

[Shri S. Mohan Kumaramangalam
—Contd.]

50 per cent of the number of workers; we are also regularising a large number more once we have satisfied ourselves with the help of the trade unions that they are actually regular workers who have been deprived of the benefits of the payment of Provident Fund. Then, so far as other matters are concerned, like housing facilities, electricity, water, and so on, this is a much larger problem which probably we will only have to tackle after we settle these very elementary rights of workers of which they were deprived by the private mine-owners.

PRICE OF B. P. COKING COKE

*93. SHRI SARDAR AMJAD ALI:†
SHRI K. B. CHETTRI:
SHRI N. R. CHOUDHURY:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently increased the price of B.P. Coking Coke;

(b) whether it is a fact that such increase is causing great hardship to the engineering units and hampering production; and

(c) if so, the remedial measures taken or proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) to (c) There is at present no statutory control on the prices of coal and coke. It is now entirely for the producers and consumers to settle the prices between themselves. It has, however, come to the notice of the Government that some of the producers have increased the price of hard coke recently but the exact impact of the price rise on the production of Engineering units is now known. Government is, however, keeping a watch over the situation.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Sardar Amjad Ali.

SHRI SARDAR AMJAD ALI: The honourable Minister says that the Government has no control over settling the prices of this coal and coke. It has so happened that in one case the price rise is upto 100 per cent even. For instance, in the case of Hindustan Steel and in the case of Durgapur Steel it is 65 to 70 per cent. May I know whether the Government is still thinking of leaving the entire thing to the discretion of the producers or it will be giving more thought to protect the interests of the consumers also?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: The honourable Member is not correct in stating that the rise in the price of coke is different between producers. The rise actually started with an increase in the price charged by the Durgapur Projects Limited. The price rose from Rs. 125 to Rs. 180 per ton. The same increase was then brought about by the Hindustan Steel and the National Coal Development Corporation and other public sector agencies. The Government is now giving its immediate consideration to the formation of a committee which will effectively control the price of coke, taking into consideration the actual cost of production. The proposal is under discussion with the Government of West Bengal because Durgapur Projects Ltd., is under that Government.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: The price as well as supply of coal is very irregular, particularly due to delay in the despatch of wagons to the foundries compared to the proportion in which they are required. I have specially gone to the Minister and have brought to his notice the prices and the distribution faults in the system of B.P. Coke and beehive coke to the foundries. May I know whether any system has been evolved to ensure that these supplies can be made regularly and at prices which were more or less prevailing earlier?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: So far as the price is concerned, I have already stated that Government is looking into the matter from the point of view of fixing a proper price taking into consideration the cost of production. So far as the question of transport is concerned, the hon. Member is aware that we have been having a number of difficulties during the last year over the question of ensuring effective transport of coke. There has been some improvement in the recent period and we hope that the position will improve a little more.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: I asked him particularly about the distribution aspect. I have brought it to his notice and he has said that a telegram has been sent so that there is quick movement to at least drought affected areas where there is unemployment due to the closure of foundries. But it is not that movement has taken place. The supply has increased through black-market and the price has gone up from Rs. 2/- to Rs. 10/- per tonne. What is he doing about it?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: I will look into this matter. I do not know how these figures of Rs. 2 to Rs. 10 are arrived at....

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: You have been looking into it for the last four months.

DR. V. B. SINGH: In determining and checking the price of coal, as the hon. Minister has pointed out, the basic fact is that of cost of production. The cost of production goes up because of cost of food articles and because of the techniques used in production and labour productivity. May I ask the hon. Minister as to what he is doing to standardise the techniques of production so that the labour productivity increases? Secondly, what is he doing to subsidise the food for workers in the mines so that the cost of production does not go up?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: I am not able to follow

exactly what the hon. Member wants. But I can only state that it is not the policy of the Government to subsidise the food articles purchased by mine workers. If we can help them through the formation of co-operative societies enabling them to purchase food at bulk rates or cheaper prices and so on, that is a different matter. But we have not taken up the position that we will subsidise the cost of food.

DR. V. B. SINGH: Part of the question remains unanswered. It is not necessary that there should be direct subsidy. For instance, there can be fair price shops.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has noted it.

SHRI SHYAMLAL GUPTA: The Minister has just now said that the price has gone up from Rs. 125 to Rs. 180 per tonne. Is it the result of nationalisation? We were very glad when the nationalisation came because we thought the price could come down. Now there is no supply even. Government is nationalising everything and bringing misery to the entire country. What is he doing about it?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: If the hon. Member had carefully followed the answer that I have given earlier, he would have understood that the price of coke was increased first by Durgapur Project, Ltd. and not as a result of the nationalisation of the coking coal mines because Durgapur Projects did this long before nationalisation. The rest of the remarks made by the hon. Member, therefore, do not appear to be very relevant.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY: It is not only the coking coal, but the price of non-coking coal also went up immediately after the take over. After taking them over, will the Minister at least abolish the contract system so that the workers and the public are benefited. This contract system is one of the most derogatory

things ever existed in any public sector. Will he at least agree to abolish this system?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANG-ALAM: Sir, I am sorry to find that even this honourable Member should join the chorus regarding the increase in the price of coal.

(Interruptions).

SHRI C. D. PANDE: What is wrong in that?

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: He should be happy when the Government raises the price.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: It is because the price of coal has increased only in the area where domestic coal is being consumed which is approximately 3.7 per cent of the total production of coal. That price has increased not because of any increase in the prices charged by the coal mine authorities, but only because the middle-men are trying to make extra profits .. (Interruptions). Let me finish, please. It would be better if hon. Members listen to me. It would be better if Mr. Roy listens to me because he raised the question of prices. Therefore, Sir, it is not as a result of the coal mine authorities having increased the price. And, Sir, we are also taking steps to open dumps in the major cities in order to bring down this price. When a major operation of this character, involving nearly 600 coal mines and two lakh workers is put through, there will be certain dislocations caused by persons who want to discredit an entirely correct decision of the Government. That is so far as the prices of coal are concerned. The other point is...

SHRI C. D. PANDE: What about supply?

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY: What about contract labour?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: Sir, the honourable Member is not perhaps aware of the discussions going on between the trade union

representatives and the Government regarding the contract workers.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY: I am aware of it.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: If he was aware of it, then he would not have put this question, because, Sir, the trade union representatives have agreed with the Government and the Coal Mines Authority that the question of contract workers will be taken up only after we have regularised the services of what may be called the permanent workers. First of all, those who are already doing permanent work in the coal mines, some of them are paying Provident Fund and other things and some of them are not paying the PF and that has to be regularised and that itself is a very big task. After that we have agreed that we will take up the question of the contract workers and the regime which is certainly a very bad regime in many areas there has to be streamlined.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Next question.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY: Are you ready to pay them through the management and not by the contractors?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: Sir, with your kind permission, I would like to answer this question.

So far as the contract workers are concerned, again, Sir, an agreement has been arrived at with the trade unions, with one of which the honourable Member is associated, that the payment will be made, supervised by the Custodian or his representatives, not directly by the Custodian, but supervised by him, at the rates which are provided for in the Wage Board awards and I think the honourable Member should be entirely satisfied with this and he should help us in seeing that these things are done properly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Sen Gupta.

SHRI DWIJENDRALAL SEN GUPTA: Sir, is the honourable Minister aware that because of the high prices, the effect of nationalisation of the coal industry is being very much eroded and people have developed an apprehension that in public sector industries the prices are bound to be higher than in the private sector inasmuch as the Durgapur Project Ltd. is itself a public sector industry?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: The honourable Member is talking about the Durgapur Project Ltd. It would be better if he addresses this question regarding the Durgapur Project Ltd. to the West Bengal Government under whose charge it is. But generally I would like to have the assistance of the honourable Member also to dispel the fears that people naturally have regarding the rise in the price of coal.

SHRI DWIJENDRALAL SEN GUPTA: How can we?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: Advantage is bound to be taken of this by the enemies of nationalisation, particularly the middlemen and we are trying to take action to see that this is put an end to as early as possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, 'next question.

*94. [Transferred to the 7th March, 1973.]

भारत के प्रति ईरान का रुख

*95. डा० भाई महावीर : क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि ईरान ने भारत-विरोधी रुख अपनाया हुआ है; और यदि हाँ, तो उसके क्या कारण हैं; और

(ख) ईरान स्थित भारतीय दूतावास द्वारा इस भारत-विरोधी रुख को बदलने के लिये क्या उपाय किये जा रहे हैं ?

†[IRAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS INDIA

*95. DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Iran has adopted an anti-India attitude and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(b) what are the measures that are being taken by the Indian Embassy in Iran to bring about a change in this anti-Indian attitude?]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) and (b) Iranian spokesmen and information media have at times been critical of India in relation to some matters concerning Indo-Pakistan differences. In Government's view, however, this does not constitute an overall anti-Indian attitude.

Government have used every means, including the Indian Embassy in Iran, to explain the correct position on such Indo-Pakistan differences.

‡विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सुरेन्द्र पाल सिंह) : (क) और (ख) भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच मतभेदों से संबंधित कुछ मामलों पर ईरान के प्रवक्ताओं तथा सूचना तंत्र ने कभी-कभी भारत की आलोचना की है। परन्तु सरकार की दृष्टि से इसे समग्र रूप से भारत विरोधी रवैया नहीं कहा जा सकता।

भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच इस तरह के मतभेदों की सही स्थिति समझाने के लिए सरकार ने ईरान स्थित भारतीय दूतावास सहित सभी साधन अपनाए हैं।

† [] English translation.

‡ [] Hindi translation.