APPENDIX - III

WAGES OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN DOBHI BLOCK

There is no denying the fact that wages of agricultural labour in Eastern U. P. are one of the lowest in the country. The reasons for such low wages can be attributed to low agricultural productivity, lower paying capacity of the employers and abundance of labour. The Joint Study Team of the Planning Commission collected data through a sample survey during the course of their investigation. According to their exercise the wage of a casual agricultural labour in Jaunpur District came out to only 69 paise per day, out of which the cash component was 6-7 paise. The team has referred to the attached labour also, which was as high as 24 per cent in Jaunpur, but no attempt was perhaps made to work out their wage rates.

In Dobhi Block, the percentage of attached labourers comes to 54.3 and 54.8 per cent of the total hired labour days in the modernised and traditional villages respectively. It is worthwhile to give the wage structure of agricultural labour on the selected farm to have a clear understanding of the complexity of this problem.

There is a convention in this area that those who need and can afford the services of the hired labourers employ one or more permanent labourers on their farms. During the days of Zamindari system, such labour families were given land for house site and some gift land in addition to some land on rent to attract the labourers.
Efforts were made by landlords to persuade labour families from other villages to come and settle in their own village. The landlord considered it his moral duty to protect the labour-cum-tenant's family (and also his other tenants) from outside pressures and helped him during social and economic crises. Landlord-labour and tenant relationship was primarily a socio-economic tie. This tie was so close that in case of a dispute among the landlords, the labourers and tenants supported their landlords, even to the extent of doing violence to each other's opponents. But this relationship broke-down slowly with the Abolition of Zamindari.

But the custom of providing some land to the agricultural labourer in part payment of wages still continues in order to get an assured and permanent supply of labour. Once an agricultural labourer accepts land, he is supposed to work for his employer throughout the year, and his family members are also under the obligation to work for that employer whenever he needs them. This contract can be revoked only at the end of the agricultural year. Cases of breaking this relationship either by the employee or the employer are very very rare. If for some reason the employer breaks this relationship, it will be rather impossible for him to get a permanent labourer during the season. No labourer will work for such an employer at any rate. Although, the labourers do not have any organisation as such, even then these sanctions are imposed by convention.

This employer-employee relationship was permanent during Zamindari days, as the labour had no option but to work for his landlord as he was economically entirely dependent on the landlord. But this is not the case now. The labourer can leave an employer and work for another employer after the end of agricultural year, if the relationship is not cordial. But by and large, this relationship continues for long time.

So far as the quantum of land to be given to the labourer is concerned, it depends on the convention of a particular village and as such, differs even from village to village in the same area. The land given to a permanent labourers varies from 0.30 to 1.25 acres or even more. When the area of such land varies from 0.30 to 0.60 acre, the labourer gets the usual wages prevalent in the area. But if the land given is 1.25 acres or more, he gets only some cash wages (generally Rs. 5.00 per month) plus clothes and food and has to work for the whole day without any other daily payment. When there is no farm work he attends to other chores.

The quality of land given to the labourer is one of the best if not the best. The labourer take fertile lands, which have assured irrigation facilities. It is decided by mutual bargaining. But the labourer will never accept an inferior or unirrigated land.

There is yet another, system which has recently been in vogue. Afraid of the rules against leasing out of land even to
labourers, some farmers give share of the produce of a particular
piece of land after deducting the expenditure on fertilisers, and some
* time irrigation as well. One such farmer in the modernised village,
has settled to give 0.65 acre to one of his permanent labourer.
Instead of giving him this piece separately, he gave him the share
in crop equivalent to 0.65 acre in both Kharif and Rabi seasons and
deducted the cost of seed and fertilisers only. As such the labourer
got the following amount of grain during the year under study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Approximate value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>8.0 mds</td>
<td>Rs. 192.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>7.5 mds</td>
<td>Rs. 172.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>15.0 mds</td>
<td>Rs. 480.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pea</td>
<td>1.0 mds</td>
<td>Rs. 34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 878.50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less cost of seed and fertiliser</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs. 118.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total obtained by the labourer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 760.50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the adoption of new technology and consequent increase in
the productivity of land and also because of the rules against leasing
out land farmers are trying to shift to cash monthly payment instead
of giving land to the attached labourers. But there is great resistance
from the labourers and they have neither agreed to it nor there is
any chance of their doing so in the near future.

* Most of the farmers who have pumping sets or tubewells generally
  supply irrigation water free of charge to their permanent labourers
  for the area given out in part payment of wages.
Wages of Permanent Labourers:

Ploughing and land preparation: When the land given in part payment of wages varies from 0.30 to 0.60 acre (those getting only 0.30 acre work for half day only), the labourer gets 1.25 seers for half day as ploughing is done during the forenoons only. If for some reason ploughing is done even in the afternoon the labourer gets 2.0 seers. In addition, break-fast is also provided, which consists of nearly two chhataks of parched or soaked grain and four chhataks of gur for Sharbat. Grain for break-fast consists of maize, pea or gram depending on the season. Calculated in money terms, total wage for one day will come to roughly Rs. 1.50. In cases where the labourer works throughout the day, he gets lunch as well. Those labourers who get 1.25 acres or more land do not get the usual wages of two seers a day, but they get only break-fast and lunch.

The permanent labourer gets wages at the same rate for other operations like sowing, transplanting, interculture and irrigation as for ploughing. These days due to supply of electricity during nights, labourers get evening meals also whenever they work during the nights.

Harvesting: Harvesting is the operation on which the permanent labourer has the exclusive right. No one generally can harvest the crops whom the permanent labourer does not want. But generally they cooperate among themselves and work for each others' employers. Wages for harvesting are paid from the harvested crop. The labourer

* One seer, 16 chhataks equal to 0.9375 Kg.
gets a share of it. It varies from 1/16th to 1/20th in different villages. After harvesting, the labourers arrange the harvested crop into small loose bundles. They get one such bundle out of 16 or 20 as the case may be. Usually the bundle taken by the labourer contains more grain. In addition they keep a big bundle out of which the employer takes out some and the labourer takes the rest. This process is called Bani - Nibarana. Usually there is a lot of bargaining done on this; the labourer trying to take as much as possible from this bundle and the employer on his part trying to take out as much as possible. Sometimes this results in tensions as well.

Employers feel that in this process the labourers share is sometimes as high as 1/10th of the total produce. A labourer will, generally, not tell the actual amount received during harvesting. It may vary from 10 - 20 Kg. a day depending on the labour put in and the yield of the crop. But this operation is of a very short duration.

For inferior grains, especially the small millets (sawan) harvesting and threshing are done by the women, and they get 1/5th of the grain as wages.

**Threshing:** For threshing too, the permanent labourers get two seers per day in addition to break-fast. But at the end of the threshing in both seasons, each labourer gets 25 kg of grain in addition to some grain known as Agwar, which is generally 5 kgs or so. If the threshing is done by threshers they get fed twice a day in addition to regular wages.
In addition to the above, the labourers get a major portion of the grain blown away with the bigger particles of Bhusa. Sometimes it weighs more than a maund or so of grain.

Gur making has been a very long drawn out process in the area. It spreads over a longer duration: (1) to provide the animals with green fodder for a longer time and (2) to provide some food to both farmers and labourer's family. Before the adoption of new technology, January and February were known to be the worst months, so far as food grains were concerned. Farmers and labourers lived on the sugar cane juice; sugar cane juice formed part of the break-fast and lunch as well. Wages are very low for this operation. Workers can drink as much juice as they can and are also given some juice for their family. Three labourers are involved in making gur. Each gets half a seer of gur per Karah (iron pan in which gur is made - quantity per Karah comes to nearly 40 - 50 kgs) of gur prepared and usually two such Karahs of gur are prepared in 8 hours.

In addition to the above, permanent labourers get clothes and food and tips at the time of festivals.

Wage of casual labour:

As already indicated, casual labour is not hired for ploughing. Bulk of the casual labour is supplied by the family of the permanent labourer. The table on the next page gives the wage rates of the casual labourers for different operations.
### WAGE RATE PER DAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Wages when given in kind</th>
<th>Wages when given in cash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sowing*</td>
<td>2 seers + breakfast</td>
<td>Rs. 1.50 + breakfast, or Rs. 2.00 without breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanting*</td>
<td>2 seers + breakfast + lunch</td>
<td>Same as above + lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuring**</td>
<td>5 seers + breakfast + lunch + 50 paise cash for tobacco and Ganja.</td>
<td>Same as above + lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-culture (it is usually done upto forenoon)</td>
<td>2 seers + breakfast</td>
<td>Rs. 1.50 + breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation***</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>1/16th to 1/25th of the crop harvested. For small millet it is 1/5th of the produce.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshing</td>
<td>2 seers + breakfast, food is also given, if threshing is done at night on power threshers.</td>
<td>Rs. 2.00 + breakfast + lunch + evening meals if threshing is done on power threshers; otherwise only kind wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others earth work etc.</td>
<td>2 kg. + breakfast</td>
<td>Rs. 2.00 + breakfast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only women do these operations.

** No one touches the manure of other caste. Musahars are the only caste which carry manure. They are very hard working and are in great demand.

*** When irrigation is done by pump sets or tube wells wages even go upto Rs. 2.00 plus breakfast, lunch and evening meals.
Wages of Female Labour:

It is interesting to know that there is no difference in the wages of the male and female workers in this area. Percentage of female labour among the casual labour is higher than male labourers, because a sizeable portion of the male labour of this area goes out to coal mines and other industrial places. The female who remain in the village work as agricultural labourers.

Recent Changes in Labour Wages:

Cash wages have been going up in the area, because of the efforts of the labour force and rising prices. In 1960-61 cash wages were roughly 50 paise per day and now it has gone upto Rs. 2.00 per day in addition to usual breakfast and some time lunch depending on the nature of work. But by and large, bulk of the wages in this area are still being paid in kind, and as such the real wages have not gone down if there has not been any increase. In fact, there has been some increases in wages even in traditional villages.

In modernised villages, there has been appreciable increase in the real wages of the agricultural labourers on two counts:

1) The productivity of the land which they get from the employers, has gone up because they have also started adopting the new technology with the help of their employers. This is clear from the example given earlier.

2) Wages paid in kind for harvesting have gone up because the total produce has increased and the labourers get a fixed share out of it. Moreover, due to the adoption of new technology demand for labour has also increased giving fuller employment to the farm labour.