

THE PROBLEMS FACED BY 'CONTRACT LABOUR'

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ABSTRACT

The authors of the paper analyse the problems faced by 'contract labour'. They find that the contract labour lacks the power of negotiation and contractor exploit their workers by creating the fear of the sack amongst them. It also discusses the trade union are suck powerful institution that enable the labourers to fight for their rights. Finally some suggestions for minimize their exploitation to some extent on the one hand and reduce their sense of insecurity on the other hand.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'contract labour' is generally used for those workers who are engaged to perform a specific work for some stipulated period. This term is frequently used among the third world countries. In this process, labour is engaged through a middleman (contractor) who supplies the labour to his owner/master/employer for some fee. Many restrictions are often imposed on such workers (encyclopedia. Com)

Contract labour faces numerous problems and some of these problems are interrelated. An attempt would be made to enumerate these problems one after another. Infact their problems form a burning issue and nobody including the Government can turn a blind eye to this issue. It has to be clearly understood that the employer/master and the labour do not have a direct link. The master/employer, the middleman (contractor) and the labour are linked through a triangular relationship. This indirect relationship becomes the root cause of many problems faced by the contract labour.

KEYWORDS: - Contract labour, Employer, Exploitation, Middleman, and Work place

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the main problems faced by the contract labour is the problem of surplus labour. Due to the ever increasing population, the supply of labour exceeds its demand. As a result, the number of labourers in the labour market far exceeds their number of earlier times. All the sectors, namely the primary, the secondary and tertiary sector are adversely affected by this problem. The supply of labour exceeding the demand of labour directly indicates the deteriorating conditions of the labourers. The result of the surplus labour is that the contract labour lacks the power of negotiation. One of the reasons of this situation is the absence of trade unions. The trade unions are such powerful institutions that enable the labourers to fight for their rights. An individual by himself is weak but backed by the strength of the trade union, he can make a fight of it. When they stand united, they can resist exploitation, raise their voice for their rights and ask for better facilities. In this way, trade unions become implicit strength of every individual. But contract labourers are neither members of any trade union nor do they have their separate trade union. Consequently they suffer and are exploited.

Even this has been observed that contract labourers do not feel quite secure like the permanent labourers. They are always afraid of losing their job. In fact the dark clouds of uncertainty are always hovering over the heads of contract labourers. They are employed for a particular period. On the completion of the stipulated work, the time period of their work can either be extended or they can be removed from the job. Their wages are far less than the wages of permanent labour. As a result of drawing meager salary, the condition of their households is very pitiable. It is not possible for them to make both ends meet, as a result the entire family including the children have to work so that they can survive and barely manage to sustain themselves. It has also been noticed that no facility of any kind is provided to contract labour. There are many departments where the arrangements of the facilities are made as per the requirement of the job. But the contract labourers do not enjoy even the basic facilities.

Contract labour does not have the facility of canteen and the facility of rest rooms. In case a person gets injured at the work place, it is very essential to make provision of first aid, but the contract labour do not have access to even this facility. If the provision of all these facilities is made, there would be improvement in the work and efficiency of

the contract labour. Most of the contract labourers belong to the weaker section of the society. Consequently they have low level of literacy. Poverty and illiteracy together keep them in the dark about the laws framed by the government for the labour class. These economic and the social constraints keep their desire confined to two square meals a day. Their ignorance makes them vulnerable victims of exploitation. They are exploited by master middlemen. Invariably they prefer to live close to their workplace. But the conditions of that place is generally horribly disgusting. The entire family is cooped in one small room, along with their children, that implies that they have no privacy even from their children. They are made to work more because they happen to be living close to the work place that is also another ugly face of exploitation.

They are promised that they would not be made to work for longer duration, but the ground reality turns out to be completely different. The duration of their contract is sometimes stretched and their temporary stay gets prolonged. Their own ignorance and illiteracy generates the illiteracy of their children as well. Their children, like them, are not aware of the importance of education. The poor financial condition compels the house-holds to use the services of their children to enhance the family income. The young children are caught in the net of child labour. None of these children or very few of them go to schools. Most of these contract labourers are unskilled. They never got any chance to hone their skills. As they are unskilled they are in no position to procure good work. No government can remain blind to the plight of contract labour. After all they are an effective part of the national work-force.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The Government must put in sincere efforts to improve their lot. First of all the parity between the permanent labour and the contract labour should be established. They should be given the same salary, allowances, facilities and leave etc. as the permanent labour. This step would be double edged. It would minimize their exploitation to some extent on the one hand and reduce their sense of insecurity on the other hand. This would bring remarkable improvement in their work and resultantly the production of the company or the firm would improve.

Secondly, it is essential to make education compulsory for their children, they should be enlightened about the value of education and gradually they can be given

vocational training. This way they would have a loftier vision than their parents. They would not be limited to only making both ends meet. It is possible that they would venture in greener pastures. Skill training is essential to enhance the value of a person in labour market. Some attention must be paid to their dwelling units as well. The approach should be more humane and considerate. In case of injury at the work place, the provision for adequate compensation should be made. Our system is a welfare system, so capitalistic tendency of making maximum profit at the cost of human working conditions must make room for provisions of better working and living conditions, healthier surroundings and educational facilities.

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