

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question. Shri Indradeep Sinha.

Response of newspaper employers for ending the stalemate in the working of Wage Board

*423. SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: t SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA; SHRI S. KUMARAN;

Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state;

(a) whether Government have given six weeks' time to the newspaper employers to make their own proposals to end the present stalemate in the working of the Wage Boards for the working journalists and non-journalists as has been reported in the 'Economic Times' of 23rd July, 1978.

(b) if so, whether the newspapers employers have responded to the ap-peal; and

(c) whether Government have received any suggestions from them if so, what are the details thereof and what decision Government have have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VERMA): (a) At the meeting held on 22-7-1978 it was decided that if suggestions made so far are not acceptable to the employers they would send alternative proposals before- the 30th July, 1978.

(b) and (c) No alternative proposals have been received so far.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the reply given by the hon. Minister hardly enhances the prestige of his Government. The newspaper proprietors have boycotted

fThe question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Indradeep Sinha.

the Wage Boards and have almost brought their functioning to a stalemate. They were told by the hon. Minister that if they did not submit their alternative proposals, Government would take a unilateral decision. May I know what decision the Government has taken? Has the Government decided to reconstitute the Wage Boards without the representatives of the employers so that justice can be done to the demands of the newspaper employees and the journalists?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, I regret that the honble Member chose this occasion to make a remark about the governments reputation. You gave me the direction last time that during

question hour I should confine myself to facts and giving information. Therefore, I shall not answer this sentence of his. The question is asked was whether alternative proposals have been received and, if not, what action the Government has taken. The hon'ble Member has been informed that no alternative proposals have been received. The Government did not say that if alternative proposals were not received on the 7th day, the Government will take some unilateral action on the 8th day. The Government made it abosolutely clear that it will not wait after the 7th day for any alternative proposals and will take appropriate action to see that the Boards continue to function.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Sir, he has not answered my question. My specific question was whether the Government have taken any action to reconstitute the Board without the representatives of the employers. That was my specific question. To that he has not replied.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put your second supplementary also. He will reply to both.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: In addition to my first supplementary which has remained unanswered I would like to ask what concession the

Government have given to the newspaper proprietors since this Government came into office in the form of excise, rebates, customs rebate, credit and other things and what concessions they have given to the newspaper employees and working journalists?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, as far as the first question about reconstituting the Board is concerned the hon'ble Member seems to ignore the fact that the Wage Board has been set up in accordance with an Act passed by Parliament. The Wage Board consists of representatives of employers, representatives of employees and two independent men and a Chairman. The Act does not contemplate a situation where the wage Board can be reconstituted without the representatives of one of the sections. If the question relates to the withdrawal of the representatives of the employers I would like to inform him and the House that what the employers' representatives have done is to withdraw, and even to resign from the Board. Therefore, the question of reconstitution does not arise in the manner in which the hon'ble Member has conceived of it.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: He has not answered the second question at all.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: With regard to his second supplementary, it is not a question which can be answered by this Ministry but by the Ministry of Finance. As far as the working journalists and others are concerned one of the first acts of this Government was to notify interim increase in wages for the working journalists and non-journalists.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, if you had permitted I would have asked a question I could not ask in view of my supplementary. But you did not allow. Sir, it is true that these two

parties.... (*Interruption*) Is it not a fact that the employers' representatives have withdrawn with the deliberate object of sabotaging the work of the Wage Board and stalling the recommendations which I hope, are due to the employees, journalists and non-journalists? If so Sir, why is the Government taking so much time? They are being clearly allowed to hold to ransom the work of the wage Board. If they are not there, is it not possible to get on with the work and come out with the recommendations and ask them to implement them? Why should the journalists, others and the public suffer? Is it just because the employers have decided to prevent and stall the work of the Board to give what is due to the journalists? In view of this did the Government consider the advisability—call it constitutional or any other thing—to see that the work of the Wage Boards start, instantly, without further delay, with or without their representation? It is for them to come in or not to come in. But what business have they got to stop it? The Government is just obliging them. We are told that Mr. Gopinath is very powerful today in government circles as he is the owner of a chain of Express newspapers as he has been in the past governments also—Is it because of his influence that the Government is behaving in this manner?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, the hon. Member asked me whether the employers' representatives had not withdrawn with the deliberate intention of stalling the working of the Wage Board. The reasons that they have advanced while withdrawing from the Wage Board are, (1) that they believe that the two independent members who are members of the Board are not really independent, and (2) that the Board in the past had not given adequate consideration to their paying capacity. These are the two reasons stated by the representatives of the employers.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: It is an old story.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: But there is no doubt, Sir, that their withdrawal has caused a stalemate which has lasted for nearly eight months. Whether it was their deliberate intention to stall its working or not, the result has been that work was stalled. Now the next question is: What action has Government taken to reconstitute the Board or to see that the Board continues its work? I would like to inform the hon. Member, Sir, that the Government did not take any immediate action in this regard because the Government was anxious to ensure that the final Report of the Wage Board would not be vulnerable either in a court of law or in practice. We have the experience of the past. Our honourable and distinguished friend referred to some of the leaders among the employers. We have known in the past any instances where, in spite of the notification of either minimum wages or increase in wages, the notification has been honoured in the breach by some of the newspaper managements, and they have gone to the court—as is known to the hon. Member—with writ petitions challenging the validity of the order of the Government and the independence of the members of the Wage Board. We did not, therefore, want to give rise to a situation where there would be further litigation and further delay.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Parliament is there.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Parliament is there but the law too is there, the courts are also there. Therefore, it is known that the writ petitions are pending with the court. Parliament cannot take away the writ petitions. *(Interruptions)* I hope the hon. Member loses the patience to listen to me after he fired the first volley. Sir, if you will permit him a second question, I am willing to reply. *(Interruptions)* If I can plead with you, Sir,...

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I will not disturb you.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, the question, therefore, actually, is what action Government has taken. The Government tried its best to bring together the two parties to ensure that there is a bipartite agreement on a way out of the impasse. If one of the parties was not agreeable to accept a situation—especially the management—it might have gone to the court, and thereby the Wage Board's work might have been delayed and after the Wage Board gave its Report there might have been further litigation and delay in the implementation of the notification as has been the case in respect of the interim relief.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I thought the hon. Minister's finger has been hurt, not his mental faculty.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: No, I have not been at the receiving end sufficiently from the hon. Member, but I am very happy that he is solicitous about my finger. I shall not point it at him.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Have you burnt your finger?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: No, I have had nothing to do with you to burn my finger.

SHRI BIJU PATNAIK: Why do you go on arguing?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: The position now is that since the management has said that it is not willing to participate in the work of the Wage Board while waiting for the judgment of the court on the writ petitions that it has filed, it has also said that it is not willing to accept the constructive alternative proposals made by the representatives of the employees' organisations. The Government, therefore, has reached a position where it has to ensure the resumption and reactivation of the working of the Wage Boards without now hoping for any further proposals to come from the management side.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: Sir, the position of both the sides and the function of the Wage Board for the last three years is known. When the independent members were there, they accepted the interim recommendations by a majority, and they were implemented. Now they have changed sides and the legal advice that if they withdraw the representatives, the function of the Wage Board will not continue and they will not be able to pay more wages to the working journalists! Therefore, it is an unfair game, and there is a deep conspiracy by the managements and the employers to see that the Working Journalists Act does not function. May I know from the Minister what alternative proposals he has and if he wants to make a provision under the Minimum Wages Act? When the Minimum Wages Committee ceases to function, the Government can itself use the powers and by making the proposals public and inviting objections within two months and make them final. Under this situation, in order to give speedy justice to the working journalists, may I know from the Minister whether he would amend the Journalists Act and will not allow the employers and the managements, as Mr. Bhupesh Gupta has said, to veto the rights and amenities of the working journalists which are due to them and under consideration for the last three years?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, one part of his question relates to the working of the Working Journalists Act; I submit that it is a separate question. But as far as the Wage Board itself is concerned, I would like to make it clear that the withdrawal of the two representatives of the employers does not create any legal bar for the Wage Board to continue its functions. Therefore, the Wage Board is free to continue its working. I think I have answered the main question as far as his supplementary is concerned. As far as the conspiracy and other aspects of his question are concerned, I do not think that I have to enter into them.

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : श्रीमन्, मन्त्री जी का जो उत्तर है, उससे मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि भूतपूर्व कांग्रेसी शासन में मन्त्री लोगों ने जो व्यवहार किया है कर्मचारियों के साथ, श्रम-जीवी पत्रकारों के साथ, वही व्यवहार हमारे मन्त्री जी भी कर रहे हैं।

(Interruptions) तो मैं मन्त्री जी से यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि वे कृपया हमको यह बतायें कि श्रमजीवी पत्रकारों को अखबारों के मालिकों के शोषण से बचाने के लिये सरकार क्या कदम उठा रही है। अभी हमारे आदरणीय भूपेश गुप्ता जी ने जैसा कहा है उसी तरह बनारस में भी एक अखबार के मालिक हैं श्री सत्येन्द्र कुमार गुप्ता, कानपुर में भी उनका दफ्तर खुला हुआ है, आगरा में भी खुल गया। लेकिन कोई ऐसा महीना नहीं है जिस महीने में वह अपने कर्मचारियों को जूते मार कर दफ्तर से न निकालते हों।

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now put the supplementary please.

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : मैं अपनी बात को दो मिनट में खत्म कर दूंगा। मैं प्रश्न ही पूछ रहा हूँ। मैं मन्त्री जी का ध्यान बनारस के उन कर्मचारियों की तरफ दिलाना चाहता हूँ चाहे वह सहायक सम्पादक हों या चाहे एक साधारण कर्मचारी, हर महीने उन्हें मालिक के अत्याचारों का सामना करना पड़ता है। मैं मन्त्री महोदय से यह भी जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या मन्त्री जी को मालूम है कि हर महीने पुलिस के डंडे से और अपने गुंडों से पिटाई कर श्री सत्येन्द्र कुमार गुप्ता, जो अखबार के मालिक हैं, अपने कर्मचारियों का दमन करते हैं और जो कागज का कोटा उनको मिलता है... (Interruptions) अखबारी कागज के बारे में उनको सरकार की ओर से जो फैसलिटीज मिलती हैं, जो उनको कागज का कोटा मिलता है उसको वह ब्लॉक में बेच देते हैं ?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, if what the Hon. Member says about repression is correct, it is reprehensible.

श्री श्रीकांत वर्मा : महोदय, आज हालत यह है कि किसी भी मन्त्री के पास कोई शक्ति नहीं रह गई है। वास्तविक शक्ति जो है वह 1 सफदरजंग रोड में बसती है और 1-सफदर-जंग रोड से रामनाथ गौयनका और अशोक जैन इनके बीच हाट लाइन चलती है, जिससे फंसले होते हैं। मैं इस मामले की सारी पेचीदगियाँ जानता हूँ। पिछले साल भी मैंने यह मामला उठाया था। उस समय भी मन्त्री महोदय ने आश्वासन दिया था कि जल्दी ही कुछ किया जाएगा लेकिन कुछ नहीं हुआ। आज ही समाचार पत्रों में छपा है कि कार्यरत पत्रकार हड़ताल करेंगे—अगर यह मामला जल्दी नहीं सुलझता है। इसलिये सबसे पहले मैं मन्त्री महोदय से यह आश्वासन लेना चाहता हूँ कि अगर झगड़ा नहीं सुलझा, अगर स्ट्राइक हुई तो कर्मचारियों का विक्टिमाइजेशन नहीं होगा। दूसरा यह कि अनस्कूप्यूलस न्यूज पेपर्स मेनेजर्स तालाबन्दी न करें, मैं यह भी सदन में आश्वासन लेना चाहता हूँ। मेरा दूसरा सवाल यह है कि उन्होंने जो आश्वासन दिया है कि झगड़े को जल्दी ही सुलझा दिया जाएगा, यह आश्वासन उन्होंने किस आधार पर दिया है। कैसे दो हफ्ते के अन्दर झगड़ा सुलझा दिया जाएगा, उसकी बुनियाद को स्पष्ट करने की मन्त्री महोदय क्षपा करें?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, with due respect to the hon. Member, I would like to point* out that his question is doubly hypothetical.
(Interruptions)

SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN MISHRA; He should reply in Hindi. He comes from a Bihar constituency.

MR. CHAIRMAN: * He may reply in any language.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: I am replying in English. I do not think anybody is mistaking this for Hindi.

Sir^ with due respect to the hon. Member, I would like to point out that his question is a hypothetical question. He asked, if there is no solution, if there is a strike, whether I can assure the House...

SHRI KALYAN ROY: What about the "hot line"?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: The question of "hot line" communications should be addressed to the Communications Minister. But I deny that there is any such "hot line". Shall I go on with my answer?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Don't try to reply in between.

SHRI SITARAM KESRI; Sir, Mr. Piloo Mody is sleeping.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is not snoring.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sky he asked whether, if there is no solution, if there is a strike, I can assure the House that there would be no victimisation. I think these two conditions will not arise. I am confident that there will be no occasion for a strike because I think the solution that will be found will lead to the resumption of the working of the Wage Board and there will be no cause for complaint on that score.

MR. CHAIRMAN; Mr. Mahanti.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: By what time will it start functioning?

(Interruptions)

SHRI BHAIKAB CHANDRA MAHANTI: Do the Government visualise that the Press Council when set up will be able to look after disputes of this kind? If "so" will it be possible for the Press Council to enforce its decision unless there is a

provision to that effect made in the Act, which apparently has not been done in the Bill that is now before Parliament?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA; Sir, the Press Council's area is entirely different from that of a Wage Board.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

Deposits of Copper and Tin in Madhya Pradesh

*424. SHRIMATI RATAN KUMARI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that rich deposits of copper and tin have recently been located in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) "if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to exploit these deposits?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI BIJU PATNAIK); (a) Amongst the copper occurrences known in various parts of Madhya Pradesh, the deposit of copper located in Malankhand in Balaghat District is relatively rich. Occurrences of tin mineralisation have been located in certain parts of Bastar District of Madhya Pradesh.

(b) In Malankhand area about 60.5 million tonnes of copper ore reserves with 1.24 per cent copper content have been estimated." "Exploration for tin deposits in Bastar District to ascertain the potential of the deposit is still in progress.

(c) The Government have sanctioned a scheme to exploit the Malankhand Copper deposit. The project is designed to produce 2 million tonnes of ore (23,000 tonnes of equivalent metal) per annum. Preliminary work on the project has already been commenced by the Hindustan Copper, Ltd., a Government of India undertaking.

According to the MP. Government they are taking up exploitation of the tin deposits through the M.P. State Mining Corporation which is a Madhya Pradesh state Government undertaking.

श्रीमती रतन कुमारी : सभापति महोदय, तांबा और टिन के अलावा मध्य प्रदेश में बहुत से खनिज पाये जाते हैं जैसे वाक्साईट, लाईम-स्टोन, मैंगनीज और इत्यादि। राष्ट्र के खनिज उद्योग में मध्य प्रदेश को तृतीय स्थान प्राप्त है। अब तक 40 प्रकार के उपलब्ध खनिजों में केवल 22 को दोहन वर्तमान में किया जा रहा है। इस बात को गम्भीरतापूर्वक अनुभव किया जा रहा है कि राज्य में एक उत्तम रूप से परिपूर्ण प्रयोगशाला की आवश्यकता है। राज्य के उद्योग भौमिकी तथा खनिज कर्म विभाग के प्रतिनिधियों को साथ लेकर संचालन क्षेत्रीय अनुसन्धान प्रयोगशाला हैदराबाद ने एक समिति बनायी थी जिन्होंने एक प्रतिवेदन तैयार किया है, जिसे भूहत्व दिया जाये।

SHRI BIJU PATNAIK: I have noted the suggestions made by her.

श्रीमती रतन कुमारी : देश की 30 राष्ट्रीय प्रयोगशालाओं में से मध्य प्रदेश में एक भी स्थापित नहीं की गयी है तो मेरा प्रश्न यह है कि इन सब बातों को देखते हुए क्या मध्य प्रदेश में राष्ट्रीय प्रयोगशाला स्थापित करने का कोई प्रस्ताव भारत सरकार के विचार-धीन है ?