

Misconduct in Employment

B.R.GHAIYE

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MISCONDUCT IN EMPLOYMENT

(in Public and Private Sector)

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

The first edition was published in the year 1969 and during the span of 8 years there has been considerable addition to the case law. In the present edition the case law upto January, 1977 has been incorporated. Further case law which could not be incorporated has been given at the end so as to bring the case law upto the end of May, 1977.

In writing the second edition opportunity has been taken to re-arrange or sub-divide some chapters for greater facility of reference. A chapter namely "EMPLOYMENT IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE AND CONDUCT RULES" has been added to provide a commentary on the Government Conduct Rules. The matter was previously scattered in other chapters but it has now been consolidated. It is hoped that now the book will be found to be equally useful for Government as well as Industrial employment.

A misconduct on the part of an employee is basically violation of obligation imposed on the employee by the conditions of service. Such conditions of service may be regulated by law, service rules or contract of service. Where an employee is charged with misconduct it is sometimes necessary to find out the exact scope of service conditions to decide whether a particular obligation was or was not imposed on an employee. The Author has, therefore, tried to discuss the various employment regulations which are imposed on an employee either by common law, statutory provisions, service rules or contract. It is hoped that this will lead to better understanding of the subject.

The book will be found very useful for employees and trade union rights because if on account of misconception of legal position they embark on an authorised action then the consequences for them are very serious. They are not only liable to lose the employment but in certain cases the retirement benefits amounting to considerable amount are liable to be reduced or forfeited and provision for their old age is likely to be jeopardised.

Although the book was out of print for the last 2-3 years and there were persistent demands for the next edition but it was not possible to bring out the second edition of the book on account of preoccupations as well as the fact that re-organisation of the book required considerable efforts and time. The Author has been encouraged by the response of the public to the earlier edition and hopes that this edition will be found still more useful by the readers.

The Author takes the opportunity to thank Shri Gopal Singh, B.A., I.L.B. for checking the case law ; Shri R. C. Garg, Senior Stenographer and Shri Ashok Diwakar for assistance in completion of the revised edition. The Author is also thankful to other well wishers and readers who have been making valuable suggestion from time to time.

B. R. Chaiyo

DELHI : July 10, 1977

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The growth of labour law has highlighted the importance of misconducts in employment. Previously the services of an employee could be terminated at will and it was, therefore, not very important to decide whether or not he was guilty of a misconduct. Since the right of employer to terminate the services was restricted, it became very necessary to find out whether an employee is or is not guilty of misconduct. From the point of view of employee also the decision of misconduct has assumed greater importance. When there were little or no retiring benefits and practically no stakes in service, the termination of the services meant little to him. Now-a-days the economic impact of dismissal on the employee is considerable. He may lose thousands of rupees on account of loss of gratuity and other retiring benefits, loss of his due leaves, reduction of employer's contribution to provident fund in case of dismissal alongwith the difficulty of getting a new employment. Thus, the employee has acquired considerable stakes in defending himself against the charge of misconduct. The employer has also a stake in the sense that if the charge of misconduct fails and he is required to pay the back wages, then the amounts are generally considerable. Hence, a proper determination of the commission of misconduct has assumed considerable importance and this importance is still increasing day-by-day. The importance of determination of misconduct in public sector has also increased on account of constitutional protections. During the last 20 years a mass of case law, not only by the High Courts and Supreme Court, but also by the Labour Appellate Tribunals, Industrial Tribunals and Labour Courts etc., has been published, either in the Law Reports or in various State Gazettes. No attempt has, however, been made to collect, analyse and co-relate them for the purpose of evolving the correct concept of misconduct. The correct understanding of the principles is very necessary not only in case of officers of a large organisation but also for every employee and union leader. The Author found difficulties in understanding the subject for the purpose of applying the principles in day-to-day problems of the Personnel Department looked after by him and this necessitated a thorough study of the subject which ultimately culminated in the present book. The Author feels that similar difficulties must be experienced by other officers as well as employees and the Author will be well rewarded if this book helps them in solving their problems.

In writing the book the Author has kept in mind the necessity of expressing various legal propositions in very simple and practical language so that they can easily be understood by the lay-men. At the same time, the requirements of the busy legal practitioners have also been kept in mind and all available cases have been quoted. The book will also be found useful

by the persons who want to make advanced study of the subject. Though the book is mainly based upon the case law as evolved by the courts and industrial adjudication, yet the Author has tried to co-ordinate the different decisions into legal propositions and explain their justification as well as their historical evolution.

The various misconducts were formulated in private employment by the Model Standing Orders mentioned in the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Rules, 1946. The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Rules, 1946, required all establishments having more than 100 employees to frame Standing Orders on the lines of the Model Standing Orders. The Standing Orders have been framed in all the large industrial establishments on the lines of the Model Standing Orders. The various courts and tribunals had the occasion to interpret, clarify and apply the misconducts as contained in the Standing Orders. Wherever the industrial adjudication had an occasion to frame the misconduct, it has also taken its colour from the Model Standing Orders.

In practically all the Standing Orders, including the Model Standing Orders, wilful insubordination and disobedience of legal and reasonable orders is misconduct. Another misconduct is 'an act subversive of discipline' and 'riotous or disorderly behaviour on the premises'. Thus the Model Standing Orders have classified the misconducts as 'Disobedience', 'Insubordination', 'Subversive of Discipline', 'Riotous and disorderly behaviour on the premises'. The classification is overlapping. The disobedience and insubordination may also be subversive of discipline. The riotous behaviour on the premises is a misconduct, but the riotous behaviour outside the premises may also be misconduct if it is comprised in 'subversive of discipline'. The classification, therefore, does not denote distinct misconducts but it denotes different standpoints for judging whether a particular act falls into misconduct or not. The author has adopted the same classification because if the author would have adopted any other classification then it would have been difficult to apply the same to the facts of a particular case in the existing circumstances. This has led to some duplicacy in as much as a particular misconduct has to be discussed at more than one place from more than one standpoint, but this was unavoidable. If any reader wants to know how a particular act is misconduct from different standpoints, then he may take the assistance of Index for this purpose.

The concept of misconduct in its comprehensive sense includes the concept of rights and obligations of employees. The misconduct can be termed as 'breach of an express or implied obligation on the part of an employee'. It is, therefore, very necessary to understand what are the rights and obligations of employees on a particular point. The author has kept this in mind and has tried to elucidate the rights and obligations of employees in respect of different matters, such as 'strike', 'picketing', 'defamation' etc., which will give a clearer insight into the circumstances in which the act can be said to constitute a misconduct.

The Author is conscious of some defects in printing which are inevitable in such a large project. The author would be thankful if the readers will point out any mistake or give any suggestion for improvement of the book. If any reader wants any clarification on any of the points mentioned in this book, he is most welcome to contact the Author.

The Author has avoided the quotation of unnecessary case law of non-Indian origin. In India every branch of law is influenced by the constitutional principles, especially the fundamental rights. The concept of misconduct is also influenced by such statutory law as the Law of Contract, Law of Penal Code and Labour Laws such as Factories Act, Industrial Disputes Act *etc.* The cases decided outside India generally decided in different set-up and in a number of cases they may not be suitable for India. In the opinion of the Author it is better to rely mainly on Indian cases. In India some of the concepts relating to misconducts such as 'theft', 'criminal breach of trust', 'misappropriation', 'forgery', 'falsification of accounts', 'defamation', 'abuse' *etc.*, have been taken from the Criminal Law of India and the Industrial Tribunals have generally adopted the same concept in deciding whether a particular act falls in the aforesaid misconducts or not. The Author, therefore, has tried to clarify at appropriate places what such concept mean in Criminal Law and how the concept of Criminal Law has been applied in industrial adjudication and, if so, with what restrictions and exceptions.

At the end of each chapter the author has given not only the case law of framing the charge relating to the misconduct discussed in that chapter but also the specimen charge-sheets. The author is conscious of the fact that whenever a misconduct is attributed to an employee, either in private or public employment, that is necessarily followed by a charge-sheet and departmental enquiry. Though the departmental inquiry is not the subject-matter of the present book, still while discussing the individual misconducts case law regarding the framing of the charge and the management or defence evidence in relation to that misconduct is also given at the appropriate place so that the book may be more useful to the persons concerned. The Author hopes that this will be found useful to the persons for whom it is meant.

The Author is thankful to his colleague and friend Mr. K. K. Khullar, Industrial Law Adviser and previously Deputy Secretary to the Punjab and Delhi Chamber of Commerce for valued discussion and advice. The Author is also thankful to his daughter Nirmal Ghaiye, M.A., Mr. Hanuwant Singh, Labour Officer, Birla Cotton Mills, Mr. R. N. Rai, Labour Law consultant and Mr. Ramesh Chandra Garg, Birla Cotton Mills for the assistance rendered by them in preparation of the book. The author also thanks all his friends and colleagues who have inspired and encouraged him to undertake and finish the present project.

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B. R. GHAIYE

TABLE OF CASES

	Pages
A, A. v. B.	328
— Chinniah and Others v. Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd.	185, 186, 300, 311, 408
— C. Mukherjee v. Benaras Municipality	344
— Thomas v. Pearlless Carbon Compay	204
— D. Cotton Mills Ltd. v. Workmen	589
— Ghadsi v. Bharat Containers (Pvt.) Ltd.	627
— G. v. Goddard	651
— Patel v. State of Gujarat	79
— I. C. Fox Collison Gilbreath, R. E. Sutton, Orville Hutchins, John S. Jones, Nephi N. Dustin, Mervil C. Hutchins, H. M. Childers, Warren S. Morden, Edward F. O., Neill, Philip Edgar Ferris v. Summit King Mines Ltd.	204
— K. Jagdish Kumar v. Automotive Mfrs. (Pvt.) Ltd.	239, 257
— Madhawan v. Ananda Bhawan	678
— Maung Chit Tay v. Mounng Tun Nyun	523, 524
— N. D'silva v. Union of India	330, 368
— R y v. Lummus Company (India), Dhiwaran	740, 741
— P. Tewari v. Allahabad Bank	249
— R. Natraj Aiyer v. Trichy Srirangam Transport Co. Ltd.	592, 805, 868
— R. D. Deshpande v. Union of India	66, 114, 792
— & S. Henry & Co. Ltd. v. Workmen	27
— Stanley Benjamin (Mrs.) v. The D. S. Central Railway, Jhansi	112
— S. Naidu v. Supdt. of Post Offices	669
— Razoi v. Divisional Engineer, Telegraphs	532
— Shankaranarayana Rao v. State of Mysore	186
— Shivananda Sarvana v. Divisional Commissioner	269
— T. Dey Ltd. v. Anil Kumar Basak	527, 540, 555
— Talashlikar v. B. E. S. T. Undertaking	734
Aacon Constructing Co. v. Harrmann	537, 557
Abanibhushan Biswas v. Hindustan Cables Ltd.	46
Abduali v. Mirza Khan	298
Abdul Azees Rothen Re	862
— Aziz v. State of Mysore	79
— v. Selva Vinaynegar Bus Service	678
— v. Steel Structures (Pvt.) Ltd.	725
— Khan v. Union of India	876
— Gaffar Gulam Kadar v. Silver Cotton Mills Co. Ltd. Ahmedabad	341, 351, 561
— Gani Muzaffar Khan v. Matchwell Electricals (India) Ltd.	714
— Hamid v. King Emperor	390
— Khader v. Consolidated Coffee Estate Ltd.	53, 168, 295
— Khalik Rauzu v. State of Jammu & Kashmir	82
— Latif v. New Prakash Transport Co	307
— Mohinddin v. Narainsinghirji Mfg. Co. Ltd., Sholapur	340
— Qadar v. Regional Dy. Director of Public Instructions	260, 262
— Rahim v. A. P. S. Road Transport Corporation	289
— Khan v. Municipal Committee	129
— Rehman v. D. Ramgiah	658
Abdullah v. Mohammed	344
— Shariff v. Mohammad Ali	337
Abid Ali Danish Ali v. Pehlavi Behary, Bombay	777, 778
Abraham v. State	565
Abzal Rehman v. King Emperor	782
Adair v. U. S.	478
Adam v. Maison de Lusae Ltd.	329
— Wantock & Frank Smith v. Armour & Co.	197
Adambhai Valibhai v. Maheshwari Mills Ltd. Gujarat	164
Adhir Ghose v. Patna Electric Supply Co.	681
Adikando Satpathi v. State	782
Aditya Mills Ltd. v. Ram Dayal	449
Adverd G. Chapain v. Pansalvaina Relations Board	167
Advertising Corporation of India Ltd. v. B. C. Nag	568
Advocate Re	816

	<i>Pages</i>
Aeklam v. Sentinel Insurance Co.	321
Aeron Steel Rolling Mills v. Narsappa Bhimappa	672
Agarpara Co. Ltd. v. Workmen	283
— Jute Mills Ltd. v. Janardan Singh	541, 552, 553
— — — v. Sukhdeo Roy	540, 549
Agnani v. Badri Das	63, 69
Agnihotrau Ananthraschayulu v. Executive Officer	177
Agra Electric Supply Co. Ltd. v. Alldin	45
Ahmed Hassan v. Chief Commissioner for Manipur	86
Ahmedabad Commercial Mills Ltd. v. Mohammad Umar	574, 611
— Cotton Mfg. Co. Ltd. v. Harihar Mahanand	279
— Electricity Co. Ltd., Ahmedabad v. Dhuli Hira	544, 557
— Jayabharat Cotton Mills Ltd. v. Textile Labour Association	622
— Kesor-Hind Mills Ltd. v. Geddalal Chhotelal	127
— Laxmi Cotton Mills Co. Ltd. v. Abdulla Khan Mohammed Safi Khan	772
— — — — Baburam Gangadin	146
— Mfg. & Calico Printing Co. Ltd. v. Ashbhai Kadriabhai	687
— — — — — v. Jagjivandas Vithaldas	624, 641
— — — — — v. Keshavlal Kanjibhai	596
— — — — — v. Shantilal Shah	348
— — — — — v. Textile Labour Association	253, 349, 411, 412
— — — — — v. Waghjee Shivjee	357, 361, 369, 385
— Misc Industrial Workers Union v. Ahmedabad Electricity Co. Ltd. Ahmedabad	25
— New Textile Mills Co. Ltd. v. Bhanushanker Manilal Trivedi	365, 366, 681
— Sarangpur Mills Co. v. I. T.	49
— Spg. & Mfg. Co. Ltd., Ahmedabad v. Vrajilal Ishwarilal	121
Ahuja Stores Ltd. v. Workmen	809
Air Conditioning Corporation (Pvt.) Ltd. v. Workmen	750
— S. L. Bhatnagar	561
Air India Ltd. v. Lobo	522
— — — v. S. Lobo	601, 603, 617, 626
— — — v. Their Workmen	604
Airlines Hotels (Pvt.) Ltd. v. Workmen	283
Ajanta Art Printers v. Its Workmen	411
Ajit Kumar Kunda v. State of West Bengal	361
— Mills Ltd., Ahmedabad v. Bhagwant Prasad	117
— Singh, Constable v. Kirpal Singh, D. I. G.	89
Akal Transport Co. (Pvt.) Ltd. v. Workmen	759
Akbarali Kasamali Ravajani v. N. G. Pandya	66
Akshay Chandra Bose v. Emperor	818
Ala Perfection Mattress & Spring Co. v. Dupree	660
Albert Bonnan v. Imperial Tobacco Co.	327
Alderson B. & Bonzorn v. Ottoman Bank	308
Alembic Chemical Works Co. Ltd. v. Bhiku Ramji	635, 643
— — — — — v. Madhosing Bajobasing	665
Algappa Textiles (Cochin) Ltd. v. Workmen	125
Ali Altaf Hussain v. Gulam Rahman Mallik	727
Aligarh Municipal Board v. Ekka Tonga Mazdoor Union	299
Alihasan Manula v. Ahmedabad Ramkrishna Mills Co. Ahmedabad	544
Alindranath Mukherjee v. G. V. Gillot	687
All India Bank Employees Association v. I. T.	441
— — — — — v. National Industrial Tribunal	442, 495, 511
— — — — — Union v. National Industrial Tribunal	91
— Railwaymen's Federation v. Union of India	75
— Sugar Mills v. Sundersingh	319
— Orissa Transport Employees Union v. State of Orissa	473
— — — — — & the State Transport Employees Union v. State of Orissa	763, 886, 887
Allahabad Bank Ltd. v. Chaturvedi	822
— J. K. Cotton Spg. & Wvg. Mills Co. Ltd. v. Textile Mills in Kanpur & Their Workmen	407
Allibhoy Sharafatly & Co., (Pvt.) Ltd. v. Nandlal Mahabali	191, 192, 194
Allison v. General Council of Medical Education and Registration	64
Alopati Swarna Krishnappa v. Alopati Kesivaswanathan	761
Amalgamated Chemicals Dyestuffs Co. Ltd. v. Workmen	128, 327, 751
— Engineering Union v. Minister of Pensions & National Insurance	18
— Tea Estate Co. Ltd. v. Union	612
Amamallai Plantation Works Union v. Sholapur Group of Estates	490

	<i>Pages</i>
Amarsingh <i>v.</i> Karansingh	185, 186
Amarnath <i>v.</i> Executive Engineer	893
—Mukherjee <i>v.</i> Turner Morrison & Co. (Pvt) Ltd.	711, 727, 753
Amba Cinema <i>v.</i> Workman, Santosh Prasad	896
Ambadas Eknath <i>v.</i> Narsinghji Mfg. Co.	622
Amba Lal Baldevadas <i>v.</i> Raipur Mills Co. Ltd.	117
—Ishwardas <i>v.</i> Aryodaya Spg. & Mfg. Co. Ltd.	674
Ambika Jute Mills Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	425
American Arcot Industrial Institute <i>v.</i> Workmen	584, 838
—Arcot Industrial Institute <i>v.</i> Workmen	296, 314, 675
— — — Mission Industrial Institute <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	171, 173, 572, 599
—Brake Shoe Co. <i>v.</i> N.L.R.B.	442
—National Bank of St. Paul <i>v.</i> N.L.R.B.	344
Ammehtha Lime Stone Quarry <i>v.</i> Workmen	632
Amritlal & Co. Pvt. Ltd. <i>v.</i> P. P. Sharma	124
Amrit Sakharam Sanat <i>v.</i> State of Maharashtra	813, 833
Amritanjan Ltd., New Delhi <i>v.</i> Workmen	396
Amritdhara Pharmacy (P) Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	528
Amritsar Rayon & Silk Mills <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	128
Amir Uddin Saley Bhai Re.	880
Amul Kumar Talukdar <i>v.</i> Union of India	253
Amulya Ratan Mukherjee <i>v.</i> Eastern Railway	877
Anamallais Timber Trust Ltd. <i>v.</i> Chack (LAT)	48
Anand Bazar Patrika <i>v.</i> Indian Journalists Association	539
— — — Ltd. <i>v.</i> Their Employees	130, 572
Ananda Dhondiba Gade <i>v.</i> Manager, Victoria Mills Ltd., Bombay	715, 743
—Prakash & Sons <i>v.</i> Girja Shankr	570
Scientific Co. <i>v.</i> Employees Union	45
Ananthanarayanan <i>v.</i> Southern Railway	671
Andersons <i>v.</i> Mt. Clemens Pottery Co.	201
Andheri Marol Kurja Bus Service <i>v.</i> State of Bombay	432
— — — — <i>v.</i> Tukram Sakharam	434
Andhra Laundry, Madras <i>v.</i> Addl. L.C.	29, 306
— Patrika, Madras <i>v.</i> Their Workers	265
— Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation Employees Union <i>v.</i> Corporation	417, 438
— Scientific Co. Employees Union <i>v.</i> Andhra Scientific Co.	46
— — — Ltd. <i>v.</i> A. Seshagiri Roa	312, 356, 369, 370
Andrews <i>v.</i> Rainssay & Co.	655
— Remak <i>v.</i> Electric Aerolite Co	513
Anglo-American Direct Tea Trading Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Labour Court	330
— French Mills, Pondicherry <i>v.</i> Goulam Cadar	734, 737
Angus Engineering Works, Angus, Hooghly <i>v.</i> Hanif Mohammad and 97 others	191
Anilchandra Ghose <i>v.</i> Union of India	357
Anil Hardboards Ltd. <i>v.</i> Shakharam Mahadeo	146
— Kumar <i>v.</i> Union of India	297
— — — Bose <i>v.</i> State of Bihar	861
— — — Mitra <i>v.</i> Commissioner for the port of Calcutta	74
Anilnath De <i>v.</i> Collector of Central Excise	72, 78
Anjuman Tea Company <i>v.</i> State of West Bengal	621, 647
Annappet Handloom Weavers Cooperative Production Sales Society Ltd. <i>v.</i> Kadalai-muthu	776
Annaswami Re	862
Annaswamy Iyenger Re	863
Anthony <i>v.</i> Good Year Tyre & Rubber Co. of India Ltd.	258
— Saccaviro <i>v.</i> Churchward & Co.	149
— D'souza <i>v.</i> Moti Chand Silk Mills	4
Araish & Basakhasingh & Co. (Pvt.) Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workman, Ramanand Pathak	866
Argent <i>v.</i> Minister of Social Security	11, 13
Arjandas Brijlal & Co. <i>v.</i> Workmen	676, 724
Ark, Hale Hardward Co. <i>v.</i> Pagland	342, 354
Armour & Co. <i>v.</i> Adam Wantock of Frank Smith	196, 202
Arron Abraham <i>v.</i> India United Mills Ltd.	823
Arthur Butler & Co. <i>v.</i> Union	47
Arun Motiram <i>v.</i> Mafatlal Fine Spinning & Weaving Mills Co. Ltd.	405
Arvind Boards of Paper Products Ltd. <i>v.</i> Gajari Ladi	465
— — — — <i>v.</i> Workmen	417, 741
Asarva Mills, Ahmedabad <i>v.</i> Bai Manni Bhuri	352, 355, 356

	Pages
Asarva Mills Ltd., Ahmedabad v. Chunnilal Sitaram	744
Asharam v. Delhi Cloth Mills	767
Asher Textiles v. I. T.	244
— v. Subbaraman	254, 263, 268, 273, 274, 314
Ashgarali alias Chottakhan a. New Victoria Mills Ltd.	639
Ashok Kumar Tribhooandas v. Ahmedabad Mfg. and Calico Printing Co. Ltd., Ahmedabad	160
— Motors Ltd. v. Their Workmen	222, 225, 226, 228, 230
— Textiles Ltd. v. Their Workmen	296
Ashoka Hotel Ltd. v. Ambi Ram	845
— Mills Ltd. v. Dabyabhai Sethabhai	838
Ashutosh Ray v. State	811
Ashwini Kumar Rathi v. P. C. Mukherjee	322
Asiatic Board Mills v. Badan Pandey	711
Asiatic Transport Service (Pvt) Ltd. v. Workmen	289
Asian Rayon Mills Bombay v. Sakharam Ragho Savant	172
Asis Mukherjee (Dr.) v. State of Bihar	763
Assam Metals Co. Ltd. v. Bijoy Lal Sen	187
— Oil Co. Ltd. v. Appal Swami	293, 303
— — — Ltd. v. Mahanti	852
— — — v. Its Workmen	119, 136, 164, 392, 400, 512, 847, 868
— Railway Trading Co. v. S. K. Sen	460
Assistant Education Officer v. Utthu Paramba	81
Associated Cement Co. v. Cement Workers Kamdar Union	725
— — Companies Ltd. v. P. N. Sharma	272, 743
— — — Shahabad v. Their Workmen	247, 420, 433
— Staff Union v. Associated Cement Co. and Others	182
— — — Electrical Industrial Mfg. Co. v. Workmen	510, 570, 490
— Indian Enterprises (P) Ltd. v. Workmen	632, 900
— Industries Ltd. v. M. C. Mahajan	765
— Traders & Engineers (Pvt) Ltd. v. Amar Singh	648
— — — — v. Workman Devraj	901
— — — — v. Workmen	183
— Traders (Pvt) Ltd. v. Workman, Charan Singh	904
Association of Plumbing & Heating Contractors of Greater New York Inc. v. William Mertem	439
Asutosh Ray v. State	825
Aswini Kumar & Co. v. Workmen	826
Atherton West & Co. Ltd., Kanpur v. Regional Consiliation Officer	173, 322, 357
— — — v. Their Workmen	132, 207, 299, 689, 740, 742
Athokpan Nombi Singh v. Officer on Special Duty, Manipur State Transport, Imphal	4
Atlas Cycle Industries Ltd., Sonapat v. Their Workmen	529, 530
— Timbers Bombay v. Their Workmen	421
Aufiero v. E. A. Laboratories Incorporated	198
Autocars Ltd. v. Ambaji Bhikhaji	687
Automobile Mfg. Workers' Association v. Automobile Products of India Ltd.	757, 764
— Products of India Ltd. v. S. V. Seshadhri	120
— — V.N. S. Sharma	265, 268
— — — Bhandup v. Workmen	382
Avadh Behari v. State of M. P.	682
Avinash Chandra Sanjar v. Dvl. Supdt. of Railway	568, 570
Ayub Yusuf Naikwaeti v. City of Sangli Municipality	827
Azad Coala Shramik Sabha v. Manager, South Jharkhand Colliery	244, 315, 412
B. B. Chawan v. Jalgaon District Central Coop. Bank Ltd.	687
— C. I. Railway v. Rajnagar Spinning Co. Ltd.	61
— C. Dass v. Union of India	80
— D'Souza v. Kohinoor Mills Co. Ltd., Bombay	683
— E. S. T. Undertaking v. B. E. S. T. Workers Union Bombay	26, 142, 194, 207, 219
— — — — v. Jainuddin	779
— — — — v. Workmen	739
— — — — Bombay v. Mustafa Ahmed Khalil Abbasi Sheikh	460, 490, 515, 590
— — — — Workers Union v. B. E. S. T. Undertaking	25, 161, 186, 194, 217, 294, 314
— — — — — 440, 442, 467, 531, 553, 628, 635, 636, 638, 809	
— — — — — v. B. E. S. T. Undertaking, Bombay	688, 741
— — — — — v. General Manager B. E. S. T. Undertaking, Bombay	769
— I. C. Ltd. v. Rambahadur Jamadar	539

TABLE OF CASES

XXXIII

	Pages
B.I.C. Ltd. v. Workmen	262, 877, 878
— — — — Kanpur v. Workmen	726, 731
— J. Sajekar v. Colaba Land & Mills Co. Ltd., Bombay	379
— K. Burman v. Additional Secretary to Government	93
— — Kar v. Chief Justice	322
— Kumankulu v. Distt. Mechanical Engineer	786
— Lakshminarayan v. Imperial Bank of India	715
— Lakshminarayana v. Suvari Sanyasi Appa Rao	802
— M. Kastura v. Swadeshi Mills Co. Ltd.	306, 307
— — S. Motor Service, Coimbatore v. Workmen	750
— Manmohan v. State of Mysore	94
— N. Alias & Co. Ltd. v. G. P. Sarathy	260, 261, 270
— — — — v. Their Workmen	262
— — C. Co. Ltd. v. Venkatiah	46
— — Nagrajan v. State of Mysore	71, 73
— — Railway Company v. Hukamchand and Harduttrai	61
— — Rubber Works v. Om Prakash	281
— — Singh v. State of U. P.	676
— O. A. C. v. Workmen	575, 875
— R. Patel v. State of Maharashtra	177
— — Venkappayya v. State of Mysore	284
— S. Vadera v. Union of India	78
Baban Madhare Shinde v. Malegaon Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd.	749
Babcock and Willcox of India Ltd. v. Their Workmen	192
Babu Singh v. State of Punjab	390
Baburao Tatyarao v. Emperor	830
Baburaoji Pandurang Rokade & Bros. v. Employees	884
Bacha Pandey v. Partabpur Concern Ltd.	594
Bachan Singh v. Union of India	882
Bachubhai Hassanali Karyani v. State of Maharashtra	166, 694
Badanbai v. Bhomsingh	711
Badri v. Bally Jute Mills Co. Ltd.	150, 622
Badrinarain v. State	491, 643
Badugu Venkateswarlu v. State	891
Badyanath Das v. Angus Co.	851
Bagalkot Cement Co. Ltd. v. R. K. Pathan	46
Bai Divaresham v. New Swadeshi Mills Co. Ltd.	349
— Kankujivi v. Shri Anand Cotton Mills Ltd.	241
— Ratan Resham v. Maneklal Hiralal Mills Co. Ltd.	349
Baikunthmath Prathihari v. State of Orissa	3
— Rukhiben Surajben v. Ahmedabad Mfg. & Calico Printing Co. Ltd. (Juilee Mills)	737
— Sanki Venu v. Manaklal Hiralal Mills Co. Ltd.	768
— Santok Beni v. Fine Knitting Co. Ltd., Ahmedabad	223, 235
Baitalpur Chini Mills Mazdoor Sangh v. Shri Sitaram Sugar Mills Ltd.	320
Bajaj Electricals Ltd. v. Jaichand Bansal	528, 537
— — — v. Workmen	566
— Industries (Pvt.) Ltd. v. Workmen	624
Bajendra Singh v. State of U. P.	860
Bajrang Lal v. State of Rajasthan	870
Baker v. Regem	843
Bakery & Pastry Drivers v. Wohl	478
Bakhtawarlal v. Crown	524
Balaiah (D) v. Indian Detonators Ltd.	466
Balabhai Vastubhai v. Ahmedabad Mfg. & Calico Printing Co. Ltd.	680
Balan Vadasseri v. District Panchayat Officer, Malappuram	259, 260, 273
Balasingh Jairamsingh v. Sarangpur Cotton Mills Co. Ltd.	389
Balasubramania Mudaliar v. Rajagopalacharier	518
Balayaya Re	823
Balbahadurmal v. Commissioner	759
Balbir Singh v. I. T.	753
Baldev Sahai Re	785
Baldeva Kar Hansa v. Delhi Admn.	673
Baldevji Shivaji v. Arvind Mills Ltd.	129, 683
Bale Bariha v. Kathu	499
Baleshwar Nath Gupta Re	866
— Singh v. Commissioner for the Port of Calcutta	702

	<i>Pages</i>
Balashwar Singh <i>v.</i> District Magistrate	902
— <i>v.</i> District Magistrate Benaras	700, 701
— <i>v.</i> District Magistrate & Collector, Benaras	695, 696
Bal Govind Shah <i>Re</i>	803
Balipara Tea Estate <i>v.</i> Workmen	873
Bali Rai <i>v.</i> Patna Electric Supply Co. Ltd.	617, 632, 636
— & Guru Prasad <i>v.</i> Patna Electric Supply Co.	628
Baliram <i>v.</i> Manager, Express Mills, Nagpur	715
— Prasad <i>v.</i> State of Mysore	833
Baljit Singh Bali <i>v.</i> Chief Commissioner, Union Territory	283
Balkaran Dingar <i>v.</i> G. G. of India in Council	62
Balkishan Tukaram Jadhav <i>v.</i> Birhan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate	154, 509
Ballarpur Collieries <i>v.</i> Industrial Tribunal	436, 437, 438
— <i>v.</i> Salim Merchant	427, 436, 437, 438
Ballu Govind <i>v.</i> Appollo Mills Ltd.	405
Bally Municipality <i>v.</i> Madan Mohan Banerjee	324, 873
Bal Mahadeo Danke <i>v.</i> Jam Sri Ranjit Singh Spg. & Wvg. Mills Co. Ltd.	343
Balraj Khanna <i>v.</i> Motiram	556
Balrama Verma Tea Ltd. <i>v.</i> Shen Cottah Kamatchia Pillai	186
— Textiles Ltd. <i>v.</i> Kamatchia Pillai	451, 461
— — — <i>v.</i> Shencottah Textile Mill Workers Union and another	169
Balussary Benefit Chit Funds (Pvt.) Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	319
Balwantraj <i>v.</i> Union of India	722, 763, 767, 776
Banaras Light & Power Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Bijli Ghar Mazdoor Sangh	369, 379
— — — — <i>v.</i> Government of U. P.	46, 52, 53
— — — — <i>v.</i> Hanuman Singh	45, 645
— — — — <i>v.</i> Labour Court II	307
Bandhu Bhairu <i>v.</i> Kamla Mills Ltd.	578, 590
Bandra Municipality <i>v.</i> Workmen	281, 591
Banga Hadua <i>v.</i> Emperor	643
Bangalore Silk Throwing Factory <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	446
— Woollen Cotton & Silk Mills Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> B. Dasappa	846
— — — — — <i>v.</i> Binny Mills Labour Assn.	772
— — — — — <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	778
Bangoday Cotton Mills Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	681
Bank of Baroda Ltd. <i>v.</i> Inderjit Mehta	608
— India <i>v.</i> L. A. T. of India	848
— Jaipur Ltd., <i>v.</i> Kishore Lal	699
— — <i>v.</i> Kishore Lal & Sadhu Ram	625
— — Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	699
— Madura Ltd. <i>v.</i> Employees Union	660, 745, 786
— — — — — Madura <i>v.</i> Bank of Madura Employees Union	47
— — — — — Employees' Union <i>v.</i> Bank of Madura Ltd.	711, 745, 787
— Mysore Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	257, 274
— Voor Handelens Scheepvaart N. V. <i>v.</i> Slatford	12
Banking Companies <i>v.</i> Workmen	576, 713
Bankola Colliery <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	332
Banks in the State of Madras <i>v.</i> Workmen	378
Bans Lochanlal <i>v.</i> Subharama Ayyar	296
Banwarilal <i>v.</i> State	790
Bapuji Bhogji <i>v.</i> Sirpur Mills Co. Ltd.	153
— Maluji <i>v.</i> Ahmedabad Mfg. & Calico Ptg. Co. Ltd.	447, 450
Barad Kant Bhishya <i>v.</i> Assam Board of Revenue	82, 83
Baramati Municipal Council <i>v.</i> Workmen	715, 728
Barari Colliery <i>v.</i> Workmen	833
Barilly Electric Supply Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Serajuddin	243, 273
— Imperial Surgico Industries <i>v.</i> Workmen	317
Barhanpur Tapti Mills Ltd. <i>v.</i> State I. C.	766
Barkway <i>v.</i> South Wales Transport Co.	396
Barnes <i>v.</i> Richards	33
Baroda Spg. & Wvg. Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Trikamlal Poonamchand	854
— — — — — Mills Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Miyabhai Chandabhai	733
Basisthanarain Chaudhary <i>v.</i> Commissioner, I. T.	31, 75
Baster <i>v.</i> London & County Printing Works	345, 359, 360, 386
Bata Krishna Burman <i>v.</i> Asstt. Secretary W. B.	551
— — Ghosh <i>v.</i> State	498

TABLE OF CASES

XXXV

	Pages
Bata Shoe Co. v. D. N. Ganguly	714
— — — (Pvt.) Ltd. v. Ganguly	461
— — — — v. Third I. T.	744
— — — — v. Shri Ram Ganguly	463
— — — — v. Workmen	302
Batahari Jena v. State of Orissa	79, 83
Bathgate Employees Union v. Bathgate & Co. Ltd.	227
Bava Hajee Bamsa v. State of Kerala	643
Bawa Crockery House Ltd v. R. N. Bhowmick	743, 745
Baytey v. Manchester Sheffield Lincolnshire Railway Co.	19, 131
Beeston v. Collyer	668
Bejdih Colliery of Equitable Coal Co. v. Madan Chatteraj	254, 262
— — — — v. Workmen	279
Belapur Co. Ltd. v. Maharashtra State Farming Corporation	30
Bell v. Lever Bros., Ltd.	35, 136
Bell et. al. v. Saten Portel	197
Bellarpur Collieries Co. v. D. K. Bapat Estate	866
— — — v. State I. T.	865
Belsund Sugar Co. Ltd. v. Shamshul Haque	452
Bencheylal v. State of U. P.	407, 411, 451, 467
Bengal Bhatdee Coal Co. v. Ram Prabesh Singh	489, 492
— Cardboard Industries Printers Ltd. v. Their Workmen	193
— Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works Ltd. v. Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Mazdoor Union	625, 629, 634, 636, 637, 638
— — — — v. Workmen	604, 853
— Immunity Co. v. P. K. Bhattacharya	888
— Ingot Co. Ltd. v. Workmen	153
— Motion Pictures v. Their Workmen	529
— Nagpur Railway Co. Ltd. v. Moolji Sicka & Co.	61, 62
— Potteries Ltd. v. Bengal Potteries Workers Union	302, 492
— — — v. Workmen	600
— United Tea Co. Ltd. v. I. T.	150
— — — — v. Ramlabhaya	743
— Water Proof Works Ltd. v. State of West Bengal	145, 283
— — — — v. Workmen	145, 279
Bennett Colman & Co. v. Their workmen	191, 192
— — — — v. Their Workmen	509, 545, 552, 593, 880, 881
— — — — v. M. Vallad-eres	522, 528, 617
— — — — v. M. Valladares and others	567
— — — — v. M. Valladares	193
Benukar Mehta v. State of West Bengal	74
Benode Behary Roy v. General Insurance Society Ltd.	27, 297
Bentecoat v. London District Auditor	382
Beoparia v. State	45
Berari Colliery v. Workmen	874
Berkshire Knittle Mills v. N. L. R. B.	439
Best Keen William Ltd. v. Workmen	881
Beta Picket Co. v. Workers	673
Bhabesh Chandra Bhadra v. Divisional Superintendent (P) N. E. Railway	249, 255
Bhagalpur Electric Supply Co. Ltd. v. Its workmen	48
Bhaganlal Textile Mills Pvt. Ltd. v. Their Empl yees	215
Bhagat Oil Mills v. Workmen	699, 829
— Singh v. State of Punjab	668
Bhagelu v. Civil Surgeon, Jaunpur	76
Bhagoji Rashoo Ambakar v. New Great Eastern Spg. & Wvg. Co.	156
Bhagwan Radhakrishan v. Commissioner of Income-tax	719
Bhagwani v. Kedari	499
Bhagwandas v. Eastern Railway	287
Bhagwande v. Morarilal	39
Bhagwant v. Kedari	802
Bhagwat Prasad v. I. G. Police	167, 619, 895
Bhagwati Genuji v. Gangabishan Ramgopal	38
Bhagyalaksmi Mills Ltd. v. Workmen	465
Bhagyalaxmi Insurance Company v. Its employee Jogesh Chandra Chakravarti	580
Bhaiji Shankerji v. Shorroek Spg. & Mfg. Co., Ahmedabad	597, 647
Bhaktavatsala Naidu v. Chrome Leather Co. Ltd.	715
Bhanamal Gulzarimal (Pvt) Ltd. v. Their workmen	271, 272

	<i>Pages</i>
Bhanuprasad Hari prasad <i>v.</i> State	781
Bharat Airways Ltd. <i>v.</i> Ram pratap Pandey	315
— — — <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	310
— Bank Ltd. <i>v.</i> Agnihotri	391
— — — <i>v.</i> Employees	54, 328
— Barrel & Drum Mfg. Co. (Pvt) Ltd. <i>v.</i> Barsati Nabhi	732
— — — — — <i>v.</i> Its Workmen	412, 645
— Electronics Ltd. <i>v.</i> I. T.	603, 627
— Fire & General Insurance Ltd. <i>v.</i> Parmeshwari Prasad	29
— Jute Refined (P) Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	746
— Marketing & Advertising Co. <i>v.</i> Its Workmen	330
— Springs (Pvt) Ltd., Bombay <i>v.</i> Their workmen	168, 223, 225, 227
— Starch & Chemicals Ltd. <i>v.</i> I. T.	45
— Sugar Mills Ltd. <i>v.</i> Jai Singh	222, 225, 226, 233, 405
Bharatram <i>v.</i> Union of India	875
Bharattaji Ghamirji <i>v.</i> Shorock Spg. & Mfg. Co. Ltd.	161
Bhaskaran Nair <i>v.</i> Management of Premier Tyres	259
Bhasker Atmaram Joshi <i>v.</i> State of Maharashtra	767
— Textiles Ltd. <i>v.</i> Industrial Tribunal	895
Bhatia Steel Works <i>v.</i> Workmen	576
Bhattachar Rubber Works <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	421
Bhattacharjee Agency & Co. <i>v.</i> Wood Products Mazdoor Union	783
Bhauji Re	825
Bhawan Jivraj & Co. (Pvt) Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	459
Bhawani Sahai <i>v.</i> Sayed Naqvi Imam	299
Bhawanidatt Dharmanand <i>v.</i> New Manekchouk Spg. & Wvg. Mills Co. Ltd.	562
Bhavanjee Sardarjee <i>v.</i> Vijay Mills Co. Ltd., Ahmedabad	148, 350, 385
— — — <i>v.</i> Vijay Mills Co. Ltd.	680, 682, 686
Bhawoo Jivaji <i>v.</i> Mulji Dayal	548
Bhimnath Hari <i>v.</i> Behari Mills Ltd.	212
Bhivadevi and Others <i>v.</i> Taddington Chemical Factory	184
Bhojraj <i>v.</i> Saurashtra Government	289
Bholanath <i>v.</i> Emperor	556, 570
— Mandal <i>v.</i> India Marine Service (P) Ltd.	677
Bhowra Colliery <i>v.</i> Workmen	298
Bhrangbhadra Chemical Works <i>v.</i> I. T.	596
Bhula Re	823
Bhupendra Singh <i>v.</i> Burrakur Coal Co. Ltd.	588
Bhutnath Dal Mills <i>v.</i> Tirat Mistry	300, 314
Bhowneshwar Kuer <i>v.</i> Raghubansmani Prasad Narain Singh	875
— Prasad Verma <i>v.</i> State	717
Bibhuti Bhushan Basu Roy <i>v.</i> General Manager, Eastern Railway	76
Biddle <i>v.</i> Bond	656
Bihar Fire Works & Potteries <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	403, 442
— — — — — Workers' Union <i>v.</i> Bihar Fire Works & Potteries Ltd.	417
— Journals Ltd. <i>v.</i> Ali Hasan	46
Bihari Mills Ltd., Ahmedabad <i>v.</i> Pir Sahib Miyan Ghazi Miyan	349, 350, 351
Bijal J-lha <i>v.</i> New Rajpur Mills Ltd., Ahmedabad	120
Bijavnand Patnayak <i>v.</i> K. A. A. Brinand	880
Bijoy Kumar Dey <i>v.</i> State of West Bengal	286
Bikaner Gypsums Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	592, 397
Bimal Kanta Mukherjee <i>v.</i> Newmans Printing Works	848
— Kumar Pandit <i>v.</i> State	82
Bindeshwari <i>v.</i> Emperor	810
— Singh <i>v.</i> State	642
Binny Beach Engg. Work Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	697, 771
— Ltd. <i>v.</i> C. C. Thomas	832
— — — <i>v.</i> Workmen	746, 765
Binoy Kumar <i>v.</i> State of West Bengal	83
Bipen Chandra <i>v.</i> Republic of India	810, 820
Bipra Das Giri <i>v.</i> Niradamoni Bewa	832
Birbal <i>v.</i> Kishori Lal	658
Birdichand Sharma <i>v.</i> 1st Civil Judge, Nagpur	16
Birdo Saunda D. Volliery <i>v.</i> Workmen	778
Birendra Kumar Sinha <i>v.</i> State of Bihar	719

	<i>Pages</i>
Birmingham <i>v.</i> Bartels	404, 442
Birpara Tea Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	632
Bishalchand Jain <i>v.</i> Chatersen	379
Bishambherlal Dayachand <i>v.</i> State of Punjab	866
Bishwanath Das <i>v.</i> Keshab Gandhabanaik	557
Bisra Stone Lime Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> I. T.	136
Bissesardas <i>v.</i> Kasturchand	19, 132
Bissessur Roy Re	826
Biswabusan Naik <i>v.</i> State	799
Biswanathdas <i>v.</i> Gohonchandra Heyrik	703, 705
Blackwood (India) Ltd. <i>v.</i> R. K. Mukherjee	710, 720
Blake <i>v.</i> Woolf	13
Blankley Laundry Co. <i>v.</i> Cleaners & Dyers' Union, Local No. 18422	487
Blenkern <i>v.</i> Hodges Distillery Co. Ltd.	815
Blue Star Engg. Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Balbir Singh	144, 749, 752
Bo Adlerbert, d. b. a. Sunrise Dairy <i>v.</i> Local No. 680, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen & Helpers of America	487
Board of Education <i>v.</i> Rice	291
Bobby Lyke <i>v.</i> N. L. R. B.	444
Boddepalli Lakshminarayana <i>v.</i> Survari Sanyasi	839, 840
Boeing Airplane Company <i>v.</i> N.L.R.B.	886
Bombay Calico Printing Mills, Amritsar <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	122
— Cotton Waste Mills Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Rashtriya. Mill Mazdoor Sangh	391
— Engg., Madras <i>v.</i> Workmen	748
— Fine Worsteds Mfrs. Castle Mills <i>v.</i> Woollen Mills Kamgar Union	576
— Gas Co. Ltd., Bombay <i>v.</i> Bhairoo Krishna	444, 445
— Glass Works Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	664
— Life Assurance Co. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Employees	148, 474, 535
— Mills Mazdoor Sabha, Bombay <i>v.</i> Rajkamal Silk Mills, Bombay	440
— Pencils (Pvt.) Ltd. Bombay <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	532
— Port Trust <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	186, 223, 231, 268, 318, 414, 415,
Boots Pure Drug Co. (India) Ltd. <i>v.</i> John Dulmeda	852
Bose <i>v.</i> Director of Telegraphs	667
Bose Bros. <i>v.</i> Iron & Steel Workmen's Union	146
Boston Deep Sea Fishing & Ice Co. <i>v.</i> Ansell	656, 663
Boulton Bros. & Co. Ltd. (India), Delhi <i>v.</i> New Victoria Mills Co. Ltd.	658
Bouzourou <i>v.</i> Ottoman Bank	271
Bowers et. al. <i>v.</i> Remington Rand Inc.	197
Bowreah Cotton Mills Co. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	299
Box-Assemble Contractor, Bombay <i>v.</i> Pandurang Anante Dange	126
— Trading Co. <i>v.</i> West Bengal Card & Ptg. Mazdoor Union	576
Bradma of India Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	868
Braemore Estate Kallar & Nedu Mangad <i>v.</i> Taluk Estate Workers Union	328
Brake Shoe Company <i>v.</i> N.L.R.B.	404
Bray <i>v.</i> Chandler	296, 656
Bredma of India Pvt. Ltd., Bombay <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	182
Briggs <i>v.</i> Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd.	244
Bright <i>v.</i> Ganas	678
Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate Ltd. <i>v.</i> Laxman Tatuaba	387, 846
Brijlal Matabadal <i>v.</i> Eastern Chemicals (India) Ltd., Bombay	768, 770, 771
Brij Mohan <i>v.</i> Priyabrat Narain Sinha	781
Britannia Biscuit Co. <i>v.</i> Workmen	850
— — — Ltd. <i>v.</i> Amirchand	303
British and Irish Steam Packet Co. <i>v.</i> Seamen's Union	136
— Electric & Pump Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	485
— India Corporation Ltd. <i>v.</i> Bakshi Sher Singh	165, 623
— — — Kanpur <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	244, 325, 383
— Institute of Engineering Technology (India) Ltd. <i>v.</i> J. V. G. Coelho	130, 316
— Insulated Calendars Cables Ltd. <i>v.</i> Workmen	825
— Movietonews Ltd. <i>v.</i> London and Distt. Cinemas Ltd.	32
— Motor Car Co. <i>v.</i> Their Workmen	477
Brooke Bond India Pvt. Ltd. <i>v.</i> Chandra Nath Chowdhary	103, 659
— — — <i>v.</i> Sudhir Ranjan Bose	767
Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen <i>v.</i> Jakcon Villey	486
Brown <i>v.</i> Dupree	660
Brundaban Swarmi <i>v.</i> State of Orissa	646
Bryne <i>v.</i> Boadle	362