

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Situation arising out of the Port and Dock Workers' Strike at all major ports in the country

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I rise to call the attention of the Minister of Shipping and Transport to the situation arising out of the Port and Dock Workers' strike at all major ports in the country and the action taken by the Government in the matter.

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY): Sir, as the Hon. Members of the House were informed on 15-3-1984, the last wage settlement for port and dock workers of the Major Port Trusts and Dock Labour Boards was effective till 31-12-1983. In order to evolve a new settlement to be effective from 1-1-1984, a Bipartite Wage Negotiating Team commenced negotiations with the four Labour Federations since August, 1983. As the discussions at bipartite level were not fruitful, the matter was reported to the Government in the middle of November, 1983. The discussions at the Government level were first held by Secretary, Ministry of Shipping and Transport and then by me. I appealed to the representatives of four labour federations to keep the overall interest of the national economy in view and help in arriving at a reasonable settlement by making their demands more realistic. I offered an overall settlement at an estimated annual cost of Rs. 32 crores which represented a 15 per cent increase over the estimated annual wage bill of Rs. 216.31 crores for the year 1983. But they pressed for acceptance of what they termed as their minimum demands, the financial implications of which worked out to approximately Rs. 69 crores representing an increase of about 32 per cent over the existing wage bill of Rs. 216.31 crores. As such an order

of increase in any wage settlement of this nature was not reasonable or realistic, I again appealed to the labour representatives to make their demands more realistic so as to enable a settlement being arrived at. But the labour representatives reiterated their stand.

My colleague, Shri Veerendra Patil, Minister for Labour and Rehabilitation also made a fervant appeal to them on 14-3-1984 to postpone the strike atleast for a week so that he could get sufficient time to find a way out. Unfortunately, the representatives of the Federations did not accede to that request also and intimated their intention to proceed with the threatened strike.

Port and dock workers resorted to strike at all the major ports with effect from the mid-night of 15th/16th March, 1984 except at Madras Port where the strike started from 6 a.m. on 16-3-1984. As a result of this strike, all the cargo handling work at the major ports has virtually come to a standstill. The strike is illegal under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 as it commenced during the pendency of the conciliation proceedings. Essential services like water supply, electricity, communication, fire fighting and hospitals are being maintained either in full or partly as these have by and large been exempted by the labour federations from the purview of the strike. The law and order situation at all the ports by and large is peaceful.

As the Hon. Members are aware, strike by workers in major ports disrupts the supply of essential commodities such as edible oil, POL, Kerosene oil etc., As the short supply of these commodities is likely to affect the common man, Government has to take necessary steps to ensure continued supply of such vital commodities. I once again earnestly hope that the representatives of the four federations of port and

dock workers will come back to the negotiating table so that a reasonable settlement can be arrived at and normalcy restored.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: Sir, the facts given in the statement are more or less correct and I cannot dispute them on the basis of facts, except only the attitude that the Government has taken towards negotiations and also towards the demands of the workers. The hon. Minister himself admitted that the strike has been very peaceful. We have declared repeatedly that we will observe all international norms in conducting the strike, and our trade-unions themselves have exempted hospitals, water-supply, electricity and other essential services. Even the personal attendance of the officers is permitted, because we are not against any officer, or administration, but we only want to press our demands, because the demands are so just.

The hon. Minister said that it is unrealistic. How is it unrealistic? After all, it is the trade-unions which brought their demands to a negotiating table even within negotiating limits; but the Government took an adamant attitude. That is the reason why the strike has taken place. Today is the fifth day of the strike. As I have already said we have adopted all norms and forms of conducting the strike as peacefully as possible. Look at the incident at Madras. In Madras, in spite of the cent per cent strike, our trade-unions allowed a passenger vessel to sail from the harbour for Andamans because we do not want passengers to suffer, and they were shown extra consideration, without drawing wages as they are on strike and still they voluntarily worked, without drawing the wages, to allow passengers vessel to sail from Madras to its destination. Such is the consideration of the workers for the nation and for the people. He is so much concerned

about non-movement of cargo. Not a single vessel has moved. Not an ounce of cargo is either loaded or unloaded. The Minister is trying to provoke. I do not say, the Minister personally. What is the necessity of inviting the Navy to handle? Is it not a provocative action? Will it not amount to fomenting disaffection between the working class and our armed forces? Can a reasonable Government, can a responsible Government, think of using the armed forces to break a strike? What will be the fate? It is the goodwill of the workers towards our armed forces which is very essential for the defence of our country. When our security is threatened all round, the Government is threatening to deploy the Navy. Already, they have deployed in Tuticorin. What aggrieves me more is the invitation sent by the Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu to the Government to deploy Navy, to unload coal. Instead of doing this, if the Chief Minister had taken the matter to the Prime Minister and urged upon her to intervene and settle the strike, it would have given a better result. We are also anxious that the strike should be settled. What is the benefit which the workers derive by continuing the strike? I do not know, what the Government is thinking in its mind. This strike could even have been averted had the Government taken the initiative earlier. At the last stage, the Minister invited them. Look at the way they invited the Labour Minister. But at least in this case, the Government thought that the Labour Minister exists and the Labour Ministry exists. In all cases, industrial relations machinery has become defunct. It is silent in the various States. Now at least, for this purpose, they thought of the Labour Minister and they invited him. But when? Just 24 hours before. What for? They had to declare the strike illegal. Some formalities, some ritual, have had to be undergone. Hence, they invited the labour Minister for the force of a conciliation, and to come to the conclusion that the strike

[Shri M. Kalyanasundaram]

was started during the pendency of the conciliation. We are aware, what games they are playing.

Sir, the trade unions or the workers cannot be deceived. We are dutiful to our country. We are concerned very much about our national interests. But we do not want to be deceived by a Government which wants to sell its ports and the equipment to the multi-nationals which are dominating the marine traffic all over the world. They want to dance to their tunes. This is the fate of our Shipping and Transport Ministry. We never had an opportunity of discussing the functioning of the Shipping and Transport Ministry in this House for the last ten years. It was ten years ago that this House had an opportunity of discussing it. Is the hon. Minister aware? He has been the Chief Minister of a State. He has not enough experience.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Make your suggestions.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: I am coming to that. What other suggestion can I make except saying that the strike should be settled and that for this purpose, you should soon take the initiative and call the trade union leaders? He himself says that they must come. When did they refuse? Have they ever refused to come? Today is the fifth day. Did you contact the trade union leaders and expressed your desire to discuss? No. Such a thing has not happened. My point is, do not provoke further. If you want to have the luxury of continuing the strike, it is the responsibility of the Government and not the responsibility of the trade unions or the workers. What happened in Paradip? Why should such a thing be allowed? After all, it is a small port. What will happen if that Port is also not allowed to function? (Interruption). Here, they have used the services of the goondas of some of the

stevedores. There is no Dock Labour Board for Paradip. Only in seven Ports, we have Dock Labour Boards, controlling the labour or supplying the labour for the stevedores, who will load and unload. In Paradip, there is no Dock Labour Board. In Tuticorin, there is no Dock Labour Board. In Mangalore there is no Dock Labour Board. At these three new ports there is no Dock Labour Board. Stevedores wanted to break the strike. They employed goondas and took some of them to work. That is what is provoking the strike. I am very sorry that five constables lost their lives in that because they acted at the instigation of the stevedores. Now the constables are retaliating, the police is retaliating against workers by setting fire to their entire colony. Hundreds of houses have been set on fire. One of the leaders who was responsible for breaking the strike, who admitted to break the strike by mobilising the rowdies of the stevedores, was unfortunately killed. I am expressing sorrow for that. We have no intention to kill. We do not want anything by force, but I can tell you that by using the force of Navy or the rowdies of the stevedores, strike cannot be broken. This has simply been shown by the workers. It is not being supported by one union above. The INTUC—my friend, Mr. Bhatt is there, he will also speak—his unions also are party to the strike. They have affirmed as much as other. Another federation affiliated to the HMS, their leaders too belong to the ruling party. There is no political motive, but it seems they have some political motive. Only two federations, AITUC and CITU are there who do not see eye to eye with the Government, but the other federations are having friendly relations with the ruling party. If that is so, why is there such a situation, who is responsible for the strike, who is responsible for this hundred per cent affinity? Never before in our history such a strike took place. This time

hundred per cent workers are solidly united and the strike is complete in all the ten major ports. Now, they are diverting their vessels to Cuddalore. Do not try to spread the strike everywhere. There will be strike everywhere. There are some minor intermediate ports where some of the vessels are sought to be diverted. Do not attempt such methods to break the strike. Kindly strict to your offer. Whenever you want, the leaders are ready. It will not take 24 hours for the leaders to reach Delhi and sit before you, if they are invited by you. So, I want to know, what action the Government wants to take with regard to the incidents in Paradip. There should be a full-fledged enquiry. Responsibility should be fixed on the police for creating such a situation and setting fire to the workers' colony. There should be enquiry. With regard to this strike I want to know when he wants the leaders to come and have a discussion. The discussion can be there with the Labour Minister or without the Labour Minister, and if necessary, let the Finance Minister also be present. The demands are quite reasonable. They have got to be within the negotiable limits. The House should not be misled. They have stated that the wages of the port and dock industry should be raised to the level of the steel agreement for which was reached only six months ago. Then, with regard to house rent allowance and city compensatory allowance, their demand is a little more. They want these allowances as applicable to port cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. But wages, they want on par with steel. Where is the difficulty? When steel, which is incurring loss, can stand that, why not port?

There is one more point. Recently for the officers, in a hurry, they revised the wages and allowances. Perhaps they anticipated that the strike will take place. So, they wanted the officers not to cooperate with the

workers or to work against the workers. In their case they are eligible for house rent allowance and city compensatory allowance. We have yet to get it for the port and dock workers. For them there is no house rent allowance or city compensatory allowance. For steel there are other allowances also. We have not asked for the allowance. Our demand has been specific. Before you concede this demand, get the permission of the BPE, whatever it is, in the interest of the country you settle the strike. That will be my appeal. I will also appeal to the other sections of the House to join with us to bring pressure on the Government to reach a settlement as early as possible.

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर (उत्तर प्रदेश):

श्रीमान्, मंत्री जी के बयान से कुछ बातें साफ नहीं हुई। आज अखबारों में छपा है कि पारादीप में झगड़ा हुआ, कई लोग मारे गये। इसके साथ-साथ यह भी समाचार-पत्रों में छपा है कि बहुत सी और संस्थायें भी स्ट्राइक में शामिल हो रही हैं। पब्लिक सेक्टर की फटिलाइजर एंड केमिकल ट्रावन्कार शामिल हुई हैं, फूड कारपोरेशन के वेयर हाउसिंग के लोग शामिल हुए हैं। इससे लगता यह है कि यह स्ट्राइक यहां तक सीमित न रह कर व्यापक रूप ले सकती है। इसका मुकाबला करने के लिये इस सरकार ने अपनी दृष्टि से बड़ी बुद्धिमत्ता की है/ लेकिन यह बहुत खतरनाक बात है कि नेवी के लोगों को बुलाया गया है। इस खतरे की ओर सरकार का ध्यान आकृष्ट करना चाहता हूँ कि बार-बार जब फौज को सिविल वर्क के लिये या इस प्रकार की स्ट्राइक को तोड़ने के लिये इस्तेमाल किया जाता है तो हमारे सहयोगी श्री कल्याण सुन्दरम ने बिल्कुल ठीक कहा है कि आप सेना और सामान्य मजदूर के बीच में खाई पैदा कर रहे हैं। इस चीज को रोका जाना चाहिए। आप कहें कि

[श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर]

आवश्यक वस्तुओं को उतारने-चढ़ाने के लिये हमने यह किया है। लेकिन यह भी साफ बात है कि कल यदि मजदूरों की स्ट्राइक चलती रहे और नेवी ने काम किया तो क्या यह संभव नहीं है कि कल नेवी के कर्मचारियों और जो स्ट्राइक करने वाले वर्क्स हैं, उनके बीच में झगड़ा न हो? आप इसके बचाव के लिये क्या कर रहे हैं, इस बात को आपको स्पष्ट करना चाहिए। पारादीप के बारे में आपने कुछ नहीं बताया कि पारादीप में यह क्यों हुआ, इसके पीछे कौन लोग हैं, कौन सी यूनिटें हैं, क्यों झगड़ा हुआ और सरकार इसके लिये क्या कर रही है। जहां तक उनकी मांगों का सवाल है, श्रीमन्, सब जानते हैं और अखबारों में आया है कि केवल 15 से 30 प्रतिशत इन्क्रोज वे चाहते हैं, इतना ही अंतर है। लेकिन सीधा सवाल यह है कि जब सरकार ने दूसरी जो पब्लिक अंडरटेकिंग्स हैं उन लोगों की तनख्वायें बढ़ाई हैं तो क्या डाक वर्क्स की तनख्वायें बढ़ाना वाजिब नहीं है। आप ऊपरी तौर से कह सकते हैं कि डाक वर्क्स पब्लिक इन्टरप्राइज में नहीं आते। मगर उनमें और पब्लिक इन्टरप्राइजेज के कर्मचारियों में टेक्नीकल अंतर हो सकता है लेकिन बुनियादी अंतर कोई नहीं है। मेरे पास में जो आपका एग्रीमेंट हुआ है, पिछले साल, स्टील के साथ, वह मेरे हाथ में है। उनकी बेसिक पे 550 रुपये है, बाकी जो अमेनिटीज हैं उनका मैं जिक्र नहीं करना चाहता, उनको सिटी कम्पेंसट्री अलाउन्स, हाउस अलाउन्स मिलता है।... (व्यवधान)... उनकी बेसिक पे 550 रुपया है और डाक वर्क्स की बेसिक पे है 325 रुपया। इतना बड़ा अंतर आप क्यों रख रहे हैं। 550 के ऊपर जितने और अलाउन्सेस की सुविधायें हैं, उनके बाद यह अंतर डेढ़ गुना और दुगुना पड़ता है। इसी तरह से

कोल के साथ समझौता हुआ है। कोल की बेसिक पे है 550 रुपये लेकिन उनका टोटल बैठता है 801.40 पैसा लेकिन इनका 734 रुपया होता है। यह आपने पिछले दिनों 1-1-1983 को लागू किया। ऐसे ही आप ने स्टील का किया और उसे 1-9-82 से लागू किया। इतना ही नहीं स्टील और कोल पब्लिक अंडरटेकिंग्स में आपने वहां के आफिसरों की 25 प्रतिशत सैलरी बढ़ा दी, 25 प्रतिशत बढ़ाई। इतना बढ़ाने के बाद यह जो डाक वर्क्स हैं उनको यह संदेह हुआ कि हमारे भी आफिसरों का 25 प्रतिशत बढ़ाया जाना कोई नावाजिब नहीं था। उनके आफिसरों की 25 प्रतिशत दिया गया और हम 30 प्रतिशत मांग रहे हैं वह हमको नहीं दिया जा रहा है। सरकार केवल यह कहकर कि इससे हमारा खर्चा बढ़ जायेगा। अपने कर्तव्य को पूरा नहीं कर सकते। आपको देखना पड़ेगा। आज स्ट्राइक के पांच दिन हो गये हैं। अगर एक महीने स्ट्राइक चल गई तो मैं समझता हूँ कि जितना आज पैसा बचाना चाहते हैं उससे दुगुना नुकसान आपको होगा। क्या मंत्री महोदय यह बताने की श्रुपा करेंगे कि इन पांच दिनों में कितनी हानी गवर्नमेंट को हुई है? जितना पैसा आप बचाना चाहते हैं उससे दुगुना, चौगुना नुकसान हो रहा है। दूसरें, क्या यह सच नहीं है आपने कहा कि पीछे एक समझौता हुआ था जो कि पिछले नवम्बर को लागू किया गया था। इस दौरान विभिन्न संस्थायें अंतरिम रिलीफ की मांग करती आ रही हैं। मुझे मालूम है कि बहुत सी संस्थायें, भारतीय कोल, डाक मजदूर संघ और दूसरे आर्गनाइजेशंस हैं, उनकी नवम्बर 80 से यह मांग चली आ रही है, यह आज की नहीं है, वल्कि 80 से बराबर चली आ रही है कि उनके अंतरिम रिलीफ दिया जाये। आपने अंतरिम रिलीफ क्यों स्वीकृत नहीं किया?

आपकी बात चले, बहुत अच्छा है बात चलनी चाहिये। श्री कल्याणकुन्दरम ने ठीक कहा है कि आपने बुलाया है, आपका यहां पर सदन के अन्दर आम आवाज दे देना पर्याप्त नहीं है। उनको आप निश्चित रूप से निमन्त्रण दे कर बुलाइये, बात कीजिये। यदि आप अकालियों के साथ बार बार कर सकते हैं तो क्या मजदूरों को निमन्त्रण देकर नहीं बुला सकते। उनको आप बुलायें, बात कीजिये जिससे उनको भरोसा हो। आप 15 परसेंट पर अड़ गये हैं उससे आप रास्ता खोलने के लिये तैयार हैं तब बात बनेगी तब वे आ कर बात करेंगे और समस्या को सुलझाने की कोशिश करेंगे। अन्त में मैं इतनी बात कहना चाहता हूं यदि मान लीजिये बात नहीं सुलझती, आपने 15 परसेंट का वायदा कर दिया है तो क्या कम से कम 15 परसेंट या इससे कुछ और ज्यादा इंटरिम रिलीफ की आप घोषणा करने के लिए तैयार हैं ? आप अभी घोषणा कर दीजिये कि 15 परसेंट से कुछ बढ़ कर के देने की आप तैयार हैं। उनका दरवाजा तो खोलिये और इंटरिम रिलीफ आप घोषित करेंगे या नहीं करेंगे। इतनी बात मैं जानना चाहता हूं।

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: (Maharashtra): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the strike of three lakh port and dock workers in ten major ports enters the fifth day today. Sir, as has been commented by a person none else than the Minister in charge of the portfolio, it has been complete and, if I may say so, peaceful, disciplined and indefinite. Sir, I must add that there has been, unfortunately, an untoward incident in the port of Paradip which I regret very much. But if anybody is responsible for the state of affairs or for this incident there, it is none but the Government and its policy, particularly the State Government who tried to help the striking workers under the leadership

of the stevedores and that is how this particular situation has arisen. What I would say only is, let there be a judicial inquiry into the incident and let the persons concerned, those who have been responsible for the violence, be brought to book. I am against violence now and even then.

In my opinion the demands have been mainly three-fold. One is, what is called, wage revision along with revision of various allowances, like house rent allowance, city compensatory allowance and, if I may say so, Sir, even an addition of transport subsidy. The second set I would like to refer to as dearness allowance, which needs to be looked into in the light of the skyrocketing prices. The third set I would like to call bonus. I would like to emphasise these with all the force at my command. We have been asking for these. When I say we, it is partly I also, because I have been associated with this industry and the working class movement for the last 40 years and have been heading the Federation which has also given a strike notice.

Sir, we are not just asking for party as it is sought to be made out. What we are asking is restoration of the status that a dock worker enjoyed in the past, of leading a number of industries in respect of wages and emoluments. That is what we are asking. Unfortunately, the 100-year old industry has lagged behind while the industries you have put up later on have been giving or paying more and rightly so. I have no grievance about that. We want, let this discrimination be eradicated and let the level be established—at least the level, if not more.

Sir, this talk of percentage increase is something which is misleading, and I am one of those who have not been able to understand it. What a worker or a person like me can understand is what is the actual quantum of wage or monthly pay packet—carry-home pay—that you are prepared to

[Dr. Shanti G Patel]

give. That is the real issue and this issue is not being answered properly by the Government though there have been a number of talks. What they have offered is something very meagre. In the steel industry, Rs. 91 has been offered as; what is called, minimum guaranteed benefit to every worker and also two annual increments. What is this Government offering here? One annual increment. Why only Rs. 71 here, sir? I would like to know why the Government is not offering at least what the steel or other industries have been offering. Talking of percentage, I am informed very reliably that in the coal industry the wage rise has been to the extent of 22 per cent. Here they are talking of 15 per cent. What is this jugglery of figures? These statistics of this percentage is something like an average of four feet when the river is ten feet deep at a certain point. So let us not talk of this percentage but talk of the reality with which we are concerned.

Sir, the strike is causing a lot of damage, in my opinion, an incalculable damage, on the national economy. The Minister has been appealing in the name of the national economy. May I very humbly and respectfully appeal to him: Let him also think of the national economy and settle the strike at the earliest possible moment. It is being talked: Come back to the negotiating table. Sir, the negotiating table is there where it was. The workers have not run away with the negotiating table. They are only on strike. You call them for negotiations they would be there physically present to settle the dispute. Sir, negotiations have been going on during the strike. In the past also during the strike in ports negotiations have gone on. So I would like to say that he is not calling the workers for negotiations. Referring to the economy. (time-bell rings). You permit me...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You put the question. The same point has been covered.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: Referring to the national economy, it is very difficult to calculate the loss. But one can easily understand the loss which will be caused due to the exporting part of the trade which is not there, loss in terms of foreign exchange. And, please remember, Sir, March is the peak export season month. If one has to go by statistics—and I am relying on a person none other than the learned Member, Dr. Adiseshiah, who has been kind enough to give me the figures—I am told that we are losing about Rs. 80 crores per day on account of exports. What are we demanding? It is Rs. 69 crores which is being asked for by the workers. Where do Rs. 69 crores stand in comparison to Rs. 80 crores a day? It is merely export that I am referring to. If you come to...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is why they have chosen this month.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: No, Sir. The contracts will be lost, and we will be losing the money. That is also important. We have been on strike in the past only during monsoon. Let the Minister check it up. He will find that there has been a strike in the ports in the month of March. One hundred and fifty ships are awaiting clearance and at the rate of Rs. 30000 the loss due to waiting is Rs 45 lacs per day.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All these details are known.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: Let me refer to another point, that of productivity. In the Annual Report of the Ministry of Shipping they talk of this productivity, better labour productivity. I am referring to this because it is the policy of the Government to pay more if the productivity

goes up. In the Bombay port, as per their norm, from 110 in 1980, it has gone up to 206 in 1983, nearly double. Are we not entitled to at least double the wages if we give better productivity?

The second point to which he refers is the financial capacity to pay. Again I may refer to the Bombay port which has been making record profits every year, running into several crores of rupees; and last year it was nothing less than Rs. 67 crores. Somebody may say that this is just referring to the Bombay port. Even the total profits in all the ports taken together come nearly to Rs. 120 crores or so—may be a few crores here and there. Here is the capacity to pay, to foot the bill on wages, if the will is there to settle the strike. The workers, on the contrary, have behaved very responsibly. They have reduced their demand from Rs. 163 crores to Rs. 69 crores. What is the difficulty in meeting their demand? The workers worked earnestly for eight months while trying to come to a settlement.

May I here incidentally refer to the incidence of wages on the total trade? It is less than 0.1 per cent. If the port charges are to be calculated on the total export-import bill of Rs. 21,000 crores, it comes to less than 0.1 per cent. Even the additional increase which is to be given, as it was said in the House the other day, it is less than .08 per cent. I would like to repeat that. Is it fair and proper to hold the country to ransom for the sake of the small figure? It is an incalculable loss, an irreparable loss, which is being done to the country? Sir, what is it that has led to the strike. May I say and may I ask; Is the Government interference not responsible for the present strike? If they had left the matter to the port authorities and the dock labour boards and had not interfered, this would not have happened. But they would like to interfere and send orders. And, Sir, the unseen hand of

what is called the BPE, the Bureau of Public Enterprises, which we call the blood pressure escalation apparatus, is something before which, I am sorry to say, Mr. Minister is not able to do anything. It is this policy which is coming in the way of this strike not being settled, the workers' dispute not being settled and their demands not being met. Therefore, I would ask: Has the strike not been foisted on the workers when there is better productivity and the financial condition is good? There is such a terrific loss now. I would, therefore, request the Minister to look into it.

Sir, about the use of the Navy or any other force, may I say is anti-labour.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Your point has been covered. Do not repeat the same point and take the time of the House.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: If you will permit me to say, Sir, there is no illegality. Illegality has to be declared by a court of law. Let me point out this fact. It is no use saying that the strike is illegal. That is merely your contention and nothing beyond that. Unless the court declares that the strike is illegal, it cannot be declared to be so.

Sir, when was the Labour Minister invited? When the house was on fire they tried to dig the well, and they called the Labour Minister to come there with a firefighting engine. I do not think it can be of any use. May I therefore, ask the Government: Is it going to hold the country to ransom? This is the main question. I have only one question to ask, and this is the question. Are you going to hold the country to ransom for the sake of a few rupees, Rs. 69 crores. In comparison, it is negligible.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You are saying the same thing again and again. You hold the Government responsible for all the evils. You have said it thrice. You see the re-

[Mr. Deputy Chairman]

cords. You are asking the same question.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: Why should you interrupt?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I interrupt because there is no time. You have already taken eleven minutes. You go on making the same point. Please take your seat.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: Secondly, may I ask the Government, whether it is going to leave the matter to these two parties and not interfere and not give any direction as far as a settlement is concerned?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please do not repeat the same point every time, Mr. Sukomal Sen.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN (West Bengal): The statement that has been made by the hon. Minister is totally disappointing. It is not at all indicative of the Government's concern about what is happening in the country due to the strike by 3-lakh port workers and how far the economy of the country is in peril. There is no indication of this concern of the Government in this statement.

Sir, today is the fifth day of the strike. Now what we find is that there is no dialogue between the Government and the workers for settlement of the strike. On the country, though there may be a repetition, still I want to say that today's report in the newspapers is terribly alarming, that the Navy has been called in, that at the Tuticorin Port the Navy has been deployed for unloading operations. Sir, what is this? The Navy has been called in. What has happened in the ports? Is there a rebellion or a civil war? Why have the defence forces been involved in it? I think the Government is taking a suicidal and very dangerous course because just in the Question Hour our Defence Minister said that our defence forces are in prepared-

ness, and very often we are told that our country is facing external danger, and so our forces should be prepared for defence. When in the situation it is necessary that there should be rapport between the civilian population and the defence forces and working class of the country should stand behind the defence forces in the defence of the country, at this time the Government is causing disaffection between the working class and the defence forces. It is a suicidal course that the Government is adopting. I ask the Government first to retrace its path. I question the very sanity of the Government in bringing the Navy to the scene. I request the Government to withdraw the Navy immediately from the Port and try to settle the strike in other ways. Then, Sir, about the Paradip affair, again the Government has come out with a distorted version, a falsified story of what has happened in Paradip. According to the Government version, they say that when the police intervened in the inter-union rivalry in the Paradip port, this violence occurred. Sir, last evening we had a telephonic talk with the dock workers of Paradip and we were told that from Bhubaneswar, two platoons of police forces were brought into Paradip to break the strike of the workers. The port authorities employed contract labour and some blacklogs to break the strike and the police were called in to help the blacklogs and the contract labour. At that time the clash took place between the police and the workers and the killing took place. Is this the way to settle the strike? On the one side, the Government is deploying the Navy and, on the other side, the Government is calling in the police force and contract labour and blacklogs. Is this the way of handling the strike? I doubt whether a responsible Government of the country can handle a strike in this way. The Government is taking a dangerous course. So, I request the Government to withdraw the police from Paradip, from any other port where the strike has occurred. They should not deploy the

police and they should not try to break the strike through black logs tract labour.

Take the demands. What are the demands? They are demanding wages on par with the public sector workers. In fact, before 1971, the port and dock workers were having pay and other amenities more than the public sector workers. After 1971, when negotiations were carried on in the public sector industries, the port and dock workers started lagging behind. Now the port and dock workers are demanding wages on par with the public sector workers. They do not want any increase more than what the public sector workers get. Sir, about coal, an agreement was recently concluded with the coal workers and the Government has agreed to increase the wages of coal workers by around 22 per cent. Now the Government says that they are ready to increase the pay of the port and dock workers by 15 per cent. In other cases, in steel and coal, they had agreed to a higher margin. But here they are not agreeable. So this discrimination is very difficult for the port and dock workers to digest. That is why they are demanding basic wages and other wages on par with the public sector workers.

Regarding house rent, the Government has again tried to confuse people. Previously the entire wage structure of the port and dock workers...

SHRI KALYAN ROY (West Bengal): The Labour Minister has disappeared. He has not the courage to face us.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister concerned is there to reply. Don't worry about others.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Previously the entire house rent allowance of the port and dock workers was part of the basic wage and as a result, the basic wage was found to be inflated. If you separate the house rent allowance from the basic wage, you will

find that the port and dock workers are getting much less than other sections of public sector workers. So when they demand that they should get house rent allowance in the port cities on par with the public sector workers, where is the harm? Where is the immorality? But the Government is in no mood to listen. They say they do not have the money. But what about the port charges? There are ten major ports. It is reported that the port charges are less than the minimum: it is only one-hundredth part of one per cent of the total value of the cargo that moves through these 10 ports. Then to whom is the Government giving the benefit? The Government is giving the benefit to the shipping monopolies of international trade, who are reaping the benefit while they touch our Indian ports. So I find that at the cost of the workers, they are giving benefits to the shipping monopolies of international trade. So this is a wrong approach.

Then, Sir, on the one side, the Government is refusing to increase the wages and, on the other side, the efficiency of the workers has gone up during the last few years despite reduction of work force due to automation and mechanisation. They say that automation and mechanisation is necessary to conform to international standards. All right, you conform to international standards and come on for automation and mechanisation. But the same time, what is the result of this automation and mechanisation? The total work force in the port and dock is going down and down. It means they are bound to work hard because during the last few years, the total cargo handled in the ports, which was 75 million tonnes, has during five or six years gone up to 100 million tonnes per annum. It means with a reduced number of workers, the port workers are being compelled to work to handle 100 million tonnes of cargo. The port workers are pressed to work more. And due to their efficient working only that the ports are running in a comfortable position. Despite the efficiency of the workers,

[Shri Sukomal Sen]

despite the reduced number of the workers, the Government is refusing to concede their genuine demands.. (Time bell rings).

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now please conclude.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Another point—I would repeat—is about the Navy. The London-based International Shipping Workers Federation said if the Government does not withdraw the Navy from the ports—the Federation is spread all over the world—none of the ports in the world would handle cargo coming from the ships touching Indian ports. If it materialises, I think our entire shipping industry is going to be in a crisis. Moreover, in this situation everyday the Government is losing Rs. 2 crores due to the strike. The Government should tell us what is the total extent of loss being suffered by it due to the strike..

SHRI K. MOHANAN (Kerala): The ruling party is on strike. Government is losing Rs. 2 crores everyday.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: At this rate it is going to be disastrous to the country's economy. I want to know, therefore, whether the Government is going to call the leaders of the unions to settle the disputes and end the strike and whether the Government is withdrawing the Navy from the ports, and whether the Government is going to implement the recommendations of the Commission that port charges should be raised.

SHRI G. C. BHATTACHARYA (Uttar Pradesh): I want to ask one question straightway: What is the rationality of striking to Rs. 15 crores and not Rs. 69 crores? From your statement it does not reflect that it is Rs. 15 crores. You may kindly go through your own statement, that "strike by workers in major ports disrupts the supply of essential commodities such as edible oil, POL, kerosene oil," etc. In the existing conditions the shortage will increase the

price rise and the burden on the common man. It has political implications. Secondly, according to the facts revealed by Dr. Adiseshiah, in the month of March exports to the tune of Rs. 80 crores daily will be affected by the strike. On the one hand, we are being denied soft loans by the imperialist countries, and on the other hand, we are facing foreign exchange difficulties. In such a situation why are you sticking to a position, a rigid position, of Rs. crores and no more? On the one hand politically you are losing here inside the country, adding to the difficulties of the people, of the common man, because of the increase in the prices and inflation and also the foreign exchange difficulties, which will ultimately even affect your development. I say all of us are becoming a part of the destabilisation programme of the imperialist countries. It is not a question of only the workers or the Government or of any federation. Kindly see what are the bigger implications, what are the bigger ramifications, where the country is facing such strong forces of destabilisation. Are we also becoming part of this economic subversion? Would you like us to become a part of this economic subversion? Otherwise, why everybody is choosing the month of March? Kindly do not stand on prestige. When you give 25 per cent to your officers, how much will it come to? How much are you going to spend on your officers? Why not on the workers? I do not find any rationale in this. You say that you are prepared to negotiate. Then why is the strike going on? Why are you not calling them for negotiations? My good friend Mr. Patil is here. Is he only to work as a fire-fighter, I do not know? Why is he quiet?

Something has happened in Paradeep and Calcutta. I see some conspiracy or some hidden hand in these things? Some destabilising forces want to create big-scale law and order problem. I think this port strike has something to do with the unfortunate things that are happening in the country. You may kindly examine this.

I think it is the bigger part of the destabilising process.

SHRI NAND KISHORE BHATT (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Deputy Chairman, the Hon'ble Minister's statement has highlighted the seriousness of the situation. The Minister is prepared for talks. It is not as if the talks have failed. Rather he is anxious that the talks should resume early. But for this purpose it is necessary that the initiative should come from the Government. After all we are one family. You have seen from the press that the leaders of all the federations who are conducting the strike have also said that they are prepared for talks and they do not want the country to be put to any economic difficulty. That being the situation I think it will be fair and justified if the Hon'ble Minister takes initiative in the matter. Do not stand on any false sense of prestige. I would request him to take initiative for talks even at this stage. Every day, every hour is costing the nation heavily.

Even in the past the main beneficiaries of the agreements have been the ship-owners. So far as the workers are concerned, they have done everything to reduce the cost and increase productivity.

The Minister has said in his statement that because of this strike essential commodities are not being lifted daily and naturally this will result in short supply of essential articles and their price rise. Before the situation worsens, I think the Hon'ble Minister should take immediate measures to bring them to the negotiating table.

Unfortunately violence has occurred in Paradeep port. We do not know how this has happened. All the leaders of workers are committed not to be a party to any violence. We do not know under what circumstances this sort of situation has developed. I would personally appeal to the Government to look into the matter. In democratic movements there is no place for violence. The workers and their leaders have gone on record that they will not be a party to any violence. If any agency has tried to

create violence, I would request the Government to look into it. The culprits who have indulged in violence should be brought to book.

Lastly, I feel that we in this House should not do anything to encourage or increase tension. We are here only to plead to the Government that they should realise the seriousness of the situation and come forward to call the workers to the negotiating table.

I do not want to go into the figures and other things. All these points have been covered by the other speakers. The details of the cost or payment are in the Minister's statement given on the 15th. But I feel the figures which have been given are not realistic. They are far from reality. The workers are demanding higher wages. There is nothing new about 1.00 it. But the basic point is this: P.M. When you have entered into an agreement in the core sector industries, why is there this delay in coming to a settlement in such a sensitive and important sector like this? I do not want to quarrel over this. But I just want to appeal to the honourable Minister through you, Sir, that without standing on false prestige, he should call the leaders and, given the time and the goodwill, I think it should be possible to thrash out the problem and find a satisfactory solution.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE (Maharashtra): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is one example of where the Government's labour policy has totally failed. The industrial relations machinery was created in this country by stalwarts like Nandaji after sustained efforts for a number of years. The Code of Discipline is there and it is applied when the verification question comes. But the same Code is not applied in the case of collective bargaining and in solving other problems.

Sir, as a citizen I would like to know why the country should be put in this position and should be held to ransom in a dispute between the employer and the employees. It has been

[Shri Shridhar Wasudeo Dhabe].

accepted in principle that the industrial relations machinery should be used where the remedy has been provided for such things. If the Ministry of Shipping and Transport was not agreeable to the demands of the workers, when the remedy has been provided in the industrial relations machinery to offer voluntary arbitration. Sir, they knew that the workers were not going to agree to this right from August, 1983 and employer cannot be judge of his own cause. So, I would like to know whether they have offered any voluntary arbitration so that this question can be solved or any interim relief can be given to them or a High Court Judge or a Supreme Court Judge can be appointed to head a wage committee to decide on this matter on the basis of the principles already laid down. I think this has not been done. They are only forcing the workers to go on strike. How can you expect the workers to work when they are not paid? Now, Sir, they say that they are ready to pay Rs. 32 crores or 15 per cent, and the workers say that they must get 69 crores. Now, Sir, as a lawyer the Minister must know that the Supreme Court has held a number of times that if the industry has the capacity to pay, if there is any wage erosion because of the increase in the cost of living index, then the wages are to be linked to profitability. The labour leaders have said that profitability is so high that they can easily pay Rs. 69 crores more as wages. So, what is the difficulty that the Government is facing on account of which they cannot pay?

Then, Sir, it has been reported in the Press that the trade union leaders are ready to negotiate. Today, in the "Times of India", it has been reported like this, and I quote:

"There are no signs of the port and dock workers' strike being called off in the near future. No initiative has been taken by the Ministry of Shipping and Transport to

resume negotiations with the striking workers."

It has been reported that the trade union leaders are ready to negotiate, but the Ministry is not ready because the strike is going on. Now, Sir, I would like to know whether the Government has declared the strike illegal or whether *ipso facto* it has become illegal under the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947. If it is so, can he negotiate with the workers? In the statement, Sir, he has said:

"I request the workers to come back to the negotiating table."

In that case, will he negotiate with the workers when the strike is going on on an emergency basis so that in a few days' time the problem can be solved? Or, does he mean—he must state it clearly—that unless the strike is called off, he will not negotiate with the workers? He must make this clear. Sir, our experience has been quite unhappy. There was the public sector employees' strike in Bangalore in 1981 which went on for a long time. Then there was the textile workers' strike in Bombay which went on for more than a year or so. Then the jute workers are on strike and that strike is going on. If the Government does not evolve a proper industrial relations machinery to solve these questions, then it will have to face a number of strikes and nobody can be accused that he is unreasonable and all that. It is because the workers cannot be believed in the words of the employers. Therefore, Sir, I would like to specifically ask the honourable Minister whether he is ready to negotiate with the representatives of the workers—one of them is here—without putting any preconditions and with the help of the Labour Ministry to solve this problem immediately.

Sir, I congratulate the working class here, the port and dock workers, because they have unanimously demanded certain things and even the INTUC is there with them

and the strike is also peaceful and is successful. That being the case, there should not be any question of prestige involved in this and the Government should negotiate with the workers. They should come to the negotiating table and solve this problem.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is a strategic sector and any disruption in this particular sector will have disastrous consequences, particularly in a developing country like ours. Knowing this, and knowing also the problems of the shipping industry which is subject to frequent bouts of depression, and even now it is in the throes of depression, it is very strange and sad that the Government of India has no proper shipping policy itself. Sir, there is an old saying, and perhaps a very popular feeling in all the shipping and docks circles, that the Shipping Ministry starts negotiations only when a strike notice is served by the workers. This is the reputation of the Shipping Ministry not only now but even before. In the earlier Government also it was like that. And the history has shown that somehow the Shipping Ministry is taking a rather cool attitude towards such important problems. Even in the matter of dock labour boats, for three new ports—New Mangalore, New Tuticorin and Paradip—there are no dock labour boats and the Government of India has stated in answer to a question in Parliament earlier that unified cargo handling agencies are there to do this work. But as far as other ports are concerned, there are dock labour boats. So they are not sure of having any uniform policy in this whole field.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: Contractors are doing this.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: There is no proper labour policy in such an important matter. I do not know whether the figures given by my friend, Dr. Shanti Patel, that Rs. 89 crores

loss per day is there are correct. But definitely a huge loss to the country is being caused.

Then, again, the history of these strikes in the past that have been quite frequent, has shown that the labour is also prepared to settle and come to the negotiating table and settle. In the past it has been settled. And it has been found that the Government has more or less conceded the demands of the labour, and according to the previous agreements, with certain meaningless riders here and there they have conceded the demands of the labour. Sir, I do not understand why they should force the labour to go on strike and then tell them to come down, causing so much loss to the economy. In this particular case the labour has shown their *bonafides* in the case of defence, in the case of vessels which are in distress; they have said that they will handle them and they will come forward with full co-operation. This attitude of theirs has to be appreciated.

Finally, I would like to ask specifically, in the light of the past history in this Ministry why does not the Government have a permanent and continuing negotiating machinery? The strike is already on. The hon. Minister will call the important leaders and good sense will prevail on both sides. Demands can be narrowed down and some settlement will definitely come about—although it could have been avoidable. But still in the light of this, will the Government of India consider having a permanent and continuing negotiating machinery for all these problems, so that such things will not occur in future. Thank you, Sir.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Prof. Sourendra Bhattacharjee.

PROF. SOURENDRA BHATTACHARJEE (West Bengal): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I will just put across

[Prof. Sourandra Bhattacharjee]

a few points. My first point is, when it was known that the agreement was to expire on the 31st December and negotiations are a very complicated process why were not the negotiations started earlier? My second question is, on what basis does the Minister say that the strike is *sou motu* illegal, because the conciliation process started? At which point of time actually did the conciliation process start? My third question is that according to him the workers did not make a realistic demand. Did the Government make a realistic offer? That part also he should state. In between Rs. 15 crores and Rs. 69 crores, in between 15 per cent and 32 per cent, what would be realistic? Has he any concrete suggestions to make about it? And why was not the Labour Minister brought into the picture earlier? (Time Bell rings) My next question, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, is that everybody has stated that the national economy has been put into jeopardy by forcing this strike on the workers. I would like to know whether at this late stage, without standing on prestige, the Shipping Minister would immediately initiate negotiations through the good offices of the Labour Minister and with the cooperation of the Finance Minister, to end the strike immediately and allow the national economy to be back into gear.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO (Jammu and Kashmir): I wanted to ask whether arbitration is acceptable to him.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Everything has been said.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: I must thank the hon. Members who took part in the Calling Attention Motion. They have put forth their views. Some points are common in all the speeches that have

been made. One point is that the Government knew that the agreement was going to be over by the end of 1983 and why the negotiations were not started earlier. Sir, the previous negotiations also started quite early and the agreement for this wage agreement was reached about 1-1/2 years ago. The negotiations went on for two years. This time also, we started the negotiations fairly early in August. The agreement was to expire in December. We started the negotiations in August. The negotiations started at the bipartite level in the early stage. After some months of discussion, they could not arrive at any decision. Then the Secretary, Shipping and Transport, and the four federations were involved in the discussions. Ultimately, when they could not come to any agreement I had to intervene in the matter. The Labour Department is involved when the negotiations start at the lower level and they are informed about what is going on. The practice in this Ministry is that the Ministry negotiates directly with these four unions. Previously, they have been coming to an agreement. Even the previous agreement was reached the same way. Only once when Mr. Morarji Desai was the Prime Minister and he was also in charge of this Ministry, he could not find time and he entrusted it to Mr. Ravindra Varma. When Mr. Veerendra Patil was the Transport and Shipping Minister, he also finalised the agreement. There is nothing new in what we are doing. We have followed the policies that have been existing. We started the negotiations quite early and we had thought that we would continue the negotiations till the end.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: But the officers were not free to negotiate. They had the directive.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: If they want all these things to be reported for somebody else, then it is all right. But they are not relevant. I am telling the facts. Many

hon. Members have also said that in my statement I have given the facts and they have appreciated it. I have accepted that the cooperation was total during the last years. When the agreement had been signed, the relationship between the Federations, the Government and the Port Trust Chairman has been very cordial for the last 4 or 5 years. That is why they could achieve this year's turnover. One hon. Member said that the Government should not interfere. Mr. Shanti Patel said that it should have been left to the ports to come to an agreement on their own. But the practice in this Ministry from the beginning has been that these four federations have been negotiating for all the ports. Then the agreement was accepted by all the 10 ports, the same policy was followed. I have got the figures. But it will take time. Except the Bombay Port, all the other ports are incurring losses. All the ports except Bombay have to pay heavy amounts to the Government. The other ports, except Bombay, are not in a position to pay even the normal increase of 15 per cent over 216 crores. It is an impossibility for these ports. That means, the wage rise will increase the rates of freight and naturally that will tell on the imports and exports. Sir, the hon. Member has made a very revealing... (Interruption)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat. We have already taken one hour. I cannot allow these interruptions.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: Let me finish.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: I do not want to interrupt.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You do stand up.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: I have a right to stand up.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Unless I allow you, ... you do not have that right.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: I am asking a clarification.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat. (Interruptions)

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: Every-time you want to run to the help of the Government.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I do not want to help. I want to help the discussion.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: What else are you doing, Sir? Running to their rescue.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No rescue. There is no question of it. Dr. Patel, please be careful in your observations. They do not require my help. You have given a threat to the country. You are charging the Government. You don't want to hear the reply from the Minister. You spoke for 15 minutes.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: I am seeking a clarification.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have put so many points. He cannot reply to all. Have some patience.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: Even additional points you do not allow.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, no. Let the Minister reply. If anything remains, you can ask.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: Let me finish. Sir, I am not able to understand this. And I also want the hon. Members to seriously think about this point that a strike in the Port Trust was never in March at any time. This is the first time that it has taken place. That is a revelation Dr. Shanti Patel said. It was always in a different month. Why they chose this March is a thing which I cannot understand. Is it a thing that we have forced? The negotiations in the previous agreement, did they not continue for an year or two? Am I not meeting them any time they come? After I took

[Shri K. Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy]

over, how many times did I sit? I sat with them for a dozen times and for hours we discussed. Could we not discuss for some more months till this March expires? Could they not think of a rainy season for a strike? The last agreement was entered into after an year after the previous agreement was over. The negotiations could have continued further. This difficulty for the nation could have been avoided. That is a thing which the labour must explain to the nation.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Not the Government?

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: That is a thing which the labour has to explain to the nation. Everybody says that the Navy has been called. We have not called the Navy just as a confrontation with the labour. Is it not the duty of the Government to maintain the supply of essential commodities to the country?

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Then settle the strike.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: Setting the strike is different. I have appealed to the workers to come to negotiations and settle it. (Interruptions) I appealed again when I made a statement here. Again today I said that they come back to the negotiation table and settle it. In spite of my appeal, you gave the notice of strike. We were negotiating. That evening, till 7 o'clock, we were talking with them. They never told me. On the next day, there was a strike notice. In spite of it, I called them. We sat for three days. This strike, Sir, is very unfortunate. I must make it. I do not know the reasons. But they had made up their mind to go on strike two months back.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Most objectionable.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: May be, but it is a fact.

We have made it very clear to the labour leaders during our negotiations that when you have made up your mind to go on strike, there is no purpose in discussing.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Most objectionable.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: Sir, everybody says that for main pay bill of Rs. 134 crores, the agreement last time was Rs. 17.72 per cent. For a pay bill of Rs. 216 crores, I started the negotiations with 15 per cent, that is, Rs. 32 crores. And you could have continued the negotiations. It is not as if we have said that this is an end in itself. We were discussing. Everybody knows it. But in the meanwhile you give a strike notice. You chose your own time which according to yourself, is very detrimental to the national economy. I appeal even now: Consider all these aspects and then try to think of the national interest more than anything else. Where is the Navy? Navy has not been called. If the Tuticorin thermal power station is not functioning, if the coal supply to that station is not regular, ask Mr. Kalyanasundaram what he will do. Sir, the whole of Tamil Nadu will be without any power. The effect of it is much worse than what it is. Should we not maintain essential supplies? Are we not to maintain essential services? Are we to close down the imports of edible oils, whose prices are shooting up? Should we not think of supplying all these things to the people? Is it confrontation with the labour or is it against the interests of the country's economy and maintaining supplies of certain essential commodities to the people? So, Sir, keeping all these things in view, I say that the strike has been forced on the Government and the nation. The Government never broke the negotiations. In spite of the fact that a strike notice has been served, I appeal to them to come to the negotiating table and settle the issue. The attitude of the Ministry was very

reasonable considering the previous agreements and we offered them Rs. 32 crores or 15 per cent of the wage bill of Rs. 216 crores, which is not a small amount. The economic position of the ports, except Bombay, is in a very bad shape, and any more burden on them would adversely affect our imports and exports. The relations between the ports, labour and the Ministry after the last wage agreement have been very good. That cordiality we expected to continue. I do not know why they have chosen to go on strike now. I have made an appeal to them requesting them to resume negotiations and solve the problem. (Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER: Who has objected to it?

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: If they come, I will talk.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: Have you invited them? (Interruptions).

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: So, Sir, this is a forced thing on the people and this will have a very great adverse effect. (Interruptions). I appeal again to the labour leaders to come to the negotiating table and settle the issue. It is in the interests of the country's economy to settle the issue. They have chosen a wrong time to go on strike. It was not the time for them to press this way. I appeal to them to resume the negotiations. (Interruptions).

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: What about the incidents at the Paradip port?

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: Sir, according to the intelligence reports and others reports, the Paradip incident has nothing to do with the Port strike. It is an internal confrontation where the police have interfered. It is not concerned with the port strike. (Interruptions).

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: There is a total net surplus of Rs. 84 crores for 81-82 and Rs. 120 crores for this year. (Interruptions). Will you please give the date and time for negotiations?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This can be done outside the House also.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Why outside the House?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. Let us take special mentions now.

REFERENCE TO THE REPORTED PENALISATION OF AN AUTHOR UNDER THE FOREIGN REGULATION ACT

श्री श्रीकान्त वर्मा (मध्य प्रदेश) :
उपसभापति जी, विशेष उल्लेख के अन्तर्गत मैं आज एक दिलचस्प मामला सदन के सम्मुख प्रस्तुत करना चाहता हूँ। यह सदन जानता है कि 'फेरा' या विदेशी मुद्रा उल्लंघन कानून की रचना तत्कालीन और चोरों के विरुद्ध की गयी थी, लेकिन हाल में एक ऐसा मामला आया है जिस में कि इस कानून का इस्तेमाल एक लेखक के विरुद्ध किया गया और एक ऐसा प्रिंसिपल कायम कर दिया गया जिस से कि सविधान के बुनियादी अधिकारों के भंग होने की आशंका है। दिल्ली के किरोड़ीमल कालेज में श्री अरूण वोस एक अध्यापक हैं और उन्होंने राजनीति शास्त्र पर कई पुस्तकें लिखी हैं। 1977 में उनकी दो पुस्तकें मार्क्सियन ऐंड पोस्ट मार्क्सियन पोलिटिकल एकोनॉमी और दूसरी पोलिटिकल पैराडाक्सिज ऐंड पजेल्स, इंग्लैंड से छपी थी। यह घटना 1977 की है। उन दिनों श्री मोंरारजी देसाई प्रधान मंत्री थे और श्री मोंरारजी देसाई अपने मेकार्थीवाद के लिये तो प्रख्यात हैं ही,