From: Sri A.C. Das  
Secretary, Assam Plywood Manufacturers Association  
& Members, Minimum wage Advisory Board  
Tinsukia (Assam).

To: The Chairman  
Minimum Wage Advisory Board  
Office of the Labour Commissioner  
Govt. of Assam,  
Gopinath Nagar  
GUWAHATI

Dear Sir,

Sub: Notification No. GLR/259/74/341 dt. 6/1/89 regarding Minimum Wages for Plywood Industry.

As a Member of the Minimum wage Advisory Board, I would like to draw your kind attention towards the above notification which has fixed minimum wages for the plywood industry at exhorbitant rates. You are aware that all Plywood factories in Assam have entered into Bipartite/Tripartite Agreements with their workers solving all problems related to their wages till March, 1990. The Govt. however, has acted on the recommendation of the Minimum Wage Advisory Board. It appears that the procedure adopted for recommending Minimum Wages for Plywood Workers are quite wrong, erroneous and illegal. I would like to give hereunder the point-wise irregularity committed in this connection.

1. The Govt. had proposed Minimum Wages for the industry as under vide Notification No. GLR/259/74/198 dt. 18/7/89:

   1. Unskilled  
      Rs. 20.80 per day
   2. Semi-skilled  
      Rs. 20.90
   3. Skilled  
      Rs. 21.00

The plywood Industry had submitted their objections to the above proposal but instead of considering the objections the Advisory Board recommended the following Rates:
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1. Skilled
   a. 26/- per day or a. 780/- i.e. month.
2. Semi-skilled worker
   a. 25/- "    a. 750/- "
3. Unskilled worker
   a. 24/- "    a. 720/- "

This recommendation of the board is quite illegal in the sense that under Minimum Wages Act the Govt. is bound to issue draft Notification for any proposal fixing the minimum wages in the industry. But in this case no notification has been issued for fixing the wages at such high rates.

2. The Board has discussed minimum wages for plywood industry in its meeting dt. 25/11/88 without Agenda and without notice to the undersigned. The minimum wage Act requires that any member of the Board should be informed by Regd. post the Agenda of the meeting.

3. It also appears that in the board meeting on 25/11/88 certain unauthorised persons also attended the meeting and vitiated the discussions regarding minimum wage for the plywood industry which is quite unjustified and improper. No outsider should be allowed to participate in the meeting as has been done in the present case.

In the board meeting on 25/11/88 when the minimum wages for plywood workers was considered though without Agenda no representative from the Employer side was present. It, therefore, goes against the natural justice that without giving an opportunity to the affected party, Minimum wages for plywood industry has been fixed arbitrarily.

5. The board has also stated that the workers do not enjoy any other benefits which is completely contrary to the facts. Workers are provided Housing accommodation, fuel facilities, E.S.I., P.F. and Bonus in all the plywood factories in Assam.
As per Bipartite/Tripartite Agreements presently in vogue in plywood Industry, the minimum wages to the new entrant (workers) is paid Rs. 15/- to 16/- per day excluding V.D.A., ESI, E.F., bonus facilities. Now if any industry is asked to pay outright an increase of Rs. 9/- per day (i.e. Rs. 15/- to Rs. 24/- per day), I understand the Board has not taken into consideration the financial burden which will fall on the plywood Industry.

In addition, it is seen that the whole process for getting the above notification published some vested machinery has worked expeditiously in the back of members like us who have been kept completely in the dark.

I, therefore, would request you kindly to advise the Govt. for withdrawal of the above notification and allow the existing Bipartite/Tripartite Agreements to continue till March 1990. Alternatively, the Board should review the whole matter in right prospective and recommend, if necessary, a rate for the industry after due consideration of all facts in this connection.

While fixing minimum wages for industry, the present capacity to pay and the condition of the industry should also be taken into account. I presume the interference of the minimum wages Board for plywood workers is erroneous as the industry, since its inception in Assam, has all along no wage dispute so long and they have been settled amicably by Bipartite/Tripartite Agreements.

Thanking You,

Yours faithfully,

(A.C. Das)

Secretary, APMA
Member, Minimum Wage Advisory Board,
Tinsukia.