

(H) EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS

Employment

The monthly unemployment figures published by the Labour Department in the Ceylon Labour Gazette refer to the total number of registrants for employment and better employment enrolled with the Employment Exchanges. There are altogether 24 Employment Exchanges and 42 Registration Centres to serve the country. These Exchanges and Centres are mostly situated in urban areas and as such the registrations may not reflect the employment position in the country. Due to this and other obvious reasons the number of registrants fall far short of the number unemployed and therefore is not a good indicator of the latter. A rough idea of the magnitude of discrepancy can be got by noting that in 1960 the number of registrants on the average were 151,000 while the number unemployed according to an estimate provided by a sample survey conducted with the assistance of the I. L. O. was 340,000. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that the number of registrants can be made use of for the purpose of studying the change of unemployment over a period, if incidences of unusually sharp increases in the number of registrants could be correctly interpreted.

During the first four months of 1965, the number registered for employment was almost stagnant; but during the remaining months the number started increasing steadily and sharply. The near stagnation during the early part of the year was possibly due to active involvement of the population in the general election. The explanation for the subsequent sharp rise is not very clear. It can probably be due to expectations of a better deal from a change of government, for there were similar instances in 1948 and 1956 when there were large increases in the number registered immediately after the Elections.

There was a 20 per cent rise during 1965, in the number of registrants. The comparable figure for 1964 was 7 per cent. The largest rise with an increase of 34 per cent was in the category of "technical and clerical" which includes dispensers, foremen, photographers, clerks, etc. The increase in the number of registrants in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled grades were 12, 27 and 10 per cent respectively. These percentages may be compared with the corresponding figures of 6, 3 and 8 for the year 1964.

The Table II (H)-1 shows the number of persons placed in employment in recent years by the Labour Exchanges.

TABLE II (H) 1

The Number of Persons placed in Employment and their relative importance to total Registrants in each category

Year	Technical Clerical	%	Skilled	%	Semi- skilled	%	Un- skilled	%	Total	%
1956	1,913	11.9	845	8.6	1,565	6.1	4,162	12.1	8,485	9.9
1957	1,176	6.3	709	5.3	1,180	3.8	3,053	6.4	6,118	5.5
1958	1,827	9.2	800	5.9	1,006	3.1	2,251	4.4	5,884	5.0
1959	1,667	8.0	1,045	7.5	1,275	3.8	3,218	5.4	7,205	5.6
1960	1,400	5.3	771	4.6	1,247	3.6	4,744	6.5	8,162	5.4
1961	1,259	4.6	631	3.5	964	2.8	2,794	3.9	5,648	3.7
1962	1,263	3.7	468	2.7	809	2.3	2,315	3.5	4,857	3.2
1963	1,322	3.7	502	3.0	836	2.3	2,466	3.9	5,129	3.4
1964	1,722	4.4	535	3.1	945	2.5	3,599	5.5	6,801	4.3
* 1965	1,498	3.1	846	4.5	1,039	2.4	3,730	5.3	7,113	3.9

Source: Department of Labour

* Provisional

Though there was a slight increase in the number provided with employment by the Labour Exchanges in 1965, its ratio to total number registered was less than the corresponding figure for 1964.

Employment in the Public Sector

In an inquiry conducted into changes in employment in the public sector during 1965, the Central Bank was able to obtain data from 51 per cent of the Government Departments and 82 per cent of the semi-government institutions. The latter group included the Government Corporations, the Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank and the institutions like the University and the Central Bank.

In the 41 Government Departments that responded to the Bank's inquiry there were altogether 158,822 employees at the end of 1965. Of these employees, 98.1 per cent were permanent, 0.7 per cent were temporary and 1.1 per cent were casual. Taking the difference between the employment figures at the end and at the beginning of the year as a measure of the change in employment, it is estimated that permanent and temporary employment in Government Departments has increased by 2.8 per cent during 1965. No estimate of the change in casual employment is given here because of the highly fluctuating nature of the numbers employed as casual employees.

In the 37 semi-government institutions from which the Bank was able to obtain data, there were altogether 76,884 employees at the end of 1965. Amongst them as many as 11 per cent were casual employees. Permanent and temporary employees formed 87 and 2 per cent of the total respectively. According to the reporting, permanent and temporary employment in the semi-government institutions increased by 10 per cent during the year, as against a 2.8 per cent increase in the Government Departments.

Labour Relations

Compared with 1964 figures, the provisional figures for 1965 show a marked decrease in the number of strikes and the number of man-days lost as a consequence of strikes. In the non-plantation sector, the number of man-days lost in 1965, at about 77,000, was far below the average loss for the past decade. In the plantation sector, in spite of some improvement over 1964, the number of man-days lost in 1965 was well above the average for the past decade. The Table II (H)-2 shows the number of strikes, the number of workers involved and the number of man-days lost as a result of strikes.

TABLE II (H) 2

Strikes

Year	Plantations			Other Employment		
	No. of Strikes	Workers involved	Man-days lost	No. of Strikes	Workers involved	Man-days lost
1955	160	1,143	69,913	47	11,293	36,016
1956	99	56,908	200,888	115	31,852	152,966
1957	177	297,061	618,050	127	70,239	190,443
1958	123	39,372	340,632	96	42,713	399,228
1959	177	47,318	352,095	71	42,453	460,141
1960	123	42,528	259,948	37	4,839	15,139½
1961	90	29,223	317,866	39	38,013	170,372
1962	138	42,569	193,792	50	25,730	801,882
1963	174	62,511	359,905	58	29,819	479,678
1964	201	68,009	611,060	103	21,400	274,623
*1965	157	64,306	454,359	43	7,196	77,465

Source: Department of Labour

* Provisional

Although the number of strikes in 1965 was 34 per cent less than in 1964, the relative importance among the underlying causes remained the same. As in 1964, about 30 per cent of the strikes were due to loss of employment, 29 per cent due to estate rules, working arrangements etc., 10 per cent due to delays in payments and another 10 per cent on general demands. Only about 3 per cent of the total number of strikes were to support demands for wage increases.