

CHAPTER XVII

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

LABOUR WELFARE

The district of Pithoragarh falls in the Bareilly region, one of the seven regions of the U. P. labour commissioner's organization, into which the State has been divided for the administration of labour laws and the implementation of labour welfare measures. The staff of the regional office at Bareilly consists of a regional assistant labour commissioner assisted by a regional conciliation officer, an additional regional conciliation officer (at Rampur), an assistant welfare officer (at Bareilly), two inspectors of factories (with headquarters at Bareilly), and 17 labour inspectors posted at the regional headquarters and in important industrial towns of the region. The administration of labour laws in the district of Pithoragarh is the responsibility of the labour inspector, Pilibhit, who also deals with industrial workers and employers, trade unions, social security, and welfare measures for employees. It is his responsibility to ensure that labour laws are properly implemented and prosecutions launched if they are contravened.

A brief account of the labour Acts in operation in the district follows:

The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923—This Act lays down that an employer is liable to pay compensation if personal injury is caused to a worker in an accident arising out of and in the course of employment and also if the worker contracts any disease mentioned in the Act. The deputy commissioner of the district is the ex officio compensation commissioner under the Act for determining the amount of compensation which may be payable under the Act to a workman or his dependants. The number of cases in which compensation was granted during the 5 years ending with 1965 was 12, and the total compensation paid amounted to Rs 22,140, the year wise break-up being as under:

Year	Fatal cases	Temporary disablement	Compensation (in rupees)
...	3	..	4,650
1962	3	..	5,400
1963	4	1	9,990
1964	1	..	2,100
1965

The Indian Boilers' Act, 1923—This Act makes provision for registration and inspection of boilers, and prohibits the use of unregistered or uncertified ones, and is applicable to the four boilers that are extent in the district.

The Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926—The Act provides for the registration of trade unions and empowers the trade union registrar, Kanpur, to inspect the working of the trade unions, to call for returns and to consider applications for registration or cancellation of the unions. An assistant trade union inspector keeps in touch with the only registered trade union of the district, the P.W.D. Gang Mazdoor Union which had a membership of 27 during 1964-65 and advises it when necessary. This is a corporate body which functions in the interest of its members and aims at furthering good relations between employer and employees. It also strives to improve the economic, moral, social and living conditions of the labourers and to ensure that fair wages, healthy living and working conditions, proper medical and educational facilities for their children, etc. are made available by the employers. There was no labour unrest in the district during the five years ending with 1965.

The Payment of Wages Act, 1936—This Act deals with the payment of wages to persons employed in factories and other establishments who earn below Rs 400 a month, fixes a time-limit for the payment of wages, from which no unauthorised deductions can be made, and is applicable to the Berinag Tea Estate, Pithoragarh, in this district.

OLD-AGE PENSIONS

The old-age pension scheme, which had already been in operation in the tahsil of Pithoragarh in February, 1960, regulates the provision (since April, 1964) of a pension of Rs 20 per month to old and destitute persons of 60 years (of age) and above, who have no means of subsistence or support. It is administered by the labour commissioner, U.P., Kanpur, the verification of age, income, etc., being done at the district level. The number of beneficiaries receiving such pension in the district on June 30, 1966, was 67, of which 32 were women, the tahsilwise break-up being as follows:

Tahsil	No. of beneficiaries		Total
	Men	Women	
Dharchula	1	6	7
Didihat	12	..	12
Munsyari	7	3	10
Pithoragarh	15	23	38

PROHIBITION

Easy availability of intoxicants, lack of public co-operation in reporting infringement of the prohibition law, the reluctance of the public to appear as witnesses in courts of law against offenders and a sizeable percentage of the population being addicted to spirits due to higher altitudes, are some of the main difficulties encountered in the enforcement of total prohibition in the district.

A district temperance society, consisting of officials and non officials was set up by the government in October, 1963, to discourage excessive indulgence in drinking. The district excise officer acted as its ex officio secretary and its activities were carried out through sub committees, each with an honorary prohibition *pracharak* (preacher), who propagates prohibition through moral and religious pressure, persuasion and personal contact. Camps and stalls are set up in fairs and exhibitions for the publicity of prohibitions, particularly at the Nanda Ashtmi fair at Martoli (in tahsil Munsyari) and the commercial fair at Jarajibli (in tahsil Dharchula) where prohibition is propagated through audio visual aids, viz., cinema slides, posters, placards, distribution of leaflets etc. Hoardings, depicting the disastrous effects of drugs and liquor have been set up at prominent places. There are also in the district the Arya Samaj and the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, which devote themselves to the promotion of temperance in particular and to prohibition in general. The local workers of the Sarvodaya movement also carry out temperance work in the district. Sincere efforts led to the closure of a country liquor shop at Thal in tahsil Didihat, situated near the Baleshwar temple, from April 1, 1966.

The quota system for the supply of liquor, under which excise licensees can obtain for sale, only a fixed quota of intoxicants, is applicable in the district. There is no sale of liquors and intoxicants on Tuesdays, other 'dry' days being Holi, Diwali, Independence Day, October 2 (the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi) and January 30 (the day of his assassination) The hours of sale and the quantity sold to an individual at a time is also restricted, in licensed retail shops. Sale of bhang, ganja and opium are banned in the district and breaches are punishable under the opium are banned in the district and breaches are punishable under the Opium Act, 1857, the U. P. Excise Act, 1910, and the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1930.

ADVANCEMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES

A district Harijan and social welfare officer was appointed in January, 1966. He works under the administrative control of the deputy commissioner (as part of the co-ordinated planning scheme) and publicizes the provisions of the Untouchability (Offences) Act. 1955, besides doing other work relating to the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward classes.

The educational facilities extended, include relaxation of the time and the upper age limits for admission to certain educational institutions, free tuition, stipends, scholarships and financial assistance for the purchase of books and stationery, besides providing free hostel facilities. During the Third Five-year Plan period 427 and 418 stipends were sanctioned for students of the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes, respectively, the amount disbursed being Rs 25,390 and Rs 15,464. Under a scheme sponsored by the Central Government, financial assistance was extended to 31 and 5 persons respectively among the Scheduled castes and Other Backward Classes and amounted to Rs 6,469 and Rs 864, respectively. Free accommodation is provided at village Bajeti Deolal (in tahsil Pithoragarh) for 20 students of these groups.

Apart from these educational facilities from the community development blocks, separate departmental grants are also made to enable these people to purchase live-stock, fertilizers and agricultural implements. During the Third Five-year plan, a sum of Rs 5,490 was sanctioned to 30 farmers of the Scheduled Castes, and agricultural loans were also arranged for them. To augment their earnings, they are allowed to set up their own cottage industries such as spinning, weaving, tailoring, shoe-making, beekeeping, smithy and poultry farming. During the Third Plan an amount of Rs 20,182 was given to 103 persons to develop village industries.

Similarly, a sum of Rs 47,584 was spent among 118 families to help them improve their living conditions during that period, and 118 new tenements were constructed during the same period besides 72 *diggis* (tanks) and nullahs at a cost of Rs 26,795 to provide drinking water facilities in localities where Harijans live in large numbers.

Over and above this sum, an amount of Rs 34,727 was also spent on similar works under schemes sponsored by the Central Governments.

The organizations that work for the social, moral and economic uplift of the Scheduled Castes are the Harijan Sewak Sangh and the Harijan Charmakala Sangh (both at Pithoragarh), their main objective being the eradication of untouchability and other social evils existing among the masses. They also encourage people to join adult classes and adopt sanitary habits. The Kumaon Arya Shilpkar Sabha, Almora, promotes literacy and also runs schools in the district which are recognized by the Antarim Zila Parishad, Pithoragarh.

CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS

The Srimati Saraswati Bisht Scholarship Endowment Trust, Pithoragarh, founded by Thakur Dan Singh Bisht on October 24, 1949, is the only trust in the district, the amount invested in it yielding an annual income of Rs 708.54. It is an educational trust and awards scholarships to sons and daughters of residents of Pithoragarh who were killed in action in World War II, and to deserving students of the Sri Sarswati Deb Singh Higher Secondary School, Pithoragarh.