

FOOD FOR WORK

Our joy knows no bounds when we received a circular indicating that hence forth part of our salary would be paid in kind. We heaved a terrific sigh of relief thinking that the price hikes would not pinch us any more, in any case, very powerfully. All our prayers appeared to have been answered at last.

Next day we got down to work on the specific arrangements to be made to implement the guidelines of the new circular. As is usual, done we planned to entrust this work to an officer. Not till then we realised the other dimensions to such problems like what are to be purchased, where are they to be stored, how to keep control over distribution and how to cope with the related accounting problems. Fortunately our Head office did swing into action, though

Poor Mrs. Khukreja who opted to come down to South did not think of this angle while arriving at that decision. Had it been known earlier Mrs. Khukreja would certainly have objected to that. Things did not end there. More were in store, literally too.

When it came to the Council of the ^{ie. distribution} problem we had to requisition the services of an employee of a Kirana store. So far as the purchase of rice was concerned we were in a quandary ^{as to} whether to go in for Rs 2/- a.k.g. rice (sold here by the State Govt. ^{of A.P.}) or not, for we were not certain as to the stand of the Central Government on this subject. Later it was authentically learnt that the State Government would have refused our request on the ground of our reportedly being high wage islanders more particularly in a Central Government undertaking. As regards storage, we had to hire a new place as these provisions, when

Things were moving.

One day when we opened mail from our Controlling office, we noticed that "Increased Consumption Statement" is still due from our side. We thought it might be a typing mistake for "Increased claim statement" which in fact was submitted well in time.

A week later we got a confirmatory copy of the telegram followed by telegram itself emphasising the urgency of submitting "Increased Consumption Statement". We all had to engage ourselves in preparing this statement giving item-wise details for Rice, Dal and Cashewnuts etc.

A few days later, we had Sri Daduji from R.O. who, it was learnt later, came for surprise check. We thought he would start with verification of cash. But, instead, much to our surprise he rushed to store room took out the special weighing machine he brought and started weighing the various items. Mr. Daduji was reportedly chosen

per books. We politely told him that the difference is due to intermittent pecks he had ~~discovering~~ ⁱⁿ the course of weighing. Apart from other comments and suggestions he observed that the in-crowd consumption ratio of certain items like spices, oil and Cashewnuts was high. He established a correlation between this and high medical claims resulting from problems to liver and stomach.

Some days slipped by. We were in for a bigger surprise when it was announced that mid-day meal scheme be started forth with by all the offices. This is said to be an improvement over the existing part payment in kind. As much as is required for this scheme, we were advised; may be slashed from the quota of the employe.

A searching brain immediately enquired as to who would look the reference has immediately made

Pending these appointments, we were advised to tactfully utilise the services of the women employees. Tactful management, being no alien concept to us, we got down to the business. But, one problem still persisted. In our office some are vegetarians and others non-vegetarians. The vegetarian sect threatened us with very dire consequences if their demands are not met. We had to utilise the services of two employees who a few days later officer in the concerned department complained that because of utilisation of his subordinates for cooking work in his department is affected. Further, as is not wholly unexpected the association of these employees came out with the plea that persons engaged in cooking be paid "COOKING ALLOWANCE" on the lines of "Functional Allowance". But

As luck would have it, this experience proved to be a blessing in disguise, as they could

the quality of their cooking deteriorated.

The Unions and Associations did not

take this lying down. They set on a

hunger strike. The cooking section ~~had~~

had to be closed and we started getting

the food from hotels. ~~Slowly~~ ^{Low} it was

found that we have eaten away all our

budgetary provisions. Our R.O. took

very serious view of this problem and

has advised us to order the food available

at State Government rates. We have

dutifully carried out these orders. This

in its wake brought forth sleepless nights

resulting from stomach disorders

leading to very high medical claims

Under MBIS.

A big hue and cry was raised. Various

representatives poured into Head Office

protesting against these blessed schemes

and strongly urging their withdrawal. After

a series of consultations, considerations

and consultations by various committees