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INDIAN
Factories Journal

A FORTNIGHTLY JOURNAL OF THE LAW RELATING TO
FACTORIES, LABOUR, WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION,
INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES, EMPLOYEES' INSURANCE,
PAYMENT OF WAGES, PROVIDENT FUNDS,
LAW REGULATING WORK IN MINES, ETC.,

WITH

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LAWS OF INDIA PRIVATE LTD.,
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CONTENTS

Index to Journal Section	...	...	 i
Index to Statutes Section	...		... i to iii
Journal Section			... 1 to 24
Statutes Section		...	... 1 to 152

REPORTS SECTION

Table of Cases Reported	...		... i to iv
Reports of Cases	...	...	... 1 to 486
General Index	...		... 487 to 493.]

INDEX TO JOURNAL SECTION

Employees' State Insurance Corporation Report	...	1
Review	...	24

INDEX TO STATUTES SECTION

Acts, Rules & Notifications

CENTRAL

Coal Mines Provident Fund Scheme—Amendments	...	27
Conciliation Officers for Quarrying Industry	...	27
Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 1952—Amendments	12,	149
Employees' Provident Funds Scheme—Exemptions	...	13
Employees' State Insurance—Sickness Benefit for persons suffering from Tuberculosis	...	34
Employees' State Insurance (General) Regulations, 1950—Amendments	...	93
Employees' State Insurance—Certain exemptions continued	...	111
Employees' State Insurance—Contribution and Benefit Periods	...	118
Employees' State Insurance (Central) Rules, 1950—Amendment	...	150
Industrial Disputes (Banking Companies) Decision Amendment Act, 1957	...	62
Industrial Disputes (Central) Rules, 1957—Amendments	...	111
Industrial Finance Corporation (Amendment) Act, 1957	...	124
Labour Officers (Central Pool) Rules, 1951—Notification	...	26
Minimum Wages (Amendment) Act, 1957	...	4
Repealing and Amending Act, 1957	...	24

ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra Pradesh Labour Advisory Board Rules	...	120
Motor Transport Industry in Andhra Pradesh declared Public Utility Service	...	150

ASSAM

Employees State Insurance—Exemptions	...	149
Factories Act, 1948—Exemptions of Tea Factories	...	59
Industrial Courts in Assam declared as Magistrates	...	148
Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Delegation of Powers	...	61

BIHAR	
Bihar Employees' Insurance Court Rules, 1952—Amendments	... 57
Employees' State Insurance Courts for Bihar	... 60
Iron & Steel Industry declared Public Utility Service	... 59
BOMBAY	
Bombay Industrial Relations Rules, 1947—Amendments	... 59
C. P. & Berar Industrial Disputes Settlements Rules—Amendments	... 128
Employees State Insurance—Exemptions	127, 133
CALCUTTA	
Employees' State Insurance—Exemptions	... 151
KERALA	
Kerala Factories (Welfare Officers) Rules, 1957	... 129
Kerala Industrial Disputes Rules, 1957—Amendments	... 37
Kerala Maternity Benefit Act, 1957	... 29
Minimum Wages Act, 1948—Notifications under	... 10
Minimum Wages Act, 1948—Notification	... 58
Minimum Wages in Plantations—Amendments	... 36
MADRAS	
Air Transport Services declared Public Utility Service	... 117
Sugar Industry declared Public Utility Service	... 61
Madras Factories Rules—Amendments	... 146
Minimum Wages Act—Exemptions	... 117
MYSORE	
Industrial Disputes (Mysore) Rules, 1957—Amendments	... 57
Mysore Factories Rules, 1952—Amendments	... 61
Mysore Plantation Labour Rules, 1956—Amendment	... 35
ORISSA	
Orissa Factories Rules, 1950—Amendments	38, 146
Orissa Industrial Employment (S. O.) Rules, 1946—Amendment	... 146
PUNJAB	
Employees' State Insurance—Exemptions	127, 132
Industrial Disputes (East Punjab) Rules, 1949 applied to Working Journalists	... 58
Punjab Cotton Ginning and Pressing Factories (Amendment) Act, 1957	... 147
Rules for the Maintenance of Records by Industrial Tribunal/Labour Courts	... 113

UTTAR PRADESH	
Conciliation Boards in U. P.—Government Orders	... 103
Conciliation Officers for Newspaper Establishments in U. P.	... 91
Employees' State Insurance—Exemptions	118, 151
Standing Orders for Sugar Industry in U. P. continued in force...	119
Sugar Industry declared Public Utility Service in U. P.	... 117
Retaining Allowance and Leave in Sugar Factories in U. P.	... 89
U. P. Industrial Disputes (Amendment and Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 1957	... 1
U. P. Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Notification under	... 11
U. P. Factories Rules, 1950—Amendments	45, 152
U. P. Working Journalists (Industrial Disputes) Rules, 1957	... 64
U. P. Industrial Disputes, 1957—Amendments	... 109
Industrial Tribunals and Labour Courts Rules of Procedure, 1957	133
WEST BENGAL	
Employees' State Insurance—Exemption	... 151
Sugar Industry declared Public Utility Service in West Bengal	... 37

THE
FACTORIES JOURNAL
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TABLE OF CASES REPORTED.

Decisions of Supreme Court and High Courts

	PAGE
Abdul Khader <i>v.</i> Consolidated Coffee Estates (1943) Ltd. and others [Madras] ...	325
Bachni and others <i>v.</i> Municipal Committee, Ambala City [Punjab] ...	34
Bharat Starch & Chemicals Ltd. <i>v.</i> Industrial Tribunal, Punjab and another [Punjab] ...	429
Berar Oil Industries <i>v.</i> N. H. Majumdar [Bombay] ...	345
Bombay Prakash Bhavan <i>v.</i> P. K. Narayanan and another [Madras] ...	323
British India Corporation Ltd. <i>v.</i> Industrial Tribunal, Punjab [Punjab] ...	352
British India Electric Construction Co., Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen [Supreme Court] ...	456
Central Provident Fund Commissioner <i>v.</i> Ganesh Dyeing & Printing Works [Bombay] ...	197
T. P. Chandra <i>v.</i> Commissioner for Workmen's Compen- sation [Madras] ...	167
Crown Aluminium Works <i>v.</i> Their Workmen [Supreme Court] ...	292
Dukhini Rajaharin <i>v.</i> Corporation of Calcutta [Calcutta] ...	313
Gnanambikai Mills Ltd., Coimbatore <i>v.</i> M. R. Rama- chandran [Madras] ...	81
Gopal Singh <i>v.</i> State of Punjab [Punjab] ...	36
Gordon Woodroffe & Co., Private Ltd. <i>v.</i> S. Venugopal [Madras] ...	356
P. C. Goyle <i>v.</i> Life Insurance Corporation of India [Patna] ...	243
The Hindu, Madras <i>v.</i> Their Workmen [Madras] ...	68
Hospital Mazdoor Sabha <i>v.</i> State of Bombay [Bombay] ...	473
India Tyre & Rubber Co. (India) Private Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen [Madras] ...	108

	PAGE
Indian Iron & Steel Co., Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen [Supreme Court] ...	377
Kaleswari Handloom Factory <i>v.</i> State of Madras [Madras] ...	171
K. Kesava Reddiar <i>v.</i> Labour Appellate Tribunal of India [Madras] ...	208
Martin Burn Ltd. <i>v.</i> R. N. Banerjee [Supreme Court]	330
Model Mills Nagpur Ltd. <i>v.</i> Dharam Das [Supreme Court]	449
Modern Match Industries, Gudiyatham <i>v.</i> Labour Appellate Tribunal of India [Madras] ...	202
Newtone Studios Ltd. <i>v.</i> Madras State Cinema & Studio Employees' Union [Madras]	215
Palace Cinema, Delhi <i>v.</i> Rameshwar Dayal [Punjab] ...	421
Patna Electric Supply Co., Ltd., Patna <i>v.</i> Bali Rai [Supreme Court] ...	394
Pudukottah Textiles Ltd. <i>v.</i> A. Subramaniam [Madras] ...	159
Punjab & Sind Bank Ltd. <i>v.</i> Rameshwar Dayal [Punjab] ...	425
R. <i>v.</i> Industrial Disputes Tribunal ; <i>Ex parte</i> Queen Mary College ...	181
Ram Lal Guramal Textile Mills <i>v.</i> State of Punjab and others [Punjab] ...	436
Rambhadhan Dariyan <i>v.</i> Second Labour Court, Bombay [Bombay] ...	467
Shama Magazine <i>v.</i> State of Delhi and others [Punjab] ...	432
S. S. Shetty <i>v.</i> Bharat Nidhi Limited. [Supreme Court] ...	218
Sree Meenakshi Mills Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen [Supreme Court] ...	399
State <i>v.</i> Hathiwala Textile Mills and others [Bombay] ...	257
State <i>v.</i> Chinubhai Haridas [Bombay] ...	441

	PAGE
State of Uttar Pradesh <i>v.</i> Swadeshi Cotton Mills Co. Ltd. [Supreme Court]	411
Union of India <i>v.</i> T. R. Varma [Supreme Court] ...	237
J. G. Vakharia <i>v.</i> Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, Bombay [Bombay] ...	231

Awards

Alagappa Textiles Ltd., Alagappanagar <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	131
Anthony Almeida <i>v.</i> Richardson & Cruddas Ltd., Bombay	288
Arvind Boards & Paper Products Ltd. <i>v.</i> Gajari Ladi ...	304
B. E. S. T. Workers' Union, Bombay <i>v.</i> Bombay Suburban Electric Supply Ltd. ...	30
Calcutta Porcelain Works Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	319
J. P. Francis <i>v.</i> Barakar Engineering & Foundry Works Ltd. ...	241
Hyderabad State Co-operative Bank Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	25
C. Innasimuthu Mudaliar & Sons <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	118
Jam Shri Ranjitsinghji Spg. & Wvg. Mills <i>v.</i> Hariba Dongri ...	194
Kerala Kaumudi, Trivandrum <i>v.</i> Their Working Journalists ...	86
Krishna Bandhu Nath Roy <i>v.</i> Bihar Chemical Industries Private Ltd. ...	137
Mahendra Glass Works Ltd., Morvi <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	46
Majoor Mahajan Sangh, Petlad <i>v.</i> Petlad Bulakhidas Mills Co., Ltd., Petlad ...	189
Mica Factories in Bihar <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	150
Morvi Electric Works Ltd., Morvi <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	52
Nripendra Narain Sinha <i>v.</i> Behar Journals Ltd., Patna ...	38
Parshuram Pottery Works Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	63

	PAGE
Parry & Co., Ltd., Fort Cochin <i>v.</i> Cochin Pandikasala Thozhilali Union, Mattancherry ...	270
Panchkari Bidi Factory <i>v.</i> Their Employees ...	96
Prabhudayal <i>v.</i> Barakar Engineering & Foundry Co., Ltd. ...	254
Ramabhai Somabhai <i>v.</i> Calico Mills Co., Ltd., Ahmedabad ...	374
Shalimar Paint, Colour and Varnish Co., Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	1
Soundararaja Mills Limited <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	41
Tata Oil Mills Co., Ltd., Bombay <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	282
U. P. Electric Supply Co., Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen ...	140

[IN THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT.]

HOSPITAL MAZDOOR SABHA AND OTHERS

v.

STATE OF BOMBAY.

Chagla C. J. and Desai J.

April 5, 1956.

RETRENCHMENT—RETRENCHMENT EFFECTED WITHOUT COMPLYING WITH PROVISIONS OF SECTION 25-F, INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES ACT, 1947—EFFECT—REMEDY OF AFFECTED WORKMAN.

'INDUSTRY'—SCOPE OF DEFINITION OF—WHETHER INCLUDES PHILANTHROPIC INSTITUTIONS LIKE HOSPITALS—UNDERTAKINGS MANAGED BY GOVERNMENT—WHETHER FALL WITHIN DEFINITION OF 'INDUSTRY'—TESTS—INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES ACT, 1947, SECTION 2(j).

The provisions of section 25-I of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, do not in any way affect the mandatory provisions of section 25-F of the Act. The failure, on the part of an employer, to comply with the condition with regard to the payment of compensation as laid down in section 25-F gives the affected workman the right to challenge his retrenchment and to contend that his services were not legally and effectively terminated.

The definition of 'industry' in the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, should, in conformity with the object of the Legislature, be given as wide an interpretation as it is possible. The definition is not confined to an activity of a commercial nature. The expression 'undertaking' used in the definition indicates that any work or project which a person may engage in, e.g., a hospital, even if from motives of philanthropy, would fall within the definition of "industry".

There is nothing in the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, to indicate that the Government as an employer should be placed in a different position from a private employer. A distinction should however be made between activities of the Government which are essential to the authority of Government as such, functions which only Government can discharge and which it would not be competent for any private individual to discharge and functions which can be undertaken by a private agency. The proper test to determine whether a particular activity undertaken by a Government is an "industry" as defined in the Act would be to consider whether if that activity had been undertaken by a private agency, it would have been an 'industry' to which the Act would apply. If the Act would then apply to that activity, it is immaterial that it is undertaken by a Government.

The running of a hospital by a private agency being an 'industry' to which the Industrial Disputes Act is applicable, a hospital run by the Government would also be governed by the Act.

Original Civil Appeal No. 65 of 1956.

Gokhale for the petitioners.

Advocate-General for the State.

JUDGMENT.

CHAGLA, C.J.—The petitioners 2 and 3 were employed in the J. J. group of hospitals as ward-servants and their services were terminated, in the case of petitioner 2 from 1st November, 1954, and in the case of petitioner 3 from 1st December, 1954. The petitioners have filed this petition challenging the order passed terminating their services and contending that their services were wrongly terminated.

It appears that a notice was served upon the two petitioners and in that notice it was stated that as certain people had been retrenched from the Civil Supplies Department and as room had to be made for them, the services of the two petitioners were being dispensed with and in their place two others from the Civil Supplies Department were employed. The contention put forward by the petitioner is that in law this is a case of retrenchment and the retrenchment is bad because the conditions precedent laid down in the Act before a valid retrenchment could be made had not been complied with. "Retrenchment" has been defined in section 2(o) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, as a termination by the employer of the services of a workman for any reason whatsoever otherwise than as a punishment inflicted by way of disciplinary action. Then follow three categories which would not constitute a retrenchment. Admittedly, the case does not fall in any of these categories. Admittedly, the service of the petitioners has not been terminated as a punishment inflicted by way of disciplinary action and as we pointed out in *K. N. Joglekar v. Barsi Light Railway* [1955] 8 F.J.R. 210, the definition given by the Legislature to the word "retrenchment" is of the widest import, and whatever the reason for the termination may be, it would constitute retrenchment as defined by the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. Therefore, there can be no doubt that although the reason that actuated the Government for terminating the services of petitioners 2 and 3 may be the most laudable of reasons, even though the Government may be wanting to replace the services of petitioners 2 and 3 by the services of people who had been retrenched from some other department and who had been longer in Government service, as far as the industrial law is concerned, the termination of the services of petitioners 2 and 3 would constitute retrenchment for the purpose of the Industrial Disputes Act.

Now, the conditions precedent to the retrenchment of workmen are set out in section 25F. It is significant to note that the heading

given by the Legislature to this particular section is "Conditions precedent to retrenchment of workmen". Now, it is true that if the language of the section is clear, the section must be construed according to that language irrespective of what the headnote or the marginal note may be, but, in order to construe the section, it is always permissible to look at the marginal note or the heading as indicating the drift of the section. But when we examine the language of section 25F, it becomes clear that the heading of this section correctly suggests what the Legislature intended and what the Legislature has actually provided by the clear language used in that section. Section 25F is in the following words:

"No workman employed in any industry who has been in continuous service for not less than one year under an employer shall be retrenched by that employer until—"

Then comes the first condition which is giving a month's notice which condition was complied with in this case. Then comes the second condition:

"The workman has been paid, at the time of retrenchment, compensation which shall be equivalent to fifteen days average pay for every completed year of service or any part thereof in excess of six months."

Then comes the third condition with which for the time being we are not concerned, and what was urged by the petitioners is that the Government having failed to pay retrenchment compensation as provided by section 25F(b), one of the conditions precedent to retrenchment was not complied with and, therefore, the retrenchment was bad and the service of the petitioners was not legally and effectively terminated. Government admit that they have not paid the retrenchment compensation. Now, the view taken by the learned Judge was that the failure to pay the retrenchment compensation did not affect the validity of the retrenchment itself, and in coming to this conclusion the learned Judge relied on section 25-I, and that section deals with recovery of moneys due from employers under this chapter and it lays down the procedure for recovering compensation or wages payable under the chapter. Now, with respect, the learned Judge would have been perfectly right in the view that he has taken if section 25-I referred only to the compensation payable under section 25F. Then it may well be argued that if the intention of the Legislature was that the compensation payable under section 25F should be recovered in the manner laid down in section 25-I, then the Legislature could not possibly have intended that the retrenchment would be bad because compensation was not paid. If the retrenchment was bad, then no question of recovery of compensation could possibly arise. But again with respect what the learned Judge has

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overlooked is that compensation is payable under this chapter otherwise than by provisions of section 25F and the Legislature may well have provided for the mode of recovery of that compensation. Therefore, even if we give a construction to section 25F which we propose to give, section 25-I would not be superfluous and the mode of recovery of other compensation due under this chapter had to be provided for by Parliament and Parliament has so provided by section 25-I. If that be so, then it is difficult in our opinion to take the view that because a mode of recovery of compensation and wages is provided by another section of the Act, the clear language of section 25F should be whittled down and an important right conferred upon the employee should be taken away from him. The language of section 25F leaves no doubt as to the intention of the Legislature. The provision is mandatory. There is prohibition against an employer retrenching an employee until he has carried out the conditions laid down in that section and the Advocate-General had to concede, and in fairness he could not argue to the contrary, that if section 25F stood by itself, it would be very difficult to urge that the conditions laid down in that section were not conditions precedent to the retrenchment of workmen. But, as we have already pointed out, the provision of section 25-I in the Act does not in any way affect the mandatory language of section 25F, nor the important right conferred upon the employee by the Legislature. It will be immediately realized that to compel an employer not to retrench a workman without paying him compensation is very different from leaving the employee to resort to a legal remedy to recover the compensation after he has been thrown out, and the Legislature in its wisdom in passing this social legislation advisedly prevented an employer from throwing an employee out until he had first paid him his compensation. Our anxiety should be to give full scope to this social legislation and the object which the Legislature obviously had in mind. By trying to read section 25F and section 25 I if the result is to render the safeguards given to the employee less substantial, then we must reject that canon of construction and read section 25F as it stands and as it was enacted by the Legislature. In our opinion, therefore, with respect, we are unable to agree with the learned Judge that the failure to comply with the condition with regard to the payment of compensation affords to the employee only the right to recover the compensation as provided by section 25 I. The right that the employee gets is the right to challenge his retrenchment and to contend that his services were not legally and effectively terminated.

Another interesting point was also urged before the learned Judge and that was that even assuming this was a valid retrenchment, under section 25H the employees had the right to be re-employed in preference

over other persons, and therefore the employment of persons from the Civil Supplies Department offended against the provisions of section 25H and the petitioners were entitled to be re-employed. The view taken by the learned Judge is that section 25H has no application because the retrenchment and the new appointment should be deemed to be simultaneous acts and the section only applies when there is an interval of time between the retrenchment and the re-employment. Mr. Gokhale has drawn our attention to the serious consequence that may result from accepting this construction of section 25H. He has pointed out that if this was the true view of the law, then an employer can always get round the salutary provisions of section 25H; if he did not like an employee all that he had to do would be to give him a notice and say that he wanted to employ someone else in his place, in which case he would be under no obligation to comply with the provisions of section 25H and he also pointed out that the true effect of section 25H was that so long as an employee was willing to serve a particular job, he had a prior claim to that job over anybody else. This contention raises a very interesting question but in view of the fact that we have decided in favour of the petitioners with regard to section 25F, it is unnecessary to decide this question on this appeal.

A contention was also raised before the learned Judge that this was not an industry to which this Act applied. The learned Judge did not decide that question because he held that in any view of the case, the petitioners were not entitled to any relief under section 25F. But now that we have held that the petitioners are entitled to relief, the Advocate-General wants to argue that this was not an industry to which the Act applies. As the question raised is of considerable importance, we first were inclined to send the matter back to the learned Judge to decide this question as he had not considered this contention. But both the Advocate-General and Mr. Gokhale suggest that it would be better if this question was decided by this court, as it is a question of law and it would avoid a remand and a further appeal.

The case was adjourned to April 17, 1956 and the following further Judgment was delivered on April 18, 1956 :

This matter has come before us again for our decision on the question which we left over on the last occasion, *viz.*, whether the hospital in which the petitioners were engaged was an industry to which the Act applied.

The question is both an interesting and important one and we have heard fairly full arguments both from Mr. Gokhale and the Advocate-General. The Industrial Disputes Act does not apply to all workmen, nor does it regulate all employer-employee relations. A workman is

defined as a person employed in any industry and therefore the application of the Act is confined to employer-employee relations in an industry as defined by the Act. Now, "industry" is defined as meaning any business, trade, undertaking, manufacture or calling of employers and includes any calling, service, employment, handicraft, or industrial occupation or avocation of workmen.

The Industrial Disputes Act is a piece of social legislation, and although it is not the function of a court of law to legislate, it is certainly the function of judicial interpretation to the extent that it is possible to help the Legislature to attain the object which it has in mind in passing a particular law. The Industrial Disputes Act embodies certain principles which ought to regulate relations between employer and employee. These principles are accepted by the Legislature as the proper principles in a progressive state, and, therefore, the duty of the court must be to give to the expression "industry" as wide a definition as it is possible. If the Act embodies correct principles regulating the relations of employer and employee, then there is no reason why as many workmen as possible should not obtain the benefit of the rights and safeguards given to workmen under this Act. There is also no reason, why, unless the Act expressly so provides, Government should be given immunity from the provisions of this Act. One should have thought when Government insists upon private employers behaving in a particular manner towards their employees and when Government insists upon the rights of employees being fully safeguarded, Government itself, when it employs workmen, should not adopt a different attitude. There may undoubtedly be instances where the security of the State may be more important than social progress and there may be cases where it may be said that the Governmental activities would be interfered with if the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act were to be applied to Government as an employer. But, subject to these exceptional cases, as we shall presently point out, it was not the intention of the Legislature, and could not have been the intention of the Legislature, that Government as an employer should be placed in a different position from a private employer.

Now, when we look at the definition of "industry", it is not confined to an activity of a commercial character. Nor does it import necessarily a profit motive or the employment of capital. Industry is not only any business or trade or manufacture, but is also an undertaking or calling of employers, and no expression could have been used with a wider import and connotation than the expression "undertaking". Undertaking is nothing more than any work or project which a person might engage in. Work or project may have no commercial implica-

tions. It might not be engaged in with the object of making profit. It might be engaged in from the motives of philanthropy, and even so it would be an undertaking in the wider sense in which that expression is used in the definition of "industry". Now, we have to consider whether the activity of the Government in connection with the hospitals constitutes an "undertaking" within the meaning of the expression used in the Act and thus constitutes that activity an industry. The facts are not in dispute and we have in the affidavit of Mr. D. P. Sethna, superintendent of the J. J. group of hospitals, the facts very clearly and very succinctly set out. It is pointed out that Sir Robert Grant, the then Governor of Bombay, wanted to start an institution for the purpose of imparting medical education and funds were collected and the foundation of the medical college building was laid some time in 1845. At about the same time, an idea of building a hospital for the sick people of all classes and castes was mooted and Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy offered a donation and some more money was collected and an opening ceremony of the J.J. Hospital was performed on 15th May, 1845. Then the affidavit goes on to say how the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Ophthalmic hospital was built from donations. Bai Molibai Hospital and Petit Hospital were also built from donations and Byramji Jeejeebhoy Hospital for children was also similarly built, and there was an endowment made by R. B. Ellappa Ballaram which endowment brought in certain income of about Rs. 10,000 and this is the only income that the group of J.J. hospitals, as had just been enumerated, has, whereas its expenditure exceeds Rs. 27,00,000 annually. It is pointed out that this J.J. group of hospitals is under the administrative control of the Surgeon-General of the Government of Bombay and its day-to-day affairs are conducted and controlled by the superintendent who is a full-time Government servant, and all the residential staff including resident medical officers, assistant resident medical officers, housemen, nurses, etc., are also full-time Government servants, and the salaries of all the servants were drawn on establishment pay bills every month and are paid entirely by Government. It is also pointed out that the J.J. group of hospitals serve as a clinical training ground for students of the Grant Medical College which is a Government medical college run and managed by Government for imparting medical sciences leading to the degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery of the Bombay University as well as various post-graduate qualifications of the Bombay University and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Bombay. It is, therefore, submitted that the J.J. group of hospitals is run and maintained by Government to provide medical relief for and promote the health of the people of Bombay and they are also run so as to provide a training ground

for students in all branches of medical knowledge and for the advancement of such knowledge. A contention is, therefore, put forward that this Hospital and the Grant Medical College are run by the Government as a Government and in doing so Government is not running any "industry".

Now, in a welfare state, Government undertakes more and more obligations. There was a time when it was said that Government was best which governs least. To-day, a Government is judged by considering to what extent it governs, and the more it governs, the better it is considered to be. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the contention that every Governmental activity must be ruled out from the expression "industry" used in the Act. It was sought to be argued by the Advocate-General that the maintenance of public health and giving of medical relief was part of the duty of Government, and if it was part of the duty of Government, then it could not constitute an "industry". It is very difficult to day to define what is the duty of Government and what is not the duty of Government. It is the duty of Government of looking after public health of its people and giving them medical relief. Is it not equally the duty of Government to supply necessities of life to its people and to look after its comforts and welfare? If one were to judge any activity of Government by the principle of duty, then practically every activity of Government would satisfy the test and would keep that activity out of the purview of the Act. In our opinion, that is not the correct approach. The correct approach must be to decide what activities are essential to the authority of Government as such, what are the functions which only Government can discharge and which it would not be competent for any private individual to discharge. If there is an activity which can be undertaken by a private agency and the same activity is carried on by Government, then it is difficult to understand why different principles should govern that activity when it is carried on by private agency or when it is carried on by Government. If that proposition were to be accepted, then if a private agency carried on a particular activity, it would be governed by the Industrial Disputes Act. If that activity was undertaken by Government, the Industrial Disputes Act would have no application. If the employees employed by the private agency doing the same activity should have the rights given to them under the Act, is there any reason in principle why they should be deprived of those rights when that activity is taken over by Government? The result of accepting this contention would be indeed very serious. One important aspect of a welfare state is the constant and increasing inroad of the public sector upon the private sector. More and more activities which in the past were considered to be essentially

Private activities are taken over by Government, and, therefore, this extraordinary result would be achieved that the more important the activities of Government become and more it seeks to achieve that objective of a complete welfare State the less rights labour would have in such a State. Therefore, in our opinion, the test we should lay down in order to determine whether a particular activity undertaken by Government is an "industry" would be to consider whether if that activity had been undertaken by a private agency, would it have been an industry to which the Act applied. If the Act applied to that activity, then, in our opinion, it is entirely immaterial whether that activity is undertaken by Government.

Now, applying that test to the facts here, private hospitals are not uncommon in this country. Medical relief and medical education can be given by a private agency, and if the private agency were to engage in that activity, there is no reason why that activity would not be considered as an undertaking which would attract the application of the Act. Therefore, if the Industrial Disputes Act would apply to the workmen of a hospital run by a private agency, there is no reason why the Act should not equally apply to the workmen of a hospital run by Government. The running of a hospital is not in the strict sense an essential Government function. In the wider sense, undoubtedly in which we now understand Governmental duty and Governmental work, it may be considered to be a Governmental function. But, in its strict sense, the Governmental function would be the maintenance of law and order, administration of justice, collection of tax and similar functions which must always be attributed to a Government and which can only be discharged by a Government. The fact that the Government is not making any profit out of this hospital, the fact that all the employees are Government servants are, in our opinion, undoubtedly beside the point. In every industry run by Government the employees are bound to be Government servants. In every industry run by Government the profit motive must be absent; the only profit that Government should think of making is the welfare of its citizens. Therefore, the true test is not the absence of any commercial element in the running of this hospital, nor the fact that the servants are Government servants, but the test is, as we might repeat, whether the running of a hospital is a function so essential to Government that it can only be discharged by Government and cannot be discharged by any private agency.

Turning to the authorities, there is a judgment in *D. N. Banerjee v. P. R. Mukherjee*, [1953] 4 F. J. R. 443 and in that case the Supreme Court held that the term "industrial dispute" in the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947,

includes disputes between municipalities and their employees in branches of work that can be regarded as analogous to the carrying on of a trade or business. There the chairman of a municipality dismissed two of its employees, namely, the sanitary inspector and the head clerk, and the municipal workers' union, of which these two employees were members, questioned the propriety of the dismissal and claimed that they should be reinstated and the matter was referred by the Government to the Industrial Tribunal for adjudication under the Industrial Disputes Act, and an objection was raised by the municipality that the dispute was not an industrial dispute, and the Supreme Court held that it was an industrial dispute.

At p. 450 Mr. Justice Chandrasekhara Ayyar, who delivered the judgment of the court, says that it was necessary to give the terms employed in the Act referring to such disputes as wide an import as reasonably possible, and considering the definition of "industry" the learned Judge says that the definition was apparently intended to include within its scope what might not strictly be called a trade or business venture.

Then the learned Judge poses the question :

".....if the public utility service is carried on by a corporation like a municipality which is the creature of a statute; and which functions under the limitations imposed by the statute, does it cease to be an industry for this reason?"

We may ask the same question here :

Does the fact that the hospital is carried on by Government make it cease to be an industry, merely because of that reason?

Then the learned Judge proceeds:

".....the only ground on which one could say that what would amount to the carrying on of an industry if it is done by a private person ceases to be so if the same work is carried on by a local body like a municipality is that in the latter there is nothing like the investment of any capital or the existence of a profit-earning motive as there generally is in a business. But neither the one nor the other seems a *sine qua non* or necessary element in the modern conception of industry."

The Advocate-General has relied on a passage in the judgment where the learned Judge says:

".....we are forced to come to the conclusion that the definitions in our Act include also disputes that might arise between municipalities and their employees in branches of work that can be said to be analogous to the carrying out of a trade or business."

and the Advocate-General says that running the hospital for the purpose of giving medical relief is not analogous to the carrying on of a trade or business. Now, with respect, this expression used by the learned Judge must be read in the light of the judgment as a whole and we have already pointed out that in the earlier part of the judgment the learned Judge is emphasizing the fact that the employment of capital and profit motive were not an essential element in the composition of an industry as constituted by the Act. Therefore, when the learned Judge is here talking of an activity analogous to the carrying on of a trade or business, with respect, what he is referring to is the wider meaning of the expression "industry" which includes not only business but also an undertaking.

Then our attention was drawn to two Australian cases. One is *The King v. Commonwealth Court of Conciliation, and Arbitration; Ex parte Victoria; Victoria v. The Commonwealth*, [(1942) 66 Commonwealth L. R. 488], and what was held there was that the expression "industrial matter" as used in the National Security (Industrial Peace) Regulations, does not include questions relating to the employment of public servants of a State engaged in its ordinary governmental department, and at p. 502 the learned Chief Justice points out that the distinction between governmental and industrial matters has been clearly recognized by the Court, and he cites with approval the remarks of Mr. Justice Isaacs in the case to which we shall presently turn :

"In no case has it ever been suggested that Crown officials engaged in administering true, essential governmental authority come within the ambit of the industrial disputes power."

So that the immunity is only given to Government when it is administering true essential governmental authority. The Advocate-General has rightly pointed out that the learned Chief Justice has emphasized the fact that the relevant question was not that the State was an employer, but that the State was engaged in an industry. We accept that principle, and as we have already pointed out, the Act does not purport to regulate relations between all employers and all employees. It only purports to regulate relations of all employers and employees engaged in an industry as defined by the Act.

Now, turning to the other and earlier Commonwealth case which is in *Federated State School Teachers' Association of Australia v. State of Victoria*, [(1929) 41 Commonwealth L. R. 569] the majority of the Judges held that the educational activities of the States carried on under the appropriate statutes and statutory regulations of each State relating to education did not constitute an "industry" within the meaning of section 4 of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act,

1904—1928, and the Advocate-General has rightly relied on the majority judgment pointing out that an educational activity can be undertaken by a private agency as well and yet when it was undertaken by Government, the Court held that it was not an industry, and the learned Chief Justice Knox delivering the judgment of the majority says:

".....can it be said that the educational activities of the States constitute an industry? So far as the matter is one of fact, we would say that they cannot. They bear no resemblance whatever to an ordinary trade, business or industry. They are not connected directly with or attendant upon the production or distribution of wealth; and there is no co-operation of capital and labour, in any relevant sense, for a great public scheme of education is forced upon the communities of the States by law."

Mr. Justice Isaacs, in delivering the minority judgment, has differed from his learned colleagues on certain fundamental and basic matters. It has often happened in judicial history that although momentarily the verdict has gone against a Judge, the final and ultimate verdict has gone in his favour, and what was a dissenting judgment has come to be accepted as enunciating the sound principles of law. It must be borne in mind that this judgment was given in 1929 when the world had still rather strange views about labour matters, social legislation and employer-employee relations, and it is rather striking to see the view put forward by Mr. Justice Isaacs in that year.

The learned Judge rejects the contention that it is only when there is co-operation between employer and employee to produce wealth in the sense of producing commodities that you have an enterprise which can be characterised as an "industry", because this contention is an echo from the dark ages of industry and political economy, and he takes the view that running of services is as much production of wealth as the making or manufacturing of commodities and he found it difficult to understand the distinction between a Government producing commodities and a Government running services, if in the former case the Government is assumed to be taking part in an industry and not so in the latter case, and at p. 585, after considering the various cases, the learned Judge says:

"In each of those instances the nature of the function actually performed was taken as the test. If it was a function that a private person could lawfully do and being so done was industrial, that was sufficient."

We agree with the learned Judge that that is the correct test and what we have to consider is the nature of the function and not the person or the authority who is performing the function. The judgment of the

Australian court, although entitled to the highest respect, is only a persuasive authority as far as we are concerned and we regret that in this matter we are unable to accept the view taken by the majority and we prefer the view taken by Mr. Justice Isaacs.

The Advocate-General then relied on a judgment of the Madras High Court in *Etti v. Secretary of State for India* (A.I.R. [1939] Mad. 843). In that case, the plaintiff took his infant child to the Government hospital in Madras and that child was taken away by someone and he sued the Secretary of State for India for damages for negligence of the hospital authorities, and Mr. Justice Burn and Mr. Justice Luxmana Rao held that the Secretary of State was not liable for tort, since the Government in maintaining the hospital for the benefit of the public at the expense of the public revenues was discharging a proper function of Government in the exercise of its sovereign powers and not engaged in a business or commercial undertaking, and also the fact that such a hospital might be maintained by private persons as well as by Government did not make any difference. The Advocate-General, very rightly from his point of view, strongly relies on this decision as supporting his contention that the maintenance of a hospital is the discharging by Government of a function in the exercise of its sovereign powers and it is not engaged in a business or commercial activity. It must be borne in mind that the decision is based upon the English Common Law rule that a King cannot be sued in tort and this principle was given effect to in India when the Crown took over the administration of the country from the East India Company. The East India Company came to this country on a commercial venture and it also happened to acquire an empire. But a distinction was always drawn between the functions of the East India Company as a commercial organization and its functions as a Government of the country. Whereas it could be sued in respect of its commercial undertakings, it could not be sued if it was discharging governmental functions, and that distinction was maintained when the Crown took over the administration of the country and this has been ever so since the decision in *P. & O. S. N. Co. v. Secretary of State for India* [1861] 5 Bom. H.C.R. 1 (Appx. A). But that principle cannot be applied in interpreting the Industrial Disputes Act. Everything which is not strictly germane to the commercial activity of the East India Company would fall in governmental functions and Government would have immunity against any action in tort. But the object of the Industrial Disputes Act is not to confer as large an immunity, and, as we have already pointed out, the expression "industry" in the Industrial Disputes Act is not used in the same narrow sense in which it was understood, when questions of the liability of the Crown arose in this

country on torts. In our opinion, therefore, the undertaking of Government in running these hospitals and employing workmen constitutes an "industry" within the meaning of the Act and the Act applies to these hospitals.

Therefore, the workmen of these hospitals can claim all the rights given to workmen under the Industrial Disputes Act.

The result, therefore, will be that we must reverse the decision of Mr. Justice Tendolkar. The appeal will, therefore, be allowed. Order in terms of prayer (b) of the petition. Respondents to pay to the petitioner costs of the petition and costs of the appeal. Costs of the petition will be quantified at Rs. 250. Costs of the appeal to be taxed. Liberty to the appellants' attorneys to withdraw the sum of Rs. 500 deposited in court.

GENERAL INDEX

- Appeal**—Letters Patent Appeal—Decision of High Court on appeal from award of Commissioner under Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923—Whether judgment or award—Whether further appeal under Letters Patent lies ... 36
- Appeal to Appellate Tribunal—Appeal from decision of Tribunal "in the interests of industrial peace"—Whether lies—Duty of Appellate Tribunal to ensure that discretion of Tribunal is properly exercised. ... 325
- Appellate Tribunal**—Jurisdiction—Power to set aside *ex parte* order—Inherent powers—Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act, 1950, section 9 (1)—Labour Appellate Tribunal Orders, 1951, O. 3, r. 4. ... 330
- Jurisdiction of—Whether has powers of review—Applicability of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908—Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act, 1950, sections 9 and 10. ... 399
- Award**—Interpretation of—Award preserving "existing advantage"—Effect of—Workmen enjoying higher scale of dearness allowance—Award fixing lower scale—Whether award continues higher scale ... 456
- Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, sections 3(6), 73A and 116(1)**—Withdrawal of reference made to Industrial court by representative union—Order of Court allowing withdrawal—Whether 'award'—Applicability of section 116(1)—Fresh reference of same matters of dispute—Validity of ... 189
- Bonus**—Award of—Sufficient bonus voluntarily given by management—Claim for further bonus—Whether justified ... 1
- Bonus**—(contd).
 —Award of—Principles—Large surplus of profits available—Determination of quantum of bonus ... 41
 —Award of—Principles—Demand for bonus made after waiting for adjudication of previous demand—Whether belated—Computation of surplus profits—Allowances—Electric supply undertaking—Depreciation—Loss on sale of machinery—Return on share capital—Rehabilitation allowance—Income-tax—Return on depreciation reserves used as working capital—Whether allowable ... 52
 —Award of—Principles—Workmen satisfied with bonus voluntarily given by employer—Demand for further bonus after 2 years—Demand raised subsequent to award of better bonus in another concern—Demand, whether justified ... 63
 —Award of—Principles—Claim for bonus based on custom—Proof of custom—Payment of bonus during three years of loss—Whether sufficient ... 131
 —Computation of surplus profits—Allowances—Depreciation—Initial and additional depreciation not taken into account—Benefit to undertaking by way of income-tax—Whether also to be excluded ... 30
 —Computation of surplus profits—Principles—Items of income to which labour has not contributed—Profit arising on account of revaluation of closing stock—Whether to be included—Allowances—Depreciation—When full depreciation should be allowed—Distribution of surplus profits. ... 282
 —Computation of surplus profits—Principles—Allowances—Initial and additional depreciation—Whether

Bonus—(contd.).

ther allowable—Increase of profits on disallowance of depreciation—Increased tax on such increased profits—Whether allowable. ... 399

C. P. and Berar Industrial Disputes Settlement Act, 1947, Sections 22(1), 23(1), 41—District and State Industrial Courts—Respective jurisdictions of—Application by trade union of workers—Whether lies to District or State Court ... 345

—Section 16—State Industrial Court—Jurisdiction—Revision of order of Labour Commissioner—Whether confined to questions of law ... 449

Closure—Bona fides of—Burden of proof—Decision when evidence on both sides unsatisfactory—Income-tax assessment order showing loss—Whether proper evidence ... 118

—Closure of section of undertaking—Whether closure or retrenchment—Rights of workmen—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, Sections 2(oo) and 25F ... 345

Conditions of service—Working hours—Fixation of—Whether management function—Right of workmen to interfere ... 1

—Working Journalists—Whether subject to administrative control of editor only—Right of management to fix administrative control over employees ... 38

—Suspension of workman—Effect—Suspension pending application under section 33, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Workman, whether entitled to wages for period of suspension—Whether can claim wages under Payment of Wages Act, 1936 ... 81

—Right of management to decide mode of conduct of business—Whether management can be compelled to run business as factory ... 96

Constitution of India, article 226—Writ petition—Petition to quash award of lower tribunal—Contentions not raised before lower tribunal—Whether**Constitution of India—(contd.).**

ther can be urged before High Court ... 159
—Article 227—Writ—Jurisdiction of High Court—When interference with order of lower tribunal would be justified ... 467

Contract Labour—Victimisation of—Relief—Duty of Industrial Tribunals to protect contract labour. ... 270

Discharge—Notice of lock-out intimating discharge of workmen—Effect—Whether terminates services of workmen—Rights of workmen on resumption of work ... 377

Dismissal—Dismissal for unsatisfactory service—Necessity of proof of unsatisfactory service—Dismissal without enquiry—Whether justified—Right of employer to determine labour force ... 319

—Dismissal for continued absence—Workman taken into police custody—Right of management to refuse leave and dismiss workman ... 377

—Workmen going on illegal strike without justification—Dismissal by employer in accordance with standing orders—Whether justified ... 450

Employees' Provident Funds Act, 1952, Schedule I—"Industry engaged in manufacture and production of textiles"—Meaning of—Factory processing and dyeing fabrics—Whether falls in Schedule I—Amendment Ordinance and Act of 1953. Whether retrospective. ... 197

—Section 1(3)—Scope and object of—Interpretation of social legislation—Industrial establishment split up into smaller units to avoid Employees' Provident Funds Act, 1952—Whether splitting up should be recognised—Duty of Courts to prevent subterfuges to avoid implementation of social legislation... 231

—Section 1(3)—Act applied to factory having more than fifty employees—Number of employees

Employees' Provident Funds Act, 1952—(contd.)

falling below fifty—Effect—Whether Act continues to apply. ... 257

Factories Act, 1948, section 36(3) and (4)—Safety provisions—"Permitting a worker to enter"—Meaning of—Positive act of granting permission, whether necessary—Entry of workman not prevented—Whether amounts to "permitting" entry—Provision of safety appliances—Whether appliances should always be provided ... 441

Industrial Dispute—Definition of—Dispute between employer and one or two workmen—Not involving any principle and not taken up by other workmen—Whether 'industrial dispute'—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(k). ... 425

—Reference to Tribunal—Nominal change of management—Effect—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 10. ... 432

—Dispute relating to period before closure of industry—Reference of dispute to Tribunal after closure—Validity—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, sections 2(k) and 10. ... 436

—When individual dispute becomes industrial dispute—Trade union ceasing to represent workman's case—New trade union taking up case—Effect—Whether creates new industrial dispute—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(k) ... 436

—Dispute between single workman and employer—Dispute taken up by union of workmen—Whether industrial "dispute"—Industrial Disputes Order (English), 1951, art. 12(1) ... 181

Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, Section 2(oo)—"Retrenchment"—Definition of—Whether retrospective—Discharge by employer before definition was introduced—Whether 'retrenchment'. ... 394

—Section 10—Reference of dispute to Tribunal—Right of party to impeach order of reference. ... 86

Ind. Dis. Act, 1947—(contd.)

—Section 10(1)—Reference of dispute to Tribunal—Reference made without proper application under Rules—Validity ... 118

See also under *Industrial dispute*

—Section 25-F—Retrenchment compensation—Qualification for—Workman completing 240 days' service—Whether entitled to compensation—'One year of continuous service'—Meaning of ... 46

—Section 25-G—Retrenchment—Principle of last come first go—Application of—Concern having branches and depots—Determination of seniority—'Industrial establishment' meaning of ... 108

—Section 33—Termination of services of probationer—Grounds for termination justified—Termination in accordance with terms of probation—Whether contravenes section 33 ... 137

—Section 33—"Alteration of conditions of service to prejudice of workman"—Stopping workman from doing his work—No order of discharge—Whether amounts to alteration of conditions of service. ... 254

—Section 33—Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act, 1950, Section 22—Application for permission to dismiss workman—Formal enquiry not held by employer—Right of Tribunal to come to its own conclusion on evidence adduced before it—No victimisation or unfair labour practice—Conclusion that no *prima facie* case made out on evidence—Whether justified. ... 330

—Section 33—Application by employer for permission or approval—Scope of power of authority to which application is made—Effect of amendment of section 33 in 1956—Whether authority can impose conditions on grant of permission or approval ... 356

—Sections 33, 33A—Industrial Tribunal—Jurisdiction of, under section

Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—(contd.)
 33A—Contravention of section 33—Whether Tribunal can confirm punishment of workmen ... 38
 —Sections 33 and 33A—Suspension of workman pending enquiry—Whether punishment—Whether falls within section 33—Application under section 33A—Right of Tribunal to award compensation ... 323
 —Section 33(2)—Approval of action taken by employer against workman—Scope of enquiry by Tribunal—Whether Tribunal can sit on appeal over action of employer. ... 304, 356
 —Section 36 (1)—Representation of workman—Officer of unregistered union submitting claim statement of workman—Union registered before enquiry by Tribunal started—Whether sufficient compliance ... 118
Industrial matter—Meaning of—Dispute as to number of persons to work a machine—Whether 'industrial matter'—C. P. & Berar Industrial Disputes Settlement Act, 1947, section 2(13). ... 449
Industrial Tribunal—Jurisdiction—Employees made to work overtime in contravention of law—No statutory provision as to payment for overtime—Right of Industrial Tribunal to award monetary compensation ... 68
 —Jurisdiction—Contractual obligations between parties—Whether can be ignored—Decisions in the interests of industrial peace—Nature of—Dismissal of workman in accordance with contract of service—Whether can be interfered with ... 325
 —Adjudication by—Scope of—Matters beyond evidence produced by parties—Minimum living wage—Whether can be taken into consideration. ... 202
 —Jurisdiction—Reinstatement of workman on petition under section 33A, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Right of tribunal to award compensation in lieu of back wages—

Industrial Tribunal—(contd.)
 Whether compensation can be awarded when dismissal is upheld ... 159
 —Jurisdiction—Reference of dispute—Duty of Tribunal to decide whether dispute is 'industrial dispute'—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, sections 2(k) and 10(1)(c) ... 171
 —Jurisdiction—Reference of Dispute to Tribunal—Necessity of relationship of master and servant between parties—Decision of Tribunal on jurisdictional issue not based on evidence—Effect. ... 202
 —Jurisdiction—Reference of dispute to Tribunal—Necessity of relationship of master and servant between parties. ... 208
 —Jurisdiction—Contravention of section 33, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Tribunal not having jurisdiction to act under section 33(2)—Jurisdiction given with retrospective effect later on—Effect—Complaint under section 33A—Whether lies—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, sections 2(r), 33, 33A. ... 288
 —Jurisdiction—Fresh reference to Tribunal of matters already covered by award in force—Validity—Whether Tribunal can entertain reference ... 352
 —Jurisdiction—Reference of question of suspension of workman—Misconduct of workman proved—Right to award re-instatement—Duty to give permission under section 33, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 ... 377
 —Jurisdiction—Application under section 33, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, for permission to dismiss workman for misconduct—Subsequent application for amendment of prayer so as to discharge workman—Whether amendment can be allowed. ... 394
 —Jurisdiction—Power to order production of documents by parties—Limitations—Applicability of Civil Procedure Code, 1908—Order directing party to produce income-tax

Industrial Tribunal—(contd.)
 return—Order directing party to prepare lists or abstracts—Validity ... 432
 —Procedure—Discovery and inspection of documents—Order directing employer to produce accounts for inspection by workmen—Applicability of provisions of Civil Procedure Code, 1908—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 11(1), (3). ... 421
Industry—Scope of definition of—Whether includes—philanthropic institutions like hospital—Under takings managed by Government—Whether fall within definition of 'Industry'—Tests—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(j). ... 473
Leave—Semi-Government electricity undertaking—Following rules of Electricity Board regarding wages—Whether bound to follow rules regarding leave also ... 52
Life Insurance Corporation—Conditions of Service—Relative ranks of Divisional Superintendent and Inspector—Right of Corporation to alter conditions of service of employees of concerns whose business was taken over—Insurance Corporation Act, 1956, section 11(1). ... 243
Lock-out—Closure caused by coercive tactics of workmen—Right of workmen to compensation for period of closure ... 377
Madras Shops & Establishments Act, 1947, section 4(1)(a)—'Person employed in position of management'—Meaning of—Tests—Branch manager of establishment working under directions of head office—Whether employed in position of management ... 167
Misconduct—Manager seeing misconduct being committed—Refusal of charge-sheet by workman—Necessity for enquiry by manager ... 1
 —Charge against workman—Verbal inaccuracy in charge—Acquittal by

Misconduct—(contd.)
 criminal court—Whether proves innocence of workman—Right of management to punish workman on evidence adduced at enquiry ... 374
 —Enquiry into—Principles of natural justice—Witnesses examined before accused workman—Whether sufficient compliance—Workman admitting guilt—Punishment, whether justified—Nature of domestic enquiry ... 194
 —Enquiry into—Nature of—Rules of Evidence Act, 1872—Whether applicable—Principles of natural justice—Meaning of ... 237
 —Employee receiving money on behalf of company—Failure to deposit money with company—Giving inconsistent statements when discovered—Dismissal, whether justified ... 241
 —Illegal and unjustified strike—Dismissal by management after proper enquiry—Selection of leaders for punishment—Lack of evidence by workers on behalf of management—Whether affect legality of dismissal—Dismissal order signed by works manager also—Whether invalid. ... 304
Reinstatement—Effect—Workman employed as substitute at time of dismissal—Whether remains a substitute on reinstatement ... 159
 —Re-instatement of dismissed workman by Tribunal—Effect—Failure by employer to re-instate workman—Computation of monetary value of award of re-instatement—Principles—Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act, 1950, section 20(1) and (2), scope and effect of. ... 218
 —Tribunal ordering re-instatement—When order can be interfered with ... 377
Retrenchment—Principle of last come first go—Application of—Confirmed workman, whether acquires seniority

Retrenchment—(contd.)

- over un-confirmed workman—Superannuated persons employed as chowkidars—Whether governed by principle of last come first go—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 25-G ... 25
- Termination of service of men employed on experimental increase of production—Management deciding to revert to normal production—Right of management to fix its labour strength ... 46
- Justification for—Workmen rendered surplus by reorganisation—Right of employer to retrench surplus workmen—Establishment of *bona fides*—Whether considerations of social justice should prevail... 108
- Compensation—Retrenchment effected before enactment of Chapter V-A, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Workmen agreeing to award of compensation based on basic wages—Claim on appeal for award in accordance with Chapter V-A—Whether justified. ... 215
- Retrenchment effected without complying with provisions of section 25-F, Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Effect—Remedy of affected workman. ... 473
- Standing Orders**—Certification under Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946—Effect—Transfer of workman in accordance with standing orders—whether workman can plead exemption from, or ignorance of, standing orders. ... 429
- Strike**—Stay-in-strike—Nature of—Workmen, whether entitled to wages for period of strike. ... 1
- Strike launched without recourse to legal methods—Whether justified—Wages for period of strike. ... 150
- Workmen resorting to 'go-slow' tactics—Whether amounts to strike—Bombay Industrial Relations Act, 1946, section 3(36) ... 467

U. P. Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, Sections 3 & 6—Reference of Industrial Dispute—Specification of time for submission of award—40 days' period specified by Government Order—Subsequent amendment of Government Order to 180 days—Effect—Whether enhances period in cases of references already made. ... 411

U.P. Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Ordinance, 1953, Section 3, Sub-sections(2) and (3)—Object of—Validity of awards made after specified period—Distinction between sub-sections (2) and (3)—Pendency of proceedings on date of commencement of Ordinance ... 411

Wages—Fixation of—Principles—Mica industry—Special features of industry—Rise in minimum wages—Whether justified ... 150

Wages scale—Fixation of different grades—Workmen to be put in grades according to nature of work—Person actually doing certain work—Appointment as assistant at lower grade—Whether justified ... 140

Wages and allowances—Revision of—Wages and allowance satisfactory on industry-*cum*-region basis—Mere lapse of time since last revision—Whether sufficient reason for revising wage structure—Subordinate staff at factory—Dearness allowance for—Whether entitled to same dearness allowance as factory workers ... 1

Wage structure—Adjudication of—Scope of adjudication under Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Right of industry not able to pay even minimum wage to continue—Revision of wage structure to prejudice of workmen—Whether permissible—Decision of Tribunal as to nature of payment made by employer—Decision based on sufficient grounds—Whether Supreme Court would interfere with decision. ... 292

Working Journalist—Definition of—Whether includes proof reader—Working Journalists (Conditions of Service and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1955, section 2(f) ... 38

—Meaning of—Whether includes proof reader—Definition of "working journalist" including proof reader—Definition, whether binding on Court—Whether Court can question basis of definition—Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955, section 2(f) ... 68

—Whether 'workman'—Dispute raised before enactment of Working Journalists (Industrial Disputes) Act, 1955, by working journalist—Whether 'industrial dispute'—Reference of such dispute to Industrial Tribunal—Validity—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, sections 2(k), 2(s) and 10(1)(c) ... 86

Working Journalists (Industrial Disputes) Act, 1955—Whether retrospective in operation—Effect on disputes raised before Act came into force ... 86

'Workman'—Meaning of—Tests—Person taking raw materials home and giving finished products next day—Whether workman—Persons allowed to work in employer's premises—No control over work or working hours—Whether workmen—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(s) ... 96

—Definition of—Sweeper engaged in loading and unloading municipal lorry—Whether person engaged in running or maintenance of lorry—Whether falls within clause (i), Schedule II, Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 ... 34

—Definition of—Essentials—Relationship of master and servant—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(s). ... 202

Workman—(contd.)

—Definition of—When employee falls within definition—Tests—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(s). ... 208

—Definition of—Tests—Employee engaged on managerial functions—Salary less than Rs. 500 p. m.—Whether 'workman'—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(s). ... 241

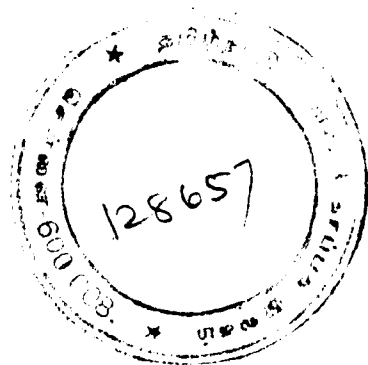
—Definition of—Work allotted by management to a contractor—Employees of contractor—Whether 'workmen' of management—Whether can be parties to industrial dispute with management—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(s). ... 270

—Meaning of—Chemist working in pharmaceutical concern—Performing skilled and technical manual work—Whether 'workman'—Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, section 2(s) 137

Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, Section 2(1)(n), Sch. II, Cl. (i)—'Workman', definition of—Whether an employee falls within definition—Tests—Person "employed in connection with operation of motor vehicle"—Meaning of—Municipal coolie assisting driver of vehicle—Whether "workman". ... 313

Writ—Writ of prohibition—Issue of—Principles—Industrial Tribunal dealing with reference under Industrial Disputes Act, 1947—Whether writ can be issued before Tribunal decides jurisdictional issue—Constitution of India, art. 226 ... 171

—Matter affecting jurisdiction of Industrial Tribunal—Involving questions of law and fact—Proper forum—Whether should be raised and decided by Tribunal in first instance. ... 425



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