

IN THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI.

Date of decision: 26.4.1991

- (1) OA 2052/1989
Shri Rameshwar & Another ...Applicants
- (2) OA 356/1990
Shri Naveender Kumar ...Applicant
- (3) OA 411/90
Shri Laxman Singh ...Applicant
- (4) OA 772/90
Shri Khemanand Khuleba ...Applicant
- (5) OA 2378/90
Shri Dalbir Singh ...Applicant

Vs.

Union of India through
the Director General,
Doordarshan ...Respondents

For the applicants in
(1) and (3) ...Shri K.N.R.
Pillai, Counsel

For the applicant in (2) ...Shri R.L. Sethi,
Counsel

For the applicant in (4) ...Shri T.C.
Aggarwal, Counsel

For the applicant in (5) ...Shri V.S.R.
Krishna, Counsel

For the respondents in
(1) to (5) ...Shri M.L. Verma
Counsel.

CORAM:

THE HON'BLE MR. P.K. KARTHA, VICE CHAIRMAN(J)

THE HON'BLE MR. M.M. SINGH, ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBER

1. Whether Reporters of local papers may be
allowed to see the judgment? *Yes*
2. To be referred to the Reporters or not? *Yes*

JUDGMENT

(of the Bench delivered by Hon'ble Mr. P.K.
Karttha, Vice Chairman(J))

In a batch of applications filed by the

5. We have no doubt in our minds that the policy of 'hire and fire' adopted by the respondents in the instant case is violative of the provisions of Articles 14 and 16 of Constitution and is liable to be struck down on that score. In *Dhirendra Chamoli and Another Vs. State of U.P.*, 1986 SCC(L&S) 187, while rejecting the contention of the Central Government that the casual worker employed in the Nehru Yuvak Kendras are outside the pale of protection of Article 14 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court observed as follows:-

" It is peculiar on the part of the Central Government to urge that these persons took up employment with the Nehru Yuvak Kendras knowing fully well that they will be paid only daily wages and, therefore, they cannot claim more. This argument lies ill in the mouth of the Central Government for it is a too familiar argument with the exploiting class and a welfare state committed to a socialist pattern of society cannot be permitted to advance such an argument. It must be remembered that in this country where there is so much unemployment, the choice for the majority of people is to starve or to take employment on whatever exploitative terms are offered by the employer. The fact that these employees accepted employment with the full knowledge that they will be paid only daily wages and they will not get the same salary and conditions of service as other class IV employees, cannot provide an escape to the Central Government to avoid the mandate of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution".

6. In *Surinder Singh Vs. Engineer-in-Chief, CPWD*, 1986 SCC(L&S) 189, the Supreme Court recorded its regret that many employees were kept in service on a temporary daily wage basis without their services being

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In a batch of applications filed by the

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casual labourers engaged in the Directorate General, Doordarshan, common questions of law have arisen and it is proposed to dispose them of by a common judgment.

2. Doordarshan had adopted a novel method of engaging casual labourers, which has been called in question in these batch of applications. Casual workers are engaged by verbal orders and discharged by verbal orders at the end of 90 days. Immediately another batch of casual workers is taken in replacement. This goes on and on. The apparent object appears to be to prevent them developing any right by virtue of service rendered by them over a period of time. Is this legally permissible? That is the question before us.

3. The basic stand of the respondents is that the applicants are not holders of civil posts and as such they are not entitled to relief from the Tribunal, that they have been engaged as casual labourers for casual nature of work, that they have been engaged on contractual basis for a specific period, that the claim of the applicants that they should not be replaced by another group of casual employees is not justified as they themselves had replaced an earlier group on their engagement and that the applicants are not entitled to the pay and allowances of regular Group 'D' employee or for leave and other conditions of service.

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The respondents have relied upon numerous judicial pronouncements in support of their contentions¹.

4. It is ~~true~~ that the casual labourers are not holders of civil posts, as has been held by the Supreme Court in State of Assam Vs. Kanak Chandra, AIR 1967 SC 884. The only consequence of this is that they are not entitled to the protection of Article 311 of the Constitution. It cannot, however, be denied that even casual labourers are entitled to the protection of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. While Article 14 provides that the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India, Article 16 stipulates that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. In a catena of decisions, the Supreme Court has observed that state action should be tested on the touchstone of fairness, justness and reasonableness in view of the valuable guarantees contained in Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. Conversely, state action should not be arbitrary, discriminatory or unreasonable.

1. Cases relied upon by the learned counsel of the respondents:-

AIR 1967 SC 884; 1989(10) ATC 656; 1990(2) SLJ 169; 1987(4) SLJ 785; 1990(1) 56; 1988(7) ATC 351; 1990(1) SLJ 624; 1987(2) SLJ 429; 1989(3) SLJ 306; 1990(13) ATC 142; 1988(8) ATC 929; 1990(3) SLJ 47; 1990(3) SLJ 28.

5. We have no doubt in our minds that the policy of 'hire and fire' adopted by the respondents in the instant case is violative of the provisions of Articles 14 and 16 of Constitution and is liable to be struck down on that score. In *Dhirendra Chamoli and Another Vs. State of U.P.*, 1986 SCC(L&S) 187, while rejecting the contention of the Central Government that the casual worker employed in the Nehru Yuvak Kendras are outside the pale of protection of Article 14 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court observed as follows:-

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6. In *Surinder Singh Vs. Engineer-in-Chief, CPWD*, 1986 SCC(L&S) 189, the Supreme Court recorded its regret that many employees were kept in service on a temporary daily wage basis without their services being

regularised. The Supreme Court expressed the hope that the Government would take appropriate steps to regularise the services of all those who had been in continuous employment for more than six months.

7. In Central Inland Water Transport Corporation Vs. Brojo Nath Ganguly, 1986 SCC(L&S) 429 at 438, the Supreme Court observed that at least in certain areas of the law of contracts, there can be unreasonableness or unfairness in a contract or a clause in a contract where there is inequality or bargaining power between the parties. In the instant case, there is lack of fairness and reasonableness in the alleged oral contractual engagements which the respondents are seeking to defend before us.

8. The learned counsel of the applicants have drawn our attention to a D.O. letter No.3/29/90-S-II dated 7.9.1990 written by Miss. P.S. Sakuntala, Addl. Director General, Doordarshan to Shri Rajmeni Rai, Director, Doordarshan Kendra, according to which there are as many as 90 casual labourers engaged by Delhi Kendra on any given day. There are 23 sanctioned posts of peons and 13 posts of safaiwala.

9. In our view, the policy followed by the respondents is ~~highly~~ arbitrary and discriminatory and violative of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution in as much as there is an element of pick and choose in

the pursuit of their policy. There is no rationale or logic in replacing one set of casual labourers daily engaged after holding a selection from among the candidates sponsored by the Employment Exchange by another set of employees similarly sponsored by the Employment Exchange every three months. This leaves scope for arbitrariness, if not corruption, at the level of the Employment Exchange and of the respondents. We hold that this is impermissible in law.

10. In order to make the system of engagement of casual labourers within legal and constitutional limits, it is imperative that the respondents should evolve a rational scheme for regularising them.

11. The Supreme Court has directed the Government to prepare suitable schemes for regularising casual labourers (vide *Inder Pal Yadav Vs. Union of India*, 1985 SCC(L&S) 526; *Daily Rated Casual Labour Employed under P&T Vs. Union of India*, 1987(2) SCALE 844; *U.P. Income Tax Department Vs. Union of India*, 1988(2) SLJ(SC) 38; *Delhi Municipal Corporation Karmachari Ekta Union Vs. P.L. Singh*, 1987 (2) SCALE 1370; *Dharwad District PWD Literate Daily wage Employees Vs. State of Karnataka*, JT 1990(1) SC 343). In our view, the respondents should frame a suitable

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/for absorption of the casual labourers within a period of four months from the date of receipt of this order. Pending this, the respondents shall allow the applicants to continue to work as casual labourers in their office as long as there is requirement for such workers. In case the disengagement of some casual labourers becomes unavoidable, it should be on the principle of 'last come first go'. Till the applicants have been regularised, the respondents may not resort to fresh recruitment through Employment Exchange or otherwise. Till they are regularised, the wages to be paid to them should be in accordance with the ^{& minimum in the} scale of pay of the post held by a regular employee in a Group 'D' post. After regularisation, they should be placed on par with regular Group 'D' employees in respect of their service conditions and benefits.

12. The applications are disposed of on the above lines. Let a copy of this order be placed in all the case files.

(M.M. SINGH)
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBER

(P.K. KARTHA)
VICE CHAIRMAN(J)