

CHAPTER XIV.  
ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

POPULATION AND DENSITY.

The total population of the district according to 1951 Census is 19,37,210 out of which 9,81,264 are males and 9,55,946 are females. The corresponding figures for the year 1941 were 17,51,339 (total population), 8,79,543 (males) and 8,71,796 (females). The district has an area of 7,016 square miles, and the density per square mile of the district as per 1951 Census figure comes to 277. The density per square mile according to 1941 Census was only 250. It will thus appear that the pressure on land has increased during the course of the decade. The average density of population per square mile over the Chotanagpur plateau is 327. On comparison of the density figures of the different districts of the State, it appears that Hazaribagh has the lowest density, except Palamau and Ranchi, where the density is 200 and 260 per square mile respectively. The density does not appear to be high calculated on the total area, including mountains and ravines, which are not fit for either agricultural or industrial exploitation. But if only the cultivable lands and the areas capable of industrial development are taken into consideration, and this is the only basis for assessing the economic capability of a region, it will be found that Hazaribagh, as also the other Chotanagpur districts, is over-populated. One may say that in that sense the Chotanagpur districts are more over-populated than the districts in the plains of Bihar. The cultivable area in the plateau region as a whole is below 35 per cent of the total area, while it is well over 65 per cent in the plain area.

CLASSIFICATION OF AREAS.

The following is a statement showing the classification of areas (in thousands of acres) in Hazaribagh district during 1950-51 :—

Forest	...	...	...	21.62
Net available for cultivation	...	...	...	4.18
Other uncultivable land excluding current fallow	...	...	...	4.09
Current fallow	...	...	...	5.33
Net area sown	...	...	...	9.49
Total area of the district	...	...	...	44.71*
<i>Bhadai</i> crops	...	...	...	2.85

\*The discrepancy between total area in square mile and total area in acre of the district is due to the difference between the cadastrally surveyed areas and the area reported by the Surveyor-General in the whole State of Bihar. There is difference of 221 thousand acres in Bihar, so this led to discrepancy in the figures of Hazaribagh also.

Aghani crops	...	...	...	8,16
Rabi crops	...	...	...	92
Fruits	...	...	...	3
Potato	...	...	...	10
Vegetables, including root crops	...	...	...	7
Total area sown	...	...	...	12,13
Area sown more than once	...	...	...	2,64

It will appear that out of a total area of 44,71,000 acres, the area covered by forests alone is 21,62,000 acres. The total area sown is actually much less than the area covered by the forests. When the actual area sown only is taken into consideration, the pressure on land will appear to be quite appreciable. So far as Chotanagpur is concerned, the configuration of the land is an important factor in determining the course of agricultural or economic development.

#### FOREST.

The forests play an important part in the economic life of the district, are valuable national asset, and the State has naturally found it necessary to adopt special measures in the wider interests of the country to preserve the forests from reckless destruction. The immediate economic needs of the population and the preservation of the forests in the national interests are, however, somewhat conflicting. From the Land Revenue Administration Reports it appears that the *raiyats* found it hard to reconcile themselves to the reservation of forests and to the restriction of the rights imposed on them. As a matter of fact, working in forests for collecting timber, fire-wood and leaves has always remained a subsidiary occupation of a considerable percentage of the rural population of the district. Forests also have provided a grazing ground for the cattle. In Chatra subdivision especially the poorer class of people of Hunterganj, Simaria and Pratappur pice-stations, depend for their living on roots known as *sarai*, *gaithi* and *tana*, which are found in abundance in the forests. It may perhaps be said that in all seasons the jungle produce does supplement the fod supply of the poorer sections of the locality.

A progressive forest policy is bound to interfere in the national interest with the short-sighted individual needs of an economically backward population.

#### OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION.

Regarding the occupational distribution of the population, it appears that out of a total population of 19,37,210, the strength of the rural population is 18,04,084, and that of the urban population is 1,33,126. The predominantly rural character of the population of the district

remains an outstanding fact. If the figure of the agricultural population is taken it will appear that the overwhelming preponderance of agriculture among the occupations has to this day remained unaffected. Agriculture still continues to be the principal means of livelihood of by far the largest section of the people. The total agricultural population of the district according to 1951 Census is 16,50,708 (8,22,075 males and 8,28,633 females). The number of persons engaged in production other than cultivation is 1,23,377; the number engaged in commerce is 41,115; the figure for transport is 10,902 and the number of persons engaged in other services and miscellaneous sources is 1,05,103.

#### ECONOMIC LIFE.

The Annual Land Revenue Administration Reports help in drawing a picture of the economic life of the district since the publication of the last District Gazetteer of Hazaribagh in 1917.

During the year 1916-17 in parts of the Chatra and Sadar subdivisions, on account of unequal rainfall, the outturn of the winter rice had suffered. There was no organised immigration into the district. The coal mines, generally, were unable to work at full pressure due to shortage of labour as the local population kept aloof from the coal and mica mines owing to good harvests.

In 1917-18, although the *bhadai* crop was damaged by excessive rain, the winter rice was a very good harvest, and the year was, on the whole, one of agricultural prosperity throughout the district. Owing to the War and other reasons, prices of many commodities had shot up. The high price of cloth, kerosene oil and salt told heavily on the people. It is reported that the price of salt at one period during the year rose as high as 4 annas per seer in some parts of the district. After timely intervention by the Government to ensure adequate supplies, Sambhar salt began selling in the district from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 pice per seer and Liverpool salt up to 2 annas per seer. The average price of a pair of ordinary *dhoties* had risen from Rs. 2 to Rs. 6, and that of a pair of ordinary *curtains* from Rs. 3-4-0 to Rs. 6-12-0. The good outturn of the winter rice crop combined with the increased wages for labour, however, helped the agriculturists to tide over the difficult situation. The group of people with small fixed income was seriously affected by the abnormally high prices. The Subdivisional Officer of Chatra had observed on the material condition of the people of his subdivision as follows:—

“The people of the subdivision are chiefly dependant on agriculture and the collection of forest produce, such as lac, catechu, *vahua*, *sabai* grass, etc. On the whole, the material condition was fair, for though the *bhadai* crop

failed to a great extent, the paddy harvest was an excellent one. I say the condition was fair only owing to the very high prices that have been demanded during the year for salt and cloth. The condition of the aboriginal population is much worse than that of others; this is invariably the case where any considerable number of Hindus live amongst them as here. "

The year 1918-19 may be described to be a period of exceptional economic distress. Owing to the War (1914-18) the prices of certain indispensable commodities chiefly cloth, kerosene oil and salt reached to unprecedented height, while those of food-grains underwent violent oscillations. The material condition of the people, on the whole, was not good. A long break in the rains in July followed by heavy rains in August caused the *bhadai* crop to be a partial failure. Again, the total cessation of the rains about the middle of September caused the failure of the paddy crop. The *mahun* crop which supplied about 3 or 4 months' food to the poorer classes was partially affected by rains and hail in March and April. The crops in Giridih subdivision were slightly better than those of the rest of the district. Steps were taken to stimulate public charity and circles were formed for the distribution of gratuitous relief through non-official agency. Work was provided by the distribution of land improvement loans on a generous scale and *locari* loan was distributed for the purchase of seed for the next crop.

The general health of the people was very bad during the year. There was a virulent epidemic of influenza followed by pneumonia. The District Board and the Municipalities took such steps as were possible to counteract the epidemic by the distribution of medicines and appointment of additional doctors, but the epidemic was so unusual that only a fraction of the cases could be treated.

During the year E. I. Railway and B. N. Railway collieries at Bermo, however, continued to develop. Some small collieries started work which gave some employment to some of the able-bodied rural population. Giridih collieries raised heavy quantities of coal. Messrs. Bird and Co. opened out the South Karanpura coal-field near Ramgarh. The survey work for the extension of the B. N. Railway from Bermo to Karanpura was in progress. The output of coal in the district increased from 4,85,110 to 15,69,732 tons during the year. Mica mines were also very active. The output increased from 22,289 to 28,770 cwt. and the number of persons employed rose from 13,722 to 20,397. The demand for mica, however, declined with the cessation of hostilities. The lac trade in the Sadar and Chatra subdivisions continued to be brisk.

During the early part of the next year (1919-20) also, the material condition of the people was distinctly bad owing to scarcity, high prices and the outbreak of cholera. The local dealers had combined to raise the prices of rice and other food-stuff and the control of food-grains was taken in hand by the State. Circles formed for the distribution of gratuitous relief through non-official agency continued to do good work. Employment for the labouring classes was provided by the distribution of land improvement loans on a generous scale. *Taccavi* loans were distributed for the purchase of seeds. The situation began to improve after the *bhadai* harvest in September and a bumper rice crop following in December and January brought a great relief. The *mahua* crop, the stand-by for the poorer people for 3 or 4 months, had partially failed. The general health of the people was on the whole better than in the previous year.

The joint E. I. Railway and B. N. Railway colliery at Bermo and the G. I. P. Railway colliery at Kargali and some collieries at the Karanpura coal-fields continued to develop. Local prices of mica recovered from the depression which was apparent during the latter part of the previous year. The Chotanagpur Banking Association with its branches did business on an extensive scale. Coarse cloth was woven throughout the Chatra subdivision on hand-loom and had ready consumption. Large quantities of catechu were made in this subdivision and exported.

There were hardly any radical changes in the economic condition of the people in the following one or two years. As is usual with an agricultural economy based on undependable rainfall, heavy rains in the early part of the monsoon during 1920-21 proved disastrous to the *bhadai* crop and complete cessation of rains in September seriously affected the winter-rice and *rabi*. There was a considerable increase in the cultivation of lac and the high price of lac prevailing in the year compensated to a large extent losses in other directions. *Mahua* crop was also good. Prices ruled high, but on the whole, were lower than during the previous year. The condition of the labourers was, on the whole, satisfactory. Local demand of labour due to the opening of new enterprises brought emigration to a standstill. Development of a few collieries owned by the various Railway Companies continued. *Charkha* spinning was stimulated by Non-co-operation Movement. Coarse cloths manufactured in Chatra subdivision were locally consumed as well as exported. Forest produce was also exported from the district.

The year 1921-22 was, on the whole, one of agricultural prosperity, but prices generally continued to be high, and the condition of the

*raiya*t was much the same as in the previous year. The price of cloth remained probably as high as it was in the preceding year. The general health of the people was fair. The development of the coal-fields of the district continued. Three collieries were working at Bermo. The labour in the Giridih mines went on strike on several occasions. The strikes were due chiefly to political causes and were encouraged by the preaching of non-co-operation.

The mica market was dull and many of the mica concerns had to close down. A railway line was in course of construction from Bermo along the Damodar Valley towards the coal-fields in Palamau. During this year the land required for this line and for a railway colliery at Swang near Gomia was under acquisition and there was a considerable opposition to its acquisition by the *raiya*t.

During 1922-23 the material condition of the people was found to be improving. The economic development of the district had led to a greater demand for labour and higher wages. There was a bumper rice crop. Public health was, on the whole, good.

The development of the coal-fields in the district made considerable progress during the year. In the Bokaro-Ramgarh area two new sites were selected for railway collieries at Jarandih and Sawang. The acquisition of the Sawang colliery for the E. I. Railway and B. N. Railway was practically complete and the acquisition of Jarandih for the B. B. and C. I. and M. and S. M. Railways was going on. In the Karanpura fields prospecting operations on a large scale were carried out on behalf of Messrs. Bird and Co. and on behalf of the Railway Board. The results were very favourable and it was expected that within a few years ten or fifteen collieries at least would be working in the vicinity of Ramgarh. The road from Dumri to Nawadih was extended to Gumiya and a survey was made for a road from Gumiya to join Hazaribagh-Ranchi road near Barhi. Survey was also made for a road from Giridih to join the Grand Trunk Road. The mica industry had some signs of revival during the year. The lac trade did not have the same boom as in the previous year. The export from the district of *sabai* grass to Calcutta for the manufacture of paper marked an increase. Forests were ruthlessly exploited in spite of steps taken by the Government to check it. Ramgarh Ward's Estate reserved a few square miles of forest in this year.

During 1924-25 as a result of the bumper crop, the third in succession, and of the unprecedented demand for labour, the agricultural and labouring classes had economic prosperity. The *bhada*i crop was comparatively poor, but the loss was more than counter-balanced by the bumper rice crop. It was, however, felt that the increase in the

wages paid to labourers had not increased their efficiency, but on the contrary, there was a general complaint that they worked shorter hours. The labourers spent a large part of their income on drink and on marriage feasts. A noticeable feature of the general prosperity was seen in the building of a large number of *pucca* houses both in the urban and rural areas. A Co-operative Bank was established in Giridih, and this institution was helpful to the agriculturists for finding loans. Unfortunately, the loans taken were not always spent on the proper purposes.

The development of the coal-fields of the district continued. The railway from Bermo to Hesla was completed. A number of collieries in Karanpura area were opened up. Another important item for the future economic prosperity, the construction of the joint railway and road bridge across the river Konar was taken up. The work was done by the B. N. Railway and the District Board contributed one and a half lakh of rupees towards the cost. The acquisition of land for the construction of the Hesla-Chandil Railway, so far as it lay within the district, was almost completed in this year.

The general health of the workers in the mines of the district was good. Most of them were employed in the Giridih and Bermo coal mines of which 4 out of 5 are owned by the railway companies. Steps were taken for proper housing of the employees and the supply of water in these mines. Each mine, moreover, maintained a dispensary and a primary school. The year was one of good crops, and consequently, there was the usual difficulty in obtaining an adequate supply of labour. The wages of labourers were higher than that of the previous year.

In the mica mines women were generally employed in splitting mica in the factories, in cleaning debris and removing earth. In the coal mines they were employed both on the surface and underground on such work as carrying coal and earth, loading and unloading wagons, filling coal tubs and assisting the masons. In the Giridih subdivision the *kamiauti* system still thrived. According to this system labourers were almost linked up indiscriminately with the land-owner for some money advance, given to their forefathers or some lands gifted. Once a *kamia* or a labourer on no wages was always a *kamia*. There is nothing particular now about *kamiauti* system which has practically died out. It is, however, difficult to accept the theory in the Administration Report that the average *kamia* appeared content to remain in the bondage which he had voluntarily accepted. There were efforts to establish weaving of coarse cloth as a cottage industry, but the move had failed as it was not a paying proposition.

The next two years, 1925-26 and 1926-27, were years of general prosperity. The paddy crop was good. The wages of labour remained high. Emigration to the tea gardens was extremely dull. Co-operative Societies were formed and were affiliated to the Central Bank at Giridih. The spread of these societies no doubt helped to break up the *kamiuti* system. Public health in the district was good except for a few cases of small-pox in certain localities.

The years also saw progress in the construction of the Barkakana-Chandil and the Barkakana-Daltonganj Railways, which were thrown open to public traffic in 1926-27. Work had already been started in the Argada colliery of the B. N. Railway and the Sirka colliery of Messrs. Bird and Co. The depression in the coal trade interfered largely with the development of private collieries. The receipts from cess on mines fell far short of the estimates. As a result of this, the District Board was unable to carry out some of its most important projects. The mica trade was slack, as there was not much demand from abroad. The produce of lac was better although the market was dull. There was a surplus stock of lac in the stock of the dealers. The supply of labour was generally sufficient and the wages were almost the same as in the previous year. The liquor shops had flourished as before as a big percentage of the income of the labourers was spent there.

There was a slump in the general prosperity during 1927-28. There was a partial failure of the paddy crop. *Rabi* crop was partly damaged by insect pests and inopportune rain. The prices of staple food crops showed a tendency to rise. The depression in coal and mica trade was continuing and telling heavily on the finances of the District Board which abandoned all original works of road construction. The Public and Private Carriers both for passengers and goods had a rapid increase in number and damaged the roads and it was a problem for the District Board to maintain the roads in proper form. There was a total failure of lac crop in the Chatra subdivision and this was to some extent responsible for the scarcity existing amongst the poorer classes. The scarcity recorded a rise in the incidence of emigration from the district to Assam Tea Estates.

The same economic trends continued in 1928-29 and 1929-30. In 1928-29 the railway line between Barkakana and Daltonganj was completed and thrown open to public traffic. A traffic survey by the Agency of E. I. Railway Administration for a line of railway from Hazaribagh Road to Hazaribagh Town was carried out. The expansion of motor bus and lorry traffic continued and there were regular services to places like Gaya and Dhanbad. The expansion of the railway and road traffic heralded future expansion of trade and industry.

The main economic feature in the subsequent few years was a general depression due to plenty of food supply and a rapid fall in the prices. The abnormal fall in the prices of food-grains affected those agriculturists who depended on cash to pay rents and for other expenses on the sale of the agricultural produce. Cultivators were finding it difficult to sell their stock. Owing to trade depression, the industrial areas were not able to provide sufficient work for the labouring classes though the wages of industrial labour in coal and mica areas continued to be the same as in the preceding year. The incidence of emigration to the tea gardens, however, fell. The decrease was probably due to the cheapness of food-grains. During these years the expansion of motor bus traffic continued resulting in further deterioration of roads. The finances of the District Board continued to be in a bad way on account of the depression.

The price of lac fell so low that hardly any lac was grown except in Gomia and Peterbar areas. The depression in the coal and mica mining industries still continued. In spite of the Kamanti Act, the *kamanti* system still prevailed. The depression also hit other indigenous industries chiefly to be found in the Chatra subdivision, namely, the manufacture of shellac, catechu, brass utensils, iron implements, wooden hair-combs, and the weaving of coarse cloth. There was a heavy slump and a substantial reduction in the purchasing power of the people. A large number of mica mines were closed and the coal mines were also working short time throughout the year 1931-32.

The depression is shown in the deterioration in rent collection, which fell from 49.01 to 41.5 per cent in the Encumbered Estates. In the Government estates there was a corresponding drop from 94.1 to 91.86 per cent. The wage level of the labourers had an abnormal fall. The daily wages of an agricultural labourer varied from 2½ to 4 annas in terms of cash. Other labourers were getting about 3 to 4 annas. In the coal mines the wage of coal cutter fell from about 8 annas a day three years ago to about Rs. 1-8-0 a week. There was a surplus of labour supply exceeding the demand. There was a large incidence of unregulated emigration of seasonal character to Burma and Bengal. There was a contraction in rural credit and the basis of credit was being converted from cash to grain. This was due to lack of money income.

The restriction on coal mining continued and the despatches fell from 22,39,373 tons in 1932 to 21,14,720 tons in 1933. The contraction was accompanied by a further fall in wages. Mica, however, showed a little improvement. Export increased in quantity by 15.4 per cent and in value by 19.21 per cent, which shows not only increased demand, but a slight rise in prices. A number of mines re-opened during the

year. The increase was mainly in splitting and scrap mica. The total value of mica exported during the year was Rs. 33,12,657 against Rs. 27,78,972 in the previous year.

Some signs of economic relief were, however, seen in 1934-35. Though the rice crop suffered in Sadar and Chatra subdivisions, the *bhadai* and winter rice, the sugarcane and *rabi* crops were good. The price of rice was 12 to 13 seers per rupee during this year as against 16 seers in the previous year. The food supply was plentiful and the tendency of the price level to rise was a good index. The wages of agricultural labour, however, remained at the same low level. In mica industry, however, the improvement continued, and there was increase both in the number of workers and the rate of wages. Coal also recorded an improved business and there was more employment but the wages continued to be the same, that is, about 4 annas a day. There was also some labour trouble in Giridih coal-fields. Rent collection improved which meant that there was more of paying capacity in the cultivating *raiya*s. The settlements of the Excise shops had good bidding in mica and coal mines area.

The despatch of coal during the year increased from 21,14,720 tons to 24,15,086 tons in the previous year. The wages, however, did not record any perceptible improvement. Mica showed an appreciable improvement. The increase was seen particularly in splitting and scrap mica. The total value of mica exported during the year was Rs. 53,06,841 against Rs. 33,12,657 in the preceding year. During winter season the price of lac was Rs. 20 to Rs. 35 as against Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 in the preceding year.

The same trends were continued in the next year (1935-36). There was a favourable rainfall and the outturn of *bhadai* and the winter rice crop was not bad. The price of rice fluctuated between 12 to 13 seers per rupee. Food supplies were sufficient and the prices showed a tendency to rise. The wages of agricultural labour, however, did not record a rise. There were encouraging signs in the collection of rent, Government Estate collection increased from 94.0 to 96.63 per cent and in Wards and Encumbered Estates from 57.5 to 66.7. The opening of Ramgarh, Bokaro and Karanpura coal-fields had a healthy influence in breaking up the old *kamiauti* system which was prevalent in those areas during the time of Survey and Settlement operations (1908-15). The labourers had a good avenue for employment in coal mines. The mica mines and factories also afforded employment to a large number of labourers. So far as coal is concerned, there was a decrease in the despatch of coal from 24,15,086 tons in 1934 to 23,53,708 tons. Mica, however, showed some improvement. Exports during the year both in

output and value increased by 8.01 per cent and 19.2 per cent respectively. There was no improvement in the shellac market in Chatra subdivision. Manufacture of iron washers, chairs, buckets, trunks and utensils by a factory at Hazaribagh was closed. A sum of Rs. 18,000 was advanced by the Government this year for works on village improvement schemes. There was no extension of railways during the year. Government sanctioned a sum of Rs. 87,900 and Rs. 1,04,500 for the construction of two bridges, viz., Gulli Bridge on Chauparan-Chatra road and (2) Jamunia Bridge on Dumri-Bermo road. The number of motor buses plying on the road increased from 57 to 61, but the number of taxis decreased from 44 to 37.

The two principal industries of mica and coal had a revival during the years 1937-39. The wages remained almost stationary showing an increase by 5 per cent or so in certain areas. The despatch of coal in 1935 was 23,53,708 tons, but in 1936 the despatch came upto 24,46,347 tons. In 1937 there was a slight decrease in the despatch of coal which fell to 23,93,668 tons, but again in 1938-39 it shot upto 31,65,010 tons. There were more enquiries for good quality mica from abroad. The exports in mica in 1936-37 showed an increase in quantity by 42.4 per cent and in value by 21.5 per cent. In 1936-37 there was a further increase of exports in mica in quantity by 13.08 per cent and in value by 22.9 per cent. In 1938 the exports of mica increased in quantity by 33.99 per cent and in value by 14.48 per cent. The other important industry of Hazaribagh district, namely, shellac, however, did not show much improvement in any of these three years. The supply of labour in the town and in the collieries of mica-fields was sufficient. There was an improvement in collection of rent. The number of emigrants was negligible. The outturn of the crops was satisfactory. The price of rice varied from 11 seers to 14½ seers.

The amended Chotanagpur Tenancy Act came into force in 1938-39, and the condition of the tenants improved considerably. Illegal exactions from the tenants started disappearing. There was a small strike in a mica factory in Giridih in 1937-38, which was, however, controlled immediately. The demand of labour in coal and mica mines gave a death blow to the *kamianti* system. The relationship between the landlords and tenants was generally good.

Mica trade received a violent oscillation in 1939-40. In the beginning of the year, there was a very heavy demand for mica due to the War. This led to a larger employment of mica labour in the mines and more output. But towards the end of the year, there was restriction on the export of mica leading to a great slump in the trade and a large number of people was thrown out of employment. This year

showed a decrease in the despatch of coal which fell to 31,34,659 tons. The export of mica decreased in quantity by 5 per cent, but increased in value by 16.6 per cent. It may be noted here that the owners of the mica mines and the middle men reaped a good profit although the labourers were not benefited at all. As a matter of fact, as has been mentioned, many of them were thrown out of employment towards the end of the year.

Rent Reduction and Bakast Restoration Acts were promulgated and acted upon giving considerable relief to *raiyats* all over the district. Reduction to the extent of even ten annas to a rupee had been made. The landlords induced the tenants to effect compromise at higher rates in appeal stage.

But as is usual with the shifting trends of trade in an abnormal period marked by war, the depression in mica trade was liquidated in the very next year (1940-41). The Central Government controlled and made larger purchases of mica. The labour position became better as the military camps at Ramgarh and other places absorbed a large number of labourers and artisans. The prices of rice and other necessaries of life showed an upward trend, but price control measures were taken quickly by the Government, and profiteering was checked to a great extent. There was a rise in the level of wages.

Owing to the Second Great War, the prices of all the commodities including food-stuff went on soaring in the next two years and price control measures by the State had to be tightened. The crops in the years 1941-42 to 1946-47 were not good. There was, however, a good demand of labourers in mica, coal and other industries in the district. The wages of agricultural labour also started moving up along with the wages in mica and coal-fields. The general condition of the agricultural population was not very prosperous in spite of some of the sympathetic tenancy measures, such as reduction of rent. The price of agricultural implements and plough cattle showed a disproportionate rise along with the high prices of the essential commodities.

The despatch of coal recorded an upward tendency. In 1944-45 the quantity of 34,20,154 tons of coal were despatched against 23,46,394 tons in the preceding year. Mica mines were worked at full pressure to ensure regular supply of mica to the Government. Factory work was extended and mica splitting as a home industry had a windfall. In 1945-46 the exports of mica had increased in value by 16 per cent. Charcoal business, particularly in Chatra subdivision, moved up owing to a heavy demand by charcoal gas plant in motor lorries due to the scarcity of petrol.

The economic trends did not fall into a set pattern owing to abnormal times. This was apparent when in 1946-47, in spite of the crops not being good and the agricultural wages and the wages prevailing in mica and coal mines being at the same high level, and in spite of a short supply of labour due to the difficulty of finding food-stuff on a liberal scale, there was a tremendous increase in the despatch of coal. This year 42,35,964 tons of coal was despatched as against 32,48,824 tons in the preceding year. The mica merchants and particularly the middlemen reaped a rich harvest, as the export of mica during 1946 increased in value by 90.5 per cent.

Although the outturn of the *bhadai* and winter rice crops was better on the whole in 1947-48, than in the preceding year, the prices remained at the same high level. There was no dearth of employment for labour in mica and coal-fields, and there was, consequently, no appreciable emigration. Wages of agricultural labour as well as the workers in the collieries and the mica mines remained at a high level. Agricultural wages varied from 12 annas to Re. 1, while in the mines it was from Re. 1 to Rs. 1-8-0. There was a lesser quantity of coal despatched during this year and the export of mica in value had also decreased by 27.04 per cent. As petrol became available, the charcoal business in Chatra subdivision had a depression. All the forests were taken over under the Bihar Private Forest Act. A new mineral, beryl, was discovered in Hazaribagh district.

The over-all position of the tenants and of the agriculturists could not be said to be prosperous. Along with a high level of wages, the prices of commodities were equally high and affected particularly the classes of fixed income groups. The condition of the industrial labour, however, was better, because industrial labour was getting more and more increase in wages. Coal recorded an increase in despatch in 1948-49. Export of mica decreased in value by 48.2 per cent during the year 1948.

During the following years 1949-51, the material condition of the people and particularly of the non-agriculturists could not be said to be very satisfactory. It is, however, true that a very small per cent of the population, namely, the big agriculturists were benefited by the high prices of food-grains. The price of rice varied between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  seers to 2 seers, and there is no doubt that much of the high prices were engineered by the stock not being released by the big agriculturists. Government had to intervene by introducing a Paddy Levy Scheme by which the stock of the big agriculturists was attached at a reasonable price. Other price control measures were also adopted. So far as the crop position is concerned, the outturn was not bad, although it could

not be said to be very satisfactory. The outturn of sugarcane crop was good. The daily wages of the labourers varied from 12 annas to Rs. 1-8-0. There was an increase in the level of wages in the mica mines which varied from Rs. 1-8-0 to near about Rs. 2-8-0, and the earnings of the collieries were generally a bit higher. The high rise of the prices of food-grains and other necessities of life badly affected the labourers and the people of smaller income group. The rise in the price of plough cattle and daily necessities of life counteracted the benefits. Despatches of coal fell in 1949-50, while the export of mica increased in value by 217.9 per cent. More coal and mica mines were worked and the wages had increased by more than 200 per cent over the pre-war level.

In 1951-52 there was a slump in the mica trade and many people in mica trade were thrown out of employment. In this year the crop position was not satisfactory and some parts of Sadar subdivision and the whole of Chatra subdivision had to be declared scarcity area. Measures were taken to provide relief to the distressed people, and a large amount of *taccavi* loans and other loans were distributed. In spite of slump, there was an increase in the level of wages in the mica and coal fields. The average daily earnings in mica mines varied from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a day, and as usual, the earnings of the collieries were slightly higher. On the whole, the percentage of collection on current demand of the three Government Estates in the district was 93.12 against 97.79 in the previous year. In the Wards and Encumbered Estates the percentage of current collection on current demand was 88.9 against 69.1 in the previous year. The relationship between the landlords and tenants continued to be generally satisfactory.

During the year a sum of Rs. 19,40,000 was allotted to the district for Minor Irrigation Schemes. As many as 708 Minor Irrigation Schemes were taken up including the old schemes of the preceding years. All old schemes were completed in the year.

In 1952-53 Chatra subdivision had a fairly good harvest. The outturn of *bhadai* and winter rice crops in the other parts of the district was not bad. During the first part of the year, the prices of essential commodities ruled high, but in the latter part, the prices showed a downward trend. The wages of the agricultural labourer and the industrial labour in the mines continued to be as before. There was a better level of collection of current demand in the three Government estates. In the Wards and Encumbered Estates the percentage of collection of current demand was 77.3 per cent against 88.9 per cent in the previous year.

On the whole, it cannot be said that the economic condition of the people had improved particularly due to the high prices of foodgrains and the other necessities of life. There was a certain degree of tension between the employer and the employee in the collieries and the mica areas. The whole of Giridih subdivision was declared to be a scarcity area in May-June months of 1952-53, and gratuitous relief had to be given in certain areas. Construction of roads and Minor Irrigation Schemes gave some relief to the hard manual workers. A large number of Minor Irrigation Schemes were completed. There was also distribution of *taccavi* and other kinds of loans.

There was not much of variation in the trends of the economic condition in 1953-54. In Chatra subdivision there was some improvement in the material condition of the people on account of a fairly satisfactory yield of *bhadai* and of *kharij* crops. The slump in the collieries and in the mica business continued. The prices of food articles came down due to good crops and rice was again available in plenty in every market. The wages of the labourers either engaged in agriculture or in the collieries remained almost the same. The relationship between the landlords and the tenants continued to be generally satisfactory. The tenants in some of the villages which were notified under the Land Reforms Act were being dissuaded by the outgoing landlords and their agents from paying rents to the Government. The situation was tactfully handled by persuasion, and, in some cases, by executive action. For the amelioration of the condition of the people, Government had allotted a sum of Rs. 72,000 to the district under the Land Improvement Loans Act in 1953-54. Another sum of Rs. 3,00,000 was also allotted to the district under Agriculturists' Loans Act. A sum of Rs. 5,00,000 was allotted to the district for minor irrigation works. 272 Minor Irrigation Schemes were taken up including the old schemes of the preceding year, out of which 153 schemes were completed. There is no doubt that but for the availability of this money, the condition of the common man would have further deteriorated.

The year 1954-55 was characterised by partial failure of paddy crops, slump in mica and retrenchment of labourers in the collieries and in mica factories. There was hardly any change in the wage-level. The over-all picture of the economic condition was not substantially different for the better.

This year also an amount of Rs. 5,26,000 was made available for distribution under the Agriculturists' Loans Act. A sum of Rs. 1,11,000 was allotted under the Land Improvement Loans Act. The entire amount was spent during the year. The liberal allotment of Rs. 6,00,000 made it possible to take up 436 minor irrigation schemes including the old schemes out of which 252 schemes were completed.

One of the aids to agriculture since 1949 has been a certain amount of State aid every year for the reclamation of waste lands. The cultivable waste lands of the district were near about 5,00,000 acres in 1947-48. Since 1949, land improvement loans have been particularly distributed for the reclamation of waste lands. The following are the figures of land improvement loans distributed for reclamation of waste lands from 1949-55 :—

				Rs.
1949-50	...	...	...	80,350
1950-51	...	...	...	62,065
1952-53	...	...	...	46,060
1953-54	...	...	...	58,520
1954-55	...	...	...	1,05,040

There has been a steady and substantial reclamation of waste lands in the district with the help of these loans.

As the agricultural economy in the district of Hazaribagh is essentially dependent on rainfall, Government have encouraged the construction of Minor Irrigation Projects, such as *bundh*, *ahars* (water reservoirs), etc. This scheme has made a great progress. From 1948-49 to 1952-53 about 1,988 Minor Irrigation Schemes have been constructed at a total cost of Rs. 39,59,781. The area likely to be irrigated as a result of these schemes will be in the neighbourhood of 39,769 acres of land. In the area peopled by others than the aboriginals, half of the cost of the project is realised from the persons benefited. As a special case, Government have exempted the aboriginals from this contribution. Among the other measures taken for the immediate relief of the tenantry, mention may be made of the amendments to the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in order to give the *raiya*s more substantial rights than what they had before in respect of the lands held by them as settled *raiya*s. A special legislation was enacted for the speedy disposal of *bakast* disputes through Arbitration Boards. This measure known as Bihar Bakast Dispute Settlement Act, 1947, has had good results. Another beneficial measure was the Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act, 1947, which conferred on the landless labourers and artisans the same rights in their homestead as are enjoyed by *raiya*s under the Tenancy Act. The passing of the Land Reforms Act and the consequent vesting of the estates and tenures in the State is a revolutionary measure. It abolishes the many intermediaries between the State and the tiller of the soil. The Government policy is very broad-based, and the sole aim is to improve the condition of the cultivators. It is contemplated to spend 2½ per cent of the collection on works of improvement for the benefit of the tenantry. In 1953-54

under this head an allotment of Rs. 1,70,095 was entirely spent on the desilting of tanks, completion of irrigation projects, construction of wells and roads and improvement of bazars. In 1954-55 the amount similarly spent was Rs. 1,45,455-12-0.

Another measure recently taken to stop the economic exploitation of the aboriginals from the hands of the money-lenders has been the opening of grain *golas*. When one remembers that in this district out of a total population of 19,37,210, the number of scheduled castes is 2,15,722, that of scheduled tribes is 2,67,552, and that of backward classes is 2,07,925, the need for such an institution is very apparent. So far 58 grain *golas* have been opened in the district. The Gram Panchayats manage 25 of them, while the rest are run by the Thana Welfare Officers. Seed grains are distributed on loan from these *golas*. By this scheme the *mahajans* have been hard hit, and their rate of interest has considerably fallen. Government have also decided that every family of Harijans in the district should be provided free of rent with 0.05 acre of land for homestead and 5 acres of land for agricultural purposes. This scheme is already being implemented. During 1954-55, 384.41 acres of land have been settled in Chatra subdivision with 167 persons. In Sadar subdivision 228.55 acres of land were settled with 177 such families. In Giridih subdivision 2,606.19 acres of land were settled with 1,512 families.

The Bhudan Movement was inaugurated in Hazaribagh district in 1954-55. More than eight lakhs acres of lands had been donated in the district and this is the largest contribution from one particular district in the whole of India. The movement introduced by Sri Binova Bhave is an all-India movement and calls upon the land owners to donate a portion of their lands to be ultimately distributed to the landless labour.

The wage-structure through the different years has been indicated. It will be seen that wages have generally been linked up with the prices of the essential commodities. There have been rise and fall in wages for the industrial labour due to increased demand for labour in the mica and coal-fields. The wage-structure of the agricultural labour has not had that type of incidence of rise as in the case of the industrial labour. The daily cash wages of an unskilled labourer in Hazaribagh district was 3 annas in 1916, and at the close of our review (1954), it was not less than Rs. 1-8-0. Similarly, the daily wages of a blacksmith, or that of a carpenter, in 1916, was 4 annas but they were near about Rs. 2-8-0, or even more, in 1954. The daily wages of a ploughman was near about 3 annas in 1916, and this was slightly above P. 1 even in the rural areas in 1954.

In April, 1952, there was some inquiry into the current rate and its incidence on agricultural wages. The venue selected was village Lipda. The normal working hours for the carpenters, blacksmiths, cobblers, field labourers were calculated to be near about 9 hours a day. Wages were found to be given both in kind and in cash. The cash equivalent of the wages for the average carpenter or a blacksmith was Rs. 1-12-0. The total wages in cash for a cobbler was found to be Rs. 1-8-0, while that of the field labourers Re. 1 only. All these rates were in respect of males. In the case of females and children, the rates varied and were much less. Woman labour was usually available for agricultural operations only. Woman labour was also utilised for collieries elsewhere, but later, the employment of woman and child labour for underground work was prohibited by legislation.

The industrial workers in mica and coal-fields form an important feature for this district. As described before, an important industry in the district is the mining industry consisting mainly of mica and coal. Nearly 69 per cent of the total production of mica in India comes from the district of Hazaribagh alone. There are near about 500 mica mines employing approximately 40,000 workers when there is no slump. Before the actual export of mica, there have to be extensive dressing, sizing and other processes. For this processing there are about 200 mica factories distributed throughout the district. Regarding coal mining industry of the district, there are about 60 coal mines working and producing near about 30,00,000 tons of coal. The average number of persons employed daily in coal mines was 36,272 in 1951, 34,431 in 1952 and 34,227 in 1953. The Giridih group of collieries alone owned by the Government of India, Ministry of Production, employ near about 9,000 persons daily. The bulk of the industrial labour in the collieries depends to a great extent for their wages on the fluctuations of the market. During depression, the wages of a coal-cutter fell from about 8 annas a day to about Rs. 1-8-0 a week. The opening of a number of coal-fields in Ramgarh area has definitely contributed towards the breaking up of the *kamianti* system and for doing away with the necessity of emigration.

The economy of the district is largely dependent on mica industry for another reason. Splitting of mica is essentially a cottage industry, which absorbs the leisure hours of the agricultural labourers and all the women and children dependent on agriculture. The reasons for the fluctuations of mica business are stock-piling and an unfortunate craze for supply of bad quality mica during the war boom. Now mica from Hazaribagh district has to stand the competition of other countries which have developed their mica industry. The Mines Act (1952)

controls the rate of wages of labour in mica mines. There are now proper regulations and rules framed under the Act as well as under Mines Maternity Benefit Act and Rules, Workmen's Compensation Act and Rules, Mines Creche Rules, Payment of Wages Act, etc. The Minimum Wages Act and Rules are now applicable to the mica factories.

In the very recent years the district has received a new look by the manifold activities of the Damodar Valley Corporation, which has opened up a series of multi-purpose dams for irrigation and the supply of electricity. The energy now available is bound to have beneficial results for the cottage industries. The Community Project Schemes and the development programmes have brought an integrated approach to the problem of rural development as an organic whole. The district of Hazaribagh is bound to play a very important part in the near future with the several dams, power stations, thermal station at Bokaro and the series of Community Development Schemes. There is going to be a factory for the manufacture of explosives at Gomia which will also be a help towards the industrialisation of the district. While agriculture will continue to remain the main occupation in the district, the industrial projects will, no doubt, absorb a big percentage of the skilled and unskilled labour of the district and will tend to raise the economic standard as a whole. The district has an abundance of resources, and there has been a beginning to utilise a large number of them.