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HAS RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT DECLINED?*

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The latest country-wide estimate of rural employment-unemployment to become available is the result of the 25th Round of the National Sample Survey (N.S.S.) conducted during 1970-71 (July-June), just about the time the slogan of *Garibi Hatao* was being floated. The merits and limitations of the earlier N.S.S. data on rural employment have been the subject of careful examination by the Planning Commission's Committee on Unemployment Estimates, as well as by individual scholars.¹ Whatever the shortcomings of the N.S.S. data on rural employment—and there are many—one particular merit of the data is that they provide fairly comparable information for a number of years for India as a whole. Compared to some of the estimates for earlier years by the N.S.S., the data for the 25th Round at first glance appear to indicate a significant decline in the rate of unemployment in rural India. In this paper it is proposed to compare the data from the 25th Round with the earlier N.S.S. findings to see what, if any, changes had taken place in rural employment-unemployment by 1970-71.

Broadly speaking, two distinct sets of surveys into rural employment have so far been undertaken and reported by the N.S.S. organization. One set of surveys related to the classification of persons according to their activity status and measurement of time spent on gainful employment by the entire rural population. The other set of surveys covered, among other things, these subjects, but related only to some well-defined section of the rural population. There have been three all-India surveys of the second type by the N.S.S. organization so far. In 1956-57 the N.S.S. organization conducted a sample survey into the various aspects—including employment—of agricultural labourers for the second enquiry into agricultural labourers in India. In 1963-64 a similar survey was conducted for the third enquiry into rural labour in India. In 1970-71 the 25th Round of the N.S.S. was conducted to enquire into the conditions—including employment—of the 'weaker section' in rural India. While naturally the universes of these three surveys were not identical, they were largely similar as we shall see below. We propose to examine the changing picture of unemployment of the agricultural labourers or the 'weaker sections,' based on the Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry (A.L.E.) and the 25th Round of the N.S.S. (The Third Rural Labour Enquiry's findings about

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1. Besides the Report of the Committee of Experts on Unemployment Estimates, Planning Commission, Government of India, 1970, attention may be drawn to Raj Krishna, "Presidential Address," *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January-March, 1973; and A. K. Sen, "Dimensions of Unemployment in India," Convocation Address to the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, 31st December, 1973.

employment are yet to be published.) The employment data for the entire rural population available from the first set of N.S.S. rounds will be subsequently used to help indirectly explain the differences between the findings of the above two enquiries.

For the 25th Round of the N.S.S. in 1970-71, the 'weaker section' of the rural sector was defined to consist of (a) the non-cultivating labour households, and (b) the lowest 10 per cent of the households cultivating some land. So far, some tables for all the major States of the Union except Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal have become available.² On the basis of these data it is possible to examine the extent of employment and unemployment of the 'weaker section' in our rural society, in 1970-71.

The 'weaker section' of the rural society, as defined above, is largely, if not entirely, coterminous with agricultural labour households as defined in the Second A.L.E. in 1956-57. One part of the weaker section consists of all rural households without any land to cultivate personally and deriving income mainly from wage labour. The Second A.L.E. also covered this population (agricultural labour households without land) except that it excluded all wage-earning households which derived the bulk of their earnings from non-agricultural wage labour. This is not a very small proportion of the rural labour households: according to the Third Rural Labour Enquiry (1963-64), the rural non-agricultural labour households without land constituted about 18 per cent of all rural labour households.³ But the pattern of employment and unemployment of non-agricultural rural labour households without land cannot be basically different from their agricultural labour counterparts.

Another part of the 'weaker sections' consists of the lowest 10 per cent of the cultivators. The Second A.L.E., on the other hand, considered only such cultivating households as agricultural labour households which earned the larger part of their total income from agricultural wage labour. Defined this way the agricultural labour households with land may constitute more or less than 10 per cent of all cultivating households, depending upon the specific situation.

In Table I, columns (2), (3) and (4) give the percentages of the two sub-classes of the 'weaker sections' and their total to the estimated total number

2. These tabulations relate to the State samples. All the relevant tables based on the central sample for every one of the States are yet to become available. Only the all-India estimates for the four sub-rounds, covering the central sample, have become available. They will be referred to subsequently.

3. Refer N. S. S. 18th Round, Feb. 1963—Jan. 1964, No. 134, Tables with Notes on Income of Rural Labour Households, January, 1967, Table I. 5, p. 22. Whereas rural labour households without land constituted 15.54 per cent of all rural households, agricultural labour households without land formed 12.79 per cent of all rural households.

of agricultural households⁴ in each State in 1970-71. Similarly, columns (5), (6) and (7) of the table give the percentages of agricultural labour households with land, without land, and their total to the estimated total number of rural households in 1956-57.

It appears from the table that while the 'weaker section' in 1970-71 constituted about 28.3 per cent of the total agricultural households, the agricultural labour households in 1956-57 constituted about 24.5 per cent of the total rural households. If the 'weaker section' households could be expressed, like in the Second A.L.E., as a percentage of all rural households it would be nearer the A.L.E. percentage.

TABLE I—PERCENTAGE OF WEAKER SECTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH AND WITHOUT CULTIVATED HOLDINGS TO TOTAL RURAL AGRICULTURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN THE 25TH ROUND OF THE N. S. S., AND THE PERCENTAGE OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS WITH AND WITHOUT LAND TO THE TOTAL RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN 1956-57

State	N. S. S. 25th Round (1970-71)			Second A. L. E. (1956-57)		
	Percentage of agricultural households constituting weaker section			Percentage of rural households classed as agricultural labour households		
	With land	Without land	Total	With land	Without land	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Uttar Pradesh	8.81	11.91	20.72	9.58	7.66	17.24
Madhya Pradesh	8.53	14.74	23.27	9.94	14.59	24.53
Bihar	8.23	17.72	25.95	18.09	11.46	29.55
West Bengal	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	9.13	15.87	25.00
Orissa	8.16	18.41	26.57	14.67	15.74	29.41
Assam*	9.24	7.55	16.79	6.72	11.46	18.18
Andhra Pradesh	6.52	34.78	41.30	12.19	23.40	35.59
Tamil Nadu	5.98	40.16	46.14	13.62	22.92	36.54
Kerala	9.39	6.10	15.49	11.73	11.00	22.73
Maharashtra	7.62	23.80	31.42	8.67	17.36	26.03
Gujarat	8.11	18.90	27.01			
Mysore	7.88	21.15	29.03	9.87	17.40	27.27
Rajasthan	9.27	7.28	16.55	1.57	4.33	6.90
Punjab**	8.87	11.28	20.15	0.87	8.51	9.38
Haryana	6.90	30.95	37.85			
All-India†	7.96	20.37	28.33	10.49	13.98	24.47

* 25th Round excludes Manipur and Tripura; Second A. L. E. includes them.

** 25th Round excludes Himachal Pradesh and Delhi; Second A. L. E. includes them.

† For 25th Round, only for the States mentioned; for Second A. L. E., includes Jammu and Kashmir as well.

N.A.=Not available.

Source: Columns (2), (3) and (4) from the mimeographed State reports of the 25th Round of the N.S.S. relating to the weaker sections; columns (5), (6) and (7) are copied or computed from statements 4.1 and 4.2 of Agricultural Labour in India: Report of the Second Enquiry, Vo. I—All-India, Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, 1960.

4. The 'agricultural households' exclude all rural households deriving more or less regular and major income from self-employment in trading establishments, manufactures, mechanized transport, professions, or from rent or salaried employment. The estimate of the total number of such rural households is not available in the reports of the 25th Round made available so far.

It is more interesting to note that the landless labour households in 1970-71 constituted more than 20 per cent of all agricultural households, while the landless agricultural labour households in 1956-57 constituted about 14 per cent of all rural households. A part of the difference between the two might be explained by the following : (i) The landless labour households in 1970-71 are expressed as a percentage of total agricultural households and *not* of the larger total rural households. However, this is unlikely to account for more than 1 or 2 percentage points at most of the difference. (ii) The Second A.L.E. data exclude non-agricultural labour households. While this will account for part of the difference, the two points together may not explain the difference of over six per cent in the two estimates noted above. In this context, it may be useful to point out that during the Third Rural Labour Enquiry in 1963-64 landless rural labour (including non-agricultural) was only 15.5 per cent of all rural households, while in 1970-71 the landless labour households formed 20.4 per cent of all agricultural households. All these go to suggest that a part of the increase in landless labour households recorded in 1970-71 over 1956-57 is real. This is also corroborated by the comparison of Census figures for 1961 and 1971, which shows that the population of agricultural labourers in India had recorded an increase of about 80 per cent over the decade, whereas that of cultivators increased by about 4 per cent only.⁵ While the agricultural labourers counted in the Census include both those with land and the landless, it would not be improper to infer from the above that the proportion of landless labour households in the rural society had recorded distinct increase during the decade and therefore during 1956-57 and 1970-71.

In any case, the populations of landless labourers covered by the Second A.L.E. and the 25th Round are quite comparable, if we presume that the employment-unemployment pattern of the landless non-agricultural wage labourers was similar to that of the landless agricultural wage labourers.

Unlike the class of landless labourers, the percentage of agricultural labour households with land was not very different in the two surveys : the agricultural labour households with land constituted 10.5 per cent of all rural households in 1956-57, whereas the lowest 10 per cent cultivators constituted 8 per

5. It is true that definitional differences make comparison of the relevant data from the two Censuses difficult. However, adjustments are unlikely to change the basic result of the comparison. The total number of male workers who had reported cultivation as their main occupation increased from 66.46 millions in 1961 to 68.97 millions (3.76 per cent increase) in 1971, and of those reporting agricultural labour as their main occupation from 17.32 millions to 31.31 millions (80.75 per cent increase). The change in the method of classification in 1971 resulted in (i) some who in 1961 would have been classified as gainfully employed persons, being classified in 1971 as mainly non-workers with possibly a subsidiary gainful occupation, and (ii) persons who would have been classified as cultivators (because they had some land to cultivate) in 1961, being classified as agricultural labourers or other workers. If the adjustment is made in the 1971 occupational classification of male workers to make it consistent with the 1961 definitions, then the total number of male cultivators in 1971 would be 69.68 millions and of agricultural labourers 31.50 millions, increases of 4.85 per cent and 81.81 per cent respectively. Indeed, an examination of the 1971 data show that whatever the formal definition of a cultivator, there was no material difference between the 1961 and 1971 findings inasmuch as in 1971 also almost all male workers with some cultivation on their own had been classified as cultivators. This footnote is based on an unpublished draft of a lecture by Prof. V. M. Dandekar on the "Role of Labour in Economic Development" delivered in Bombay in 1973.

cent of all agricultural households in 1970-71. Here the difference is largely due to an arbitrary figure—the lowest 10 per cent of cultivators—being considered as constituting a part of the 'weaker section,' while the Second A.L.E. had an income criterion for selection of labour households. Consequently, one finds the agricultural labour households with land forming a much larger proportion of the rural households in the Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan in 1956-57 than in 1970-71, and the reverse in States like Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Besides this arbitrariness, it is possible, on the grounds stated in the preceding paragraph, to presume that the class of agricultural labour households with land in 1970-71 defined as in the Second A.L.E. would form a larger proportion of the cultivating households in 1970-71 than in 1956-57.

All in all, it is not improper to conclude from the above that the coverages of the two surveys, the Second A.L.E. and the 25th Round's 'weaker sections,' are largely comparable.

The 25th Round of N.S.S. gives data on total time spent by persons in the small cultivator and landless labour households in gainful employment, in seeking or being available for job, and in not being available for gainful employment, classified by age and sex. We shall confine ourselves to the adult males between ages 15 and 59 only. The children, that is those below 15 years of age, are largely but not entirely outside the labour market. The same cannot be said about all persons aged 60 or above; but, for meaningful assessment we shall exclude them also. Female employment and particularly unemployment, are more difficult to assess and so we shall keep females aside for our purpose.

Table II summarises the total time disposition of the adult males in the 'weaker section' households in 1970-71. It shows that the adult males spent about 82 per cent of their normal working days in gainful employment (on own business or wage labour). Only 5.7 per cent of their total time was spent in unemployment, *i.e.*, in seeking or being available for work. For the remaining 12.5 per cent of the time they were not available for work due to sickness, domestic work, festivities, etc. Only in 5 of the 14 States for which data are available, was the percentage of time spent in unemployment larger than 5.7: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. The average percentage of time spent in unemployment was even smaller—3.4 per cent—among the small cultivators, and only a little larger—6.5 per cent—among the landless labourers.⁶ For most of the States the averages were less than these all-India averages. Indeed, for some States like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Mysore, and Assam and Uttar Pradesh as well, the time spent by the adult male workers in unemployment was quite small: less than 1 or 2 per cent.

6. The available tabulations for the central sample show that adult males (aged 15-59 years) among the small cultivators spent 4.76 per cent of their time in unemployment and those among the landless labourers spent 5.68 per cent of their time in unemployment. These percentages are not very different from those arrived at from the State samples.

TABLE II—PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TIME OF THE ADULT MALE WORKERS SPENT IN GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT AS PER THE 25TH ROUND OF N.S.S. AND THE SECOND A.L.E.

State	Gainfully employed			Second A.L.E.	Seeking/Available for work			Second A.L.E.	Not available for work			Second A.L.E.
	25th Round				25th Round				25th Round			
	Small cultivators (2)	Landless labourers (3)	All (4)		Small cultivators (6)	Landless labourers (7)	All (8)		Small cultivators (10)	Landless labourers (11)	All (12)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Andhra Pradesh ..	86.9	83.2	83.8	65.5	4.0	6.3	6.0	19.5	9.1	10.5	10.2	15.1
Assam	85.8	83.9	85.0	74.2	1.3	2.9	2.0	3.6	12.9	13.2	13.0	22.2
Bihar	85.0	82.3	83.5	67.1	5.3	8.0	7.1	18.6	9.7	9.3	9.4	14.0
Kerala	56.4	60.2	58.0	53.4	19.0	20.5	19.6	31.8	24.6	19.3	22.4	14.8
Madhya Pradesh ..	88.0	90.4	89.5	67.9	1.7	2.0	1.9	11.0	10.3	7.6	8.6	21.1
Maharashtra	82.4	85.5	84.7	69.0	3.3	4.7	4.4	13.2	14.3	9.8	11.0	17.8
Gujarat	87.8	78.9	81.7		4.3	5.9	5.4		7.8	15.2	12.9	
Mysore	88.8	92.1	91.2	67.6	0.9	1.2	1.1	14.3	10.3	6.7	7.7	18.1
Orissa	75.0	81.7	79.4	63.0	0.7	1.0	0.9	15.9	24.3	17.3	19.7	21.1
Punjab	83.5	79.2	81.0	58.9	0.5	10.3	6.1	19.7	16.0	10.5	12.8	21.4
Haryana	78.7	83.6	82.6		3.0	5.3	4.8		18.3	11.1	12.6	
Rajasthan	85.8	78.5	82.7	62.2	2.7	5.1	3.7	17.5	11.5	16.4	13.6	20.3
Tamil Nadu	77.2	70.2	71.0	55.6	7.6	11.6	11.1	29.3	15.2	18.2	17.8	15.1
Uttar Pradesh ..	86.3	81.5	83.5	66.0	2.0	3.7	3.0	13.2	11.7	14.8	13.5	20.8
West Bengal	—	—	—	69.0	—	—	—	23.3	—	—	—	7.7
All-India	84.2	80.8	81.8	65.0	3.0	6.5	5.7	18.6	12.4	12.7	12.5	16.4

Source : The data for the 25th Round have been tabulated from the mimeographed State reports of that round. The data for Second A. L. E. are calculated from Tables 5. 4 and 5. 11 given in the Second A.L.E.'s all-India report (*op. cit.*)

HAS RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT DECLINED ?

The above findings of the 25th Round of the N.S.S. run counter to the general impressions or presumptions about the extent of available employment and prevailing unemployment in the rural areas of the country in general and in some of the States in particular which are among the poorest in India. Indeed, while 4 or 5 per cent unemployment may be quite high by the standard of the developed countries, it may not acquire the same significance in rural India if it is remembered that this measures not chronically unemployed persons, but total time spent in unemployment by all the adult males in the 'weaker section' population.

The estimate of unemployed time based on the 25th Round of the N.S.S. appears even more disturbing when it is compared with the estimate of time spent in unemployment by the adult male casual agricultural labourers in 1956-57 as shown by the Second A.L.E. These data are also presented in Table II side by side those for the 25th Round of the N.S.S.

It appears from Table II that in 1956-57 the adult male casual agricultural labourers in India were engaged in gainful employment for only 65 per cent of the time, and were unemployed for 18.6 per cent of the time. For 16.4 per cent of the time they were not available for gainful work. This is in sharp contrast to the 82 per cent time spent in gainful employment and only 5.7 per cent of the time in unemployment by the adult males in the 'weaker section' in 1970-71. Is one to infer from this that there had been a significant increase in the employment available to the 'weaker section' (or the rural labourers) in the 14 years since 1956-57 and a consequent decline in unemployment in their ranks, so much so that rural unemployment had lost its urgency by 1970-71? Before one comes to any such startling conclusion by a simple comparison of the data from the two surveys, it is prudent to go behind them and look for any differences in concepts and methods that may be responsible for such wide divergence between the two estimates.

In the first place it is necessary to examine the possible differences arising out of the different populations covered by these two surveys. (i) The 25th Round tabulations cover all adult males between the ages 15-59, whereas the Second A.L.E. data refer to only adult male casual agricultural workers. (ii) The adult males aged 60 and above are excluded from our tabulations of 25th Round data. (iii) The Second A.L.E. data exclude the attached adult male agricultural workers. Now, if the adult males aged 60 or more are included in our tabulations for the 'weaker section' then not only the percentage of time spent by all adult males in gainful employment in 1970-71 will be less than 82 per cent, but the percentage of time spent in 'unemployment' will also be less than 5.7 per cent, because the older males spent less time in either gainful work or seeking work, and more in 'not being available for work.' If, on the other hand, all adult males not in the labour force are excluded, then the proportion of time spent in gainful work as well as in unemployment will be somewhat higher. Since the proportion of the adult male

population aged 60 or more and the proportion of adult males not in the labour force are equally small, it is unlikely that any adjustment of the 1970-71 tabulations to take care of both these would have changed the pattern of time distribution noted earlier for the adult males aged 15 to 59 in 1970-71. The inclusion of attached farm servants in the adult male agricultural workers in 1956-57 would reduce the percentage of time spent by all male agricultural labourers in unemployment from 18.6 to about 14 per cent.⁷ Even then the difference between the proportion of time spent in seeking job in 1956-57 and 1970-71 remains very wide.

An examination of the methods and concepts used in the two surveys reveals a relevant difference in the approach used to measure intensities of time disposition. In the 25th Round of the N.S.S. the time disposition of each member of the sample household on each of the 7 days preceding the day of enquiry was to be noted. But this was to be noted not in hours but in days. For noting the intensity of time disposition in various activities an intensity code was specified. If a person had spent more than half of his normal working day on any particular activity, then the intensity was to be recorded as 1. If he had spent half or less of the working day in any work then the intensity was to be noted as $\frac{1}{2}$.⁸ As against this, the Second A.L.E. laid down that a full day's work (intensity 1) will mean three-fourths or more of normal working hours. More than one-fourth and less than three-fourths of the normal hours was taken to constitute work with half intensity. And less than one-fourth work was considered as 'nominal intensity' which was to be equal to $\frac{1}{3}$ of a normal working day. Normal working day was taken to be of 10 hours' duration. The difference between the Second A.L.E. and the 25th Round of N.S.S. in noting the intensity of time disposition might at least partly account for the difference between the two surveys in their estimation of employment and unemployment. Unfortunately, however, the available tabulated data relating to them do not leave any scope for adjusting one set to conform more or less to the definitions of the other, so that the extent of divergence due to this difference in measurement may be broadly indicated.

It is, however, possible to examine this point indirectly with the help of the employment data made available by the other set of N.S.S. enquiries referred to earlier. Attention may therefore be turned to these data.

7. The Second A.L.E. report does not give the proportion of the attached adult male agricultural labourers to the total adult male agricultural labourers; it only shows that the attached agricultural labour households formed about 27 per cent of all agricultural labour households. We presume the same proportion to hold in the case of adult male agricultural workers. Further, while the attached adult male workers were not gainfully employed for 90 days in the year, it is not shown how many of these were days of real unemployment, *i.e.*, when they were seeking or available for work. We presume that they did not report any time spent in such unemployment. Under these assumptions the time spent in seeking work formed about 14 per cent of the total time of all adult male agricultural workers. In fact, if we had all relevant data for the attached labour, this percentage would presumably be somewhat larger.

8. The instruction to the field staff was: "The decision on whether the intensity is $\frac{1}{2}$ or 1 will depend on the judgment of the informant. In case of doubt and difficulty, however, attachment for 4 hours or less may be taken to be $\frac{1}{2}$ intensity and more than 4 hours' attachment as intensity 1."

The N.S.S. in the 14th, 15th, 17th and 19th Rounds collected data on time spent in gainful employment by the rural population. The tabulated results have been made available for the country as a whole.⁹ These show the sex-wise division of the rural population into those that were in the labour force and those that were outside it during the week under reference. The tabulations give a classification of persons in the labour force according to the total number of hours spent by them in gainful employment in the week under reference. These data appear, subject to certain limitations, adjustable for comparison with the employment data given by the Second A.L.E., on the one hand and the 25th Round, on the other. We shall set this out in what follows.

Although data on the above lines are available for four different N.S.S. Rounds, it is not necessary to examine them separately, but to take an average of all the four Rounds. The differences in the findings of the four Rounds are not such as to make averaging unhelpful. For purposes of comparison attention will be confined to rural males.

The N.S.S. tabulations show (i) the proportion of the total male population in the labour force, (ii) the proportion of those in the labour force 'unemployed' during the reference week, that is, those who were not gainfully employed at any time during the week and were seeking or available for work for at least sometime during the week, (iii) the proportion of those in the labour force who were gainfully employed for 14 hours or less during the week, (iv) the proportion employed for more than 14 to 28 hours in the week, (v) the proportion employed for more than 28 to 42 hours in the week, and (vi) the proportion in the labour force gainfully employed for more than 42 hours in the week.

Now, it is obvious that the 'males in the labour force' according to these N.S.S. Rounds are not necessarily the adult male agricultural labourers of the Second A.L.E. or the male workers between 15-59 years of age in the 'weaker sections' of the rural population. The males in the labour force would include non-adults who were gainfully employed for at least a part of the week, while it would exclude all those adults as well as non-adults, who were not gainfully employed or were seeking work during the week. However, this by itself may not create a significant discrepancy among the three sets of data. The other basic difference is that these N.S.S. Rounds cover the non-agricultural labour and non-weaker section's working population as well. But, whatever their time disposition for gainful employment, it is unlikely that they would have spent a larger proportion of time in 'seeking work' than the agricultural labourers. And finally, our interest is to see with the help of these data, what differences, if any, can arise from the use of the alternative definitions and measures of intensity of time disposition, in the estimation of time spent in gainful employment and unemployment.

9. These are reported in the National Sample Survey Reports No. 100, 156, 173 and 196.

The relevant data relating to the rural males from the four N.S.S. Rounds are summarised below :

TABLE III—PATTERN OF EMPLOYMENT OF THE RURAL MALE LABOUR FORCE IN INDIA (AVERAGE OF FOUR N.S.S. ROUNDS, 14TH, 15TH, 17TH AND 19TH, FROM 1958-59 TO 1964-65)

A. Proportion of rural males in the labour force	..	..	..	..	..	..	55.21%
B. Out of the total rural males in the labour force (A=100%), the percentage							
(1) Seeking or available for work (unemployed) during the week	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.31
(2) Gainfully employed but not working during the week	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.73
(3) Employed for 1 to 14 hours during the week	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.72
(4) Employed for 15 to 28 hours during the week	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.74
(5) Employed for 29 to 42 hours during the week	..	..	..	..	..	..	16.25
(6) Employed for more than 42 hours during the week	..	..	..	..	..	..	64.31
(7) Not reporting hours of employment	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.94

Source : Based on data in Tables 1. 11 and 1. 50 of Report No. 100; Tables 1. 8 and 1. 24 of Report No. 156; Tables 4. 1 and 4. 31 of Report No. 190, and Tables 1. 5 and 1. 12 of Report No. 173 of the N.S.S.

With the help of the above table, it is possible to estimate the total time spent by the male labour force in gainful employment, by using the alternative measures of intensity of time disposition adopted in the 25th Round of the N.S.S. and in the Second A.L.E. However, it is necessary to note a basic difference between the 25th Round and the Second A.L.E. data and that of the other N.S.S. Rounds. In both the 25th Round as well as the Second A.L.E. the intensity of time disposition was ascertained for each of the 7 days of the reference period, and noted in terms of $\frac{1}{2}$ day or 1 day (or $\frac{1}{8}$ day). On the other hand, in the other N.S.S. Rounds we have only the total number of hours worked during the week, and not its distribution on each of the 7 days. Consequently, it is not possible with the published data, to strictly apply the methods of the 25th Round or the Second A.L.E. to the other N.S.S. data on employment. However, we believe, the methods followed below will broadly agree with those followed by the 25th Round or the Second A.L.E.

Let us first use the intensity measure of the 25th Round of the N.S.S. According to it, engagement for more than half-a-day in any activity will be noted as a full day spent in that activity, and half-a-day or less will mean only half-a-day spent in that activity. Now, if a normal working day is considered of 8 hours' duration, then a work-week is of 56 hours. We may say that persons gainfully employed for more than 28 hours in the week had a full week's work. This would include any time for which they were not available for work, but they are not considered as unemployed any time during the week. Now, as was pointed out above, this is not the same thing as was done in the 25th Round. But in the absence of more detailed data this is the closest

approximation to the 25th Round's method of measuring intensity of time disposition. All those employed for 28 hours or less in the week were to be considered as gainfully employed for only half the week. For the rest of the time they as well as those reportedly unemployed were either seeking work (unemployed) or were not available for work. The N.S.S. Rounds do not give an estimate of hours for which workers were not available for work. But we may assume that an average male worker was not available for work one-sixth of the time. This is somewhat higher than the 12.5 per cent of the time for which the adult male workers (15-59 years of age) were not available for work according to the 25th Round. We however wish to have a higher estimate since some non-adults as well as old people are included in the four N.S.S. Rounds considered here. With these assumptions, it can be calculated from the above table to show that the male labour force was 'unemployed' for about 6.8 per cent of the time. This estimate is not very different from the 5.7 per cent unemployed time for the adult males among the 'weaker section' in the 25th Round.

Let us now turn to the estimation of unemployed time by following, as far as possible, the intensity measure of the Second A.L.E. According to the Second A.L.E. all those working more than three-fourths of a normal working day were to be considered as working for a full day. Those working from one-fourth to three-fourths of a working day were to be considered as working for half-a-day. And all those working for one-fourth day or less were to be considered as working for only one-eighth day. Following this line (but subject to limitations similar to those noted in the previous paragraph), persons working for more than 42 hours a week may be considered as fully employed (including any time they may not be available for work), persons working from 15 to 42 hours for only one-half of the week, and persons working for 14 hours or less may be considered to be gainfully employed for only one-eighth of the week. But in order to estimate the time spent in unemployment, we must also have an estimate of the time they were not available for work. Like in the earlier instance, we assume that, on an average, they were not available for work one-sixth of the time. Then it can be calculated from the above table that the rural male labour force was unemployed for about 13.7 per cent of the time, if time disposition is measured as per the definition of the Second A.L.E. This estimate is comparable to the Second A.L.E.'s estimate of about 14 per cent time spent in unemployment in 1956-57 (including attached farm labour.)

The result of the above two exercises is quite clear : the estimation of time spent by the rural male labour force in unemployment, measured as per the definitions of the Second A.L.E., is at least double that arrived at by using the definitions of the 25th Round of the N.S.S. This suggests that the much lower percentage of 'unemployed' time of the rural male labour force among the 'weaker section' in 1970-71 than in the Second A.L.E. is largely due to the different methods of measuring intensity of different activities. Indeed,

there is reason to believe that the extents of unemployment estimated in the Second A.L.E., the 25th Round, and the intervening rounds of the N.S.S. are not significantly different. The 25th Round's findings provide no basis to conclude that the rate of unemployment among the 'weaker section' or the agricultural labour class in rural India had declined by 1970-71.

The validity of the above explanation can be checked by suitable re-tabulation of the original N.S.S. data for any of the earlier rounds according to the alternative definitions of time disposition. Pending any such attempt, it may not be inappropriate to make two general comments. Firstly, one may wonder if this explanation can be equally valid for the small cultivators who are at least partly self-employed and the landless labourers who are only wage employed. Wage employment would be for a whole day or for only half-a-day unlike self-employment which can vary a great deal. Therefore, it is difficult to presume that the estimate of time disposition of the landless labourers in the 25th Round is plagued as much by such definitional variations as that of the small cultivators. This is all the more reason why the very low estimate of time spent in unemployment by the landless male workers in a number of States in 1970-71 needs careful scrutiny and explanation. Secondly, if the above explanation is broadly valid, it implies that for a large proportion of the days on which a rural male worker was employed, employment was for only part of the time. Such a structure of rural employment would appear to make any time-measure of employment-unemployment not only ambiguous but also unhelpful in formulating policy measures. Systematic examination of the available raw data would go a long way in clearing these basic questions.