

at Muzaffarpur in the near future with a view to mitigate the inconvenience to the employers and workers, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. VENKATA REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The provident fund authorities have reported that the proposal for opening of a Sub-Regional Office at Muzaffarpur, is under consideration and that it would be placed before the Central Board of Trustees at their next meeting.

Representation from West Bengal Tea Employees' Association

1500. SHRI SONGDOPAL LEPCHA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the representation dated 27-7-80 has been received from West Bengal Tea Employees' Association, Jalpaiguri, for amendment of Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 so as to cover those employees with income upto Rs. 1000/- under the scheme in view of the reduction in purchasing power of the rupee; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. VENKATA REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Various proposals for amendment of the Gratuity Act, 1972 including amendment of the salary limit are under consideration. The suggestion of the Association will be given consideration while taking decisions on the proposals.

Tripartite Conference on Beedi Industry

1501. SHRI PATTIAM RAJAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Tripartite Conference on Beedi Industry was postponed twice; and

(b) whether Government proposes to convene the meeting in this regard, if so, when?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. VENKATA REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The meeting is being convened early in January, 1981.

Issue of Provident Fund Pass Books to Employees

1502. SHRI N. P. CHENGALRAYA NAIDU: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Provident Fund pass books are proposed to be issued to employees contributing the Employees Provident Fund Scheme on an experimental basis in selected areas;

(b) if so, the broad outlines of the proposal; and

(c) how far this is likely to improve the working of the said organisations and benefit the contributors?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. VENKATA REDDY): (a) to (c) The Central Board of Trustees of Employees' Provident Fund at its 86th meeting held on the 13th and 14th October, 1980 decided that a scheme for issue of pass books be prepared by the Central Provident Fund Commissioner in consultation with the Chairman of the Regional Committees of Delhi, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh where it is proposed to be tried on an experimental basis. The Board felt that the issue of such pass books will benefit the contributors by having with them a running record of their account.

Delay in Payment to Retiring Officers

1503. SHRI NAND KISHORE BHATT: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to refer to the reply to Unstarred Question 504 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 1st August, 1980 and state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the amount of under-payment to retiring officer involved in the case was about Rupees three thousands and his Ministry took about nine months to settle the case;

(b) whether any action has been taken to fix responsibility for the delay so that such inordinate delays do not recur; and

(c) if so, whether there are any other such cases of underpayment and delay in settlement of accounts of retiring officers and what steps are being taken to ensure that the retiring officers are paid their dues expeditiously?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. VENKATA REDDY): (a) Yes.

(b) No individual official can be held responsible for the delay.

(c) Similar cases of delay have not come to notice and retirement benefits are granted to retired employees as expeditiously as possible.

Lockout in Bennett Coleman and Co. Ltd.

1504. SHRI BHOLA PRASAD: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bennet Coleman and Company Limited, Bombay has lately declared a lock-out in their establishment at Bombay;

(b) whether it is also a fact that as a result of lockout, the Times of India (Bombay) and other journals were closed down;

(c) if so, the details in this regard; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to intervene and to see that the lock-out is lifted?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. VENKATA REDDY): (a) to (c) According to the information received from the Government of Maharashtra, which is the appropriate Govern-

ment in so far as the labour management relations in the establishments of Bennett Coleman and Company Limited are concerned, the Company did not declare a lockout. There was, however, a stoppage of work in the establishments from 6th October, 1980, consequent upon the strike of a group of workmen from 1st October, 1980. The daily newspapers viz., The Times of India (English), Navbharat Times (Hindi) and Maharashtra Times (Marathi) did not appear from 2nd October to 21st October. Evening News and Economic Times were published intermittently in a limited number between 2nd October and 6th October. All other periodicals also of the group viz. weeklies, fortnightlies, etc. were also not published during the period from 2nd October upto 21st October.

(d) The dispute was resolved at the intervention of the Minister of Labour and the Chief Minister. The strike and closure were lifted from 19th October, 1980.

National Insulated Cable Company of India

1505. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Insulated Cable Company of India Limited (NICCO) has acquired Alfred Herbert India Private Limited, by taking 40 per cent interest in the latter from the parent company in the UK;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that the Alfred Herbert (India) Ltd., is under liquidation;

(c) what are the terms announced by liquidators Alfred Herbert Limited of UK for the disposal of its 40 per cent interest in the Indian Company;

(d) whether the Government of India and the UK Government have agreed to the deal; and

(e) if so, what are the details in this regard?