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Editorial.

Railway freight on dry cows from Madras. In the October issue of this Journal we, while commending the steps taken by the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay for lowering the railway freight on cattle booked to and from Bombay, referred to a similar representation made by the Madras Provincial Marketing Board to the authorities concerned. We are glad to note that their efforts have met with considerable success. It was recently announced that from 1st February 1937, the freight rate per mile would be reduced from four to two annas per four wheeled vehicle carrying dry cows from Madras to all stations between Kavarapettai and Tenali, subject to a minimum charge and to a maximum in the number of animals carried in a wagon. Apart from this concession, the terminal charge of Rs. 4 now collected on each wagon of cattle imported into Madras, was abolished. We hope that these concessions will stimulate a greater movement of cattle from Madras to places where grazing is available in plenty and will eventually save the valuable Nellore breed from the hands of the butcher.

Payment of wages in kind. In an interesting and instructive press note issued recently on the survey of the wheat markets of India, it is stated that the "undoubtedly wasteful system of payments in kind * * * makes it difficult for the growers to benefit from an improvement in the price of wheat and it is suggested that early steps should be taken to abolish it and to substitute a money economy for a natural barter economy in the villages". We find ourselves unable to subscribe to this view. We are fully alive to the possibility that a change to the cash system will result in a greater quantity of agricultural produce now retained by the cultivators being brought into the market, and will make people realise quickly the position of the agricultural wages compared to that in other industries. It will also free the agricultural worker from the risks to which a farmer is exposed, improve his bargaining power, and enable him to spend his earnings on the purchase of articles of his own choice.

We should not at the same time lose sight of the conditions prevailing, and the forces operating, in the agricultural economy of this country. The survey of wheat marketing has brought to light more prominently than anything else, that the marketing conditions are always to the disadvantage of the grower, that "the number of people who consider themselves as entitled to take share of the cultivators' wheat was found to be astonishing" and that "the cultivator gets only about threefifth of the consumers' rupee". The additional obligation to pay his labour in cash would only tend in our opinion, to aggravate his difficulties. Under the present system of payments, there is available for the guidance of the grower, a sure and fixed scheme of expenditure which leaves him free to deal with the complexities of the market as best he can. This advantage would be lost to him if the system of cash payment is adopted. The Indian farmer is an utter stranger to the price-fixing factors that operate on distant markets and producer-countries, and to the caprices of the exchange. It is also an acknowledged fact that he is seldom able to command adequate and ready cash therewith to pay the labour engaged by him day to day. The result of the innovation under such circumstances is not difficult to foresee. A new class of moneyed exploiters will arise and the grower will not get even the threefifths of the rupee he now gets.

Nor is it a fact that the agricultural labourer in India is really in a position to take advantage of the proposed order of things. He is proverbially poor and has just the money or earnings to provide himself with bare food and clothing and has little left to trouble himself about the choice of his purchases. Situated as he is, the suggested change would only deprive him of the advantages, if any, of having with certainty all the grain he needs and place him at the mercy of an open market. Added to this there is sure to follow the loss of that psychological factor which contributes at present in no small measure to the harmony existing between the two classes. It cannot be gainsaid that this mutual relationship is more intimate and harmonious as a result of this system of paying wages in kind. The labourer feels that he is almost a member of the farmer's household when he partakes of the same produce that his master reaps. The loss of these features from the economic life of the village is certain to give rise to dissatisfaction and will result eventually in disputes and strikes which cultivators in general abhor.

We invite the attention of our readers to the *Press communiqué* published in this issue on the census of educated unemployed.

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Plants of the Italian millet.