

**DEFENCE INDUSTRY  
IN INDIA**

**G. S. KRISHNA**

**ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS**

Narsihman, M.P., tried and tested President of the Andhra PTUC, inspire us to fulfil this task.

**Long live trade union unity for united struggle to achieve urgent vital demands!**

**Long live the Second Conference of the AHTUC!**

**Long live the unity of the Indian working class and its standard-bearer, the AITUC!**

**Long live the international solidarity of the working class and its leader, the WFTU!**

**Long live peace and freedom and the equality of nations!**



## DEFENCE INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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### History

What we call defence industry in India today can be divided into the following broad sections:

- i) Engineering
- ii) Metallurgical
- iii) Optical
- iv) Explosive
- v) Leather & clothing
- vi) Transport, and
- vii) Building & Roads.

The first Explosive Factory for the production of gunpowder was opened by the Britishers at Ichapoor in West Bengal shortly after the construction of Fort William; though it is said that the Dutch and the French also purchased gunpowder in India prior to them. For a very long time the British did not expand defence industry in India and continued importing all their requirements from UK. But the historical necessity of making India a base to defend their Far Eastern empire and the emergence of Japan as a military rival to them made them open more ordnance factories, specially in the interior of the country, viz. Jabalpur, Kanpur, Shahjahanpur and Kirkee (Poona). During the First World War, we had eight ordnance factories and they worked day and night.

As early as in 1911-12, in the Gun Carriage Factory at Jabalpur, the workers resorted to the first three-days' strike under the leadership of Shri Lekh Raj (who is still alive in Jabalpur) against the transfer of a popular Foreman and won their demand.

As the defence industry in this country was set up on the basis of working mostly during war, it always had depression after the war, resulting in heavy retrenchment and shrinkage in earnings of workers. A very expensive nucleus was kept during peace time to serve the British imperialist inter-

ests in India, the Far East and Middle East in times of emergency. Another important basis was that the defence industry had no link with the general industrialisation of the country. With the intention of maintaining agricultural and raw material producing economy of the country, no plans were ever made to utilise these machines for the production of additional articles those machines could turn out even for Government purposes. On the contrary machines were allowed to lie idle. The question of building up heavy industry which can produce all the modern armaments, ships, aeroplanes, etc., was naturally beside the question. Even the machines that were imported had to depend upon for spare parts, etc., on UK. Moreover, the technicians, all highly skilled and even some unskilled ones were imported from UK. The Superintendent, Works Manager, Assistant Works Manager, Foreman, etc. in the Ordnance Factories and even Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) in Military Engineering Services (MES) used to be British. Thus whatever basis was laid for the industry, full precautions were taken to see that it remains a top secret and totally dependent on UK for machines, spares, skill and what not.

Again historical necessity, due to troubled conditions preceding and during the Second World War and the stoppage of supplies from Europe, led to the expansion, addition and to a certain extent Indianisation of this industry. More ordnance factories and depots were constructed, the number of cantonments was increased and more Electrical, Mechanical and Engineering (EME) Workshops added. In the 22 Ordnance Factories about 2,00,000 men were employed and the machines worked day and night. For example, in Ichapur Factory with 10,000 employees, 1,50,000 rifles and 1,200 machine guns have been produced per year. 150 stations of MES employed about 1,00,000 persons busy with numerous projects of building new cantonments, ordnance factories, ordnance depots, quarters, etc., and providing electricity and water supply to them. In all there were about 6,50,000 civilian defence employees at the end of the war serving in ordnance factories, ordnance depots, MES, EME Workshops, Technical Development Establishments, etc.

These ordnance factories produce rifles and guns for army, shells, small bombs, fuses, gun carriages, army vehicles, bodies, compass, telescope, binoculars and other apparatus and various kinds of leather and textile requirements of defence forces. With almost every factory there is a Technical Development Establishment, whose main job is to inspect and approve the products of the factory. There is a Scientific Organisation with the Army Head Quarters, which is sup-

posed to do research work in the latest designs of armaments. Our whole structure of the Army being on the British pattern and still linked up with the UK through Commonwealth and a number of British officers or British-trained officers in it, its job has been reduced to work on the blueprints received from UK, and not any original thinking.

There were 28 big and small Ordnance, Vehicle and Base Depots where all kinds of stores, big and small vehicles, spares, clothings, etc., except Engineering, are dumped, stored, accounted for and issued. There are Electrical & Mechanical Engineering (EME) Workshops attached to or nearby some of these depots. These carry out repairs and renewals to the vehicles and machinery in use of the armed forces. According to the strength and nature of the jobs these workshops are divided and designed into Army/Command/Station Workshops. The Depots and EME Workshops are manned by civilian industrial and non-industrial workers while a section of the officers belong to military cadre of the Ordnance/EME Corps.

Then there are Military Engineering Services (MES) formations, which are connected with the Cantonments, building and maintaining roads, constructing buildings in it, running and/or distributing electricity and water supply installations in the Cantonments and providing furniture to the defence forces personnel. Under the same organisation are Engineer Stores Depots for the custody, maintenance and issue of engineering stores. There were about 65 garrison Engineer Stations of MES with equal number of small outstations and nine Engineer Stores Depots. As in the case of Ordnance Depots and EME Workshops, MES & ESDs are also manned by civilian, industrial and non-industrial workers with militarised officers from the Corps of Indian Engineers. The number of these workers and stations are fluctuating and place of work changing according to the construction programme as well as movement of the Army.

Besides these there are civilian workers in military dairy farms, Cantonment Boards and sections of a very small number in certain units also. The sweepers of the Cantonment Boards have often organised themselves and struggled for increase in wages and better service conditions.

During the last war, i.e., in the year 1946, the strength of civilian defence workers was about 6,00,000.

**1939 - 45:**

The 1939-45 war necessitated production of certain small items, which were hitherto obtained from UK, in Indian Ordnance Factories and experiment (no doubt under strict secrecy and in British hands and guidance) for the production of small arms. Indian Ordnance Factories were thus made to feed the immediate requirements of forces in South East Asian and Middle East theatres of war, as supplies from UK and USA were not safe and assured due to submarine movements.

**1946 - August 1947:****Workers' Conditions**

Just after the war these productions were stopped, work in the factories was very much reduced so much so that in some of them only small sections were running. Projects in the MES were also stopped. In the Depots no doubt there were huge stores of all sorts lying not only unorganised but not even fully accounted for and the Government was unable to decide properly which to keep and what to dispose of. The Americans had brought a lot of material for the use of their forces in India and when going back they decided to leave them in India and subsequently negotiated a sale for Rs. 100 millions.

Defence employees, specially industrial ones, were employed on daily rates, monthly rates on casual and/or temporary basis. They continued working for years, even decades and some for a generation but they were temporary or casual, with neither security of service, nor any kind of retirement benefits. Even among the non-industrialists there was a very small, say, 10% of employees who were entitled to become permanent. It is, therefore, evident that vast number of these also remained temporary all their life. A queer rule was that when a temporary employee was awarded permanency, he had to come down to the minimum of the scale and usually it used to result in a recurring loss of ten to twenty rupees per month for the whole period of service. Service and working conditions were bad and differed even from one branch of the defence department to another. The treatment meted out by the British officers during the war to the civilian workers was often insulting. The status of the defence civilian workmen was not defined and they suffered from the disadvantages of both the military and civilian regulations.

Even the 10% permanent seats were not filled in during the war.

As soon as the war ended the problem of "What next?" with the horror of mass retrenchment and unemployment faced the defence workers. Up to 31st March, 1946, military law was applicable to the defence civilian workers also and therefore though discontentment was brewing, organised struggle through trade unions could not be possible.

### **Trade Unions Formed**

The Ordnance Factories were for administrative convenience put during the war under the Ministry of Industry and Supplies and were treated as civilian factories doing essential jobs. Heavy work under tiring conditions and the movement in and around Calcutta gave impetus to some of the employees to form a trade union in 1943 with the name of "Ichapoor Rifle, Metal & Steel Factory Workers' Union" and this was affiliated to the AITUC. By 1945 trade unions in Ordnance Factories began increasing and specially the heroic struggle of Ordnance & Clothing Factories' Workers at Shahjehanpur in continuing 52 days' strike against retrenchment and their victory very much helped the movement to spread in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra where most of the factories are situated.

1946 is a significant year for defence workers in all its branches and they waged numerous strike struggles mainly against retrenchment, bad treatment by the officers and for wage increases. The general upsurge in the TU movement of the country was fully shared by the defence workers.

In March-April and then in August-September, 1946, Military Accounts Department employees—mostly clerks—went on strike—first in Lucknow and then on an all-India basis and rapidly organised an All-India Military Accounts Employees' Federation. They were able to postpone the impending retrenchment. But the betrayal of the Congress leaders who joined the interim Government of India on September 2, 1946 and at whose instance and assurance the strike was called off smashed their organisation and there was large-scale victimisation of activists.

### **Struggles**

On 11th May, 1946, Harness and Saddlery (H & S) Factory workers at Kanpur went on a one-day token strike and then from 21st May continued a 34-days general strike demanding bonus and no-retrenchment. There was no TU organisation at that time and the strike call was given and

fought by all political parties. The demands were won and the H & S Factory Employees' Union emerged out of it.

On 21st June, 1946, MES workers at Allahabad responded to the call of political strike given by all parties on the arrest of Sheikh Abdulla and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in Kashmir and formed their trade union. Simultaneously and taking impetus from this, MES Workers' Unions were formed in several parts of the country forming their local unions or federations; which ultimately merged into one All-India MES Workers' Federation at its Lucknow session on December 23 and 24, 1946. S. A. Dange and K. C. Srivastava were elected President and General Secretary respectively.

Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur, fought a strike struggle for 30 days.

Defence unions in Bengal fully supported and joined the historic strike on 29th February, 1946, in support of RIN revolt.

9,000 Dock workers in Bombay went on strike on July 21, 1946, demanding implementation of enquiry committee's report and stopping retrenchment of 600 workers.

Besides the above, protest strikes, lightning strikes and demonstrations were held in a number of installations and establishments of Defence department during the year and workers gained immediate and local demands and strengthened their TU organisations.

### **Formation of All-India Federations**

This year also witnessed the formation of not only several unions but their further consolidation into one "All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation" at a convention of Ordnance unions at Agra in September, 1946 under the presidency of Smt. Aruna Asaf Ali. Ahmadi was elected General Secretary and Hariharnath Shastri as Acting President.

Thus in the beginning there were three central organisations of Defence workers, viz., (i) All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, (ii) All-India MES Workers' Federation, and (3) All-India Military Accounts Employees' Federation. The movement was so strong that though none of the unions or federations were given letter of recognition, they were virtually all recognised by the Government and thus defence workers for the first time in the history won the right of forming the TUs. Another gain was that mass-scale retrenchment was checked, day-to-day conditions in the services a bit improved and the basic demands of pay, allowances, leave, etc., of civilian defence workers were also referred to the Central Pay Commission by a resolution of the Governor-General in Council, dated 3rd July, 1946.

## More Struggles

The first half of 1947 witnessed two big strikes. One that of the Ordnance Depot workers on all-India basis from 14th April to 6th May, 1947, and affecting specially Kanpur, Agra, Delhi, Harbanspura (Lahore), Sialkot, Panagar and Chheoki against retrenchment. The other centres in South partly supported it and it was ultimately withdrawn by Hariharnath Shastri without any assurance regarding demands. This subsequently resulted in not only large-scale retrenchment in Ordnance Depots but mass victimisation of TU activists due to which some unions had to suspend and others stop their activities.

The second was a token strike for one day (10th June, 1947) on the call of UP MES Workers' Federation and about 15,000 MES employees throughout United Provinces — at Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Jhansi, Agra, Dehra Dun, Bareilly and some small outstations responded to it for expediting the publication of the report of the Central Pay Commission.

Besides that, on 6th January, 1947, when the blood of 6 working-class martyrs fell, more than 20,000 defence workers joined the whole of Kanpur city and its working class in protest strikes, processions and demonstrations.

In July 1947, in H & S Factory, Kanpur, there was a 5-day stay-in-strike demanding bonus and overtime allowance.

## Disruption

In 1946-47, the British imperialists fully utilised in the defence installations in Northern India the communal bogey to disrupt not only struggles of the workers, but also their organisations, but except for some very temporary effects here and there, the defence workers remained united.

## Unemployment

During this period, thousands of so-called casual and/or daily rated employees, though indirectly and not at a time, were retrenched and the way was cleared for further retrenchment due to the temporary set back caused by the withdrawal of April-May 1947 All-India strike and further dislocation and disorganisation caused by the partition of the country, disruption in the TU movement as a result of the formation of the INTUC and then HMS and UTUC, communal riots, etc. Against retrenchment the workers specially in, the Ordnance Factories and MES had brought forward the suggestion that in order to check the social epidemic of unemployment, these

installations should be utilised to produce consumer articles for civilian needs. In this connection, UP MES Workers' Federation issued an appeal to all legislators and did lobbying at Naini Tal session of the UP Assembly in May, 1947, and met the Chief Minister Pandit Pant, Home Minister Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Labour Minister Sampurnanand and a host of MLAs of various parties to set up a committee to plan the utilisation of so-called surplus man-power in the Ministry of Defence—a good number of them being technical and highly skilled ones—for national reconstruction, which will also help in checking unemployment. One of the concrete suggestions was to utilise the MES installations for rendering services to civilians and civil departments of the Government. This step was taken when the battle of shirking responsibilities on the issue of retrenchment and unemployment from one Ministry in the Central Government to another and from Union Government to State Governments and *vice versa* was going on. Neither UP nor Central Government heeded the appeal and the process of retrenching defence workers in an unplanned and chaotic manner and throwing them on the streets continued.

#### August 1947 - May 1949:

The Partition of India in 1947 did not affect the position of ordnance factories, as there was no ordnance factory in the territory that now constitutes Pakistan. Two ordnance depots, IESD, and EME and MES formations in Ex-Northern Command went over to Pakistan.

The change of rule on 15th August, 1947, did not change in any way the policy of the Government regarding defence organisation and industry, because the Congress Government also adopted the British pattern of defence system and it was being worked out by the British officials, now on loan and contract basis in the service of the Government of India. The Indianisation only changed some faces from white to brown, though in all key posts Britishers continued. In the defence industrial sector specially, the Indianisation was not so rapid as on the Army side with the excuse that we are technically backward and the help and guidance of the Britishers was badly needed. Not only this; in subsequent years more foreigners, notably Swiss, were imported on luxurious terms as technical guides.

Heavy retrenchment of civilian workers was carried out in ordnance factories during 1946 and in May, 1947, in ord-

nance depots and EME workshops just after the withdrawal of all-India strike in May, 1947, and in MES in June, 1948. The strength of these establishments was drastically reduced from 50 to 70%, even more than actually estimated and as a result some of the favourites and blacklegs in the struggles of 1946-47 were re-employed. There was no policy regarding declaring employees surplus. Anybody who did not find favour with the administration was fired and specially trade union activists were the special targets. After this in the name of adjusting the strength of installations employees were moved from one end of the country to another and again the union workers were the largest to be dislocated.

The problem of displaced employees was uppermost in Ordnance Depots, EME Workshops and MES. Their rehabilitation, postings to stations of choice sometimes causing dislocation of already-serving workers, seniority and adjustment on posts, their service records and fixation of pay were urgent matters. At some places these matters were promptly taken up by the trade unions, while at others the administration did not lose any time in creating confusion and division among the two sets of workers and using them against each other and even to set up rival organisations. But this game could not continue for long and all the trade unions realised that any division either on the issues or their relative importance is detrimental to their class interests and, therefore, such refugee organisations were closed and trade unions strengthened. In MES at Ranchi and Kanpur a single organisation was formed—some representations were made—but later wound up.

### Central Pay Commission

The question of service conditions—temporary or casual service, increase in pay and D.A., leave, retirement benefits were all before the Central Pay Commission. Though initially, probably because defence civilian workers had no permanent cadre and remained temporary or casual throughout the service and as such were not considered as Government servants in its full meaning, their cases were not referred to the Central Pay Commission. However, later on the strike struggle of the defence workers forced the Government to refer their case also to the Commission on 3rd July 1946. The defence workers unlike the Railway and Post & Telegraph workers were not so well organised in an all-India body to present their viewpoints before the Commission. On the contrary the Government viewpoint was placed before the Commission by the following officials:

A. H. Wilson, Military Accountant General.

Lt.-Col. Shri K. Loch—Master General of Ordnances.  
 Col. A. F. F. Thomas—Director, Civilian Personnel, GHQ.  
 Maj.-Gen. W. F. Hasted—Engineer-in-Chief, GHQ.

The employees' viewpoint was presented by a number of delegations—all local in character—as listed below :

<i>Date</i>	<i>Organisation represented</i>	<i>Names of Representatives</i>
9- 9-46	Def. HQ Association	Mr. Bhagat Ram ,, M. D. Dalakshi
11-10-46	All India Assn. of Clerks of Ord. Factories, Arvankadu, HQ, Executive.	Mr. I. C. Francis.
do	Storemen, Semi-clerical Assn., Rifle Factory, Ishapore.	Mr. R. B. Mathur.
do	Inspectorate of Military Exp. Staff Assn., Kirkee.	Mr. V. R. Joshi.
do	Ord. Factory, Shahjehanpur Cordite Factory Labour Union, Aravankadu.	Mr. Rustogi. M s. S. Thiagarajan, Pres.; Elmo Decruz, Vice-President.
do	Ord. Factory, Ishapore.	M s. N. N. Goswami, N. Vedaratnam R. Singh
do	Naval Dockyard.	Mr. S. Y. Kolhatkar.
18-10-46	A. I. Ord. Factory Chemists Assn.	Mr. H. N. Roy.
do	Ord. Factories	Mr. A. Charudutt.
22-10-46	A. I. Assn., Ord & Clothing Factories, Ishapore.	M s. D. V. Reddy, M. N. Roy.
21-12-46	Delhi Province MES Workers' Federation.	M s. Chakravarty Srivastava, A. Sharma, P. N. Etsan Doraiappan.

The stand on various points represented were sectional, local and varying. In fact, and it is cent per cent true of industrial personnel, the case of defence workers remained unrepresented before the CPC.

This fact has a reflection in the CPC report also. While pages after pages and chapters have been devoted to Railway, P&T and Class I & II Employees and rightly too, their pros and cons discussed thoroughly, defence workers and their

problem figure very little in it. In spite of this the recommendations were made applicable to defence workers also.

The basic mistake of the Government in asking the various heads of Departments to fix up grades for employees and cadre serving under them on the basis of broad recommendations of CPC without either proper categorisation, mutual discussion and consultation with the employees' union representatives has resulted in the creation of a number of serious anomalies in the pay structure of defence workers.

In Ordnance Factories one single officer Mr. Shahaney, Assistant Director-General of Ordnance Factories, was entrusted with the task of fixing up the pay scales of Ordnance Factories workers on the basis of CPC recommendations. Without doing any job analysis and more or less arbitrarily, the scales were fixed. The Master-General of Ordnances (MGO) and Engineer-in-Chief (E-in-C) fixed pay scales for other defence workers in ordnance depots, EME workshops and MES in similar way and in some cases even the recommendations of the CPC were not kept in view, e.g., though it is mentioned on p. 339 para 13 that "the scales of pay for the staff in the MES should be the same as for comparable categories in the CPWD," this has been conveniently ignored.

The rules for the implementation of these pay-scales, i.e., fixing their pay in what is called 'revised pay scales' were such that whatever apparent gain workers seemed to get, was snatched away. The abnormal delay in this respect and revision whenever Controller of Defence Accounts thought fit and enforcing recoveries of large sums as a result, has been a continuous and serious grievance of workers.

As a result of these recommendations, defence workers lost All-India Service Liability Allowance of Rs. 5|- p.m. (only clerks) and Conveyance Allowance of Rs. 15|- at certain stations, where the place of work was beyond 5 miles from the city. Certain number of clerks who had undertaken liability for service in any field or operational areas also lost Rs. 10|- p.m. as Field Service Liability Allowance, though the liability continued. The demand of the workers was that these allowances should be paid to all sections of workers who were called upon to undertake such liabilities.

The rates and scales of pay of workers employed on piece work rates in ordnance factories, staff paid from contingency fund, daily rated casual personnel and certain categories of skilled or semi-skilled employees were not revised along with others and this caused a serious discontent.

Generally the employees just below the officer grade and the unskilled categories got certain increase in their pay

scales and actual wages. The lot of semi-skilled workers, clerks, typists, stenographers, storekeepers, etc., remained the same or even worse. The increase in D A, casual leave from 15 to 20 days, PTO claim, House Rent and City Compensatory Allowance and subsequently application of contributory provident fund rules to all defence workers, introduction of quasi permanent and temporary cadre for non-industrial and industrial categories respectively and certain retirement benefits (gratuity and death-cum-retirement benefits) were the gains.

As a result of great deal of agitation during this period certain housing schemes were introduced, new and additional houses constructed and in some stations existing barracks converted into living accommodation. Though from the point of view of the magnitude of the problem, specially due to very large number of shiftings, it only amounted to a drop in the ocean and the cases of employees and their families being thrown out of the quarters, of their living for months and years in *serais* and *dharamsalas*, and station waiting rooms and families of 5 to 10 members living in one room continued.

Thus during this period of 1947 to 1st half of 1949, as a result of increasing dearness and the failure of the Government to compensate the same by increasing the Dearness Allowance as recommended by the CPC, anomalous pay scales and its faulty way of fixation, heavy retrenchment and the dislocation caused by unplanned transfers, stoppage of A. I. and Field Service Liability allowance, conveyance allowance, no proportionate increase and revision in the pay scales and rates of piece-rates workers, contingent workers, casual and daily rated workers, the condition of defence workers worsened.

### Rules of Recognition

Another attack on the defence workers' trade-union movement that was launched during this period was in the form of regulating the recognition of their unions formed in March 1948. Registration under Trade Union Act, 15 per cent membership, the clause forbidding any strike without secret ballot and 66 per cent support and punishment to those who resort to strike otherwise, submission of annual report and accounts, correspondence through proper channel, previous intimation of amendment in the constitution—were the main conditions to be fulfilled for recognition by Government of India. No procedure was laid about how and on what conditions recognition will be withdrawn and about appeal against that order, though specific provision about withdra-

wal of recognition is there. No time limit exists within which unions who fulfil conditions must be recognised and as such the Government retained its power to delay indefinitely. In no other industry in this country such a high percentage of minimum membership has been prescribed for recognition. In some industries there is no percentage fixed, while in others, e.g., Railway, where the movement is two decades old once it was fixed at 10 per cent.

Had the purpose of these instructions been simply regularisation of TUs in defence installations for the purpose of negotiations with the employers, all those unions and specially in those installations where only one union existed and with whom the Government was corresponding and meeting their representatives would have been automatically recognised. But this was not to be. And under this pretext the trade unions which fought for workers' cause and against attack on their service conditions were discriminated for repression and the way was opened for the INTUC and pro-administration unions only to function.

### Repression

The anti-Communist hysteria of the Congress rulers at this time, which was precisely initiated to weaken and disrupt the mass organisations—as united, strong and militant mass organisations fighting for the people's welfare and exposing the inefficiency, corruption and misdeeds of the ruling clique had the danger of their being swept away as a result of mounting struggles — on the pretext of the security of national defence, applied to defence TUs also. Hundreds of employees on mere suspicion, specially active trade unionists, were dismissed from service. One Shri Izzat Rai, a clerk in MES at Ambala, who it is said was not only not a member of any political party, but even was not a member of the local MES union, was summarily dismissed from service on mere suspicion of being a Communist. The totally false charge for which no explanation was obtained and the prospect of unemployment proved to be so shocking to him that he died of heart failure, leaving behind his widow and five children with no means of livelihood.

Though in March, 1949, the National Safeguarding of Security Rules were passed and were also applicable to defence employees, still the Government, in this department, utilised clause 5 of the I.A.F.Z. 2055 agreement form which temporary employees have to fill in for dispensing with their services after giving one month's pay or notice in lieu. As the whole of industrial personnel and 95 per cent of non-industrial personnel were temporary even after serving for decades, they

were deprived of even the normal procedure of being heard, knowing the exact charges, cross-examination or refuting the evidence before being dismissed. Technically they were discharged as their services being no longer required and then their names were published in Indian Army orders debarring them from future employment. This also deprived them of any legal right to sue in a court of law.

### Further Disruption

The ruling circles knew that the struggles of defence workers can only at best be slowed down but not halted with repression of TUs and on its activists only and so simultaneously their another weapon, disruption in the TU organisations, was also let loose.

Certain elements of Socialist Party were found as ever obliging in this respect and they with the unions where Socialists were working (Poona and Agra area) seceded in 1948 at the Calcutta Session and formed All-India Defence Services Civilian Employees' Federation with headquarters in Poona. Srimati Aruna Asaf Ali continued its president, with Shri S. M. Joshi as Vice-President.

The All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation with the remaining unions elected Shri S. M. Banerji, an employee of H. & S. Factory, Kanpur as its president, Shri Radha Mohan Singh (another employee from Kanpur) as Vice-President and Dr. Mrs. Maitreyee Bose (Calcutta) as General Secretary.

Certain office-bearers of the Federation however immediately sensed the result of the disruption and therefore the President started negotiations for the merger of the two organisations. The Socialists did not however respond as warmly as they should have. On the other hand, the forces of disruption led by the INTUC group in the Federation (Dr. M. Bose) did not favour any attempt for merger. This group tabled a no-confidence motion against the President Shri S. M. Bannerjee in the General Council meeting held at Calcutta in December, 1948. In this meeting, Ordnance Employees' Unions in Uttar and Madhya Pradesh region walked out and in a convention at Kanpur in March 1949 formed a third organisation named "UP & MP Ordnance Employees' Federation" with late Shri Radha Mohan Singh as President and Shri S. M. Banerjee as General Secretary.

### Struggles & Victimization

Thus three Ordnance Employees' Federations — out of which two were affiliated to INTUC and HMS respectively and one independent without any affiliation—were functioning in 1949. These were more or less regional federations with the

two federations, viz., All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, Calcutta (Bengal region) and All-India Defence Services Civilian Employees' Federation, Poona (Poona region), having unions under Congress and Socialist influence respectively affiliated to them. The third federation as its name implies UP & MP Ordnance Employees' Federation confined its activities among the Ordnance employees in UP & MP region, was led by employees, not influenced by any political party and was not affiliated to any national TU centre.

On April 17 & 18, 1948, A-I MES Workers' Federation held its second session in Lucknow under the presidentship of Shri S. P. Gupta. It adopted a unitary constitution for the organisation under the name of "A-I MES Workers' Union" and elected Shri Mrinal Kanti Bose as president and re-elected Shri K. G. Srivastava as General Secretary. 32 delegates mostly from Bengal and Delhi not agreeing with the unitary constitution walked out under the leadership of M/s. S. P. Gupta and Amar Singh and formed a rival organisation in the name of 'A-I MES Workers' Federation' with its headquarters at Delhi and Shri Shibban Lal Saxena, as President and Sardar Amar Singh as General Secretary. The organisation, however, was very short lived...

During this period a number of new and local unions of MES employees specially in Southern Area were formed. MES Employees' Union of Madras Area, Poona Area and Bombay Area came into existence. Local unions at Deolali, Secunderabad, etc., were also formed. These trade unions were mostly led by pro-administration elements and confined their activities among grade III employees. They were accorded recognition by the Government very soon after their formation. In due course specially in Madras Area, industrial workers also started active participation in that union. The Madras Area and Deolali MES Employees' Union got affiliated with the A-I Defence Services Civilian Employees' Federation.

The then Socialist leader Shri Keshava Chandra Gupta at Agra who was also Jt. Secretary of AIDSCEF got the local union separately registered as MES Workers' Union, Agra and then subsequently changed its name as "UP MES Workers' Union, Agra" and got it affiliated with AIDSCEF, Poona.

During this very period, when A-I MES Workers' Unions decided to fight heavy retrenchment in MES in June, 1948 and decided in its working committee meeting at Meerut in May, 1948 to launch *satyagraha* at Delhi, its leaders and activists were severely repressed. Shri Teja Singh and S. A. W. Naqvi, Treasurer and Jt. Secretary, were dismissed from Lucknow for alleged leading an illegal strike there on 12th June,

1948. The General Secretary of the Union, Shri K. G. Srivastava, Working Committee members Shriyuts Madan Singh, Hari Singh, P. P. Dixit and several Branch secretaries, Shriyuts Goswami in Pulgaon, Chandra Prakash at Meerut, Natwerlal in Kanpur|Lucknow, Narain Dass from Allahabad|Bareilly and several others were dismissed from service and scores of them were transferred and/or put under arrest.

The Indian Naval Dockyards Union, Bombay during this period fought a number of struggles in defence of their service conditions and attacks on their leaders and TU rights. Its leaders specially Samuel Augustine and S. Y. Kolhatkar were several times arrested and detained in jail without trial.

### June 1949 - April 1954

#### Industrial Situation

With the military situation in Kashmir becoming more or less stabilised in the latter half of 1949 and completely after 1st January, 1950 Indo-Pak Cease Fire Agreement, the crisis in the defence industry (which is still based on expansion or full work during war and the spectre of idle men and machinery during peace, and is manifest in retrenchment of workers and reduction in their earnings and increase in idle time and cost of production and which was temporarily halted after 1947) further deepened. The policy of not building our own defence industry and self-sufficiency in the matter of Defence requirements and on the other hand, depending upon the British and American imperialists is responsible for the ever-increasing drain of our money from this country to UK and US as shown below :

*Amount spent on the purchase of stores and equipments from abroad. (as available from the accounts of the High Commissioner for India in UK and Indian Supply Mission in Washington).*

1948-49	Rs. 955.57 lakhs
1949-50	Rs. 1,151.75 lakhs
1950-51	Rs. 1,933.48 lakhs
1951-52	Rs. 1,449.76 lakhs
1952-53	Rs. 1,315.42 lakhs (final estimate).
1953-54	Rs. 2,625.10 lakhs (budget estimate)

(N.B. : The above figures do not include certain purchases made from abroad through sources other than the High Commissioner in UK and Indian Supply Mission, Washington.)

At the same time, these imperialists and the Indian Congress Government were trying to solve this crisis by retrenching defence workers; keeping the machines idle and reducing the earnings of piece-work rated and daily-rated workers, refusing to increase Dearness Allowance as recommended by the Central Pay Commission, withdrawing P.T.O. claim, reducing casual leave from 20 to 15, increasing working hours of clerks from 34 to 38½ hours, increasing quarter rent from the concessional rate of 3 per cent to 7½ per cent in ordnance establishments. On 1-8-1949, the defence workers were divided into industrial and non-industrial categories which resulted in discrimination and reduction in the number of holidays for the industrial workers. In MES all earned and medical and at some places and sometimes even the casual leave was stopped being granted to industrial employees. Occasionally on flimsy technical reasons, house rent and City Compensatory Allowances were also not paid to defence workers at Agra, Kanpur and other stations on the alleged plea that the installation does not fall under the Municipal limits of the respective towns. In Kanpur (Chakeri) and certain other stations, this allowance was sanctioned from 1-9-50, and not from 1-1-47 as in other cases, for no fault of workers. While there are no instructions for the settlement of arrears due to workers, fixation of pay and payment of regular increments within any specific time limit; recoveries on such grounds as even lack of technical sanction were immediately made and reimbursement of the amounts took years and years, causing immediate serious financial handicaps to workers. By a stroke of pen continuous services before 1-8-49 of about 16,000 Ordnance depot employees were declared not to be counted for seniority purposes. All the defence workers were still temporary or casual. The rate of piece work was still not reviewed in accordance with the recommendations of the CPC and the anomalies created in the pay scales, as well as in the fixation of pay of skilled and unskilled grades had resulted in immediate drop in the wages of the workers. In ordnance factories, Shahaney Report was very severely criticised.

While workers were thus made to 'sacrifice' even to the point of starvation, the costly administrative machinery was kept as it was, in some cases increased and besides keeping the British advisers and employees, more foreign experts were continuously imported. The following tables showing pay and allowances of officers and workers will show the correct position. These tables do not include the pay of military officers and personnel posted to or employed in the installations :

1948. The General Secretary of the Union, Shri K. G. Srivastava, Working Committee members Shriyuts Madan Singh, Hari Singh, P. P. Dixit and several Branch secretaries, Shriyuts Goswami in Pulgaon, Chandra Prakash at Meerut, Natwerlal in Kanpur, Lucknow, Narain Dass from Allahabad, Bareilly and several others were dismissed from service and scores of them were transferred and/or put under arrest.

The Indian Naval Dockyards Union, Bombay during this period fought a number of struggles in defence of their service conditions and attacks on their leaders and TU rights. Its leaders specially Samuel Augustine and S. Y. Kolhatkar were several times arrested and detained in jail without trial.

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### EXPENDITURE ON ORDNANCE & CLOTHING FACTORIES

Year	Pay of Staff	Directorate of factories	Purchase of materials (in India)	Civil production agency	Value of work done (consumer goods)	Total No. of employees employed by Ord. factories.
1950-51	7,25,03,000	18,37,153*	6,75,00,000	17,13,939*	1,61,33,198	68,635 (1951)
1951-52	7,89,65,000	20,15,721*	7,25,00,000	20,68,539*	96,77,139	70,640 (1952)
1952-53	8,93,18,000	22,33,502*	8,30,00,000	18,11,170*	Not yet known	69,641 (1953)
1953-54	8,88,00,000	22,14,000†	8,30,00,000	16,80,000†	—	54,024 (1-1-54)
1954-55	9,10,00,000	23,00,000††	7,15,00,000	17,80,000††	—	—

\*—Actual Expenditure

†—Revised Estimate

††—Budgetted Estimate.

### EXPENDITURE ON M.E.S.

Year	Officers	Others	Expenditure on works	ARMY		NAVY	AIR FORCE
				Expenditure on maintenance of buildings & communication.	Expenditure on maintenance of operational installations	Total expenditure on works including maintenance	Total expenditure on works including maintenance.
1950-51	27,00,000	1,73,00,000	87,31,139	4,78,89,133	1,70,09,294	45,37,660	1,11,77,035
1951-52	42,00,000	2,03,00,000	1,82,26,895	5,22,00,632	1,76,76,325	45,04,565	1,44,38,774
1952-53	47,00,000	1,98,00,000	1,18,40,323	4,91,61,636	1,86,46,836	49,04,467	1,55,43,306
1953-54	44,00,000	1,80,00,000	1,02,00,000	5,35,00,000	2,00,00,000	54,47,000	1,42,46,000
1954-55	45,00,000	1,85,00,000	1,05,00,000	5,52,00,000	2,01,00,000	73,99,000	1,95,58,000

## TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHMENT

Year	Officers	Others	Industrial Estt.
1950-51	12,00,000	95,50,000	40,82,000
1951-52	11,30,000	1,19,00,000	30,97,000
1952-53	13,25,000	1,45,00,000	39,82,000
1953-54	14,70,000	1,62,00,000	35,50,000
1954-55	16,50,000	1,66,00,000	35,00,000

## EXPENDITURE ON PAY OF CIVILIANS IN ORD. ESTT.

Year	Officers	Others	Industrial Estt.
1950-51	39,47,000	2,42,00,000	3,47,19,000
1951-52	32,50,000	3,31,50,000	3,15,00,000
1952-53	34,00,000	3,55,00,000	3,76,18,000
1953-54	32,40,000	3,43,10,000	3,47,00,000
1954-55	35,00,000	3,60,00,000	3,84,00,000

## EME WORKSHOPS

1950-51	4,00,000	56,27,000	1,22,55,000
1951-52	3,48,000	78,04,000	1,20,00,000
1952-53	4,25,000	95,00,000	1,30,00,000
1953-54	3,60,000	61,75,000	1,50,00,000
1954-55	4,45,000	75,00,000	1,50,00,000

EXPENDITURE ON PAY & ALLOWANCE OF CIVILIANS  
IN ARMY & COMMAND & OTHER STAFF  
HEADQUARTERS

Year	Officers	Others	Total estimated	Total actually spent
1950-51	31,60,000	1,37,38,000	1,68,98,000	1,69,53,168
1951-52	29,71,000	1,34,42,000	1,64,95,000	1,64,37,966
1952-53	29,10,000	1,36,50,000	1,65,60,000	1,57,19,197
1953-54	27,60,000	1,32,95,000	1,60,55,000	Not known.
1954-55	26,45,000	1,28,45,000	1,54,90,000	do

## EXPENDITURE ON SCIENTIFIC ADVISER

1950-51	6,47,000	4,30,000	10,77,000	3,47,456
1951-52	4,47,000	2,50,000	6,97,000	4,77,331
1952-53	4,95,000	4,00,000	8,95,000	5,44,154
1953-54	5,50,000	4,25,000	9,75,000	Not yet known
1954-55	5,05,000	5,40,000	10,45,000	—

If on a graph a curve is made out of the expenditure incurred with its relation to the work executed or the output of factories and the expenditure on the pay and allowances of the supervisory staff or what is called the staff whose pay

is charged to overhead expenses; the expensive administrative set up will be exposed. Similarly if the ratio and percentage of the supervisory staff and the industrial worker is worked out, it will again prove that the rate of proportion in increasing or decreasing the expenditure on the former does not bear corresponding ratio.

20 ordnance and clothing factories with various technical development establishments of weapons, ammunitions, clothing, laboratory, instrument and electric; 26 ordnance depots divided and sub-divided into Central Ordnance Depots, Ordnance Depots, Vehicle Depots, Ammunition Depots and Base Depots; about 25 EME Workshops (Army HQ, Command & Station Workshops); several Inspectorates of Stores; about 45 Garrison Engineer & similar number of outstations with varying strength of military engineer service formations in all the cantonments in India, and a number of smaller formations where civilians are employed total up to 1,884 defence establishments. All these, however, are not manufacturing establishments. The following table gives their strength as on 1-5-53 :

Category	No.	Wage Bill
Gazetted	2006	About 3 lakhs of rupees.
Non-Gazetted industrial) personnel	1,47,483	,, 31 lakhs of rupees
Non-Gazetted (non-industrial) personnel	1,02,670	,, 64 lakhs of rupees

Thus while in Railways for the same period, the ratio of officers and workers was 1:377, in Civilian Defence Installations it is 1:124. While the increase in the expenditure on pay of officers during 1950-51 to 1954-55 in MES has been 66 per cent, the expenditure on pay of 'others' (workers) during the same period has been only 6.9 per cent. This was being done because of their policy of giving more and more work and even annual and periodical maintenance and repairs to the contractors.

It is interesting to note that in Army Command and other HQ offices a huge and expensive apparatus is being maintained, the post-war reduction has affected them very little and the pace of reduction in its expenditure as a result of consistent criticism has been during the years 1950-51 to 1953-54 of only 4.7 per cent. These figures are in respect of civilian staff—the combatant cadre is in addition to it.

It is a known fact that in modern warfare (even for defensive purposes) it is the scientific development of arms and other requirements that is the deciding factor and not only the numerical strength. Yet the expenditure on the scientific

advisor's staff has always been less than even what was budgeted and 30 to 65 per cent of the budgeted amount has been surrendered.

In ordnance depots one of the chief tasks during this period was to sort out, stack and properly stock the stores purchased from the US forces and the UK when they left the country after World War II. As the transaction about purchases was made in several lots lying in various cantonments, material still closed in packages and it was just lying as a heap; the particulars and detailed nomenclature and exact condition of the articles was not known. The surplus to requirements stores from our stock was also to be dealt with. The Defence Minister in a reply to Dr. Ram Subhag Singh admitted in the House of People on 4-9-1953 "that very large quantities of surplus Defence Stores valued over 11½ crores of rupees are lying with the Directorate General of Supplies & Disposals. There are no facilities for storage of all the stores, as a result of which they go on deteriorating." A reorganisation scheme was started in ordnance depots to examine these stores and after checking properly stock them. Thousands of workers were employed on casual basis to do this job. Retrenchment of this staff every now and then and recruitment of more staff for the same work after some time and in some cases simultaneously has been a serious problem with ordnance depot workers, because the new recruitment at different centres did not mean re-employment of the retrenched ones.

While our purchases of stores and equipment abroad has every year been increasing as will be clear from the following table; the machines and technical men of ordnance factories have been and are lying idle and starving.

The amounts spent on the purchases of stores and equipment in India :

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rs. in lakhs</i>
1948-49	47,83.85
1949-50	50,32.43
1950-51	55,70.34
1951-52	63,30.88
1952-53	(final estimate) 68,34.68
1953-54	(Budget) 70,70.79

The amounts spent for purchase of Stores & Equipment of items produced by ordnance factories are as follows :

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rs.</i>
1947-48	4,95,04,515
1948-49	„ 11,82,34,241
1949-50	„ 16,27,27,641
1950-51	„ 19,48,32,630
1951-52	„ 19,56,24,412

(From proceedings of the House of the People on 10-8-53).

### Dependence on British

The programme of the defence industrial development has been virtually in the hands of foreigners, specially Britishers (who numbered 73 in 1953), and has been neglected, as will be seen from the figures of expenditure on this count during this period :

1951-52		Rs. 1,03,50,000
1952-53		„ 1,00,01,476
1953-54	(Revised estimate)	„ 25,00,000
1954-55	(Budget)	„ 1,25,00,000

The British imperialists with the help of British officers and their lackeys in the country were seeing to it, as is evident from the above figures, that the stores and equipment for the defence forces (Army, Navy & Air) should be continued to be obtained from UK and other European countries, and British firms in India. In the Parliamentary Budget session of 1952-53, this was exposed when it was mentioned that a rifle which was manufactured in the Rifle Factory, Ishapur, was sent to the same firm in UK for proofing and okaying, who was exporting it to India and naturally it was not okayed. Similarly, while ammunition boots were purchased at Kanpur from the British firm of Cooper Allen, at the same time the Harness & Saddlery Factory, at Kanpur itself, which can manufacture it, was starving of work and surplus notices were being served on the workers. There are a number of other instances where cheaper and up to the mark articles produced by ordnance factories are at times delayed and at others not at all produced on mass scale for use in other Government departments and the public.

In this process, the Indian capitalists have also not lagged behind. They have raised the cry of denationalisation of the industry—particularly clothing and leather factories and demanding that the ordnance factories should not be used for production of articles for civilian consumption. The writings and utterances of Sir Sri Ram of Delhi, Shri Kirloskar of Poona and the deeds of ex-Defence Minister Sardar Baldev Singh, a shareholder of Tatas, in not accepting workers' demand in this respect are worth mentioning.

The British officers helped continuance of our dependence on foreign countries in another way. The Indian Purchasing Mission in Germany had successively in two reports raised an objection as to why articles which have been during war and even how can be manufactured in Indian ordnance factories are indented and procured from foreign countries.

When such questions were being raised by the workers and public here, those officers would either say that the production of those articles in the quality required for defence forces would be costly compared to the cost of purchase from Europe or USA, or that the quality of home-made articles would be very much inferior or alternatively present an estimate of hundreds of crores of rupees for addition and alteration of machinery to enable production of that particular article so that the Government of India which is always running a deficit or just balanced budget will refuse incurring that capital expenditure and permit import of articles from abroad.

The defence workers' unions, as stated earlier, had just after the war put up the suggestion that in national interest the machine and man-power of these installations should be fully utilised and if the total production is more than what is required for the defence forces; those very articles, if of any use to civilians, should be produced on mass scale and sold. If not, alternative articles which these machines can manufacture and are consumed by the public should be produced during peace time. There is enough scope in the Harness & Saddlery Factory to produce all leather articles for civil departments and public sale. Clothing factories can do work similarly. Binoculars, rifles, short Bren guns, cycle and motor parts, various kinds of tools, parts of locomotives, etc., can be produced in ordnance factories. The power houses and water reservoir stations of MES can be used for supplying electricity and water to civilian population also, who are today not getting enough electric power and sufficient water supply. The new development and construction works partly carried on by Central and State PWDs may be shared with MES, as was done successfully during the last war. Supply and maintenance of furniture to all Government and semi-Government departments can similarly be handed over to the furniture section of MES and the articles manufactured by them can also be put on sale in public. With the increasing nationalisation of Road Transport, the EME workshops can serve this public section quite usefully.

### Crisis

But when these plans were not accepted and only workers squeezed to face the crisis through retrenchment of surpluses, reduction in earnings or wages (Refer to Shahaney Report), stricter discipline and worsening working conditions, the workers through all the three Ordnance Employees' Federations were forced to take to the path of fighting them out and strike notices were served—no doubt on different dates—by all of them.

### Kalyanwala Committee

The imperialist and bourgeois governments have got one magic cure for all the ills and it is the appointment of a commission or committee. And so was what is popularly known as Kalyanwala Committee of Inquiry set up on 15th September, 1950, with Shri F. N. Kalyanwala, Bar-at-Law, as Chairman and Shri B. B. Ghosh, and K. N. Subramaniam, ICS, Joint Secretaries of Ministry of Defence and Labour respectively as members.

The terms of reference of the Committee were :

- (i) To examine whether the report, generally known as the Shahaney Report, on the basis of which the present pay scales in the ordnance factories have been fixed provides a satisfactory basis for the implementation of the Pay Commission's recommendations regarding pay scales, having regard to the nature of the work to be performed in the ordnance factories;
- (ii) To examine and make suggestions regarding the rectification of any anomalies in pay scales existing in the present orders applying the revised scales of pay to defence installations;
- (iii) In the light of the Pay Commission's recommendations on the subject, to examine whether conditions in any defence installation are so special as to justify the grant of a Conveyance Allowance to any class of personnel employed therein;
- (iv) To examine whether service conditions regarding permanency of industrial and non-industrial employees in defence installations need any alteration;
- (v) To examine and make recommendations regarding the leave rules of industrial employees serving in the defence establishments, including all kinds of leave;
- (vi) To examine and make recommendations regarding the scale of contribution by Government to the Provident Fund of the employees serving in defence establishments, where a Provident Fund Scheme exists;
- (vii) Whether the present methods of calculations of piece work earnings of high paid and low paid piece workers should be continued;
- (viii) Whether all piece work rates for new jobs in future should be correlated to the new monthly scales in consonance with the principle that a piece worker of average ability, working at standard speed, should earn 25 per cent profit over time rates; if so, what

should be the reference point in the monthly scales to which the piece work should be correlated;

- (ix) Whether any revision of piece work rates is necessary/desirable and, if so, in what manner should such piece work rate revision be done;
- (x) Should there be a guarantee of the minimum wage to all piece workers, even when there is no limitation against the ceiling earnings;
- (xi) *Overtime Pay*: The Committee may examine the eligibility of personnel who are not at present allowed overtime pay, to such payment, if any representation is made to it. As the Committee is not expected to deal with the question of working hours, the intention was that while examining any question of overtime pay the Committee should start with the basic point that certain working hours are already prescribed;
- (xii) *Gratuity and/or pension*: The point for consideration was how the period of extra temporary service of non-industrial employees (i.e., service prior to 1st August, 1949) should be counted for purposes of gratuity for such personnel. Under the existing orders that service does not count at all. The Committee would examine this and make necessary recommendations. On the question of pension there was no special dispute but if the Committee should recommend permanency for industrial employees it would be within their scope of examination to consider whether the normal pension rules should be applied to such employees in lieu of the Contributory Provident Fund benefits which are at present, admissible to them.

As will be seen, the terms of reference did not include revision of pay scales which was overdue because the CPC's understanding of economic situation having been completely proved incorrect, increase in DA according to rise in the cost of living index, revision of house rent allowance according to latest census figures, children's education allowance, and hill allowance as recommended by CPC, medical aid, restoration of PTOs, working hours, system of confidential reports and annual medical examination, counting of full service prior to 1-8-49 of erstwhile ETE personnel, accommodation, retrenchment and declaration of surpluses, which were the burning issues of defence workers.

Taking advantage of the division of defence workers into

several organisations, and with the compromising and vacillating leadership of the Federation, the Government successfully was able for some time to divert the attention of defence workers from fighting for its demands to a Seat on the Committee.

The Committee was ordered to complete its work and submit its report before 31st December, 1950. But the actual work of the Committee started only after the three ordnance federations were represented on the Committee through one adviser each on 27-1-1951 as under :

1. Shri K. M. Mathews, Rep. All-India Def. Services Civilian Emp. Fed., Poona.
2. Shri R. C. Srivastava, Rep. of the All-India Ord. Emp. Fed., Calcutta.
3. Shri S. M. Banerji, Rep. of Uttar & Madhya Pradesh Ord. Emp. Fed., Kanpur.

Advisors had no voting right but sat with the Committee at all hearings and accompanied visits to the places of work.

The original demand of the workers was to have one of its representatives as full-fledged member on the Committee. But the Government insisted that the representatives should be agreed to by the three federations. Comrade N. M. Joshi's name was proposed by a federation and agreed to by another, but the All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, Calcutta under INTUC pressure did not agree to it. The Government of India instead of resolving the issue, came out with the proposal of having vote-less advisers from each federation and thus workers' voice on the Committee was curbed.

The Committee visited certain installations at and near about Poona, Calcutta and Kanpur and on the basis of different memos submitted by the three federations and other unions, examined their representatives. The Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry, Shri F. N. Kalyanwala, fell ill and died on 18th December, 1951, before the report could be finalised. And it took the Government three months to decide if the work of the Committee should be continued with the remaining two members or a new Chairman appointed. On 1st March, 1952, the Committee was directed to proceed with the work without any chairman. They heard MES Workers' Unions at Delhi on April 7 and 8, 1952.

The Government fully exploited the division among defence workers. Simply by the announcement of the Committee

since 15th September, 1950, it had virtually got an injunction not to improve and give anything to the workers until the Committee's report was submitted and considered by them. Even the issues of Government share in the contributory provident fund and leave rules of industrial personnel, on which Government decision was almost arrived at were also referred to the Committee on 8th February, 1951. In MES during this period often in various areas, even casual leave was stopped to industrial personnel and all other kinds of leave were stopped totally pending Committee's Report and decision.

### Industrial Council Meeting

While the proceedings of the Committee of Inquiry were being delayed from months to years, ever-increasing prices, declaration of surpluses, retrenchments, reversions, abnormal delay in fixing pay and payments of arrears were seriously disturbing the workers and the discontent amongst them was mounting. The most active section of the defence workers—the ordnance factory worker—was very vocal in its expressions of this feeling and therefore, the Director General of Ordnance Factories after prior consultation in a meeting with the Superintendents of various factories and Labour Welfare Officers, called a meeting of representatives of all Ordnance Factory Employes' Unions at Calcutta. This meeting was called "Industrial Council Meeting" and it lasted from July 23 to 26, 1952. The whole game was to utilise this meeting to put the blame on the workers and justify and, where necessary, intensify the offensive against the workers. And keeping in view the division of workers' organisations the authorities expected to divert their attention from Kalyanwala Committee and the demands referred to it. The Agenda of the council meeting was :

- i) Security and Discipline
- ii) Absenteeism and steps to minimise the same
- iii) Labour productivity
- iv) Welfare measures in factories and estates and extension of cooperative movements.

75 persons out of which 42 were representatives of unions or Federations and the rest of works committees attended the meeting, which was presided over by the Director General of Ordnance Factories himself. Some of the AITUC members present in the council meeting cleared the fog, exposed the Government game and called upon workers' representatives to be united and speak with one voice against this new offensive. This was responded to by workers and they had a joint meeting of representatives of all unions/federations to chalk

out their united line of action on each point of the agenda and to present them with one voice. The united suggestions about 5 days week, cash bonus, short-recess of 15-20 minutes at intervals, provision of cheap milk were placed in the meeting. Barring the three Socialist representatives from Kirkee, common understanding on these issues could be achieved.

### Unity Move

The workers in general had seen and some of the unions federations had begun realising in the year 1951 that the spectre of divided defence worker—with three federations: one MES federation and several unattached unions was proving harmful to their cause, different view-points were being expressed and the Government was availing of this in denying the demands and that they were not able to fight out successfully with combined strength the growing attacks of the Government.

With a view to unite again into one organisation some exchange of views had taken place amongst these organisations but due to mutual suspicion, certain political considerations and lack of organised movement for unity from below much headway could not be made. The Industrial Council meeting once again brought the question of unity to the fore and the demand for presenting a united front to the Director General of Ordnance Factories in the meeting and actual agreement in spite of different thinking and approaches on the points presented gave a fillip to the idea. After the meeting the representatives of three federations, viz., AIDSCE Federation, Poona, All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, Calcutta, and UP & MP Ordnance Employees' Federation, Kanpur, met together and decided to meet in August at Kanpur to consider the proposals regarding how all defence unions should again be brought together.

The representatives of three federations, namely, Madan Sen Gupta, Babulal Singh & others (Calcutta), Mankar, Mathew and Krishnan (Poona) and S. M. Banerji, C. B. L. Tewari and M. L. Beohar (Kanpur) met at Kanpur on August 22, 1952 and drafted an agreement for the merger of the three federations. The INTUC representatives insisted that first the three federations should merge without the MES and other unaffiliated unions.

The salient points of the agreement were :

- (i) The Federation shall be non-political and not affiliated to any central TU organisation or political party.
- (ii) Individual unions affiliated to the Federation may

associate or affiliate to any central TU organisation or political bodies but such activities shall be at their own risk and responsibility.

- (iii) All unions (even parallel unions) will attend the unity convention.
- (iv) An Ad Hoc Committee of K. M. Mathew (Poona), K. D. Banerjee (Calcutta) and S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur) with the former as Convenor was elected to draft a constitution and convene a unity convention by September, 1952.

### September 1952—Poona Strike

Meanwhile the discontent among Poona defence workers burst out in the spontaneous historic strike of 35,000 workers of that area from 29th August to 29th September, 1952.

The immediate cause of the strike was the retrenchment of 213 workers from the Central Armoured Fighting Vehicle Depot of Kirkee. The issue of raising Poona from 'C' to 'B' grade station for House Rent and City Compensatory Allowance purposes and bestowing this benefit on 7,000 workers living outside the limits of the Poona Corporation area at Dehu and immediate publication of Kalyanwala Committee Report were the main demands.

The strike which started on 29th Aug., '52, with 2,400 workers of Central Armoured Fighting Vehicles Depot, Kirkee, was joined by 9,000 others from Central Ordnance, Vehicle and other depots at Dehu from 8th and 9th September; on 11th September, 16,000 workers of Ammunition Factory, Kirkee, and on 15th September another 1,500 workers of High Explosives Factory, Kirkee, joined the strike. Like this the strike gradually spread from factory to factory and depot to depot. The 9th September rally which was jointly addressed by representatives of all political parties, viz., Socialist, Communist and Scheduled Caste Federation was a landmark in the movement.

Though in this struggle locally there was no organised, united front and a number of unions existed, but in practice all progressive persons, unions and parties were working for the same end and often, the working class unity in action was demonstrated as in the speeches of all leaders from one and the same platform, joint processions, and combined agitation.

The strike was withdrawn by the All-India Defence Ser-

vices Civilian Employees' Federation leadership on 22nd September, 1952, after negotiations with the Government. The 231 workers were taken back on the job or given alternative jobs and it was decided that in future whenever there will be any surpluses it will be reported to the Works Committee for comments before actually effecting retrenchment and their views given consideration and it was promised that early steps will be taken to publish the Kalyanwala Committee Report and also the demand for upgrading of Poona to "B" grade station would be considered (Poona was later upgraded to "B" grade station).

The strike in all affected 235,570 workers of 11 Defence Installations in Poona Area and in the 25 days 4,30,000 working hours were lost. Eight Defence Unions of Bombay had decided to go on strike if no settlement was reached by September 25. 21,000 Defence workers of Calcutta had decided to go on token strike on October 21, 1952 in support of this strike. Uttar & Madhya Pradesh Ordnance Employees' Federation, Kanpur and MES Unions had also supported the striking employees and were contemplating the next move if no settlement was reached. The A.O.C. Clerks' Association and some supervisory and clerical sections of Factory had in a statement opposed the strike. Though no effort were made to organise support for the strike, the strike had shaken all the Defence installations all over India and spontaneous support was forthcoming.

Shri S. M. Joshi, General Secretary of the All-India Defence Services Civilian Employees' Federation while announcing withdrawal of the strike had said: "that the strike committee had decided to advise the 35,000 striking workers to go back to work from tomorrow in view of the sufferings and hardship involved in continuing the strike", though he maintained that "the committee was not satisfied with the reply of the Defence Minister."

The Kalyanwala Committee report was submitted by the two members on September 20, 1952.

### Struggles

In the ordnance factories during 1952, besides the above, there were following successful strikes for the reasons given against each :

<i>Name of Factory</i>	<i>Period and Reasons</i>
Gun Carriage Factory, Jabalpur (Mechanic Shop 'A')	11th & 12th Jan. 1952 (Two days) — Revision of piece work rates for repair to recoil system.

Ordnance Factory, Khammaria  
5th February 1952 (one day) — Demand of outstation allowance.

Gun Carriage Factory,  
Jabalpur (Painters Shop)  
18th to 28th Feb., 1952 (11 days) — Wage increase and use of abusive language by Foremen.

Ordnance Factory, Khammaria  
28th April, 1952 (one day) — Against victimisation.

Ordnance Factory, Wadala  
6th June, 1952 (one day) — Increase in rise of food-grains.

Ammunition Factory, Kirkee ('A' Section)  
6th & 7th June, 1952 (2 days) — Highhandedness of the Factory Officials.

Ammunition Factory, Kirkee  
23rd August, 1952 (one day) — Unsuitability of new charge room.

### Organization

1952 saw the revival and revitalisation of a number of new defence employees' unions and branches, affiliated and independent. Among the three federations, slight organisational changes were made during the period. The office bearers of the three federations were as under:

*AIDSCE Federation, Poona* : President: Shri Jai Prakash Narain; General Secretary : Shri S. M. Joshi.

*All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, Calcutta* : President: Shri Deven Sen; General Secretary: Shrimati Dr. Maitreyee Bose.

*UP & MP Ordnance Employees' Federation, Kanpur* : President: Shri M. L. Beohar (Shri Radhamohan Singh had died); General Secretary : Shri S. M. Banerji.

A number of parallel unions in various factories and depots affiliated to different federations existed.

In MES most of the branches of the All-India MES Workers' Union were revived during 1951-52 but its sphere of activity was limited to the states of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, UP and MP only. As already mentioned several stations and area unions were functioning, viz., UP MES Workers' Union at Agra; MES Workers' Union (Area Committee) Ambala

in the whole region of Punjab, PEPSU and Himachal Pradesh, Delhi Area MES Workers' Union; Madras Area MES Circle Employees' Union; Poona Area MES Employees' Union; Bombay Area MES Employees' Union and Deolali MES Workers' Union.

The presentation of their case before the Kalyan Committee at Delhi on April 7/8, 1952 brought most of the MES unions together and though different Memos were submitted to the Committee, for the purpose of presenting and going the case, the Memo of the All-India MES Workers' Union with a supplementary memorandum was accepted on this basis and a team of four persons, viz., K. G. Srivastava (Delhi Area MES Workers' Union), Gurbux Singh (MES Workers' Union (Area Committee) Ambala), M. V. Krishnamoorthy (Madras Area MES Circle MES Employees' Union) and Shri Shiva Chandra Gupta (UP MES Workers' Union at Agra) by the first named argued their case. After the hearing over the representatives of these MES unions and Delhi Area MES Workers' Union met and decided to form an "All-India MES Workers' Federation." For drafting the constitution and coordinating the activities, an Ad Hoc Committee with Shri K. G. Srivastava as convenor was formed. Subsequently, Deolali MES Workers' Union also joined the Ad Hoc Committee. This Federation did not come into existence because of the merger talks of all defence workers' unions which subsequently materialised in May, 1953 and meanwhile the coordination committee functioned.

### Unity — One Step Forward

A special feature during this period was more close collaboration by defence workers' unions of a locality, irrespective of the branch they belong and the federation they might be affiliated to. Loose coordinating committees with different names came into being at Bombay, Jabalpur, Panaji, while at Poona, Calcutta, Kanpur and Delhi on various occasions joint celebrations of the days, holding meetings, and more mutual consultations were visible.

The Poona defence workers' strike and its after effects delayed to some extent the furtherance of merger talks and at the next meeting of the unity Ad Hoc Committee took place at Poona on November 22, 1952, where the draft constitution was agreed and the dates and venue for the Unity Convention decided as Jabalpur in February, 1953. Also a call was given by the Joint Ad Hoc Committee to all defence unions irrespective of affiliation with any federation or not, to observe December 17, 1952, as 'Protest Day' against delay in publication of Kalyanwala Committee Report; victimisation of TU

workers (discharge from service of Shri M. V. Krishnamurti, General Secretary, Madras Area Civilian MES Workers' Union, Shri Sampson David, General Secretary, Ammunition Depot Kamgar Union, Ambala, several transfers and charge sheets); retrenchment, etc.

#### **United Protest Day**

The Coordinating Committee of MES unions also endorsed observance of protest day on 17-12-1952.

The observance of protest day on December, 17th, 1952, by all defence unions all over India was the first common action in the history of defence trade union movement.

#### **Kalyanwala Committee Report Published**

The Kalyanwala Committee Report was published on December 18, 1952 and it showed that on majority of the points, it is a report of agreeing to differ. And thus the Government got another excuse to further delay and deny the workers whatever little benefit a section of them could have got by sitting over as a judge on the differing recommendations of two of its own officials.

#### **Gadgil Committee Report**

Another event worth mentioning during 1952 was the appointment on 15-7-1952 and the report of the Dearness Allowance Committee which is popularly called Gadgil Committee Report, which was submitted on 4th October, 1952. This affected all Central Government employees including defence workers. To divert the attention of employees from the growing demand of increase in wages, revision of pay structure fixed by the C.P.C., dearness and other allowances; the Government of India appointed this Committee to recommend what portion of Dearness Allowance should be treated as part of pay for all purposes provided the present total of pay and Dearness Allowance is not enhanced. Though the general demand was for cent per cent merger of DA with pay, the Committee recommended only 50 per cent of DA to be treated as pay for certain purposes. As a result a small section of workers got an enhancement of Rs. 3 to Rs. 10 p.m. in their allowances. The piece work rated worker did not get any benefit. Those workers who were allotted Government quarters had specially to suffer reduction in wages by paying more quarter rent for the same accommodation and without any increase in the emoluments. The rent of quarters in the Ordnance Factory Estates—specially new quarters and for those who were transferred from one station to another, was actually increased to 15 per cent of their pay. Employees

in "C" grade stations and drawing pay between Rs. 76|- to Rs. 100|- also suffered reduction in wages.

### Government Offensives Continue

With the Financial year 1952-53 coming near its end, retrenchment, declaration of surpluses in ordnance factories, ordnance depots, EME, MES, etc., was being resorted to. According to Government figures given in the House of the People on 15th August, 1953, a total of 4,859 civilian workers were retrenched from the Ministry up to 30th June, 1955, of which 1,407 were regular (industrial), 1,911 regular (non-industrial) and 1,537 as casual. Many more were retrenched but as a result of Union's struggles, were given alternative employment or taken back for some time.

Victimisation of active trade union workers had increased. Charge sheets and transfers to far off and out of the way stations of union office-bearers was a common feature. Efforts were made to curb the new local unions.

The discussion at the Twelfth Indian Labour Conference held at Naini Tal and the Government of India, Ministry of Labour questionnaire on the Industrial Relations Bill, where it was suggested that defence workers should not be given full trade union rights, especially the right to strike, had created great discontent in their ranks though Dr. Maitreyee Bose, General Secretary of All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, who was present there as a representative of INTUC and K. Ramamurthi, General Secretary of Union of Post and Telegraph Workers, who went as an observer and placed viewpoints of Government employees in general and S. A. Dange, General Secretary of the AITUC, had unequivocally declared and pleaded that defence workers should also have full trade union rights including the right of strike.

Not counting the full services of 16,000 erstwhile ETE employees, mostly in ordnance depots prior to 1-8-1949 and superseding their claims to seniority in promotions and at the same time exposing them to be the first victim of any reduction in establishment was a serious problem and representations to the Government till now have proved futile.

Under the Standing Orders Act, 1946, the Draft Standing Orders for Ordnance Factories were considered by the certifying officer in the presence of representatives of ordnance factory employees' unions. The unions jointly rejected most of the provisions, but the Act as it was and the Standing Orders had to be certified.

Transfer of Technical Development Establishment (W)

from Jabalpur to Kirkee had created serious discontent amongst the workers there.

The Ordnance factories had a plan to declare about 4,000 workers as surplus.

#### **Lockout in G. S. Factory**

In the Gun & Shell Factory, Cossipore (West Bengal), there was upto now an overlapping shift system. It suited the workers for conveyance arrangements for coming and returning back from the factory. The total hours of work in a week were 44½. Suddenly the management announced that the shift timings will change, causing difficulty of conveyance to the workers and that working hours will be increased to 48 hours a week. It also caused apprehension among the workers about impending retrenchment. As the administration did not come out with a clear policy and made no arrangement for the conveyance of workers who will complete or come for night shifts; the 5,000 workers struck work on 31-12-1952. Subsequently the Government declared a lockout. After several big demonstrations of workers before the office of the Director-General of Ordnance Factories, he was forced to lift the lockout on 9th January, 1953, and give a guarantee that there will be no retrenchment as a result of the change in shifts and working hours.

#### **Announcement of High-power Commission**

An appeal to Members of Parliament was made on behalf of the UP & MP Ordnance Employees' Federation and MES unions regarding the above grievances and suggesting appointment of a commission to assess the men and material power in defence installations and their proper use in national interests for production of civilian articles in Ordnance factories. And the House of People echoed with this demand from all sections. The Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, who is also holding the portfolio of Defence, in these circumstances, announced on 26-3-1953, while replying to the debate on Defence grants in the House of People, the appointment of a High Power Commission to enquire into the working of Ordnance factories and its production for civil purposes in peace time. He also declared that pending this the surplus personnel will not be retrenched and work found for them. This for a very short time eased the situation.

#### **Unity Convention Preparation**

The unity convention which was to be held in the month of February 1953 did not come off because a section of the INTUC leadership did not endorse the unity proposals. In

fact even after the decision to hold a unity convention to merge the three federations into one, a conference of Ordnance employees' unions affiliated to the INTUC was held at Modi Nagar along with the 1953 INTUC session. But these struggles of the workers during this period which had brought in various unions of defence workers irrespective of affiliations nearer to each other and their results and the continued delay of the Government to announce their decisions on Kalyanwala Committee Report once again forced the Ad Hoc Committee to meet at Kanpur on April 11 and 12 1953. K. D. Banerji (Calcutta), C. B. L. Tewari (Kanpur) and B. N. Rajhans (Poona) attended. It was finally decided to hold the convention at Kanpur on May 23 and 24, 1953 and the management of the convention will be done by the Kanpur Defence Workers' Union affiliated to All-India Ordnance Employees' Federation, Calcutta.

### Hunger Strike At C.O.D. Jabalpur

On 21st April, 8 workers of C.O.D., Jabalpur, resorted to hunger strike before the depot gate against retrenchment of 197 workers from 16-5-53 along with 1362 surplus depot employees. The local Defence Employees' Committee comprising of all defence unions at Jabalpur guided it. An anti-retrenchment week was planned, wherein meetings at various installation gates were held and on the last day, i.e., 23rd day of April, all defence and some other workers of local civil unions took out a procession of about 10,000 workers of defence, Post & Telegraph, electric, tonga-riksha, etc., which paraded the city thoroughfares and held a mass meeting. On 28th May on the call of Defence Council 15,000 workers of defence, P. & T., mehtars of Jabalpur Corporation and Burn & Co. employees observed half-day tools down strike and full-day hunger strike. Even the shops were closed. A big procession and huge mass rally were held. Such mass mobilisation of workers and people had never happened in the history of Jabalpur trade union movement and it confirmed that all sections of people are hit by the economic crisis and in their common struggle they can be brought together on one platform. All defence unions with more or less similar problems, therefore, decided to give strike notice.

15,000 workers of six defence installations at Dehu Road Chinchwada, Talegaon also decided to go on strike from 1st May, 1953. Depots at Kanpur, Allahabad (Chheoki), Panagar, Delhi, Jabalpur, Pulgaon and factories in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh region also served strike notices.

The representatives of UP & MP Ordnance Employees' Federation and certain unions met Mr. H. M. Patel, the Defen

Secretary, and on his assurance of alternative employment, the hunger strike was broken on 29-4-52. The Minister for Defence Organisation also stated in the House of People on 29-4-53, that alternative employment will be provided to the surplus personnel.

### **Unity Convention, May 1953.**

Unity Convention of the Defence Federations was held at Kanpur on May 23 and 24, 1953. 500 delegates and observer delegates from all over the country participated. The All-India MES Workers' Union at this stage was not merged or affiliated, as it was not part of any of the three ordnance federations that were being merged. The urge for unity of defence workers, which had suffered so many attacks and set-backs, was fulfilled and the unions affiliated to INTUC, HMS and AITUC and independents joined hands in forming "All-India Defence Employees' Federation." The constitution was adopted and an agreed panel of office bearers were elected. Dr. Maitreyee Bose, (Calcutta) and S. M. Joshi, M.L.A., were elected President and General Secretary of the new Federation with HQ at Poona. An executive council of 33 members and office-bearers was elected. The parallel unions were directed to merge or retain only one union by mutual discussions within three months. A resolution against the policy of retrenchment, declaration of surpluses, victimisation, etc., was passed and it was decided that as a protest there would be a token strike of all defence workers on 30th June, 1953.

### **Decisions On Kalyanwala Committee Report Announced**

The organisational unity of the defence workers and their unity on future action had had its immediate effect and the Ministry of Defence immediately after the Convention, on May 26, 1953 through a press communique announced its decisions on certain recommendations of the Kalyanwala Committee.

The press communique agreed to make the Government's share in the contributory Provident Fund equal to the employees' as against 34th as at present. It accepted that a certain percentage (to be fixed later) of industrial personnel should be made permanent in each branch of the defence industry. It also granted gratuity to non-industrial personnel, who were previously called Extra Temporary personnel for their ETE service on the same scale as applicable to industrial employees, should they retire without being confirmed. The Government agreed to revise the piece work rates adopting the middle point of each monthly scale as reference

point and a guarantee to every skilled and semi-skilled worker to be paid Rs. 30 and Rs. 35 per month.

These decisions though to some extent good, by themselves did not touch the fringe of the present 'day problems'. The benefits to be accrued were in future, while on the pressing problems of the day even those within the terms of reference of the Committee, viz., leave to industrial persons and conveyance allowance, no decision was still arrived at. The General Secretary of the Federation in a press statement described it as 'unsatisfactory and disappointing' and said that this will not change the decision of 30th June token strike.

### Strike in Dehu Road Depot

Against the retrenchment of 900 workers, Dehu Road Ordnance Depot workers had to resort to spontaneous strike from June 1, 1953. The other installations in and around Poona and all over India supported the struggle. On June 1953, police lathi charged the workers and imposed a curfew through section 144 Cr. P.C. A few persons including S. Joshi, General Secretary, were injured. The strike was withdrawn unconditionally on 13th June, 1953.

### 30th June, 1953 All-India Token Strike.

In pursuance of the decision of unity convention all defence installations went on one-day token strike on 30th June 1953 against the Government's anti-working class policies regarding retrenchment, no counting of ETE service prior to 1-8-49, non-implementation of favourable recommendations of Kalyanwala Committee Report, and victimisation. 'No retrenchment' and 'unemployment will ruin the country' were the main slogans of the day. Even according to the Government statement in the House of People on 13th August 1953, 62 defence installations including 19 ordnance factories remained totally closed on this day.

This expression of solidarity after the organisational unity of defence workers in spite of the various threats and provocation of Mahavir Tyagi, Minister of Defence Organisation, resulted in virtual stoppage of retrenchment in defence installations for some time to come.

The General Secretary of the AITUC, S. A. Dange, was congratulating the defence workers on this bold lead, giving a call to all trade unions in the country to observe one-day token strike all over India against unemployment.

### **Bad Treatment in Factory Hospitals & Khammaria Incident**

Negligence on the part of factory hospital authorities, not keeping proper medicines, harassment etc., have been the common complaints in the past. In February 1953, at the Harness & Saddlery Factory Hospital, at Kanpur, the death of a driver had created serious agitation and one-day strike. In Muradnagar Factory Hospital similar complaints existed. In Military Hospitals generally civilians were considered as intruders and very often neglected even when suffering from serious ailments or accidents.

In Khammaria Ordnance Factory Hospital on July 20, '53, the wife of a worker named Kamle died, when he was sent to fetch the medicines from market. This agitated the workers very much and they tried to meet the Superintendent of the Factory on 21st and 22nd July to request for proper investigation of the case, but instead, the police and military were called, workers' lathi and baton charged. There was a scuffle for some time but the union and federation leadership reached the spot and handled the situation very calmly.

Suddenly next day the authorities arrested about 100 workers which resulted in a strike in the factory the following day. The All-India Defence Employees' Federation also intervened but the situation again took a worse turn when Ram Prasad, a factory worker detenu, died in the jail on August 4, 1953. All this time Khammaria was just like a besieged city, terror reigned and the police freely arrested anybody on whom they could lay their hands specially union activists and democrats who supported their cause. 44 workers are under suspension since then and police case against 32 is going on in the special court.

To collect mass signatures against this act of the Government, collect funds for the cause of the victims and express protest on the call of the Executive Committee of the Federation, 27th August, 53 was observed as 'Khammaria Day' by all defence unions throughout India.

### **Victimisation at Panagar**

A Joint Secretary and a member of the Executive Committee of the Panagar IAOC Depot Workers' Union were discharged from service summarily.

### **Recognition Rules**

Though no formal amendment in any of the rules was made, in the recognition letters of defence unions one more condition was imposed, i.e., no discharged or dismissed em-

ployee will be permitted to remain as office-bearer of a cognised union. In the Council of States, while reply supplementaries to a question, Satish Chandra, Defence Minister, confirmed that no new unions will be permitted to have among its office-bearers dismissed or discharged employees. Thus through this rule victimisation by the employer was sought to be confirmed by the workers' union, also under the pressure of withdrawing recognition, which is against the spirit of the Trade Union Act, 1926, which permits even non-employees to become members and office-bearers.

### **August 1953 Executive Meeting & Negotiating Machinery**

The Minister for Defence Organisation met the representatives of the All-India Defence Employees' Federation on August 4, 1953 and offered a negotiating machinery. Defence workers did not press for their right of strike. Executive Committee which met on that afternoon welcoming setting up of a permanent negotiating machinery, unanimously rejected surrendering the right of strike. Demands were repeated before the Minister but without avail.

### **Again Retrenchment**

Retrenchment in Central Ordnance Depot, Jabalpur (50 persons) and 505 Command EME Workshop, Delhi (50 workers) was faced by the unions and on the agitation, it was postponed. Surendra, a worker of 505 Command Workshop EME, Delhi Cantonment, on getting retrenchment notice committed suicide, seeing the bleak prospect of life of the unemployed before him. In Agrawal Ordnance Depot, 1,000 workers were declared surplus. On unions' strong attitude, only 400 were declared surplus.

### **Utilisation of Labour Welfare Funds**

There are very many complaints in which Labour Welfare Fund is being utilised in the various defence establishments. Works Committees which have the head of the union as Chairman and half their members being nominated, the remaining either elected or nominated by the union. In Ambernath Ordnance Factory, Ordnance Depot, Kurbasti, and 505 Command Workshop EME, Delhi, irregularities in spending thousands of rupees were brought to the notice of authorities. In the latter, on November 1953, workers refused to pay anything to the fund till the report is published and it was only after pay boycott and demonstration, that this was accepted by the authorities.

### Works Committees

In all factories, depots and workshops, the works committees under the Industrial Disputes Act are functioning. In MES, Works Committees are almost non-existent except recently some have been constituted at a very few centres like Jabalpur and Panagar. The interference of the authorities generally through Labour Welfare Officers in the annual elections of the 50 per cent members of the Works Committees has been the common feature. Bypassing the unions, even where union has got more than 50 per cent membership is another trouble. The machinery to settle such disputes is very very slow.

### MES Unions Join Federation

Negotiations for the merger of the branches of All-India MES Workers' Union and other MES unions was going on since unity convention. The growth of MES unions specially after 1949 has been very uneven—there were some station, some area, some provincial or command and one all-India union. The necessity of reorganising these unions was rightly felt. The delay occurred because of the federation leadership insisting on this reorganisation first taking place outside the federation and the new unions to be affiliated to the federation, MES unions wanted affiliation and reorganisation under the aegis of the Federation. However an agreement was arrived at between S. M. Joshi, General Secretary of the Federation, and K. G. Srivastava, General Secretary of the All-India MES Workers' Union and in the convention of all-India MES workers' unions held at Jabalpur on November 3 and 4, 1953, the agreement was ratified by which All-India MES Workers' Union was dissolved, new area unions were formed and the Federation affiliated them, where necessary, even without registration. In this convention for the first time after the disruption of the 1948 MES Conference, all MES unions gathered at one place and besides considering their particular problems took the above organisational decision. Resolution on no retrenchment, no victimisation, no annual medical examination and confidential report, no trade test, no militarisation of MES civil cadre, no 24 hours duty for Chowkidars, recognition of trade unions, provision of accommodation, compiling of service code, implementation of Kalyanwala Committee's favourable recommendations, May Day holiday, amendment in Workmen's Compensation Act, permanency of industrial personnel, etc., were passed.

### Stay in Strike in Harness & Saddlery Factory, Kanpur

The Government had as yet not made up its mind about the functioning of Ordnance factories during peace time. The



taking not to join any trade union. This lock-out cost the national exchequer about Rs. 50,000 in the shape of pay and allowances of officers and other expenses during this period and loss of production.

Chatterjee remained on leave for 3½ months and joined duty at Bhusawal on the advice of the Federation executive. The case for the payment of wages for the lock-out period is pending in the court.

### **Kanpur Defence Workers Oppose US-Pak Military Pact**

On 29th of December, 1953, 8,000 defence workers in Kanpur paraded the streets shouting slogans against the US-Pak Military Pact and in a meeting thereafter pledged their whole-hearted support to Nehru Government in this respect and assured services for the defence of the country against any aggression. It was a united day and representatives of the three political parties, viz., Congress, Communist and Socialist, supported the defence workers in the meeting.

### **New Deal**

The issue of defence industry, its role in national defence and the conditions of workers in this vital industry has crossed the limit of isolation in the cantonments and a closely guarded secret to one where people had started taking interest in it. The number of questions on this subject, adjournment motions and short notice questions had this year definitely increased and the parliamentary debates on defence grants also showed that now more people were interested in the problems of defence, specially because of the changed international situation. The agitation of the defence workers outside had also helped focusing attention.

The Defence Ministry, therefore, started its war of propaganda by publishing a very nicely printed booklet with fine get up with the title *New Deal for Defence Civilian Workers* in December, 1953. It was a compilation of the decisions of the Government of India on the recommendations of Kalyanwala Committee Report, with a foreward by Mahavir Tyagi, Minister for Defence Organisation, stating that the "Government have gone very far to meet their (defence workers) wishes" and that their present terms in these (leave and holidays) respects are already much more favourable than in private industry and hoping that as a result defence workers "will increasingly rely on Government to look after their genuine interests, inspired by the spirit of friendliness and trust."

The only notable announcement in this brochure was re-

garding new leave rules of industrial workers. 5 days' casual leave on full pay and 10 'days' full pay leave on medical certificate was added to the existing entitlement of leave, which was yet not uniform in various branches of the department. The anomalies in the pay scales of certain categories, which affected a very small minority were removed. As in the case of Central Pay Commission report, Gadgil Committee Report, so here also attempt was made by remedying injustices in the case of a very small percentage of the workers; leaving the bulk as they were, or worse and thus to create division among the workers. The problem of revision of pay scales as suggested by K. N. Subramaniam, one of the members of the Committee, implementing equal pay for equal work in the case of MES and CPWD workers, conveyance allowances, holidays, etc., are still pending. The percentage and the method about permanency of industrial workers is also hanging fire.

#### **Mounting Discontent Among Defence Workers— General Strike on Agenda**

From the above it has been seen that though in ordnance factories and MES, there has not been any retrenchment but declaration of surpluses or giving notices and then withdrawing after the agitation by the workers has been taking place all the time.

In ordnance depots and EME workshops actual notices of retrenchment were served but the workers' vigilance, agitation and struggle forced the authorities to either temporarily withdraw or provide alternative employment to these workers. In addition reversions, have taken place also in these installations, reducing wages from 10 to 50 per cent. In ordnance factories though it is said that civil work to the extent of 112 lakhs has been received during this year, idle time of the workers has increased and the average earning of piece rate worker is about 50 per cent. With more and more work being given to the contractors, in MES workers are being spared, brought on the muster roll payment system of day to day basis for some time and then taking a legal position that being casual employees, their services are no longer required.

In ordnance depots the fate of 16,000 ex-ETE employees, because of not counting their services prior to 1-8-49, is sealed and great discontent prevails.

As stated in the preceding para the favourable recommendations on Kalyanwala Committee report have been buried. The scheme of making industrial workers perma-

ment is as usual being abnormally delayed and yet the method of making permanent and the percentage is under consideration. Grant of PTO claim, all-India liability allowance, conveyance allowance are not expected to be even considered in the near future.

Quarter rent has actually increased from the original rate of 3½ per cent of pay to 15 per cent of pay.

Though it is said that for national reconstruction and even proper working of the ordnance factories sufficient technical personnel are not available, the existing skilled persons are being used on vocational jobs. Recently 120 machinists from Ordnance Factory, Kanpur, and Rifle Factory, Ishapur, were transferred to Harness and Saddlery Factory, Kanpur, to do the job of net making.

The cases of victimisation of trade union activists are not only not considered but fresh cases of victimisation, harassment, hindrances in holding trade union meetings in Cantonment and near working place are increasing.

Medical facilities are almost non-existent and in Factory Hospitals very inadequate and negligent.

Naturally in the face of the threat of unemployment, cut in wages through reversions and the total absence of any social security and security of service, the defence workers have for the time being almost forgotten their demand for revision of pay scales and dearness allowances, in spite of the pinching dearness every day.

Negotiating machinery, which was promised in the August 1953 interview and was expected to function in October 1953, to which the defence workers had thought they will refer all these matters, did not come off.

### **High Power Commission for Re-organising Ordnance Factories**

On 26th March, 1953, the Prime Minister had agreed to appoint a High Power Commission to examine how best these factories can be utilised for production of articles of civil production. The defence workers had demanded a representative of the Federation to be included on the Commission.

On 1st December, 1953, in reply to a question by Hiren Mukerjee in the House of People, the Deputy Defence Minister stated that the chairman of the Commission will be Sardar Baldev Singh, M.P., ex-Defence Minister, while other members' names will be announced later and that no representative of the Federation will be taken.

In reply to a supplementary question by him as to why

the experience of the actual workers in regard to the utilisation of plants is sought to be ignored, the Prime Minister stated that "in the task of examining their working and bringing in the civil element in it, if I (Prime Minister) may say so, apart from the workers even the managers are not good enough by themselves. They can be consulted. So, outsiders are going to be appointed including technical advisers who will consult the workers, managers and others."

Actually in the month of January, 1954, the Constitution of Ordnance Factories Reorganisation Committee, with a view to advise the Government on the production of greatest number of specialised stores required by the defence services in the shortest possible time in these factories and at the same time so to re-organise production as to utilise any surplus capacity that may become available from time to time, owing to fluctuating defence demands, for the production of stores required by other civil departments of the Government and private industry, particularly of stores which the ordnance factories are specially fitted to produce, was announced. The following is the personnel of the Committee, which is to submit a preliminary report to the Government within three months, to be followed by a final report later, if necessary :

*Chairman :*

Sardar Baldev Singh, M.P. (ex. Defence Minister).

*Members :*

1. P. C. Mukerji, Ex-General Manager, Chittaranjan Locomotive Workshops (now General Manager, Eastern Railway).
2. S. L. Kirloskar, Director & General Manager of Kirloskar Oil Engines Ltd.
3. S. Vaish, Chartered Accountant of M/s. S. Vaish & Co. Kanpur.
4. S. J. Shahaney, Asst. Director-General of Ordnance Factories will act as the Secretary of the Committee.

As is clear the primary object of this Committee is to devise ways and means to speed up production and utilisation of the men and machinery for production of articles for civilian consumption is, and up till now, a secondary consideration, when basically the problem before the ordnance factories in India during peace time is how to keep them working in national interest.

As stated earlier while British imperialism is interested in seeing to it that India does not become self-sufficient in her

defence requirements and for that purpose is working through its British superintendents of ordnance factories, advisers and lackeys; sections of the Indian bourgeoisie had its own side-interest of getting this industry or part thereof denationalised, and at least to see that the products of the heavy and modern machines and highly skilled work in these factories, (if done on mass scale and with proper adjustments) does not come out in the market to compete with their products of which there is a total monopoly in their hand and therefore a source of unlimited profit.

Defence workers saw through this game and insisted on their representative being taken on the Committee, threatening otherwise to boycott it and produce another report of their own after a convention of technical workers. They agreed even to nominate a highly technical man or man of eminence in the scientific and economic world as their representative, but the Prime Minister in his interview on 8th April, 1954, did not agree. How could he?

#### **Feb. 10-11-12 Executive Meeting and February 26**

##### **A. I. Demands Day**

When the Executive Committee of the Federation met at Khammaria (Jabalpur) on February 10, 11 and 12, 1954, strike ballot was on its agenda. But in view of the international situation—specially the danger on the border of our country as a result of U.S.-Pak Military Pact; the defence workers finally decided to approach the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, personally and at the same time place before the people and explain to them that the country cannot be defended from any danger with the current policy of the Government in remaining dependent on foreign support of our requirements and discontented defence workers. For this and to strengthen themselves it was decided to observe February 26, 1954 as "All-India Demands Day."

#### **Prime Minister's Interview on April 8, 1954**

The President and the General Secretary of the Federation had an interview with the Prime Minister Nehru on 8th April, 1954. Of the five demands, viz., implementation of Subramaniam's Recommendation in the Kalyanwala Committee Report; no retrenchment; counting of ETEs service from 1-8-49; inclusion of a full-fledged member of the Federation in the Ordnance Factories Re-organisation Committee; and setting up of a standing Negotiating Machinery; all but the last one were totally rejected. The Prime Minister promised to issue orders for setting up standing Negotiating Machinery,

of which proposals have been sent for Federation's comment and is discussed in the subsequent paragraph.

### Observance of Corps Days

Observance of Corps days (Army Ordnance Corps & E.M.E.) in which money is spent from the Labour Welfare Fund or is collected from the workers and is squandered in feting the high officials, their wives and guests was challenged by the civilian defence workers at two places. In Shakabasti Ordnance Depot, though money was collected from the workers, they were not permitted to participate in the celebrations. On shouting slogans of protest after the working hours and outside the gate, these workers were beaten up with lathis, batons and whatever came handy which caused serious injuries to many. Next day on 9-4-1954 all the workers struck work for one hour but when going to duty on the advice of the General Secretary of the Federation, who had earlier a talk with the Commandant of the Depot, 105 workers were marked absent. The Deputy Defence Minister's intervention, which was immediately sought, proved of no avail. On the contrary in the Parliament he even denied beating and injuries.

In 505 Command Workshop, E.M.E. Delhi, E.M.E. Corps Day was celebrated on 1st May, 1954. The workers objected to the forcible collection of 12 annas per head for this day and more than 2,000 workers expressed their protest by observing complete fast on 8th April, 1954. The workers demanded reduction of expenses so as to bring down subscription of civilian workers to annas four only, and completion of programme in the noon, so as to enable the workers to participate in May Day meetings and processions and catch shuttle train in time and offered to co-operate in the management, so that the discrimination between the officials and the workers in a social gathering is minimised. The administration refused to agree to any of the points and, on the union boycotting the day, held it surrounded by hundreds of military men.

### Struggles

2,000 C.O.D. Workers of Delhi marched on foot from Serai Rahila Station to COD (on 20th April, 54, morning) a five mile distance protesting against over-crowding in the shuttle train. From next day the number of bogeys was increased from 5 to 14.

506 Army Workshop E.M.E. Workers' Union, Jabalpur, has given notice of strike from 16th May, 1954, if the two victimized workers are not reinstated within this period.

In E.S.D., Panagar, when workers reported excess issue

of stores to a contractor, they were chargesheeted. On the workers' demand for enquiry, the President, Vice-President and General Secretary, of the Union were transferred. Having refused intervention by the Labour Commissioner, Bengal and Assam M.E.S. Workers' Union decided to go on sit-down strike from 26th April, 1954. The authorities bent down, cancelled the transfers of the President and General Secretary, withheld the charge sheets and set up an enquiry into the incident.

In Gun and Shell Factory, Cossipore, the Union because of the new orders for booking idle time is apprehensive of retrenchment and has in a communication to the administration sought clarification of the orders.

Four workers of Harness and Saddlery Factory, Kanpur, went on hunger strike from 21st April, 1954, against down-gradation and change of trade from skilled to unskilled on the pretext of there being no work. The demand was supported by all defence workers who took out processions from their respective installations on 26th April and held a mass rally to support the demands of hunger strikers. S. S. Yusuf, Vice-President, All-India Trade Union Congress, and Raja Ram Shastri, General Secretary of Hind Mazdur Sabha, spoke in the rally and supported the demands. On 28th April, three more workers and on 29th one old citizen of 80 years joined the hunger strikers. One hour token strike in all defence installations on the 28th April was postponed on the telephonic assurance of Assistant Director General of Ordnance Factories. The hunger strike was called off on 1st May, 1954 after eleven days on the assurances of Director General of Ordnance Factories to consider their demands.

### Standing Negotiating Machinery

The proposal, it is learnt, is to have negotiations at three levels—the lowest at installation level, the middle at HQ level and the top at the Ministry level.

Individual cases are banned for discussion and matters on which agreement is reached and the others on which agreement is not reached will not be raised again for two and one years respectively.

Whatever the merits and demerits of the proposal, one thing is obvious. And that is that it does not have any provision for cases on which the Federation and the Ministry of Defence do not agree. All this time the defence workers were made to wait for a machinery through which the demands which have either been rejected or are kept pending for years will find some solution.

## Conclusion

The Prime Minister speaking on the Defence Budget grant this year confirmed in the House of People on 25th March, 1954 that "our Defence Forces have practically been built up anew, of course, they were built up on the old (British) foundations, it is true."

Further discussing the pattern of our Armed Forces development he stated :

"Now, I referred to the pattern of our development which, necessarily, has to be on the old lines, unless we scrapped the old lines and started afresh. . . . Now as we had so far adopted the British pattern in our Army organisation, it was natural for us to continue that. It was good enough."

He praised the services rendered by the British and foreign officers in these terms :

"We have had till recently a senior officer as adviser, he is leaving in a few days and a very good adviser he has been. . . . I should like to say—and I say so—from personal experience, not only those two senior officers that we have had in the Army, Navy and the Air Force have done us exceedingly well, and I should like to express my high appreciation of the loyal way and the efficient way in which they have worked for us."

Praising the good machinery that we have in the defence organisation he went on "Naturally, the persons responsible for it are many senior Indian Officers and others who are in charge, but *in a good measure*, more especially in the Navy and the Air Force, *a great deal of credit for that must be given to the British Officers who have helped us during these years*" (*emphasis ours*).

He takes a pride in saying that "the growth of defence industry in this country has been particularly satisfactory."

Though the number of British officers during this period has come down but still the key posts are either held by them directly or as advisers or in the alternative, there are British trained personnel who have up till now refused to think otherwise. Link up with the Commonwealth and the Sterling Bloc are bound to have effect on the industry. Our Army, Navy and Air Force officers go for training to UK and cannot think of any other pattern of arms and organisation except British. This dependence specially after the US-Pak Military Pact is likely to prove quite dangerous.

Though in the UK the Royal Ordnance Factories pro-

duce civilian consumer goods during peace and become self-sufficient during war, our foreign experts have not given and implemented this piece of advice. Every year the amount spent in the purchases from the UK, the USA and other European countries is increasing. A sum of Rs. 7,57,04,000 has been budgeted in 1954-55 for purchases of stores in England against Rs. 4,58,51,000 last year.

After seven years of independence as far as self-sufficiency in defence requirements is concerned, we are virtually where we started. The machines are lying idle and men are being declared surplus and retrenched. How much attention is being paid to build up modern defence industry will be evident from the fact that while Rs. 4,64,00,000 have been surrendered from the Defence Capital Outlay, in 1953-54, only a paltry sum Rs. 25,00,000, was spent on industrial development and for current year a sum of Rs. 1,25,00,000 has been allotted. The Five-Year Plan as no allotment for the industry. The Machine Tool Prototype Factory at Ambarnath, which was declared open with so much publicity in 1952 is still not complete. In the 20 ordnance factories only 39 highly skilled personnel have been employed, out of which 19 are in Rifle Factory, Ichapur, alone. 11,806 are skilled personnel out of total 54,024 employees.

The industrial workers of not only ordnance factories, but all defence installations are still temporary. Security of service is always at stake and the ghost of unemployment is always hovering round them. Ordnance depots and EME workshops have no estates, a small section of non-industrial employees of the MES are only provided shelter, and all the ordnance factories also have no estates and the factory estates that exist have not sufficient quarters. The rent is increasing. Though the Shahaney Report has been severely criticised by N. Subramaniam in the Kalyanwala Committee Report as scientific and irrational, the same pay structure is continued even now. The defence installations are generally far off the city but no conveyance allowance has been approved and even the cheap transport system mentioned in the Kalyanwala Committee Report has not yet been provided. Contractor's system is being increased and even the normal maintenance work is being given to the contractors and MES workers spared. Not counting of ETE service prior to 1-8-49 of 16,000 employees has rendered them junior and exposed for reversions and reductions. In the matter of leave, holidays, working hours, permanency and contributory provident fund, discrimination has been made between industrial and non-industrial workers. The new leave rules are not being properly

implemented in MES. Recoveries on account of arrears of contributory provident fund are taking away 50 per cent of wages from MES employees. Trade tests are being used as a weapon to victimise and declare honest employees inefficient. The policy of militarisation of civilian cadre in MES and of gate-keepers in ordnance depots and EME workshops is, besides robbing Peter and paying Paul, will affect the efficiency and cost extra expenditure to the State.

Negotiating machinery is yet a hoax. The Reorganisation Committee of the Ordnance Factories is cooking its report. The skilled workers are being made to forget their trade.

Newer methods are employed to attack the workers and victimise the active trade unionists.

The defence workers have taken a lesson from disruption in their ranks and were the first in the Indian trade union movement to bring 2,50,153 workers belonging to different shades of opinion and religion and unions affiliated to different trade union centres and of political thought into one organisation. The success of the 30th June, 1953 strike has helped cementing their unity and activated and created many new units. The few concessions from Kalyanwala Committee Report regarding contributory provident fund, leave rules, permanency in principle, gratuity for non-industrial employees, revision of piece work rates, removal of certain anomalies in pay scales could be snatched only through struggles beginning from September 52 and united agitations. Upgrading of Poona area from 'C' to 'B'; checking mass retrenchment and drawing the attention of people towards this industry are some of the achievements during this period. Since February 1954, the All-India Defence Employees' Federation has started its monthly organ *Defence Worker*.

The functioning of the Federation Central Office needs improvement.

Strengthening the trade unions and Federation organ, cementing the unity and an uncompromising stand for defence of the workers' rights and interests will enable them to meet the offensive against their service and living conditions. Efforts to democratise the functioning of trade union organisation should be continued. In the fight for the defence workers' demands, mobilising of public opinion on the concrete suggestions for improving and expanding defence industry to suit the present day demands of national defence is very essential.