

ABSENTISM IN INDUSTRY*

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Absentism has always been one of the persistent problems in industry. Pointing out that, in recent years, the rate of absentism has been increasing in Indian industries, Mr. Murthy studies the problem against the social and economic background of the workers and makes some concrete suggestions for reducing it to the minimum.

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Though absentism is an omnipresent phenomenon and affects almost every type of organized set-up—a government office, a school, a commercial house or a film company,—it assumes the nature of a serious problem only in an industrial establishment. This is because the organization and work of a factory is based essentially on cooperation between the various factors involved and the team-spirit of the workers. The absence of a worker or a foreman in one department of a factory dislocates the work of not only that particular department but also, in many instances, leads to disturbance in the work of other allied sections. When it affects more workers than one, as has been happening in recent years in Indian industries, its repercussions are more far-reaching than are generally comprehended.

Consequently, the problem of absentism in industry is not the same as it is in a school or an office. In industry, absentism affects the morale and discipline of the whole group of workers. It affects the production schedule and leads to dislocation at various levels. The waste of time, energy and money is considerable. Its worst offshoot is the problem of the '*badli*'—a '*badli*' is one employed in the place of the absentee worker—which creates further problems to the management. As a '*badli*' worker is not usually trained for the job on which he is employed, he naturally takes time to acquaint himself with his new work; and, more often than not, by the time

he settles down to it, the permanent, worker returns and demands re-engagement. Hence a '*badli*' rarely puts his heart and mind into his work, so that the management are constantly required to create good supervision staff to look after the '*badlis*' during their periods of engagement.

The worker himself is not unaffected by absentism. It has been generally observed that, when a worker absents himself once, may be due to some genuine reasons, he develops a temptation to be absent more frequently, sometimes even on flimsy grounds and becomes ultimately a chronic absentee. The absentee suffers the loss of his wages and puts his concern to a loss of its production. Losing his wages, he affects the economic status of his family; and if he indulges in chronic absentism, he endangers the standard of living of his own and his family members. Thus, absentism is a serious problem, affecting industry and the individuals indulging in it and, therefore, should be studied in all its perspectives. An attempt is made here to study this problem, with reference to one industrial unit in Bombay and against an economic as well as a sociological background.

Absentism Defined.—What is absentism? In ordinary sense, absentism means leaving one's work place without permission. But absentism in industry is variously defined and has a restricted connotation. J. D. Hackett has defined absentism as "temporary cessation of work, for not less than one whole working

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day, on the initiative of the worker, when his presence is expected". Another writer, K. G. Feneion defines it as "absence from work when work is available". But Ankalikar, a third authority has used the term to mean only "unauthorised absence of the worker from his job."

Of these three definitions, those of Fenelon and Ankalikar are too wide and vague; and they do not take into consideration those qualifications that differentiate absentism from other types of loss of work, wages and production. But Hackett, in his definition, pays attention to these qualifications too. Absence is of a temporary nature and its duration will last from one whole working

day to any period prescribed by the concern. The definition also implies that work is available and the worker is aware of it. It further means that the employer is expecting the worker to turn up; hence the failure of a worker to turn up on a holiday—unless he has previously agreed to do so—does not constitute absentism. Also, if there is a lock-out or a curfew in the locality which prevents the worker from turning up or intimating his inability to do so, it cannot be called absentism. The cessation of work should, therefore, be on the initiative of the worker.

The following table gives an analysis of the various kinds of cessation of work causing loss of time, of which absentism is one:—

TABLE I
Analysis of Types of Cessation of Work Causing Loss of Time:

<i>Nature</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Cause</i>	
(a) Lateness	Temporary	Less than 1 day	Initiative of worker	
(b) Absence	-do-	One day or more	-do-	-do-
(c) Suspension	-do-	Variable	-do-	employer
(1) Quit.	Permanent		-do-	worker
(d) Separation				
(2) Lay-off	Temporary	Variable	-do-	employer
(3) Discharge	Permanent		-do-	-do-
(e) Vacation	Temporary	One day or more.	-do-	-do-
(f) Lockout	"	Indeterminable	-do-	-do-
(g) Strike	"	"	-do-	worker

Extent of Absentism.—According to available statistics, the incidence of absentism in Indian industries is enormous and compares unfavourably with that in other countries in the west; and it has been rising in the post-war years. The following table gives an over-all picture of the incidence of absentism in some of the major industries of India:—

TABLE II
Incidence of Absentism in some major industries in India:

Industry	Place	Year	Rate of Absentism
Cotton Textiles	Bombay	1948	13.3%
Woollen Textiles	Bombay	1948	15.2%
Iron & Steel	Bengal & Bihar	1949	13.9%
Coal Mines	Bihar	1947	34.4%
Mica Mines	Madras	1943	34.4%
Tea plantation	Assam	1946-47	24.2%
Cement	Bihar	1949	13.2%
Ordnance factory	Madhya Pradesh	1948-49	10.1%

As can be seen from the above table, the rate of absentism is very high in India. In some of the advanced countries, it had not reached such a high rate even in the years of war. For instance, in America, during the war, 7 out of every 100 workers were absent from their jobs every day in some industries. According to Hackett, about 8 per cent is the normal rate of industrial absentism in America. The Industrial Research Board surveyed nearly 60 factories, big and small, employing about 75,000 workers and came to the conclusion that, in peace time, the rate of absentism was 5 per cent and during war years, it was 6 to 8 per cent for men and 10 to 15 per cent for women. In New Zealand, the rate of absentism, according to the Scientific Industrial Research Department was 6.5 per cent for men and 11.5 per

cent for women. In Australia, it was 7 per cent for men and 13 per cent for women, while in Canada, it was 6.9 per cent in November 1942. From these figures, it is clear that, compared with these countries, India enjoys an incomparably high rate of industrial absentism.

Methods of Calculation and Recording.—As there are different definitions, there are also different methods of recording and calculating absentism. Each industry has its own method of calculation. In some industries, even public holidays are included in their calculations of absentism. In a few cases leave without pay is included; this is the case in the unit which has been studied for this thesis. Then there are strikes and lock-outs which are regarded by some as instances of absentism. Thus, in calculating absentism, the procedure differs from factory to factory in the same place and from place to place in the same industry. For example, in the cotton textile mills of Bombay, if a permanent worker is absent, his name is included in their calculation of absentism, even though a substitute is appointed in his place; but the textile mills of Ahmedabad do not include the permanent worker in the absentee list if a substitute is taken in his place. Such varied practice at different centres and in different units makes the calculation of industrial absentism in India a difficult process.

There is yet another difficulty, which is want of any uniform limit to period of absence. Some units keep the names of workers who are absent for six to nine months on their registers and include them in calculating their loss of time and production, while others consider even those who are absent for a few days as having left their jobs and strike their names off their rolls and regard them as cases of labour turnover. The lack of any definite limits to the point

when absence passes into labour turnover causes difficulty in any comparative study of absentism in different industries and at different places in India.

How then to calculate absentism in Industry? It may be calculated on the basis of hours or of days. Though the first will be more accurate, the latter is more convenient and practicable as few plants in India keep the hourly totals. The ratio between the amount of time lost (days or hours) and the amount of time that might have been worked had all employees been present, gives the total absence, disregarding the over-time and late-coming which are too negligible. The formula to calculate absentism is: Divide the total days lost by the total number of working days with full complement and multiply by 100. The result is the percentage of absentism. This is expressed as follows:—

$$\frac{\text{Total Days Lost}}{\text{Total Days to be worked}} \times 100 = \text{p.c. of absentism}$$

Note: Total days to be worked in a year:—the number of days worked in a month multiplied by the number of employees multiplied by twelve.

One of the chief difficulties in making a statistical estimate of absentism is that its nature and extent cannot be determined by the mere fact that the worker is not at work. In all such cases, there are three possibilities: the worker may be late, he may be absent or may have left his job. Unless there are definite policies regarding the various types of loss of time, it is difficult to be accurate in recording cases of absentism. This can be made clearer by quoting the Royal Commission on Labour, who said, "Absentism is an annilous term, covering absence from many causes. There are few managers who can say previously which workers are away because they are idling, which are kept away by sickness and which have gone on holiday, meaning to return. Even workers who have left with no intention of returning may be

treated for a time as absentees." However, the advantages of maintaining records of absentism need not be discussed elaborately. Any person interested in the solution of the problem has to depend on records to see which factor is causing a high incidence of absentism. He has to find out whether a few chronic malingerers contribute much to the rate of absentism or whether it is a widespread malady, whether it is high in any particular department and if so, why, and lastly, how much of it is preventable. Further, records alone can help a person to isolate the chronic offenders. Last but not least important, it is only through statistical records that one can estimate how much absentism costs an industrial unit in terms of money and production.

Causes of Absentism.—A social malady arises out of no one cause; and as industrial absentism is a major social problem in India, it must be the result of various factors or a combination thereof. The causes of absentism can be said to be threefold: one, those relating to the conditions in an industry, such

as, temperature, poor lighting, irregularity in mechanical processes or production, frequent break-downs, accidents, occupational sickness, fatigue, etc.; two, conditions outside the factory, such as, distance, lack of transport facilities, etc.; three, those relating to the personal or social life of the worker, such as, living conditions, indifference to the job, laziness, addiction to alcoholic drinks or drugs, etc. Keeping this categorisation in view, the causes of absentism are analysed below under various headings, in the light of the data collected in the industrial unit surveyed in Bombay.

Absentism in Relation to Age of the Worker.—Age has a great influence on a worker's regularity of attendance. But it is yet not easy to say whether a young or an old worker is more regular, even though a young worker may be said to be generally less responsible and more easy-going and given more to other diversions, when compared with the latter. The following table gives interesting data on the relation of age to absentism:—

TABLE III
Analysis of Absentism in Relation to Age of the Workers:

Age-Group	No. of workers studied			Total No. of days absent			Percentage of absentism		
	1949	1950	1951	1949	1950	1951	1949	1950	1951
18-24	28	28	28	580	570	259	7.4	7.6	6.6
25-40	53	60	60	795	1069	519	4.8	5.6	5.5
Above 40	12	12	12	244	254	99	6.4	6.7	5.2
Total	93	100	100	1619	1893	877	5.5	6.0	5.6

(Figures for 1951 are for the first six months of the year)

The highest rate of absentism is uniformly maintained by the young workers in the age group 18-24 years. This may probably be due to the fact that the young workers are, as already stated, not so steady as the older ones. Even the investigator's personal observation in the factory showed that, although the young workers were present on duty they

wasted more time in talking to others and moving from one place to another, going to the Canteen, lighting cigarettes, etc. The high incidence of absentism may also be due to the fact that the workers of this age-group, being still young and ambitious, may be on the look-out for new jobs.

Another point that the table brings out is

that the workers aged above forty come next in the rate of absentism. This can be explained by saying that they are more prone to sickness and fatigue. It may also be that these workers are more disillusioned and disgruntled about their work. This may result in the worker becoming indifferent to his job. Thirdly, with age, responsibilities may also increase, and domestic worries may tell on his regularity. Hackett is of the opinion that age becomes a deciding factor when it is above fifty years.

In 1949 and 1950, absentism of the workers in this age group is more than that of workers in the age group 25-40 years, and less than that of those in the age group 18-24 years. In 1951, the rate of absentism in this group is less than the rate in both the other groups. Probably, this peculiarity is due to the fact that absentism increases, in this age group during the last six months of the year. It may in turn be due to the seasonal and climatic changes that occur, like the monsoon, and the summer. Though the figures for the first six months, of the 18-24 age group also show a decrease, the difference is not so mar-

ked as it is among the old workers.

It is evident that minimum absentism is caused among the workers in the age group 25 and 40 years.

Absentism in Relation to the Nature of Work.—It is generally believed that an employee who has put in longer service, is more regular in attendance. It is argued that he gets adjusted to the environment and also becomes faithful to the management.

A new employee is prone to absentism as he has still to get into the groove. He has to form an attachment to the job. As G. Williams says absentism is due to the "Difficulties of working out a new routine in unfamiliar employment, perhaps not so well situated in relation to their homes". The same idea is expressed when the author says, "Absentism is highest among those who have never been subjected to factory discipline. Punishing new employees of this type only increases the 'quit' rate and makes for the opposite of good employee relations".

The following table will enable us to see how far this conception is factual:

TABLE IV
Analysis of Absentism in Relation to Service

Years of service.	Workers studied.			Total days absent			Percentage of Absentism		
	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51
Below 2½ years	1	7	7	12	164	118	.5	7.5	10.8
2½ years	16	16	16	183	216	116	3.6	4.3	4.6
3½ years	34	34	34	625	590	284	5.8	5.5	5.3
4½ years	15	15	15	228	245	118	4.8	5.2	5.0
5½ years	8	8	8	138	149	53	5.5	5.9	4.2
Above 5½ years	20	20	20	433	529	188	6.9	8.4	6.0
Total	94	100	100	1619	1893	877	5.5	6.0	5.6

(Figures for 1951 are upto June only)

The figures indicate that the highest percentage of absentism exists both among the workers who have put in below 2½ years' and those who have put in above 5½ years' service.

While confirming the usual opinion that newcomers absent themselves much, the above table clearly shows that after a certain period of service, workers absent themselves more. Thus, the idea that with longer ser-

vice, regularity and steadiness increases has been proved to be incorrect. This may be because, after a certain period of service, the workers become confident about their security of job and so do not care much for regularity.

The lowest rate of absentism exists in the case of workers with 1½ years service. Probably, it is because, after about 2½ years' service, workers adjust themselves to the job and the working environment, and develop an interest in their work. But the interest and the enthusiasm as the figures show, are very short-lived.

Conditions at home affect to a certain

extent, the regularity of a worker in the factory. Irregular habits at home many a time act as a hindrance to his attending the factory, however reluctant he may be to absent himself from work. Whether he is alone at home or not, whether he is married or unmarried, whether his wife is living or dead—all these factors have to be considered in dealing with the problem of his absentism.

Civil Conditions as a Factor.—In the factory, where this research was undertaken, the following were the figures of absentism in relation to the civil condition of about 100 workers.

TABLE V
Influence of Civil Condition on Absentism:

Civil condition	Workers studied.			Total absence			Percentage of Absentism		
	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51
Married	56	63	63	856	1159	537	4.8	5.8	5.7
Unmarried	34	34	34	686	643	310	5.2	5.0	5.8
Widower	3	3	3	95	91	30	10.1	6.0	5.6
Total	93	100	100	1619	1893	877	5.5	6.0	5.6

(Figures for 1951 for six months only)

Though there is not much difference between the rates of absentism of married and unmarried workers, we see a marked increase of absentism in the case of widowers.

The absence of any great difference between the rates of absentism of married and unmarried workers, is not in keeping with our general opinion that unmarried workers are more unsteady and so are more prone to absentism. But in the plant surveyed, it is the widower who has a high rate of absentism to his credit. This is probably due to the domestic disorganisation caused by the death of a wife. The worker, if he has children, has to look after their comforts; sometimes he has to prepare his own food and look after the household too. The greatest handicap in the case of widower is his psychological make-up.

There may arise in him a certain indifference towards everything. A widower usually is one who has lost a valuable bond between himself and the world. He may try to forget the loss, either by engaging himself in work or by other means as much as possible. But the fact remains that the loss of his wife seriously affects his regularity in the factory.

The similarity in the rates of absentism of the married and unmarried workers, in the present instance, may be due to certain special reasons. Though marriage brings with it many domestic and social responsibilities and is usually believed to affect a worker's attendance in the factory, in the present case, even those workers who were married were living alone, keeping their families away in their home towns or villages. Thus they were

living just like unmarried workers and hence the similarity in the rates of their absentism.

Normally, the size of a worker's family, a factor related to his civil condition, is supposed to affect his attendance. His economic status and living standard, his domestic problems, his attitudes to his work and the establishment are all affected by the size of his family, i.e., the number of children, dependants, etc. But in the present instance, reliable data could not be collected from the workers studied as they were all living alone in Bombay and leading a bachelor-life as they said.

Absentism in Relation to Birth-Place.— It is the general belief that the birth-place of a

worker has a great deal to do with his rate of absentism. The more distant the native place the more often or the longer is the worker believed to absent himself. Going home on leave, he usually stays away even after the expiry of his leave. Secondly, if the worker happens to belong to a village, his habits are supposed to be as irregular as the monsoons. His rural background is such that he finds it difficult to adjust easily to the rigours of factory discipline. Therefore, absentism is supposed to be rampant among such workers. Though this sounds logical, the figures collected from the factory under investigation tell a different story, as can be seen from the following table:—

TABLE VI

Analysis of Absentism in relation to the Worker's Birth-Place:

Native Province	No. of workers studied			Total days absent			Percentage Absentism		
	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51
Bombay City	23	23	23	440	464	229	6.1	6.4	6.3
Bombay State	38	40	40	652	764	379	5.4	6.1	6.0
South India	10	13	13	148	182	93	4.7	4.4	4.5
U.P., C.P. & Punjab	14	16	16	249	333	126	5.7	6.6	5.0
Orissa, Bihar & Assam	8	8	8	130	150	52	5.2	6.0	4.1
Total	93	100	100	1619	1893	877	5.5	6.0	5.6

The above table indicates that the highest percentage of absentism occurs among workers belonging to the city of Bombay. The lowest goes to the credit of the employees hailing from South India. The opportunities to absent himself from his job occur more in the case of a worker of Bombay city itself. His responsibilities and obligations are many. An illness at home keeps him busy with doctors and druggists. Any birth or death, marriage or a religious festival prevents him from going to his factory. He has not only duties to the members of his family, but also obligations towards his various friends and neighbours.

Above these obligations, there is a certain attraction that a home yields. Many a worker may find it far more palatable to

take a day off and enjoy the luxury of being at home rather than attending his factory.

Such attractions and diversions are denied to a worker who has migrated from other states. He may have domestic worries but, as most of the workers have left their families behind in their native places, the problem is only in terms of mental anxiety. At the most, it may end in giving financial help to his people. A worker's child may be ill at his native place. But he need not absent himself from work unless he goes to his place. If there is ration difficulties at home, he need not stay away from work here in Bombay.

His social circle too is not very wide, as he does not belong to the soil. Very rarely does

he stay away from work because of religious festivals, etc., as there is none with whom he can share the feast. Certain provincial groups of workers do get together and celebrate their festive days. But this is not so much as it is in the case of the native workers.

Most of the workers, who come from other States like to get on in their jobs. Once they lose job, they know it is difficult, even to stay in Bombay, as they have no houses here. This keeps them regular. Secondly they prefer to go to their jobs and earn their wages, because most of them have nothing else to fall back upon. His home here does not also attract him very much. Further he would not like to make frequent trips home because of the cost it involves.

Another probable reason why the incidence of absentism is more among the workers belonging to Bombay is that they have settled down in various localities, mostly far from the factory areas, whereas the workers from other states have no such bonds like own

houses, relatives and friends, cultivable lands, etc., to bind them to any particular region in the city. Hence they settle down as near to the factory as possible. Thus, they avoid transport difficulties, etc., which usually stand in the way of regularity.

A special feature, in the case of the workers from South India in the plant under investigation is that most of them are ex-service men, who were working in ordnance factories during war. This experience may have made them more disciplined. This may account for the low rate of their absentism. Secondly most of the workers from South India knew English. But there is no sufficient data to correlate education and absentism.

Distance of Residence from Factory as a Factor in Absentism.—Distance of the workers' living places from their work places seems to play a large part in absentism. The general belief that the greater the distance, the greater is the rate of absentism is substantiated by the present investigation also, as the following table shows:

TABLE VII

Absentism in Relation to Distance of Residence from Factory:

Distance between residence & factory	Workers studied			Total days absent			Percentage Absentism		
	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51
Below 1 mile	7	8	8	112	101	660	5.1	4.0	4.8
1-2 miles	21	22	22	288	374	139	4.3	5.4	4.0
2-5 miles	30	33	33	526	617	291	5.6	5.9	5.6
5-10 miles	15	17	17	299	347	162	6.3	6.5	6.1
above 10 miles	20	20	20	394	454	225	6.2	7.2	7.2
Total	93	100	100	1619	1893	877	5.5	6.0	5.6

The incidence of absentism increases with increase in the distance of the worker's living place from the factory beyond two miles. The rate of increase is more during the monsoon months, because heavy rains are usually observed to dislocate the city's transport services. Even employers are today realising the importance of distance as a factor in

absentism and are therefore attempting to provide housing for their employees as near their work places as possible.

Sickness and Absentism.—In India, the incidence of sickness among industrial workers and that of their absentism go together. It has been found that wherever the rate of sickness is high, there the rate of absentism

is also equally high. Hence, employers provide various medical and other facilities for workers to reduce the incidence of sickness and thereby the rate of absentism. The close

relation between sickness and absentism becomes clear from the following table of data collected from the factory under investigation:—

TABLE VIII

Analysis of Absentism in Relation to the Type of Illness:

Type of illness	Workers studied			Total days absent			Percentage of Absm.		
	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51
Fever	42	44	44	704	869	442	5.3	6.3	6.4
Respiratory	8	8	8	127	143	37	5.0	5.7	2.9
Digestive	9	9	9	215	183	94	7.6	6.5	6.6
Weakness & Aches	5	5	5	120	103	42	7.6	6.6	5.3
Wound & Skin diseases etc.	6	6	6	130	108	42	6.9	5.7	4.4
Total	70	72	72	1296	1406	657	5.9	6.2	5.8

Of the workers studied, 70 out of 93 in 1949 and 72 out of 100 in 1950 and '51, said they were victims of illness. Among them, the majority complained of fever. But the workers who suffered from digestive troubles were responsible for the highest rate of absentism.

The digestive complaints were mostly due to the irregular food habits of the workers. They had no fixed timings for eating; when they ate they ate quick. It may be mentioned that the investigator took twice the time a worker took to take his meal. Thirdly, the food they consumed was hopelessly unwholesome. It was no surprise that digestive complaints were common and increased absentism.

The rate of absentism for the 100 workers

studied was 5.5% in 1949, 6.0 in 1950 and 5.6 in 1951, whereas the rate of absentism for the workers suffering from illness was 5.9 in 1949, 6.2 in 1950 and 5.8 in 1951. This indicates that the percentage of absentism among workers prone to illness, is more than the total percentage.

Very often, it is not only his own illness that affects his regularity of work but also that of any of his family members. Illness of some one in the family in terms of worry and anxiety, financial difficulties, loss of time in visiting the doctor, etc. disturbs the mental equanimity of the worker and affects his attendance at the factory. The following table shows the close relation that subsists between illness in the family and absentism:—

TABLE IX

Analysis of Data on Relation between Illness in Family and Absentism:

Occurrence	No. of workers			Total days absent			Percentage of Absentism		
	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51	1949	'50	'51
Occasional	32	32	32	461	631	260	4.6	6.3	5.2
Frequent	16	17	17	360	385	220	7.2	7.2	8.4
Total	48	49	49	821	1016	480	5.4	6.6	6.2

The above table establishes the correlation between illness in the family and absentism. It is high among workers whose families suffer frequently from some illness or other. Even their total annual percentage of absentism is higher than the total percentage for all the workers.

Other Factors of Family Life causing Absentism.—Besides illness, there are various other factors of family life which cause industrial absentism. There are various social obligations like attending a friend's or relative's marriage, observance of religious functions or duties, going out on pilgrimage and similar other things, which give rise to absentism. Often a worker may be very unwilling to discharge these obligations and duties. But social tyranny forces him to fulfil them so that he is compelled to absent himself from work. Besides these factors, there are others also like road accidents, high income, poor supervision, natural laziness and addiction to drugs and drink mentioned by many investigators as causes of industrial absentism. But reliable data could not be obtained on these points in the present investigation. Thus it can be seen that it is not one factor but a combination of several factors that is responsible for the high incidence of absentism in Indian industry. Therefore, any programme of prevention, to be effective, has to be multisided and able to tackle all the factors.

Treatment of Absentism.—The traditional way of treating absentism in industry depended more on the enforcement of discipline and had less of human touch in it. An absentee was outright discharged, more often even without an enquiry into the causes of his absence. The management was concerned more with the maintenance of discipline in the factory than with the removal of the causes that go to induce workers to absent themselves from work. **But** this method of treating absentism helped the management

little; instead of reducing, it has only increased absentism. Hence the need for other methods than mere enforcement of disciplinary regulations. "The cure for the problem of absentism is not rules but commonsense. It involves a careful study of causes, a sincere effort to remedy faulty situations and the segregation and education of chronic offenders."

While rules and regulations are essential for the maintenance of discipline and smooth functioning of the factory, management should keep in mind that they should be administered in such a way as to invoke confidence in the workers. No worker is generally against discipline, if it is fairly and properly administered. Employees are happier under reasonably strict discipline. But it is improper maintenance of discipline that creates indiscipline among the workers.

Proper maintenance of discipline presupposes a fair system of granting leave. In the present investigation, it was found that workers who applied for leave fairly well in advance were not sure if their leave was sanctioned till the very last day. This had an extremely discouraging effect on the employees. It would be advantageous to the management and convenient to the employees, if applications for leave are dealt with and disposed of promptly.

Personal Touch.—A majority of the problems in industry today are due to lack of personal or human touch in the employer-employee relations. In the conduct and administration of the modern industrial organizations, it is practically impossible for management to establish personal contact with workers whose number usually runs into thousands. This loss of personal contact with his employer has created a sense of fear in the mind of the worker and given rise to various psychological problems, which are partly responsible for the increasing absentism

in industry. The Personnel Management Department can establish this personal contact with and restore security to the worker. The Personnel Officer or Labour Welfare Officer can meet personally and enquire into the difficulties and worries of the workers and try to assuage them. This kind of personal contact will go far in reducing the psychological tension in the workers' minds.

But a Personnel or Labour Welfare Officer can achieve nothing, unless the departmental heads and foremen cooperate with him. The foreman is in direct and daily contact with the worker. He knows when the worker works well, ill or over-works. He also can have an idea of his personal and private difficulties. Therefore, he can keep the Personnel Officer in touch with all the relevant information about the workers. This will help the Personnel Officer to take timely action in all cases of crises arising out of tension in the minds of the workers. Hence, unless there is very close cooperation between the Personnel Management Department and the Departmental Executives as well as foremen, the Personnel Officer will not be able to achieve much by way of reducing tension among the workers.

But it must not be overlooked that the cooperation of the workers themselves is very essential in fighting absentism. There must be created in the mind of each worker a sense of belonging to the organization in which and for which he works. The failure of Indian management to achieve this is a sad commentary on their efficiency. If absentism has to be reduced to the minimum, every worker has to be made to feel that his absence affects his own factory or unit. If this sense of belonging is absent, he does not care what happens to his factory; he will be particular about only his emoluments from the management. It is high time therefore that our managements opened their eyes

and revised their policies in such a way as to make their employees feel a sense of belonging to their organizations. In this respect, industrial managements in the West have made great progress; and it is worth our while to study the methods they have adopted and adapt them to conditions in Indian factories.

In this connection, the following suggestions may be made in tackling the problem of absentism.

Clear-Cut Management Policies.—It is very necessary that management follow clear-cut and definite policies. These should include fair but strict discipline, systematic recording and definite action; and the workers must know what their managements policies are in this regard. He must also be aware that regularity of attendance is an important factor in his service and promotion.

Incentive Schemes.—Various incentive schemes like production bonus, attendance bonus, etc., are now-a-days evolved and operated in industrial organizations to reduce absentism and to create interest in the worker in his work. In the factory that has been studied for this thesis, only production bonus was in existence; the management offered few incentives to the workers for regular attendance. Though it is still a matter for argument whether incentives lead to healthy results, it cannot be denied that they do help to some extent in the maintenance of discipline and reduction of absentism.

Education.—Education not only aims at improving the worker within the factory but also to improve his living outside. As the report of the "Discipline Control Board" of West Allis Plant says, the fact that everyone loses when a worker takes time off without good reason must be fully realized by all the employees. This keeps absentism at a low level. Such a realization is possible only when

there is the feeling that he is a part of an organization, a member of a group. His job is not his own concern. Then alone can he understand that advance information of his absence will enable management to plan replacement or re-distribution of work. The worker must realize that if he is absent, he puts often an additional burden on another worker.

Education helps us to reduce two of the vital factors which contribute to absentism in a factory. These are sickness and accidents. Much of the time lost, due to them is preventable. It must be remembered that "even genuine illness, among a large group of employees, can be, to some extent, controlled".

Such an educational programme should be about safety measures and personal hygiene. It should emphasise such common factors as, coughing, careless disposal of nasal secretions, explosive taking in of one another's breath and spitting on the floor and in the machine tanks, etc.

Posters, films, pamphlets, radio-talks and staging of plays are good methods to educate the workers in leading a life that may be

helpful both to themselves and to their factory.

Welfare Activities.—Welfare work is an integral part of any plan that is made to tackle industrial problems. Many causes of absentism, as has already been observed are concerned either with the working or living conditions. Though it is impossible to give it a cash value, the advantages claimed for a welfare programme are increased efficiency, better time keeping, greater contentment and a reduction of absentism.

No amount of education or incentive or discipline can solve the problem without welfare work. Welfare work is concerned with the worker's job, his food, his recreation, his health in the factory and sometimes housing facilities outside the factory. With facilities, such as, ration shop in the factory, medical assistance to workers, a clean and healthy working environment and housing facilities nearer the factory, much of absentism can be prevented.

In conclusion, it may be mentioned that if an earnest attempt is made by our industrial managements to implement some of these suggestions, it will help our industry and thereby our country at large.