

Industrial Labour in 1954-55

Whether productivity of labour has increased' or not, and if it has, what the measure of this improve' merit is may le disputed. But not open to dispute is the broad trend that substantial increase has been effected in industrial production without a proportionate increase in factory employment. In 1954, the latest year for which complete statistics are available, the trend urns strikingly in evidence.

Factory employment has not maintained a uniformly upward trend for all States: in West Bengal, the decline of factory employment has not been arrested.

A disquieting feature of 1955 was a marked deterioration in industrial relations, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of man days lost resulting from industrial disputes.

AT the end of 1955, we have not yet got the complete statistics of factory employment in 1954. Barring Punjab, for which figures are not yet available, the average daily number of workers employed in factories which come under the Factories Act are given in Table I.

Factory employment steadily went up from 2.46 million in 1948 to 2.43 m in 1949, 2.50 m in 1950, 2.54 m in 1951 and 2.57 in 1952. That was the year, it will be remembered, when India was swept by a deflationary wave. Factory employment, however, was not affected in that year. IT declined a little in 1953 but picked up again in 1954, the total for which, when the Punjab, figures are added, should be the highest so far.'

A feature about factory employment in 1954 may be noted. This is best brought out (See Table II) by indices of employment and of industrial production computed by the Labour Ministry and published in the last issue of the Indian Labour Gazette. The index for production used here has a different set of weights based on labour cost and it excludes coal; the employment index has also been adjusted and is not directly comparable to the figures given in Table I. Nevertheless the comparison is suggestive.

Production Increases, Not Employment

Now the deduction drawn from the two columns of figures in Table II about the rapidly increasing productivity of industrial labour from 1949 onwards, which is obtained by the simple arithmetical process of dividing the second column of figures by the first, and multiplying the result by 100, may be subject to various qualifications. What stands out, however, is the broad trend which undoubtedly warrants the inference that substantial increase in industrial production has been effected from 1950 onwards, without any net increase of employment in industry.

To what extent this is the result of rehabilitation of plant and

machinery and to what extent that, of improvement in agricultural production and transport which enabled a steady supply of raw materials to be maintained and ensured a regular off-take of factory goods, what again was the part played by increased money demand for goods made possible by larger investments by the Government in development all these are disputed points. Not open to dispute, however, is the substantial increase in industrial production effected without a proportionate increase in the employment of labour.

Another feature which stands out is the markedly divergent, movement of factory employment in the different States in 1954, the most striking being the steady decline in West Bengal after 1951 and the steady increase in most other States, with a slight break in some of the States in 1953. Madras at first sight might seem to share the fate of West Bengal in this respect; but this is not the case, as will be apparent when the combined total of employment in Madras and Andhra is compared with employment in the Madras State in the years before the separation of Andhra State.

Industrial production fully maintained its rate of progress and the index for the first 9 months of the year, which is the latest available for 1955, stood at 159 as compared to 146.0 for 1951. How far did employment keep pace with production? Figures of employment are available only in a few cases, so it is not possible to say anything for the employment situation in general. In cotton textiles, for which data are available up to August 1955, the average daily number of workers employed, taking all shifts together, was 752,616 compared to 743,622 in August 1954 and an average of

TABLE II
Index of Industrial Employment and Production
(Base 1939 = 100)

Year	Employment (E)	Production (P)	Productivity (P/E x 100)
1948	141.4	112.3	79.4
1949	143.3	108.4	75.6
1950	136.0	107.2	78.8
1951	135.7	120.4	88.7
1952	136.7	133.2	97.4
1953	133.1	140.8	105.8
1954	135.9	153.6	113.0

TABLE I
Employment in Factories

States	1948	1952	1953	1954
Andhra	—	—	96,339	108,840
Assam	59,563	66,620	63,748	65,290
Bihar	148,208	172,599	169,771	170,517
Bombay	737,460	787,014	782,679	809,895
Madhya Pradesh	101,646	114,744	122,110	122,204
Madras	288,722	407,451	301,935	328,677
Orissa	12,329	18,087	18,419	20,174
Punjab	36,625	53,159	45,960	—
Uttar Pradesh	242,083	240,285	242,380	239,874
West Bengal	678,701	646,871	627,160	609,925
Ajmer	15,877	15,604	15,384	14,452
Coorg	74	380	385	458
Delhi	36,894	43,375	41,174	42,764
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	2,019	1,264	1,482	2,035
	2,360,201	2,567,453	2,528,026	2,535,105
All-India excluding Punjab	2,323,576	2,514,294	2,482,066	



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741,169 in 1954. Production of cotton textiles, it may be noted, rose to 5,046 mn yds in 1955 from 4,998 mn yds in 1954, and production of yarn to 1621.5 mn lbs from 1561 mn lbs in 1954.

Another industry for which employment statistics are available up to last September is coal mining. The average daily number of workers employed in collieries in last September totalled 350,968 compared with 337,730 in the same month in the previous year and the daily average of 332,320 in 1954.

Registered Unemployed

It is not possible, unfortunately, to infer anything about the employment situation in factory industries from the data collected by the Employment Exchanges. This is because, to the extent that registration with the exchanges indicates anything at all, it would indicate only the trend of the general employment situation. Nothing could be known specifically about changes, if any, in factory employment. Secondly, all the unemployed do not register with the exchanges. A recent survey carried out by the NSS in September 1953 in the bigger towns, excluding the cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi, went to show that only a quarter of the unemployed had registered with the exchanges and the proportion of the unemployed who were illiterate or under-matriculate who registered with the exchanges was much lower. As industrial labour would come under the latter categories, employment exchange statistics could say very little about them.

Bearing all these limitations in mind one may still look at the employment exchange statistics (Table III). The number on the live register, that is those who were still looking for jobs at the end of the year had steadily risen year by year from 3.31 lakhs in 1950 to 6.95 lakhs at the end of October 1955. The persons for whom the exchanges could find jobs, on the other hand, declined from 4.17 lakhs in 1951 to 1.63 lakhs in 1954. During the first 10 months of 1955, the number was 1.37 lakhs.

Decline in Private Sector

The table below would also suggest a gradual shrinkage of employment opportunities in the private sector of industry. The steady expansion of Industrial production, however, makes this a little difficult to explain, except on the assumption that the exchanges are not get-

TABLE III
Employment Exchange Statistics
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Year	No. of registrations	No. of applicants placed in employment			No. of applications on Live Registers at the end of period
		Government	Private	Total	
1950	1,210	n.a.	n.a.	331	331
1951	1,375	n.a.	n.a.	417	329
1952	1,479	153	204	357	438
1953	1,409	127	57	185	522
1954	1,465	118	45	163	610
1955	1,306	103	34	137	695

(Ten months up to October)

TABLE IV Central Government Employment
No. at the End of the Year or Month

	Administrative and Executive	Ministerial	Skilled and Semi-skilled		Unskilled	Total
1950	51,860	132,003	147,956	245,567	577,386	
1951	54,814	142,850	145,304	247,694	590,662	
1952	58,555	150,870	145,455	260,613	615,493	
1953	58,583	154,364	156,103	247,161	616,211	
1954	56,680	164,067	159,282	252,707	632,736	
1955						
January	44,837	175,566	158,697	254,062	633,162	
February	45,568	176,247	158,175	252,323	632,313	
March	46,412	178,810	158,898	249,999	634,119	
April	47,673	178,665	161,009	248,936	636,283	
May	48,837	181,500	157,399	249,718	637,454	
June	48,347	183,943	156,497	249,938	638,725	
July	48,381	184,134	157,258	249,297	639,070	

ting the same co-operation from private employers as before while Government jobs continue to be channelled through them. But is this assumption tenable? The decline in placings with Government raises doubt. For total employment in Central Government establishments (excluding railways) shows little change over this period, as would be evident from Table IV. Reduced placings through employment exchanges, if employment through exchanges is the Government policy, are difficult to reconcile with these figures.

Employment in Control Government

There has been a surprising development, however, in Government employment, indicated by these figures, viz., a sudden and sharp decline in appointments in administrative and executive posts, and a simultaneous and nearly equal increase in ministerial appointments. Someone said somewhere—it must be a foreign expert, otherwise he would not be listened to! that in India there are too many bosses and too few workers. Has the Government taken this strictly seriously to heart and changed its employment policy from this year? If that is so, a reversal of trend should be round

the corner, for the Government has begun to feel acutely the shortage of executive personnel for implementing the second Plan and appears to have made up its mind to rectify this deficiency and to strengthen its administration personnel. That cannot mean all clerks and no officers!

Industrial Relation Worsens'

A development on the labour front which compels attention is the increase in Industrial disputes and loss of man days resulting from such disputes (Table V). After falling steadily from 1950, both have shot up in 1955, the monthly average of man days lost, having jumped in the first three quarters of the year to 522,568 from the monthly average of 281,052 in 1954.

TABLE V
Industrial Disputes & Man days Lost
(Monthly Average)

Year	No. of Disputes	Man days lost
1950	59,990	10,67,255
1951	57,610	3,18,244
1952	67,437	2,78,080
1953	38,884	2,81,884
1954	39,762	2,81,053
1955		
Jan Sept.	62,705	5,22,568

