Appendix-III

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

The Governor in Council

Resolution on Immigrant Labour in Assam for the year 1928-29

Extract from the proceedings of the Governor in Council in the General and Judicial Department, No. 8674. G.J., dated the 27th November 1929.

READ-

The Immigrant Labour Reports of the Commissioners of divisions for the year ending the 30th June, 1929.

RESOLUTION

1. SCARCITY in some of the recruiting districts led to a larger influx of labour into the tea gardens of Assam, the total number imported rising from 42,845 to 68,900. The Governor in Council is glad to notice that in the Assam Valley there was also a marked increase in the number of labourers obtained locally. The total resident labour force had increase by the end of the year from 1,025,221 to 1,037,662.

2. There was no epidemic during the year and no garden was declared unhealthy, but possibly owing to the larger number of new and unacclimatised labourers, the death-rate rose from 20.61 to 21.77 in the Assam Valley and from 18.86 to 21.26 in the Surma Valley. In the Assam Valley the birth-rate fell from 32.41 to 31.06 but in the Surma Valley it rose from 31.73 to 32.71. The remark in the report of the Commissioner of the Assam Valley Division that there was a higher birth-rate and a lower death-rate is not supported by the figures given.

3. The average wages of women fell slightly in the Assam Valley from Rs.11-6-11 to Rs.11-4-2 but otherwise the steady rise in wages in recent years continued. In the Assam valley the average wages of men rose from Rs.13-2-1 to Rs.14-1-5 and of Children from Rs.7-0-6 to Rs.7-6-1, while the average earnings in the Surma Valley increased from Rs.10-4-7 to Rs.10-13-11 for men, from Rs.8-6-4 to Rs.8-
11-2 for women and from Rs.5-4-0 to Rs.5-7-11 for children. These figures represent cash earnings only and do not take into account the value of other concessions in the form of free housing, medical attendance, firewood and grazing and land for cultivation. Most remarkable was the rise in men’s wages in the sadr subdivision of Lakhimpur, where the average earnings were returned at Rs.17-3-10. In that subdivision men constitute a larger proportion of the labour force than in any other area in the province. The Commissioners’ reports do not disclose to what extent, if any, there has been an improvement in the standard of living or the amenities or life. The importance of this aspect of the labour question was emphasized by the Governor in Council in last year’s and the preceding year’s resolutions, and he trusts that the local officers will endeavour in future to ascertain and report what advance has been made in this direction.

Relations between employers and employed were generally good. There was an increase in the total number of complaints filed by labourers, but the number of criminal cases instituted by labourers decreased and all of them were either compromised or decided against the complainants. There was also a decrease in the number of criminal cases brought by managers against their labourers and there were few cases of serious rioting. Some strikes occurred but were usually settled quickly on the intervention of the District Officers. In three cases the management was at fault but usually no genuine grievances against the superior staff were disclosed. Although labour is not organized in Assam, the labour force is quick to resent any thing which is regarded with or without reason as an injustice or imposition and to express that resentment by concerted action. The industry can ill afford the loss of labour and managers therefore are anxious to keep their labour force contented. In last year’s resolution the Governor in Council referred to the recruitment of labour from the Bombay Presidency where Act VI of 1901 is not in force. He has recently addressed the Indian tea association with a view to securing a more effective control over recruiting operations in that Presidency so as to ensure that a suitable type of labour is recruited.

The Royal Commission on Labour will shortly visit Assam to investigate the labour conditions in this province, and the Governor in Council is confident that
the employers will do all that they can to assist the Commission in their investigation,

By order of the Government of Assam,

G.E. SOAMES,

Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

Source: Report on Immigrant Labour in Assam 1929 (June), Pp. 1-2