ILLUSTRATIONS
From
The Joint Secretary,
A.O.C. Labour Union,
Digboi, P.O.

To
The Hon'ble Premier,
to the Govt. of Assam,
Shillong.

Sir,

We have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the resolution passed nem con in the mass meeting held on 20/2/39 which speaks for itself.

The situation here is becoming more and more serious, due to the wanton attitude of the Company and the silence and apparent inaction of the Government despite the fact that a Conciliation Board and a Tribunal of Labour have previously submitted their views by this time. This attitude on the part of the troubles and distress of the sufferers, has made them frustrated enough to raise their voice in utter hopelessness in the form of the attached resolution.

We sincerely hope that the Government will take the matter in all its seriousness and take such action as deemed necessary in the circumstances to save the situation.

We have the honour to be,
Sir,
your obedient servant,
(A.O.C. LABOUR UNION).
This meeting of the strikers of Assam Oil Company Ltd., Digboi earnestly appeals to the Assam Ministry to take prompt and effective action to end the dead-lock - especially in view of the fact that the reports and recommendations of the Conciliation Board and the Tribunal are supposed to be already in the hands of the Government - as the menacing attitude of the Company and the unexpected and inexplicable deaf silence on the part of the Govt. have created a grave crisis amongst the strikers whose patience, energy and purse have almost been exhausted on account of the protracted but peaceful moral fight for the last five months. This meeting therefore respectfully submits that in the event of the Ministry's failure to intervene in the dispute and to find ways and means for a satisfactory solution to end the dire distress of the strikers, the strikers will have no other alternative left open to them than to launch Satyagraha and it (this meeting) notifies that Satyagraha will be definitely started from the 10th September and the responsibility will no longer lie on the strik-

Digboi,
The 30th August, 1939.

A.O.C. LABOUR UNION.

JT. SECRETARY.
HONBLE PREMIER SHILLONG, STRIKERS HUMBLY OFFER WHOLEHEARTED COOPERATION AND LOYALTY TO GOV.

THIS EMERGENCY STOP COMPANY ADAMENT NOT TAKING ALL WORKERS BACK & STRIKERS THEREFORE PREPARED LEAVE STATION IN UTTER HELPLESSNESS & APPEAL KINDLY INSTRUCT COMPANY IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT DUES WITH SER COMPENSATION OR REINSTATE ALL STRIKERS DEFEATING OTHER DEMANDS.

LABOUR UNION SECRETARY

CA 85 l 18/54

The sequence of entries at the beginning of this telegram is—class of telegram, time handed in, serial number (in the case of foreign telegrams only), office of origin, date, service instructions (if any), and number of words.

This form must accompany any inquiry respecting this Telegram.

Lal Chand & Sons, Printers, Calcutta—No. 636 R (B-239)—8-10-37—30,000 Rs.
From
The Joint Secretary,
Assam Oil Company Labour Union,
Digboi.

To
His Excellency the Governor of Assam

Honoured Sir,

Post respectfully sheweth,

(1) That the humble petitioner has respectfully telegraphed to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General to-day as follows:

"Strikers humbly offer wholehearted co-operation and loyalty to Government in this emergency stop Company adamant not taking all workers back stop strikers therefore prepared leave station in utter helplessness stop appeal kindly instruct Company immediate settlement dues with service compensation or reinstate all strikers deferring other demands."

(2) That the said petitioner also telegraphed on 5th Sept. to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General as under:-

"Reference ordinance Digboi yesterday ten thousand Oil workers on legal strike over five months appreciate Government's emergency measures for petroleum supply request order company restore statutory working take."
"Concentration" Camps For Workers
Oil Company's New Method to Break Strikes

Union Secretary's Appeal To Assam Govt.

Two statements have been issued by the Secretary of the Assam Oil Company Labour Union, in one of which he examines the attitude of the Company towards the strikers, and in another he exposes the one-sided report of the magistrate on the Digboi firing.

UNPRECEDENTED
The secretary emphasises the responsibility of the Coalition Government in Assam towards the strikers in the present dispute, as they are fighting for their legitimate rights. The creation of "concentration camps" by the company to break the strike is a step which the secretary regards unprecedented in the annals of Indian labour disputes, which had never been permitted even in the days of the bureaucratic regime in the provinces.

GOVT.'S HESITATION
He deplores the hesitation of the Assam Government in declaring the company as the offending party notwithstanding the fact that the company had refused to accept a board of conciliation.

In another statement, the secretary points out how deeply public opinion has been shocked by the magistrate's prejudiced report on the Digboi firing, white-washing the excesses of the police and the military.

DIBGOL May 27

The secretary of the Assam Oil Company Labour Union, in the course of a statement, says:

"The clear refusal by the company even to accept a board of conciliation or arbitration, as was proposed by the Government, has conclusively demonstrated the uncompromising attitude of the Assam Oil Company. The company's adamant attitude has been, by itself, the most effective weapon in the propaganda to break the strike. It is not known what steps the company started working in spite of the strike. But it is a time when a complete deadlock prevailed and still prevails in so far as oil and petrol operations are concerned. The company has been given every facility to bring in an outside labour through police and military assistance, particularly when the company has come out with its own policy of conciliation. It is not known what steps have been taken by the company to break the strike. It is not known what steps have been taken by the company to break the strike."
DIGBOI FIRING JUSTIFIED

ACTION OF PATROL PARTY UPHELD

REPORT FINDINGS

NO EMPLOYEES OF OIL COMPANY PRESENT

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT
SHILLONG, May 17.

The Government of Assam to-day published the report of Mr. Pabitranath Das, the magistrate who inquired into the firing incident at Digboi on April 18.

The report consists of 33 typed pages, and the findings of the magistrate arc:

(1) That the deaths of Praneswar Chaudhuri and Satyendra Chakraborty were caused by rifle-shots fired by riflemen of Jamadar Paniram's party;

(2) That the riflemen fired in self-defence when faced with, and attacked by, a hostile mob of several hundreds;

(3) That Chanu Ahir was shot down by Lieutenant Murray in self-defence when he was attacked by a hostile mob;

(4) That they all in the course of patrol duty, exercised the right of private defence on being attacked by the mob;

(5) That none of the Assam Oil Company's employees were with the riflemen at the time;

(6) That neither Mr. Tainsh, nor Mr. Towler, nor Mr. Gillespie (employees of the company) fired on the mob or shot down any member of the mob.

Regarding the number of casualties, the magistrate says: "I find that, as a result of the firing, there were seven casualties—three dead and four injured. The injuries were not of a grievous nature."

Regarding Mr. Tainsh, he says: "The allegation that a European in plain dress, or Mr. Tainsh, fired a rifle-shot from the vanette has not an iota of evidence in support of it."

Regarding Mr. Towler, he says: '"The allegation that a European in plain dress, or Mr. Towler, fired a rifle-shot from the vanette has not an iota of evidence in support of it."

Regarding Mr. Tainsh, he says: "The allegation that a European in plain dress, or Mr. Tainsh, fired a rifle-shot from the vanette has not an iota of evidence in support of it."

Regarding Mr. Towler, he says: "The allegation that a European in plain dress, or Mr. Towler, fired a rifle-shot from the vanette has not an iota of evidence in support of it."

The magistrate in his report says: "There is ample evidence on record, and it is not disputed that Jamadar Paniram Mech, the vanette driver, was present when the victims were killed."

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ATTACK UPON ASSAM GOVERNMENT

It is an open secret that the Congress Government of Assam has been formed and kept in power in spite of the strenuous opposition of all reactionary elements in that province. The European exploiters of Assam are particularly hostile to the new Government. What part was played by Mr. Hockenhull and his followers, both European and their Indian henchmen, in preventing the formation of the Cabinet of Mr. Bardoloi is, we believe, still fresh in the public mind. Foiled in that unhappy attempt, the champions of the European interests both in and outside Assam have remained since then engaged in the equally dishonourable game of discrediting the Ministry on flimsy or no ground. An Anglo-Indian contemporary has not hesitated even to call the Government of Mr. Bardoloi “a criminal Government” engaged not only in a subversive propaganda against constituted authority but in taking a partisan attitude in the recent labour strike at Digboi.

Of course, if the Ministry had been guilty of the charges that were leveled against it, no condemnation of it would have been too strong. But as soon as the allegation was published in the paper referred to above that due to their hatred of the Assam Oil Company the Ministry had issued orders to the Police to see that the officers of the Company particularly the Europeans did not get any domestic servants, an emphatic contradiction of the report was issued by the Government. That statement, particularly as it came from Mr. Bardoloi against whom hitherto even his enemies have not been able to bring any charge of dishonesty ought to have silenced the voice of calumny. But unfortunately, nothing has been considered too mean for the enemies of the Congress in their efforts to stigmatize and, if possible, dislodge the Congress Ministry.

This is why an adjournment motion was brought in the Assam legislature the other day to censure the Government in this connection. The motion was, of course, talked out and we do not know whether it was liked by Mr. Bardoloi and his colleagues. We think, however, it has done a distinct service to the Ministry. It has enabled the Government to place the whole situation concern-
EMPIRE NEWS
SPECIAL SERVICE TO
Daily Telegraph
and
Morning Post
BOYCOTT IN ASSAM
LOSING STRENGTH

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT
CALCUTTA, Monday.

The situation in Digboi, in North-East Assam, where Assam Oil Company labourers have been on strike for 49 days, has undergone little change in the last few days.

The company has declared its intention to engage new labour, but the Labour Union is said to be "frightening" applicants away. There is little doubt that if new labourers appear at the works in large numbers, there will be serious trouble.

All Europeans, as recently reported, lost their domestic servants, and the "Red Guards" formed by the strikers, prevented the Europeans from engaging new servants.

The police have now stopped this practice, but as in the case of other labourers the servants are afraid to resume work.

There is less strength in the boycott against Europeans and bazaar prices.

Commons Questions
ASSAM OIL CO. STRIKE
SAFETY OF EUROPEAN STAFF

Sir NAIRNE SANDEMAN (Cons., Middleton and Prestwich) asked the Under-Secretary for India what was the present position of the members of the European staff of the Assam Oil Company, besieged by strikers at Digboi.

Col. MUIRHEAD replied: I understand that, in consequence of the strike among the employees of the Assam Oil Company at Digboi, a small number of Europeans and Indians from among the staff are sleeping in the company's hospital, and a larger number are messing there. The Governor, however, assures me that the Europeans at Digboi are not and never have been in a state of siege. A strong force of military police has been stationed in Digboi and the neighbourhood since the beginning of the strike, and the latest reports indicate that the situation generally has greatly improved.
ASSAM COUNCIL DEBATES DIGBOI STRIKE MINISTER REPLIES TO CHARGES MADE BY "STATESMAN"

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT SHILLONG, May 9.

THE Assam Legislative Council discussed at some length the Digboi strike situation on an adjournment motion raised in the House by Maulavi Abdul Hye on Saturday (a summary of which has already appeared in the Statesman).

His motion ran as follows:

"That this Council do now adjourn to discuss the present urgent public importance viz., failure of Government to deal with the situation arising out of the labour strike at Digboi (1) totally crippling a very important industry in the province (2) causing extraordinary hardship and discomfort leading to a general danger and deterioration of public health by withholding all domestic servants (3) the unfortunate living incident with potentialities for further breaches of peace."

Maulavi Abdul Hye emphasized in his speech that it was due to the negligence of the Assam Government that unfortunate happenings were taking place at Digboi.

The Premier indicated that, according to the Trade Disputes Act, the Government could only point out to the dispute what was right or wrong, and advise the parties in dispute what was right or wrong, and advise the public on the parties in dispute what was right or wrong, and advise the public.

The Premier added: "We can definitely tell the Honourable Members of the House that we have not party to the using of military force for the purpose of canvassing, which we can definitely say is a libelous statement."

Mr. M. Mundra said, "On or about April 26 the Premier issued an appeal to the Assam Oil Company, and to the strikers requesting the former to suspend the recruitment of general labour, and the latter to discontinue their meetings, picketing, and other activities, pending discussion of the settlement of this dispute. The Company immediately and voluntarily complied with this appeal, but, despite this compliance, the police were ordered by the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that the Company's undertakings were implemented, to act, in fact, as strike police.

The Premier's appeal was received by the strikers in a different manner. Not only did their demonstrations continue, but one of their leaders declared that they had no intention of complying with the Premier's appeal."

The Finance Minister said, "I wish to add a few words to what has already been stated by the Premier, particularly in view of the fact that certain comments have been made in the Press in Calcutta on the telephone, to the effect that what has been dragged in and the responsibility for issuing certain orders, alleged to be unjust and inhuman, has been thrown upon me. I can well realize the brutality with which these Members of the House and the public outside, for not issuing a statement, from the Premier after those letters and the libellous statements were issued in the Statesman, but if we have delayed in refuting these charges, it was for the simple reason that before issuing a statement, I wanted to consult the Premier, who was in Calcutta, and with whom I could discuss this affair only, the other day when he returned to Shillong. He advised me that instead of issuing a statement, it would be better for me to place all the facts before our other colleagues, and after discussion with them to issue a communique for the purpose of making the Government's position clear.

"Having accepted that advice, I have been waiting to place before this Council all these facts before Hon'ble colleagues at a meeting on Monday, and for the issue of a communique to discussion at the meeting. But since that matter has now been fixed by the Premier, I think I shall be failing in my duty if I do not take the Hon'ble Members into my confidence, and acquaint them with the actual facts and with the instructions which were issued by the Assam Oil Company, and the way in which that article was written, but I would like to say this much that, as soon as that article was brought to the notice of the Premier, he consulted the Premier, and informed him that the facts were incorrect in the article had any iota of truth, and that, when a reply from me, he lost no time in issuing a statement to the Press.

"The Hon'ble mover of this motion has laid stress on certain letters and statements which were published in the Statesman on the 26th of April, and I would not speak at this stage anything about the manner, and the way in which that article was written, but I would like to say this much that, as soon as that article was brought to the notice of the Premier, he consulted the Premier, and informed him that the facts were incorrect in the article had any iota of truth, and that, when a reply from me, he lost no time in issuing a statement to the Press."

"I shall read to the House the following letter to the Premier, which I consider it extremely unfortunate that the Premier should not have thought twice before believing the perverse version of the action of the Assam Government, and issued such an instruction. It is a damned lie to say that this Government, issued any instruction at all times when individuals were barred from recruiting domestic servants."

REQUEST TO A. O. C.

In this connexion, I would like to state before the House the circumstances which gave rise to the request to the A. O. C. for discontinuance of recruitment of outside labour, which unfortunately has been interpreted by interested parties and persons as instructions from this Government restricting the right of individuals to employ domestic servants. When the Premier was informed by the Superintendent of Police that the Company were "expecting a large force of labour from outside on Monday, 26th, at the Railway Station, and there was every likelihood that in the time of the arrival of such a force at Digboi, there would be picketing by the volunteers of the Union, which was calculated to give rise to breach of peace. Having brought the matter to the notice of the Superintendent of Police wanted instructions, and the A. O. C. was given instructions by the Department to act."

On receiving Dibrugarh, I immediately got into communication with the Premier, and informed him that, in view of expected arrivals of outside labour in Digboi, there was every likelihood of disturbance and breach of peace, and that I thought it advisable that we should prohibit the entry of such labour, and thereby avoid unpleasant situation. On receipt of a telegram from the Premier, the following day, Sunday, I sent for the Deputy Commissioner, and after consulting him, we decided that we would write the following letter to the Managing Director of the Oil Company:

MR. GUNNING's LETTER

"I shall read this letter, and the Memos to the S. O. C. relating to the instructions with a view that the Honourable Members may be convinced that what
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.
DEFENCE CO-ORDINATION DEPARTMENT.

NOTIFICATIONS.

Simla, the 14th September 1939.

No. 232-OR. 639.—In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (r) of sub-rule (1) of rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules, the Central Government is pleased to direct that the persons named in the annexed Schedule shall not, without the permission of the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, be in the Dibrugarh subdivision of the Lakhimpur District.

SCHEDULE.

(1) Mahomed Ahmed Chaudhury.
(2) Sadhu Singh.
(3) Mahomed Wafi.
(4) Aswini Kumar Chakrabarty.
(5) Laganath Upadhya.
(6) Syed Asgar Hassein.
(7) Mahomed Siddique.
(8) Amarnath Tewari.

No. 232-OR. 739.—In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (4) of section 2 of the Defence of India Ordinance, 1939, the Central Government is pleased to direct that the powers and duties conferred and imposed on the Central Government by clauses (c), (e) and (f) of sub-rule (1) of rule 26, and by rules 53, 54, 58 and 59 of the Defence of India Rules shall, within the limits of the Dibrugarh subdivision of the Lakhimpur District in Assam, be exercised and discharged by the Deputy Commissioner of the said District under the condition that such exercise and discharge shall, in respect of clauses (c), (e) and (f) of sub-rule (1) of rule 26 of the said Rules, require the previous sanction of the Governor of Assam in his discretion.

A. deC. WILLIAMS,
Secy. to the Govt. of India.
Jawaharlal Nehru being escorted to the meeting venue by the AOC Labour Union workers during his Digboi visit in 1938.
Concilience meeting being observed by the workers of AOC on the death of striking workers in 1939.
ILLUSTRATION M

Photograph of dead bodies of three AOC workers who died in police firing on 18 April, 1939.
ILLUSTRATION N

Cremation of police firing victims at Digboi, 1939.
ILLUSTRATION 0

Procession of AOC workers to mark 100th. day of the strike.
Police takes position to prevent AOC workers to hold a meeting.