

Chemicals Travancore Ltd. in Cochin, which was being processed separately, Government decided to locate the first of the two proposed projects for the manufacture of fertilizer and chemical equipment at Visakhapatnam. The implementation of this project has since been taken up by Bharat Heavy Plate and Vessels Ltd., a Company wholly owned by the Government of India.

This information was given in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on 9th June, 1967.

12 NOON

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED STAYING AWAY FROM DUTY OF A LARGE NUMBER OF FIREMEN IN CERTAIN SECTION OF THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Railways to the reported staying away from duty of a large number of firemen in certain sections of the Southern Railway and the consequent cancellation of several trains on that Railway.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI C. M. POONACHA): Sir, it is understood that on 25-7-67 the unrecognised Southern Railway Firemen's Council which is a sectional body decided to go on mass sick leave on and from 26-7-67 as a protest against non-redressal of certain grievances of this category of staff such as, revision of the classification of loco running staff from "continuous" to "intensive", and increase in Mileage Allowance, besides other local grievances like, filling up of vacancies; increase in Leave Reserve percentage, confirmation of all loco running staff and cancellation of punishments etc. and this mass sick leave has resulted in dis-location of certain passenger and Goods services in three out of six

divisions of Southern Railway, namely, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai and Olavakot.

As the hon'ble Members are aware, under the Parliament Negotiating Machinery functioning for over 15 years now on the Railways, the recognised Unions and their affiliated recognised Federations could discuss matters affecting all categories of Railway employees across the table, at the different tiers of this Machinery. On the Southern Railway, there are two recognised Unions which could discuss these matters with the local Railway Administration or alternatively their affiliated Federations, namely, All India Railwaymen's Federation or the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen, could discuss these matters with the Railway Board. Instead of using this Machinery and finding out a solution for the grievances, if any, certain Firemen belonging to certain unrecognised Sectional Associations have resorted to this agitation.

All steps have been taken to maintain the Train services as far as possible and minimise the inconvenience to the travelling public and to maintain the movement of essential commodities etc.

Certain Members of Parliament have recently met me and discussed the grievances of this category of staff with me and I have assured them that once normally is restored the matter will be sympathetically examined and appropriate action taken. In the circumstances, it is hoped that normal running of Train services would be restored early.

श्री राजनारायण (उत्तर प्रदेश) : लखनऊ
से दिल्ली में तीन तीन घंटा बराबर देर होती
है ।

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE: Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that though he has catalogued the grievances alleged to be agitating the minds of these firemen, actually the griev-

[Shri A. P. Chatterjee]

ance which made these firemen to go on mass sick leave is the grievance of non-payment of daily allowance or mileage allowance however it may be called.

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pradesh): How do you say that?

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE: This has appeared in the press.

SHRI A. D. MANI: All that appears in the press need not be correct.

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE: I want to know whether that is a fact or not. Secondly, will the hon. Minister state whether the report appearing in a section of the press today is correct or not, that the firemen are desirous of going back to work if the Railway Ministry and the authorities would assure them that there would be no victimisation if they returned to duty? If that is a fact, why is the Railway Ministry not assuring them of non-victimisation so that the functioning of the Railways on these sections may be normal once again and food movement etc. may go on?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: Sir, the first question referred to the reduction in their mileage allowances. Actually certain anomalies have arisen due to the re-forming of the links and the running of the trains in this sector. Since the Madras-Villupuram line has been electrified the running of the trains on certain sections had to be re-arranged and the link freshly reformed. In this certain anomalies have arisen which I have agreed to look into and set right difficulties, if any, resulting in the reduction of their allowances; whatever it might be, that bill be looked into.

Secondly, as to the assurance that the hon. Member referred to, a short notice question on similar lines was put in the other House and I have furnished the answer there. I have said that if normalcy is restored by these people going back to work unconditionally, then we will take a

very sympathetic view of it and we will never be vindictive.

SHRI D. THENGARI (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, the role of recognised Federations has been referred to. I should like to know whether the grievances of these firemen were taken on the agenda of the Permanent Negotiating Machinery (PNM) by any of the affiliated Federations and if so, on what particular date it was taken on the agenda, and how many months or years are required to consider these demands? If their demands were not considered by these Federations, what other form or method would the hon. Minister advise them to take in order to focus the attention of the Government on their problems?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: As a result of the modernisation of the Indian Railways, that is to say, consequent on the introduction of diesel engines and the electrification of some lines and so on, certain work-programmes have got to be re-drawn and for that a simplification procedure has been recommended and certain guide-lines have been prescribed. These guide-lines have been discussed by the two Federations at the Federation level. The two Federations have generally approved of these simplification procedures, subject to certain local anomalies being set right as and when they are noticed. This general approval of the Federations at the Federation level to the simplification procedures has been indicated. Now, subsequently, in certain sections when it is put into practice certain types of anomalies have been noticed. These matters would be gone into. I do not know if at the Divisional level the PNM has been used in this particular matter. But before that certain sections of firemen in these Divisions have gone on mass sick leave.

SHRI SUNDAR SINGH BHANDARI (Rajasthan): Sir, . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your name is coming up later.

SHRI SUNDAR SINGH BHANDARI:
No, Sir. I was No. 4 in the list.

SHRI A. D. MANI: He is the leader
of a Party.

SHRI SUNDAR SINGH BHANDARI:
My name appears even before the
name of Mr. Thengari.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very good.

श्री सुन्दर सिंह भण्डारी : मैं मंत्री महोदय
से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि फायरमैन के
नामने इलेक्ट्रिफिकेशन और डीजलाइजेशन
के कारण वहाँ पर भी रिट्रैचमेंट का सवाल
आया है क्या और अगर रिट्रैचमेंट का सवाल
आया है तो इनका फिर से एवजार्ब करने के
सामने में क्या कदम उठाये गये हैं ? यह एक
सवाल है । और दूसरा यह है कि जो जेनरल
एकानामीज आप जगह जगह कर रहे हैं उसके
कारण फायरमैन के सामने वर्क लोड बढ़ने का
भी प्रभाव आया है या नहीं ।

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: There
has been no retrenchment and we
have taken abundant care to see that
this simplification of operational pro-
cedures does not result in any
retrenchment. We have categorically
given this assurance to the workmen
and to all the Railway employees in
general. As for the workload in-
crease, it is not the workload that has
increased. With the new linking in
certain sectors the length of mileage
got reduced, perhaps, and therefore,
consequently the mileage allowances
might have been reduced. These are
matters which might arise in any
particular sector where the simplifi-
cation and the new linking is intro-
duced. But as and when they come
to our notice we will examine and
give our best thought to them.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN (Andhra
Pradesh): I have been following the
news in "The Hindu" ever since this
started. In the press communique
which was being issued by the Gene-
ral Manager, Southern Railway, I did

not find the conciliatory attitude
which the Railway Minister has taken
here. On the other hand every day
he has been issuing statements cal-
culated—he might not have intended
it perhaps—to provoke the employees
into further action with the result
that the thing has spread. It started
in Tiruchirappalli, it spread to
Madurai and now it has spread to
Olavakot and it is affecting the rice
supply to Kerala. Some ten to twelve
wagons of onions and potatoes have
perished and a lot of havoc has al-
ready been caused. Here the issue
involved is that they have introduced
certain simplification procedure which
when implemented ultimately changes
the working conditions of the em-
ployees concerned. Now the working
conditions of the employees cannot
be changed unless they give notice
and a proper discussion takes place.
Discussing with the two federations
is one thing. So I would like to know
whether this aspect has been discuss-
ed with the recognised Unions at the
Railway level.

Another thing is, while negotiating
a settlement and asking them to go
back to duty, what is the objection
for the Railways to permit the re-
presentatives of the Action Council
of the Firemen or Drivers to attend
along with the representatives of the
recognised Unions? You cannot re-
cognise this organisation but I under-
stand most of them owe loyalty to one
or other of the Unions and they form-
ed this Council to express categori-
cally their grievances. That is why it
has taken shape and it becomes
stronger than the other organisations.
In view of this what is your objection
to permit one or two representatives
of this Council to discuss matters
along with the representatives of the
recognised Unions and come to an
amicable settlement?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: The
General Manager, Southern Railway,
was here on the day when I was dis-
cussing with some hon. Members of
this House and he knows what we
have decided and how the matter

[Shri C. M. Poonacha.]

should be resolved. Then it was indicated that the workmen would be asked to go back to work unconditionally and after normally is established and the regular running of train services restored, we will look into the matter and do the needful. It was also indicated that we will not be vindictive. These assurances have been given and they stand. In today's Radio news it was reported that they have decided to go back to work and I hoped they might have resumed the normal running of the train services but my latest information at 11.00 today is that the *status quo* continues. In spite of the fact that Radio reported that they have decided to go back to work, my information is that the *status quo* continues and the train services still remain interrupted. I would wait for some time to know the exact situation.

SHRI BALACHANDRA MENON (Kerala): While appreciating the stand taken by the Minister on the question of the rights of the recognised Unions may I suggest that because of the change in the condition of service of the workers who had certain vested rights a direction may be issued to the management to discuss the issue with the representatives of those who are affected along with the representatives of the recognised Unions so that this matter may be settled? I am not asking for any right of recognition being granted to this association or this committee or anything of that sort. All what I ask is this. Certain rights have been taken away from them; rights which are already vested in them are being denied to them. Surely they must have the right to go direct to the General Manager and negotiate over this issue; that does not in any way affect the right of the recognised Unions. They are only going to negotiate what they already had and what they have lost. They have been deprived of certain rights they already had and therefore they have got the right to go and discuss it with the General

Manager. Therefore I would put it to the hon. Minister that the Railways should discuss this with the representatives of the recognised Unions and also with such of those workers or their representatives—they may select anybody—who have been affected so that this matter can be settled. And this can be done very easily, that is what I feel.

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: Sir; all these things could be looked into once normalcy is restored. My hon. friend there himself had come along with other friends and we had detailed discussions about it. This was on Monday and today is Thursday but still things have not come back to normalcy. While they had all the assurances and other things from the Government they should also have played the game and restored normalcy which has not been done so far. Sir, I look forward to normalcy being restored so that other things could be looked into.

SHRI A. D. MANI: May I ask the Minister how many employees were involved in this mass sick leave operation and may I ask him further it is not customary when a person applies for sick leave to obtain a doctor's certificate and were certificates by Railway doctors appended to these applications?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: No. But this is the tactics now adopted. As for the figures, in Tiruchirappalli it is about 644, in Madurai Division it is about 597 and in Olavakot it is about 568 as on 1-8-67. These are firemen only.

SHRI M. V. BHADRAM (Andhra Pradesh): Now the problem is this. Most of the firemen in the three Divisions are very much agitated over the issue because it is not a small issue but as the hon. Minister says their genuine grievances could be looked into. But he puts a condition like a very bad employer that unless they resume nor-

maley those things will not be looked into. If they are genuine grievances why can't the Minister straightway say that all these things will be conceded as far as their grievances are concerned?

Secondly about the PNM, all the railway employees in the country are fed up with this PNM because it delays things. First there are discussions at the lower level, then there are discussions at the General Manager's level and then with the Railway Board's level. It takes enormous time in discussions and that is why the railway workers are fed up with it and they want to do away with it. They want it to be replaced by a better machinery.

Further, as an employee, has not he got the right to represent his grievances to the employer apart from the question of recognition or non-recognition of any Union and has not the employer got any obligation on his part to look into the grievances of the employees? Why have not all these things been done since so many months?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: Sir, my hon. friend has gone into further details about this matter. Now if it is a question of the right of the employee in matters where he feels aggrieved, he is very well within his limits to make his representation but he cannot take the law into his own hands and use methods of disrupting the services and bringing the whole service to a standstill thereby causing enormous loss to the railways and, not only that, affecting the vital movement of foodgrains. And I must congratulate the Southern Railway here that in spite of these difficulties Food Train services have not been disrupted. They have maintained it and for this I think we should pay a tribute to the management and say that they have done very well in spite of the fact that the firemen have taken the law into their own hands and tried to force the issue by compelling the Administration to come to a certain understanding. We

had discussed all this—seven Members of Parliament came to me—and the understanding was that they would ask the firemen to go back to work unconditionally immediately and that the management should give an assurance that there will be no victimisation and that the anomalies and the grievances would be looked into. Having got all the assurances, now to play slow is not fair to the understanding that has been reached.

SHRI R. S. KHANDEKAR (Madhya Pradesh): I would like to put a few questions. Is it not a fact that the local Railway Administration invited fresh recruitment and consequently many retired railwaymen offered their services and this is one of the reasons why the situation aggravated? Secondly, is it not a fact that now the drivers have also joined the firemen and practically all the railway services have been paralysed in that section? Thirdly, how many food trains have been affected, because that is vital to Kerala? How many food trains have been detained. Lastly, the Minister spoke about the PNM and my friend here also referred to it. I have been pleading that it is a useless, outmoded machinery and the Government was thinking of bringing into existence a Joint Consultative Machinery. What has happened to that?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: The essential movements of foodgrains particularly in this sector had to be maintained and for that the Southern Railway had to recruit temporary staff to maintain and run the most essential services, i.e., the foodgrains movement from Andhra to Kerala. The management there have taken certain measures, which I am sure would be appreciated by one and all, because we have not allowed the food train movements to be disrupted. Regarding the PNM and the Joint Consultative Machinery, that is a matter which is being discussed at the national level. So far as the Railways are concerned, we have agreed to the Joint Consultative Machinery being established.

SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH (Punjab): Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that one of the reasons for the agitation is stated to be the fall in the gross income of firemen on account of relinking of certain parts and duties of firemen on the Southern Railway? What is the maximum fall in income in terms of rupees suffered by any fireman and what do the Government propose to do about it? I would also like to know from the hon. Minister whether other categories of running staff also suffered a loss in their gross income as a result of the re-linking of certain parts and duties?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA: I did mention that there are certain anomalies. Certain sections or categories of employees have got something more, a plus advantage, and a certain section have got a minus advantage. This is the anomaly and we have promised to look into them, but that does not mean that all of a sudden the entire service should be brought to a standstill.

SHRI G. MURAHARI (Uttar Pradesh): I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of the fact that the Southern Railway Firemen's Council, although they had resolved to call off the strike in response to the appeal by MPs, did not do so because there was no assurance regarding victimisation or break in service. All that they want is that they should be assured that there will be no victimisation and nobody will suffer from any break in service. I would like to know whether the Minister would like to give that assurance here on the floor of the House, because that would probably go a long way towards seeing that the firemen returned to work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is almost an assurance and the railwaymen must know how to act. I am very sorry that the railwaymen did not respond, especially when the Railway Minister has expressed his view. He cannot say categorically 'I shall do it.'

SHRI G. MURAHARI: On the one hand, the Minister says that they should go back to work. The Minister should say that he is prepared to give this assurance on the floor of the House. The difficulty with the Minister seems to be that he does not want to communicate with that particular Council, because he has not recognised it. But I would like to know whether the Minister is prepared to give that assurance here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know a bit of the railwaymen's mind and railway associations. A statement of that kind by the Minister should be appreciated and if the railwaymen are anxious to protect their interests, they should immediately give up the strike and join their work.

(Interruptions)

SHRI G. MURAHARI: Will he give the assurance on the floor of the House?

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS (Orissa): He has the backing of the Chairman.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Sir, one small question. I want the Railway Minister to realise the irritation which the Chota Zamindars cause to the railway employees. There was one incident on the 14th or 15th of July on the Kotah Division of the Western Railway. The ceiling fans from the firemen's running rooms were removed because someone had decided that firemen did not require ceiling fans in their running rooms in the name of economy. Such irritations, which these small, Chota Officers cause, should be taken into consideration. That is why I ask him to contact the General Manager and see that some assurances are given. Later on we can discuss it.

SHRI G. MURAHARI: I want the Minister to make a statement on the floor of the House that he will not victimise nor will there be any break in service.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: It is a question in which they think that the prestige of the Railway Board is involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Railway Board and the Railway Administration must maintain discipline.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: False prestige.

FAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

REPORT (PART I AND PART II) OF THE STUDY TEAM ON THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following papers:—

- (i) Report of the Study Team on the Customs Department (Part I) relating to Clearance of Cargo.
- (ii) Report of the Study Team on the Customs Department (Part II) relating to Preventive Arrangements—Organisation and Personnel.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1288/67 for (i) and (ii).]

I. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS (1965-66) OF THE BHARAT HEAVY ELECTRICALS LIMITED AND RELATED PAPERS

II. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS (1965-66) OF THE HEAVY ENGINEERING CORPORATION LIMITED, RANCHI AND RELATED PAPERS

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. V. RAGHUNATHA REDDY): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table, under sub-section (1) section 619-A of the Companies Act, 1956, a copy each of the following papers:—

- (a) (i) Annual Report and Accounts of the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited for the year 1965-

66, together with the Auditors' report on the Accounts

- (ii) Review by Government on the working of the Company.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1326/67 for (i) and (ii).]

- (b) (i) Annual Report and Accounts of the Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited, Ranchi, for the year 1965-66, together with the Auditors' Report on the Accounts and the comments of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India thereon.

- (ii) Review by Government on the working of the Corporation.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1327/67 for (i) and (ii).]

THE COTTON AND STAPLE FIBRE TEXTILE MILLS (REGULATION OF WORKING) SECOND AMENDMENT ORDER, 1967

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI MOHD. SHAFI QURESHI): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table, under sub-section (6) of section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, a copy of the Ministry of Commerce Notification S.O. No. 2285, dated the 4th July, 1967, publishing the Cotton and Staple Fibre Textile Mills (Regulation of Working) Second Amendment Order, 1967. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1328/67.]

THE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1967

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI): Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

SHRI R. S. KHANDEKAR (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, last time it was assured that before introducing any such Bill, copies of it would be circulated.