

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED STRIKE BY, AND MANHANDLING OF EMPLOYEES OF RESERVE BANK OF INDIA AT BANGALORE AND MADRAS

SHRI K. P. SUBRAMANIA MENON (Kerala): Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Finance to the reported strike, by and the man handling of, the employees of the Reserve Bank of India at Bangalore and Madras.

THE MINISTER OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, in Bangalore there was a demonstration by the employees of the Reserve Bank of India on the 5th December, 1970 against certain decisions of the Reserve Bank of India. At about 11.30 A.M. on that day, the Assistant Treasurer in charge of one of the Note Examination Sections is reported to have been assaulted by two employees, on his refusal to allow them to enter the Examination Section.

The Police came to the Bank on Monday, the 7th December, 1970, to make inquiries on the complaint made to them by the Assistant Treasurer. In this connection the police arrested 16 employees. Of the arrested employees, one was released on the 7th December, and the remaining were released on bail on the 9th December. Two employees who are alleged to have assaulted the Assistant Treasurer have been suspended by the Manager of Bangalore Office.

On account of the action taken by the police and the disciplinary action taken by the management, the employees resorted to concerted absenteeism from work from the afternoon of 7th December.

The latest information from the Reserve Bank of India received this morning shows that the matter has

been amicably settled and normal work has been resumed this morning with all the employees reporting for duty.

There has been no strike at the Madras Office of the Reserve Bank. Under an agreement recently concluded by the Reserve Bank with the All India Reserve Bank Workers' Federation, the working hours of Class IV employees on Saturdays have been reduced with effect from 12th December, 1970. A difference arose at Madras Office of the Reserve Bank of India on the 12th December regarding the correct interpretation of the revised hours of work and the cleaning staff refused to do the work unless all of them were allotted work in the morning only. A few employees were called for duty in the afternoon. Attempts were made to persuade them to attend to the work assigned to them, but as they remained adamant, casual labour for the day was brought in. As it was apprehended that the casual labour might be prevented from working, the police were alerted by the Bank authorities. The police stationed themselves outside the Bank, but withdrew soon afterwards. No disciplinary action was taken against any employee. The Reserve Bank authorities hope that this matter also will be settled amicably.

SHRI K. P. SUBRAMANIA MENON: I am happy that the dispute in the Bangalore Office has been settled and the employees are resuming work this morning. But may I know from the Government whether these 15 employees who were arrested were all members of the Executive Committee of the Class III Employees' Association who went on a deputation to the General Manager to represent to him about certain grievances against the complaint by one of the supervisory staff members and that these people were arrested within the cabin of the Manager of the Reserve Bank by pre-arrangement? And secondly, may I know whether, after being arrested, they were taken to the police station and kept in the police station for two days and they are produced before the Magistrate only on the 9th and were beaten very

badly, insulted, manhandled, etc.? And now the police have framed charges against them, and the Reserve Bank has suspended these employees.

Since the dispute has been settled, I do not want to pursue the matter further, but I would like to know from the Government whether these charges against these employees have been withdrawn and whether the suspension also has been withdrawn?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA: Sir, as I indicated in my statement, action was taken against these employees on the complaint made by the Assistant Treasurer. Thus, on receipt of the complaint, the police proceeded according to law, and they did arrest a number of employees. Where exactly they were arrested, what about the timing of these arrests, this information I do not have with me, or whether they were inside the cabin or outside the cabin, I do not have information. But they were arrested on the day the police came and made the enquiries, after the complaint was made—on the 7th December. They arrested 11 employees. Another employee was arrested later in the day. And one of the persons was released in the evening. It is wrong to say, according to my information, that they were beaten. This allegation has been denied that any of them has been beaten, and various sections have been quoted, because for the breach of the law these people were arrested. It is true that the arrested people were released on bail on the 9th December. But if the bail was furnished earlier, I do not think that any action could have been taken against them. As the law requires, the employees were presented, according to my information, before the Magistrate. But when subsequently bail was furnished, the employees were released. And later, there was a visit by senior officers of the Reserve Bank to this branch. Protracted negotiations were held, and only this morning we received a Telex message from Bangalore saying that the matter has been satisfactorily settled bet-

ween the employees and the Reserve Bank authorities, and that normal work has been resumed and that the full complement of staff is attending to the work.

SHRI K. P. SUBRAMANIA MENON: May I know also from the Government whether they will ask the Reserve Bank at Madras to settle their dispute with the Class IV employees amicably and quickly?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA: Yes, Sir. I have indicated in my statement how the dispute arose and I have expressed the hope that this matter also will be settled amicably. We have not received the report so far whether that dispute has been settled. But we do hope that an amicable settlement will be arrived at.

SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHARAN (Kerala): It is seen that a complaint had been made by a member of the supervisory staff of the bank concerned; it would also appear that subsequently a representation was made by members of the clerical staff to the local Manager. These are the two incidents which have given cause to the trouble there in the Bangalore Branch. May I say, Sir, that the employer-employees relations in the Reserve Bank everywhere are not up to the healthy-mark as they should be, that there is generally a bureaucratic attitude on the part of the superior officers towards the subordinate officers, and that amongst our public sector concerns there has been very wide dissatisfaction, particularly among the subordinate staff on the working of the Staff Selection Committees, Departmental Promotion Committees in the matter of promotions and appointments. May I know what steps the Government would take to see that incidents of this nature are avoided in future and the employer-employee relations in the Reserve Bank branches everywhere are up to the sound mark?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA: Sir, the hon'ble Member knows that the settlement with the Association

[Shri Vidya Charan Shukla]:
representing the workers of the Reserve Bank was arrived at by an agreement on 7-10-70. It settled most of the outstanding disputes. I do not think, Sir, there has been any bureaucratic attitude as such. There were certain differences of opinion. They were hammered out by negotiation peacefully, and the main demand of the employees and the questions that were posed before the management were settled amicably. After this, this thing arose out of an isolated incident that took place in the Bangalore branch of the Reserve Bank and, as I indicated, it snowballed into something much bigger than it originally was. But, fortunately, by the intervention and good sense—intervention of the senior officers and good sense amongst the workers themselves—the entire matter has now been completely settled; there is no widespread dissatisfaction as such any more amongst the employees of the Reserve Bank as far as my present information goes.

SHRI KALYAN ROY (West Bengal): Is it not a fact that the work of the Reserve Bank, whether in Calcutta or in Bombay, is facing repeated disruption because of various types of labour disputes? The hon'ble Minister said that most of the outstanding disputes have been settled. But there are disputes which have not been settled. So, is it not a fact that most of these difficulties arise out of a certain attitude which the Reserve Bank authorities are taking, which is not a proper attitude which should be followed in the public sector? That is number one.

Secondly, is it not a fact that after the agreement which was arrived at with the All-India Bank Employees' Association the work of the other banks is running smoothly? But why is it that the Government felt helpless to control the Reserve Bank authorities either to maintain proper labour relations or to influence them to follow a proper credit policy which is

still being followed mostly in favour of the monopolists?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA:

It is wrong to say that the policy of the Reserve Bank has been followed in the interest of the monopolists. That is absolutely wrong. As a matter of fact the Reserve Bank has been following the policy which has been laid down by the Government which is against monopoly and the growth of monopolistic tendencies in our society. The attitude of the management of the Reserve Bank has always been helpful and broadminded. As a matter of fact, the employees of the Reserve Bank are in one of the most advantageous positions in the country. Everybody knows that. It is wrong to say that the attitude of the Reserve Bank authorities has been wrong and, therefore, there has been some dispute. Such disputes keep on arising between the employers and the employees and such disputes are not unknown in other sectors. In the Reserve Bank, happily an agreement has been reached. It is a very wide agreement and it covers most of the points of dispute. This difficulty that arose in the Bangalore branch was an isolated incident and that has also been settled now. It is not a question of the Government's helplessness in these matters. The Government keeps a vigilant eye on these matters and whenever our help or guidance or direction is needed, we always act in time to see that the vital work of the Reserve Bank is not disrupted because of such disputes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The dispute has been amicably settled. There need not be any more discussion, I think.

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pradesh): A very short question, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The matter has been settled amicably. Why do you want to continue it?

SHRI A. D. MANI: Only a very short question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All right.

SHRI A. D. MANI: May I ask the Minister to tell us what were the actions of the management of the Reserve Bank against which there was a demonstration by the employees? Secondly, he has referred to the curtailment of the hours of work on Saturdays. If it is done by the Reserve Bank, it stands to reason that this should be applied to other banks also. Why has the Reserve Bank been chosen for this relaxation of work on Saturdays when there are so many Government offices where people are working according to the schedule on Saturdays?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA: Sir, I had earlier indicated in my main statement the incident because of which two employees of the Reserve Bank in Bangalore had to be suspended. These two employees had assaulted the Assistant Treasurer while he was on duty and, therefore, they were suspended. About the second question of the hon. Member, the Reserve Bank, as everybody knows, has its own entity and it has its own terms of contract under which it employs its staff. Therefore, they agreed on certain working hours as far as the Class IV employees were concerned. It had nothing to do with the other banks or other organisations of the Government. This was only a local agreement between the management of the Reserve Bank branch at Madras and their Class IV employees. There has been some dispute about it which has caused some tension. But it has caused no dislocation in work. We hope very soon this matter will also be settled.

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that as far as arrests of Reserve Bank employees are concerned, these arrests were mainly of members of the executive committee of the union there? At

least 15 of them were arrested, as far as my information goes. I would like to know whether it is a fact or not. If it is a fact, may I know whether it is not a fact that all these members of the executive committee were arrested on a private complaint by one of the supervisory staff? If that is so, will the Minister agree that this was really a conspiracy by some of the supervisory staff of the management with the police in order that the members of the executive committee may be arrested? If so, what action does the hon. Minister propose to take against such harassing arrests of members of the executive committee of the union at the instance of private complaints?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA: Sir, it is not a question of any conspiracy in this matter and there is no question of any private complaint. As I have indicated, the incident took place during the working hours of the bank and the Assistant Treasurer who was on duty was assaulted by two persons, and on that he made a complaint. I do not think that it can be called a private complaint of a person because he was a public official on duty and he was assaulted then. Therefore, the police took action according to the law. I am not sure whether the persons who were arrested later on were all members of the executive committee. But obviously they were active members of the association that took an active part in the agitation and they obstructed work. Therefore, they were proceeded against under the law. I would not say that there was any conspiracy between the bank management and the police or anybody. It was only an isolated incident which unfortunately grew out of all proportions and created dislocation in work for several days. Now happily both the employees and the employers have come to an amicable settlement and I do not think we should say or do anything which will vitiate the good atmosphere that has been created now.