

already. It is a very serious issue. The Jain Commission Report was submitted to the Government about three months back. It has still not seen the light of the day. We are being kept in the dark. Sir, you are the custodian of the House. We have seen the hon. Members referring to Press clippings today. We are not referring to the Jain Commission Report. How long will it continue like this?

How long will it continue like this? As per the Jain Commission Report, as reported in the Press, it is crystal clear that our intelligence machinery had failed. As per the Jain Commission Report submitted to the Government, there are so many conspirators and it has been proved. What action has been taken in this regard? We have been kept in darkness. I want to know whether the Government is waiting for some more murders to be committed. As a result of these militant activities, we have lost our Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers and thousands of people. I want to know whether it is not a serious matter which should be considered by this House. Sir, as you are the custodian of the House, you have got more responsibilities. One Minister is still present in the House even the Minister in-charge of Parliamentary

Affairs was also present in the house—Kindly direct them to expedite the matter; otherwise, so many things will happen, and particularly the evidence will be destroyed. Hence my request is that this Report should be placed on the Table of House immediately.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, I just like to add one thing. It is obligatory on the part of the Government and as per the Commission of Inquiries Act, 1956, they will have to place the Report of the Committee along with the Action Taken Report. We expected that the Government should have placed this Report—at least indicated that during this Session they

would like to place the Report along with the Action Taken Report, whatever Action Taken Report has been prepared, whatever action they have taken. Therefore, I would like to have some response from the Government, they should indicate to us—some Cabinet Minister is sitting—by what time—because we know the schedule of the present Session—we are expected to have the Report placed on the Table of the House along with the Action Taken Report.

SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Sir, there is no response from Minister ...(*Interruptions*)...

Postal Strike

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, we cannot but deeply deplore the attitude and policy of the Government with regard to the Postal strike which is continuing. It has entered the fourth day. A vital channel of communication in the country has totally collapsed. Much contrary to the boastful statements being made that nothing is wrong, something of the Postal system is still functioning, the facts are completely otherwise. The Postal Department has come to a standstill. Lakhs of Postal employees are on strike. Maybe, it has entered the fourth day and the Government appears to be silent. At least, the Parliament which is in Session is not being informed about the negotiation that is continuing. I thought, the House expected the hon. Minister looking after Communications, of course, it is an additional charge—will inform the House. What is happening to that? How long is this strike going to continue? Therefore, the whole policy appears to be devoid of any responsibility and extremely casual. The Prime Minister, only the other day, said that negotiations are going on. Sushmaji said in the other House that talks are going on, but how long will the talks go on?

Sir, the Tandon Committee Report was submitted to the Government much

earlier. Why did the Government wait for a strike to take place, to take a view on the Report? And why are the negotiations being allowed to be conducted by officials only? What prevents the Minister from having talks with the leaders of the striking employees? Since the communication channel has collapsed, causing deep distress to the common people, those who cannot speak on telephone; those who cannot make use of fax, those whose numbers are much greater in the country, they are facing a tremendous inconvenience. Even after this, the Government does not think it necessary to come to the House! Sir, therefore, I demand—number one—the Minister must talk to the striking employees. There is no question why the Minister should not talk. It should not be left to the bureaucracy only.

Number two, the Government must take a positive step towards implementing the recommendations made by the Tandon Committee. Number three, the Government must enlighten the country in the House tomorrow as to at what level the talks are going on and as to what the Government intends to do to put an end to the strike in order to create a situation where this paralysed condition is done away with as also the postal system is put to action. This is absolutely devoid of responsibility. The Government is too casual and it does not seem to take the House into confidence when the House is in Session.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I had raised this issue earlier. I would like to share certain information with the House. There is absence of a statement by the Government. Apart from other things, the Parliamentary convention demands that when a statement is made in the other House, it is also made here so that the Members can have their questions clarified. It is not done. We are seeing a systematic propaganda being made by the

Government, using all channels, to malign the striking employees and to politicise the issue of strike. Mr. Chairman, Sir, you must be aware that the organisations of postal employees, have gone on strike earlier also during the Prime Ministership of Mr. Deve Gowda and Shri Narasimha Rao. Even before starting negotiation or discussion with the striking employees, we have definite information that the Government would charge the major Opposition parties with manufacturing this type of agitation. The Government is openly maligning the striking employees.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, Sir, a month's notice of strike was given. There has been no effort on the part of the Government to avoid the strike through negotiations. The question of negotiation will arise only after the strike has started. The Government is distorting the facts. There is no connection between the recommendations of the Talwar Committee and the Fifth Pay Commission report. The Talwar Committee was constituted by the Government much earlier. Sir, there is an inhuman system of extra-departmental employees prevailing in the Department of Posts. Since the British days, since the 19th century, certain "employees are working with such responsibilities as those of full-fledged employees of the Department of Posts. But, they are not recognised as employees. Sir, there are employees in this ED category who are given as low a salary as Rs. 800 per month and they are linking this with the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations! Three years ago the Talwar Committee had given its recommendations but they have failed on that. It is demanded that this inhuman colonial legacy should be brought to an end. The Government is still trying to confuse the issue saying that it is related to the Fifth Pay Commission. What we say is, this attitude does not help. The Communications Minister is openly saying that unless the strike is called off, there would be no

negotiations. She has taken it as a prestige issue. No responsible Government and no Government which is sensitive to the difficulties of the people takes such a confrontationist position. After the Prime Minister's remark that some way will be found out, we were hopeful. But we have seen that even after that -the Secretary of the Department of Posts has gone back on the assurance which was made by the Department of Posts and the Postal Board. They said that the ED employees would- be converted into postal employees. They have gone back on that and the whole thing has added up to the confrontation. We urge upon you to ask the Government to take some meaningful steps because six lakh employees are involved. The entire postal network has come to a stand-still. Yet, the Government, day in and day out, is misleading the nation saying that the strike had no impact whereas, day in and day out, the strike is going from strength to strength. Our only appeal is that the Government should take urgent steps at the highest political level to find out a way out and go in for a negotiated settlement and restore the postal system in the country.

SHRI R. MARGABANDU (Tamil Nadu): Sir, normal life has been paralysed due to this postal strike. The communication of the poor man has been disturbed. It is all right that rich people have STD and other means to communicate. But, so far as common man is concerned, this strike has very much affected his normal life. Sir, the Government must come forward and accept some of their reasonable demands. At the same time, the postal employees must yield to some of the reasonable problems of the Government. I am told that about Rs. 600 crores are involved per year. I do not know to what extent the Government will be -able to bear it. This is one question. Secondly, Sir, some of the demands of the employees have already been accepted by the

Government side. Some of the employees were ready to accept them. But, some political parties are intervening in the matter. They are preventing the employees from accepting any such thing. So, I request the Government that some of the reasonable demands of the postal employees may be accepted. I also appeal that the postal employees should also call off their strike in order to restore the normal life.

श्री सभापति : श्रीमती कमला सिन्हा, एक मिनट।

श्रीमती कमला सिन्हा (बिहार) :आपने तो शुरू करने से पहले ही ब्रेक लगा दिया।

श्री सभापति : हां, सबको लगा रहा हूं।

श्रीमती कमला सिन्हां सभापति महोदय, मैं इस विषय के साथ अपने को संबद्ध करती हूं और सरकार से यह कहना चाहती हूं कि आम जनता की आवश्यकताओं को सरकार ध्यान में रखना चाहती हैं तो पोस्टल कर्मचारियों के साथ तत्काल बात करके उनकी समस्याओं का निदासन ढूंढे क्योंकि यह बात सही है जैसा कई साधियों ने कहा हैं, कई माननीय सदस्यों ने कहा है कि जिनके पास साधन उपलब्ध हैं वह टेलीफोन से बात करते हैं, फैक्स से आवश्यक कागजात भेजते हैं। लेकिन जिनको अपनी बात के बारे में खबर देने के लिए पोस्टकार्ड लिखना होता है या टेलीग्राम भेजना होता हैं या किसी के घर में को कोई मर गया, कोई विपत्ति हो गई तो कैसे यह समाचार भेजेगर्? यह क्या हो रहा हैं? देश के 80-90 करोड़ लोगों के साथ सरकार क्यों खिलवाड़ कर रही हैं? सुषमा स्वराज जी उस विभाग की प्रभारी मंत्री हैं इसलिए मैं यह भी नहीं कह सकती कि मूछ की लड़ाई हैं। लेकिन ऐसी बात तो नहीं होनी चाहिए। पोस्टल स्टाफ के जो लीडर्स हैं, यूनियन के नेता हैं उनके साथ बैठकर बात करनी चाहिए। मैंने तो यह भी सुना हैं सरकार की ओर से यह प्रयास किया गया है कि एक सेक्शनल लीडरशिप को बुलाकर बातचीत करने की कोशिश की गई हैं और उसी के कारण आग और भड़की। यह नहीं करना चाहिए था। जितने स्ट्राइकर्स हैं उन सभी संगठनों के लीडर्स को एक साथ बैठाकर बात करनी चाहिए थी और मसले का हल करने का उपाय करना चाहिए था। सरकार ने यह नहीं किया। सरकार ने फूट डालने की कोशिश की, फूट डालकर संगठन को कमजोर करने की कोशिश की और उसके कारण नाराजगी और बड़ी। समस्याओं का निदासन भी नदूढ़ें।

तथा मजदूरों के बीच में, कर्मचारियों के बीच में जो मतभेद पैदा करने की कोशिश की गई है सरकार की ओर से, यह बहुत ही अनुचित बात हुई है। इस तरह की बात न करके मैं आग्रह करूंगी कि तत्काल इस समस्या का निदान ढूंढे और अक्रोस दि टेबिल बैठकर बातचीत करके इस मामले को सेंटिल कर लेना चाहिए।

प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दिल्ली) : सभापति महोदय, यह जो देश में हड़ताल हो रही है उसके कारण जनता को कष्ट हो रहा है, मैं उसमें अपने आपको शामिल करना चाहता हूँ कि यह कष्ट ठीक नहीं है और यह हड़ताल जल्दी से जल्दी खत्म होनी चाहिए। सभापति महोदय, यह भी ठीक है कि जो मंत्री हैं वह भी आकर के यहां पर स्थिति को स्पष्ट करें। परन्तु जो बातें यहां पर राजनीतिक रूप में कही गई कि सरकार यह कर रही है, सरकार केज्युअल है, सरकार ने यह किया, महोदय, मैं उस सबको प्रतिकार करना चाहता हूँ। इस बारे में बात चल रही थी, बातचीत उनसे शुरू हो गई थी, उनकी तीन मांगें ली गई थीं, बाकी मांगों पर बातचीत करके लगभग मामला तय हो रहा था उस समय कुछ राजनीतिक दलों ने क्रेडिट लेने के लिए जानबूझकर के इस हड़ताल को जारी कर दिया। यह भी बिल्कुल ठीक है कि अगर चार दिन मामला और रुक जाता तो पूरी तरह से मामला निबट जाता और उसको तय कर दिया जाता। मैं अपील करना चाहता हूँ यह तो ठीक है कि मंत्री जी आएँ और पूरी स्थिति को स्पष्ट करें। परन्तु यह बात भी है कि मांगें जो शुरू में थीं, और जिनको माना जा रहा था, अब उन मांगों को इतना बढ़ाया जा रहा है ताकि न सरकार उनको मान सके और न मांगें पूरी हों और हड़ताल किसी तरह से चलती रहे। इस प्रकार सरकार को बदनाम किया जाए। यह उचित नहीं होगा। इम्प्लॉइज और सरकार को बैठकर इसका हल निकालना चाहिए और प्रधान मंत्री जी ने आश्वासन दिया था कि कोई न कोई हल निकल आएगा और आश्वासन के बाद ... (व्यवधान) ...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, there is a serious point of order. ...*(interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: On what?

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: You have condemned the Government for nothing and without any reason ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: My point of order is, Mr. Malhotra has made a

statement that the employees have revised their charter of demands. It is a plain untruth and to that extent, he is misled the House. That is my point of order. ...*(interruptions)*...

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Sir, this is not a point of order ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, there is absolutely no difference between the strike and their charter of demands. ...*(interruptions)*...

प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : जितनी बातें आपने कहीं, you have misled the House from the beginning.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: You are misleading the House. ...*(interruptions)*...

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: You have completely misled the House.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: You are misleading the House. ...*(interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Malhotra, you complete your submission first. ...*(interruptions)*...

प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : मैं सिर्फ यह कहना चाहता था कि सदन को भी इस बात को देखना चाहिए, यह बात ठीक है कि अमीर आदमी टेलीफोन कर लेंगे या फैक्स से भेज देंगे लेकिन करोड़ों लोगों के साथ इसका ताल्लुक है। इस मामले को न तो सरकार जैसा आपने कहा कि मूँछ का सवाल बनाए न किसी को इज्जत का सवाल बनाना चाहिए। वैसे ही इम्प्लॉइज को भी इस बात के लिए तैयार करना चाहिए कि रीजनेबल तरीके से इसका हल निकल आए और यह हड़ताल जल्दी से जल्दी खत्म हो।

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, I did raise this issue in this august House three days before the commencement of the strike. You had kindly permitted me to raise it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please finish it in one minute.

SHRI S. VIDHUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Yes, Sir. After that, Mr. Vayalar Ravi

had also raised the same issue.. The same issue had also been raised by the C.P.I. When I was raising the issue, I was told very clearer that the main issue was, the departmentalisation of the E.D. workers and pay on a *pro rata* basis. They are not demanding it on an eight-hourly basis but are demanding it on a *pro rata* basis. My colleague has said that about Rs. 600 crores of expenditure would be incurred; that is why employees have to decide about it. What I would like to

say is, when the retirement age has been raised from 58 years to 60 years, the Government, in this financial year alone, is going to save about Rs. 1,800 crores. The amount of Rs. 600 crores could be taken out from the amount of Rs. 1,800 crores. That is why, as far as the financial problem is concerned, it is not an issue at all. I had requested the hon. Minister on that day, through you Sir, that a statement should be made. I feel depressed today because no statement has come from the Government on this issue. Where do they stand? Why is there so much lingering? If we find any reason, we can also co-operate with them to avert the strike. This is based on "equal work for equal pay."

In 1993, there was a four-day strike in the Postal Department. At that time, there was an agreement between the Government and the workers that the Government would constitute a Committee to go into the grievances. Based on that agreement, in 1995, the Government had constituted a committee *i.e.*, Talwar Committee. The Talwar Committee has submitted some recommendations. Now, based on those recommendations, the workers have submitted their demands and grievances. Therefore, it is totally justified and two important Unions — N.F.P.E. and F.N.P.O — are participating in the strike. Both the unions are important. When both the unions are participating in the strike, means, six lakh workers are participating in the strike. Now, the communications have completely been

paralysed. Sir, six lakh workers are involved. It is a very important issue affecting the whole nation. That is why, once again, I ask the Government to continue its dialogue in a friendly and human manner and see that grievances which are actually placed before you are accepted and rectified.

The second point is, the Government should come forward before this august House with a statement as to what action they have taken. With these words, I conclude. Thank you. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM: Sir, the employees have to withdraw their strike also in the interest of the nation. ...(*interruptions*)... Why should there be any statement only? The employees should also be persuaded to withdraw the strike. ...(*interruptions*)...

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Because no statement has come from the Government., ...(*interruptions*)... He is entitled to speak whatever he wanted to...(*interruptions*)... What I wanted to say is, if a statement comes from the Government, we will know the actual position and we can take a decision based on that. Without any statement, how can we come to any conclusion?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, my appeal to Mr. Malhotra and the Treasury Benches is, please do not bring politics into this. There is no politics involved and there is no political interference in this. I can assure you. This is an issue which is affecting the nation and in the national interest we are suggesting that the Government must come forward and settle the issue. The hon. Minister can negotiate. I would like to make only one point. The nomenclature "Extra-Departmental Employees" is a wrong notion. Sir, not only in Kerala, I can assure you, and you can also find out, in every State, more and more young people are being recruited. Once upon a time, only retired personnel were being employed. But, today, young people are being recruited. And, there is also a rule

in the Department that more than 60% of the employees should be recruited from the categories of S.C. and S.T. and one's qualification should be below X class.

These are poor men. They are selected by the Superintendents of Post Offices. Sixtysix per cent of the people involved in this work are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They work for more than eight hours. They go by a bicycle or by a bus to the main post offices, collect the baggage, come back and distribute the mail. There was a film in Kerala on an ED employee killed by an elephant while walking through a forest.

Sir, this "Extra Departmental" was introduced when Indian population was only 23 crores. Now, it has reached 100 crores. Since then, the population has increased, the villages have increased, the work load has increased. So, please take into account the fact that there is no point in calling it Extra Departmental. They are departmental employees, working for more than eight hours. They were recruited as per the norms of employment exchanges. Most of them are poor people, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes. They are catering as a post office or even more than that. So, I appeal to the Government to look into the grievances, to look into the issue in a humanitarian way. We are living in a country where there is no slavery. In fact, they are more slaves than employees. So, I appeal that we should forget politics and look into the matter seriously. It is purely a trade union matter. Mr. Malhotra, I know the trade union which belongs to your party is not associated with the strike. But, that should not be an impediment for the Government to have a dialogue and settle the issue. Thank you.

Business

ALLOTMENT OF TIME FOR DISPOSAL OF GOVERNMENT AND OTHER BUSINESS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I have to inform that the Business Advisory Committee at its meeting, held today *i.e.*, 13th July, 1998, allotted time for Government legislative and other business, which is as follows: (a) Discussion on the working of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, and the Ministry of Industry—5 hours each; (b) Consideration and return of the Appropriation (Railways) No. 3 Bill, 1998, after it is passed by Lok Sabha—3 hours.

New, it is seven minutes to two. When would you like to meet again? (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: There is no strike in Railways, Sir. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the point is that we do not get a place at the first floor canteen for lunch. It takes time. That is why a minimum of one hour is required; otherwise, we would not be able to come back in time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, the House is adjourned for lunch for one hour.

The House then adjourned for lunch at fifty-three minutes past one of the clock.

The House re-assembled after lunch at fifty seven minutes past two of the clock, the Deputy Chairman in the Chair.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I welcome you Madam.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I hope that this welcome translates into cooperation. Now, we shall take up the Appropriation (Railways) No. 3 Bill, 1998.