricultural labourers could be done under the provisions of Central Act 11 of 1948 also; but for various reasons which I do not propose to detail, it would be proper, in my opinion, to take power for fixing fair wages by the special legislation which I trust, the Government will undertake to place on the statute book early for settling the Thanjavur Agrarian Labour Problems. The interests of the whole State in the settled agrarian conditions of Thanjavur "the rice bowl" of the State for ensuring assured food supply, warrant the enactment of a special Act for Thanjavur district alone and questions of cost of the scheme proposed above should not be an obstacle.

53. Wages once fixed should be reviewed by a Committee once in three years. The Government should refix wages after considering the views of this Committee. On the constitution of this Committee, I do not want to offer any remarks.

54. One demand by land-holders was that hours of work and also norms of work should be fixed. The Labour Associations did not seriously oppose the fixation of 8 hours of work for men and 7 hours of work for women. This work should be done in convenient sessions, because the nature of agricultural work is such that no fixed time of work can be prescribed. Long established custom can be left to regulate time of work. Having regard to the nature of agricultural work it is impracticable to fix workable and satisfactory norms for any type of agricultural work ; mamul alone should supply this want.

55. Further, a few labour associations demand that compensation for death or injuries caused during work should be provided for. Death is a rare occurrence except by snake bite. It may be left out of account. Serious injuries also are a rare occurrence since agricultural work is not a hazarduous occupation. Unlike industrial labour, all the conditions of agricultural labour are not capable of minute or precise regulation or control. Besides, difficult problems of responsibility for injury and liability for paying compensation would arise, which, it would not be possible to dispose of expeditiously and cheaply in workmans' compensation courts or tribunals which will have to constituted at taluk centres to be useful at all to labour. I therefore think the time is not ripe to recommend setting up any official machinery for providing compensation to labourers either for death or for injury. The innate fair sense of the land owning classes in Thanjavur and village public opinion can be depended upon to suitably compensate the injured workmen for the present, because I have seen that in the main, despite pockets of disturbed labour conditions, a sizeable portion of land-owners and labourers are still able to manage their mutual relationship in an amicable manner, unaided by any official machinery.

Un-employment Relief.

56. A claim was made by many Labour Associations that the State was bound to grant unemployment relief to agricultural labour in Thanjavur district because for at least three months in the year such labour does not have any work, and the Thanjavur district is the main source of food supply for the whole State. These considerations, in my opinion, are irrelevant for the grant of any unemployment relief to agricultural labour anywhere. The agriculture industry cannot be treated specially in the matter of unemployment relief. Firstly agricultural labour is employed in a seasonal industry. The State cannot bear the expenses of relief of unemployment in an industry however important or vital that industry may be to the life of the community. It is only one item of the economic activity of the community which stands on a different footing from other industries because, the product of it is the vital need of the people, food.

57. The concept of unemployment relief for labour engaged in any industry is based upon the main idea that such unemployment is temporary and a passing phase and such distress deserves to be relieved by the State as a temporary measure so that skilled and semi-skilled employees in the industry are not rendered useless for the purpose of the life of the community. Agricultural labour is wholely unskilled. The present supply of agricultural labour taking the whole State is much in excess of the demand. To introduce any scheme of unemployment relief for such labour will be indirectly encouraging these people to remain idle for two or three months in the year. The off-season period particularly from 15th of March to 15th of June is the hotest part of the year in the entire Tamil Nadu. Strenuous or hard out-door manual work during this period is generally avoided if possible by all labourers after 12 noon. All these considerations show that grant of unemployment

relief will induce apathy in unskilled agricultural labour and diminish the desire to work during the off-season. This is not to say that other suitable avenues of employment should not be created for them by the State during the off-season period.

58. The Labour Department, even now, is undertaking schemes, for assisting landless labour with loans for starting small-scale industries. Many of the schemes are not at all effective. It is unnecessary to assess the reasons for this because, agricultural labour generally suffers from an in capacity to turn to non-agricultural employment and there is a distinct disinclination to learn new skills. For example the abundant supply of coconut husks available in Thanjavur district is wasted as fuel and the coir rope required by the agriculturists in this district is imported from Kerala. In Kerala State, there is a flourishing cottage industry of coir rope manufacture which can be carried on in coconut topes and as a cottage industry. Much capital is not required. The experience of the State of Kerala can be usefully copied if only agricultural labour in Thanjavur will co-operate. Even now mat-weaving and employment in rice-mills afford employment for a small number during off-season period. The question of starting new cottage industries will have to be studied in depth and on the inquiries made by us, I am unable to make more useful suggestions now.

59. The scheme now undertaken by the Government to encourage sinking of filter point tube-wells in suitable areas must be intensified in the taluks of Nannilam, Mayuram and Sirkali where, I was able to find, suitable local conditions exist. These areas are potentially capable of producing abundant water-supply and raising of summer crops with the aid of such supply will provide much needed work to the agricultural labourer during the summer months of March, April and May. The other three taluks in the East Thanjavur area seem to be unsuitable for sinking filter point tube wells. The abundant supply of raw meterials like straw, coconut husk, paddy husk which are now mostly wasted could be suitably utilised for starting new industries based on these raw materials, which would give opportunities of more employment to unskilled labour.

60. Intensive cultivation programmes undertaken by the Government with the aid of Ford foundation and other agencies, if successfully completed, would provide additional employment opportunities only to a portion of agricultural labour. It is not possible to estimate now the extent of such additional employment potentiality, but I feel this is a worthwhile source of relief of unemployment for agricultural labour. The generally held idea that transformation of landless labourers into tenant cultivators would increase employment opportunities greatly could be accepted only after a detailed study is made. Intensified cultivation by tenant cultivators is not very marked or pronounced but such cultivation by owners of lands might produce more agricultural work for the labour force. Rehabilitating landless labourers as tenant cultivators would require investment of a considerable sum of money and massive effort on the part of the Government. Landless labourers possess no resources to utilise properly the opportunity given to them when they are made tenants. Equally the question of distribution of any surplus land by reduction in the ceiling limit fixed under the Ceiling Act, 1961, as a source of relief of agricultural landless labour has to be examined more thoroughly before any acceptable conclusion could be put forward. The objective of the Government should be, to provide employment to the agricultural labour at least for a period of 300 days in the year: then alone the poverty of agricultural labour could be satisfactorily solved. An equally effective approach to permanent solution of the problem would be to take steps to curtail the abnormal increase of population in the agricultural Labour sector as compared to the other

sectors of the rura community in Thanjavur district. Methods should be devised and carried out by which a considerable portion of this labour population could be diverted to non-agricultural employment at least for three or four months in the year when no work is available for them in the fields. Any one single remedy would not be effective. The problem is so vast that a many pronged attack alone would have any chance of success within a reasonable period of time.

Madras Public Trusts Act, 1961 (Madras Act 57 of 1961).

61. An allied topic is rehabilitation of landless labourers by giving them land belonging to temples and charitable institutions for cultivation. The Commission had no sufficient time to study this problem in relation to administration of the Madras Public Trusts Act 57 of 1961, execpt in the case of one devasthanam, Velur Devasthanam, Vaidheeswaran Koil, Sirkali taluk. There are about 600 public trusts of religious charitable endowment institutions owning about 17,000 acres of land in the taluks of Mayuram, Sirkali, Nannilam, Thiruthuraipoondi and Nagappattinam. The Commission was able to ascertain from the authorized officer of this area that it was reported to him that nearly 635 tenants of these charitable and religious institutions held more than the ceiling area of 5 standard acres allowed to the tenant under the Act. The Commission had no opportunity to verify the ramifications of this evil but during the enquiry the Commission had reason to estimate approximately that nearly one-eighth of all the leases given by the Devasthanams, maths and charitable institutions were bogus leases. Such leases, it was alleged were taken in the names of absentee relations like sons and sons-in-law. A more detailed survey than what was possible for this Commission would be necessary to examine this question satisfactorily. However, it is a fact that several tenants who have taken on lease more than 5 standard acres are giving sub-leases of the excess lands to their nominees for a higher rent. Power is already there in sections 6,7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 of the Act to remedy this evil. The excess land to be distributed to landless labourers, as a result of action taken cannot be estimated accurately in the absence of a proper survey. Still, to the extent to which even a few hundreds of landless labourers would get land for cultivation if such an inquiry is undertaken, will help to some extent rehabilitation of landless agricultural labour. In view of this, I recommend that the number of authorised officers and the staff sanctioned to them should be increased suitably and a drive initiated to enable authorised officers to exercise their powers effectively. If on examination, it is found that the Act will have to be amended to carry out the policy underlying it, action may be initiated for that purpose also after a study is made by the Revenue Board or other appropriate authority. I can confirm that, the local enquiry made by me at more than one centre I visited, disclosed that landless agricultural workers are expecting that effective action will be taken by the Government in this matter. The present managements of the trust are not, possibly with a few honourable exceptions, anxious about carrying out the avowed policy underlying the Public Trusts Act. They are more anxious naturally about the chances of collecting the income which they get by leasing out their lands more easily, and without difficulty. No blame can attach to that attitude of trustees of public temples and charitable institutions.

Housing.

62. This problem has been tackled by the Government for a number of years in the case of Harijans. The Schedule (No. III) gives the number of house-sites acquired, the number of houses constructed, house-sites acquired now lying waste, for this six taluks comprised in East Thanjavur area for the five-year period from 1964–65 to 1968–69. Total

number of house-sites acquired for housing during the past five years is 2,660 and the number of houses constructed is 565 and the remaining sites are lying waste. The effort has not even touched the fringes of the problem. The causes are :—

(1) Non-availability of sufficient extent of dry-land in East Thanjavur area.

(2) Consequently when wet lands are acquired, they are water-logged and low-lying and houses could be constructed only after raising the level of the land at the cost of the beneficiaries. Most Harijan families are unable to meet this expenditure from their own resources.

(3) Non-availability of suitable Government poramboke lands for assignment to landless labourers because even many threshing floors and porambokes have been occupied unauthorisedly by landless labourers for the purpose of constructing houses. The Mirasdars have a legitimate grievance that they are suffering for want of sufficient number of threshing floors because of such unauthorised occupation by labourers.

63. Most of the labourers live in Jari natham patta lands belonging to land-holders. There is no tendency now for land-holders to evict the labourers from such lands. Therefore the problem of want of house-sites is not very acute now. However, a long-term policy for solution of this problem must be worked out by utilising all available methods of acquiring lands for house-sites. Acquisition of private land will necessarily be a costly affair. Still a phased programme must be worked out and rigidly adhered to ; then alone the grievances of landless labourers of East Thanjavur area can be remedied to any appreciable extent. I have no more concrete suggestions to make in regard to this problem.

64. Before I conclude my report, I desire to express my thanks to the Law Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu Thiru T. S. Ramalingam, who, as requested by me, kindly attended two discussions on legal problems arising for study by the Commission at my residence in Madras. He readily procured and supplied all the information I required from neighbouring States like Kerala and Mysore regarding minimum wage notifications issued by such Governments ; and of his own initiative he supplied me relevant material of a useful nature obtained from the West Bengal Government. I must also place on record that the Commission received hearty co-operation from the officers of the Revenue Department, the Agriculture Department, the Labour Department, the Industries Department, and the Rural Development and Local Administration Department of this district. But for their unstinted co-operation a study of this character could not have been completed within the short period of four months.

S. GANAPATIA PILLAI,

28th May 1969. *Commission of Inquiry, Agrarian Labour Problems, East Thanjavur district.*

SCHEDULE I.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE AVERAGE COST OF LABOUR INPUT AND OUTTURN PER ACRE IN THE STATE SEED FARM TAKEN UP FOR STUDY IN EAST THANJAVUR DISTRICT.

Name of State Seed Farm.	*Name of taluk.*	*Name of Crop.*	*Cost of inputs.*					*Cost of labour for one acre of cultivation.*					(*Gross produce*) *Outturn in terms of Kalams.*				
			1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Nedumbalam ..	Thiruthuraipoondi taluk.	Kuruvai ..	36	28	78	97	67	152	166	220	260	222	41	33	50	50	52
		Thaladi ..	45	24	66	45	76	156	130	186	151	181	38	10	40	19	..
		Samba ..	42	34	54	61	65	162	158	204	221	233	55	37	44	28	47
Nagamangalam ..	Mayuram taluk ..	Kuruvai ..	50	67	57	90	137	126	156	137	209	190	44	28	29	42	49
		Thaladi ..	33	33	42	50	112	155	117	166	147	204	38	20	24	..	..
		Samba ..	38	28	53	73	..	110	144	143	161	..	38	32	43	38	51
Moongilkudy ..	Nannilam taluk ..	Kuruvai ..	54	56	81	78	85	110	131	150	211	180	32	54	48	45	52
		Thaladi ..	30	20	53	50	82	99	121	153	171	192	40	36	42	28	..
		Samba ..	38	35	36	107	55	131	131	158	155	199	58	52	66	42	..

SCHEDULE II.

Average Budget of an Agricultural Labour Family—Harijan.

Name of the taluk.	*Name of the village.*	*Food.*	*Clothing.*	*Repairs to houses.*	*Medical expenses.*	*Education expenses.*	*Fairs Festival and functions.*	*Total.*	*Remarks.*
		Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Mannargudi	Vadakovanur	671	185	15	10	10	10	901	
Mayuram	Alangudi	684	135	18	..	..	22	859	
Sirkali	Kattur	774	133	15	..	3	23	948	
Thiruthuraipoondi	Mattupalaiyam	706	38	40	28	..	42	854	
Nannilam	Urgudy	807	25	53	20	4	53	962	
Nagapattinam	Thandalai	842	43	47	16	..	50	998	
Total ..		4,484	559	188	74	17	200	5,522	
Average ..		747	93	31	13	3	33	920	
	Non-Harijan.								
Mannargudi	Vadakovanur	828	100	50	15	..	20	1,013	
Mayuram	Alangudy	645	80	20	20	..	20	865	
Sirkali	Kattur	828	99	20	..	..	20	967	
Thiruthuraipoondi	Mattupalaiyam	706	38	38	45	..	38	875	
Nannilam	Urgudy	753	55	..	15	..	78	913·50	

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SCHEDULE III.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE NUMBER OF HOUSE-SITES ACQUIRED, NUMBER OF HOUSES CONSTRUCTED, NUMBER OF HOUSE-SITES LYING WASTE FROM THE YEAR 1964–65 TO 1968–69.

Name of the taluk.	*Number of house-sites acquired.*	*Number of houses constructed.*	*Number of house-sites lying waste.*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nannilam	434	139	295
Nagapattinam	57	..	57
Mannargudi	206	56	150
Tiruthuraipoondi	223	87	136
Mayuram	600	37	563
Sirkali	546	246	300
Total ..	2,066	565	1,501

SCHEDULE IV.

STATEMENT SHOWING EQUIVALENT LOCAL MEASURE FOR THE LITRES.

Local measures.	*In term of litres.*
(1)	(2)
One Local measure plus 70 Ml. or 60 grams in weight	One litre.
2 Local measures plus 140 Ml. or 120 grams in weight	Two litres.
3 Local measures plus 210 Ml. or 180 grams in weight	Three litres.
4 Local measures plus 280 Ml. or 280 grams in weight	Four litres.
5 Local measures plus 350 Ml. or 300 grams in weight	Five litres.
5½ Local measures plus 385 Ml. or 330 grams in weight	Five and half litres.
6 Local measures plus 420 Ml. or 360 grams in weight	Six litres.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

Serial number.	*Nature of Recommendation.*	*Paragraph.*	*Page.*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	Fixation of fair wages for various agricultural operations other than harvest.	35	13
2	Fixation of new uniform wage for harvest	36 and 37	13–14
3	Transfer of enforcement of Weights and Measures Act from the Labour Department to Panchayat Union.	39	14–15
4	Amendment to Pannaiyal Protection Act to increase the wages of Pannaiyal and appointment of contract Labour.	44	16–17
5	Appointment of Labour Courts, Tribunals, and their powers and functions.	45	17–18
6	Appointment and duties of Labour Officers	46	18
7	Appeal from the final orders of Labour Court to the Labour Tribunal.	47	18
8	Collector's role and powers in the enforcement of labour laws.	48 and 50	19
9	Application fees for the labourer and land-owners to the Court and Tribunal.	51	19
10	Appointment of the Committee for the revision of wages once in three years.	53	19
11	Compensation for death and injuries caused to Agricultural Labourers.	55	20
12	Fixation of hours of work for agricultural workers	35 and 54	13 and 20
13	Unemployment relief : Coir-making, starting of new industries and sinking of filter points.	56 and 58	20–21
14	Number of authorised officers to be increased for the Proper Administration of Trusts Act.	61	22
15	A long-term policy and a phased programme to be worked out for the acquisition of house-sites.	62	22–23


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