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## Revision of Pay Scales

BY accepting the major recommendations of the Pay Commission. Government has cleared the way for improvement in its relations with the employees. It has wisely refrained from withdrawing from the position it had taken prior to the employees strike last month in respect of the principal proposals. And it has, again wisely, resisted the temptation of doing things piecemeal- While the public and many Government servants will accept the new proposals as a fair compromise between the needs of the employees and the needs of the country, those who went on strike and their leaders will probably still feel disgruntled. Hut having made a mess of 'direct action', they could scarcely expect anything more from Government. It is now up to them to show by means other than shouting that the service. of Government servants are worth more to the country than what it pays for them.

The statement on pay scales and other benefits to employees laid before the Lok Sabha this week by the Union Finance Minister is in its own way an impressive one. It covers everything from simplification of salary scales to provision of educational facilities to the children of Government employees. In respect of salaries. Government has, by and large, gone farther than what the Pay Commission had recommended. Keeping the starting salaries at about the levels indicated by the Commission, it has enhanced the ceilings somewhat. This, together with running grades instead of slab ones, improves the chances of a normally efficient employee to obtain a measure of relief from any increase in prices that might occur from year to year. Though there is no explicit reference to a need-based wage, the Government statement accepts the principle of a minimum wage, and has fixed it at Rs 80 per month. It has also agreed to weight the other concessions slightly in favour of those in the lower-income ranges.

Many of the adjustments now agreed upon are in the nature of rationalisation of the conditions of service, and it is difficult to say how many of the employees will stand to gain substantially straightaway. So far, over 500 different pay scales have been integrated into about 140 scales, covering nearly 75 per cent of Government employees- Since Government has given the employees the option of retaining their existing scales and dearness allowances if they so choose, none of them will be worse off in financial terms on account of these revisions. More important, orders have been issued to end the scandalous position of employees being kept on a temporary basis for long periods. All those who can be absorbed into the permanent category are to be confirmed in their appointments, so that they get the various benefits regarding leave, retirement and so forth. This will probably be the main element in enhancing the remuneration of a large number of Government servants.

On the question of dearness allowance, the position taken by Government is that it should not be such as to offset automatically and completely all increases in the cost of living, but should be subject to fixation periodically. The principle suggested is that if over a period of twelve months, the consumer price index remains on an average 10 points above 115. Government should consider whether an increase in allowances should be sanctioned and, if so, at what rate. This

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