

million of sugar is expected during the current year, decontrol of sugar is absolutely necessary not only to bring down prices but also to eliminate black market ?

SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE : This does not arise out of this question.

LOSS DUE TO RECENT AIR INDIA STRIKE

SHRI A. D. MANI 8 ♦103. SHRI MULKA GOVINDA L REDDY :

Will the Minister of TRANSPORT, AVIATION, SHIPPING AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) the total loss incurred by the Air India with special reference to the loss incurred on account of the cancellation of bookings effected from abroad involving the earning of foreign exchange as a result of the recent Air India strike, and

(b) the number of persons who were laid-off on account of the strike and what was the total amount of the wage bill which was lost to them as a result of the lay-off ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION (SHRI C. M. POONACHA) : (a) The total loss suffered by Air-India as a result of strike by the Flight Navigators, is estimated at Rs. 105 lakhs. The amount of foreign exchange involved is estimated at Rs. 76-65 lakhs. Separate figures of loss incurred on account of cancellation of bookings are not available.

(b) The number of persons laid off on account of the strike was 1520. This figure does not include Flight Navigators who went on strike. The Corporation have decided that except for Flight Navigators, the period of absence due to the lay off should be adjusted against leave of all kinds. There has therefore been no loss of emoluments to the employees who were laid off.

SHRI MULKA GOVINDA REDDY : May I know, Sir, what were the reasons for the strike and what were their demands, and whether in the strike were involved all the employees or a particular section of the employees ?

The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Mulka i Govinda Reddy.

SHRI C. M. POONACHA : A detailed statement was made on the floor of this House the other day with reference to the Navigators' strike and the reasons which prompted the Navigators to resort to the illegal action and the attitude of the Government and the action taken by the Government to see to the early termination of the strike etc.

SHRI MULKA GOVINDA REDDY : May I know, Sir, whether it is true that the dispute with the Navigators has been referred to arbitration or has it been settled amicably ?

SHRI N. SANJIVA REDDY : The question of arbitration does not arise. It was in protest against the award given by Justice Khosla that they went on strike. It was illegal. The whole thing was placed before this House. Because of 41 Navigators going on a strike, unfortunately the flights could not take place and we had a lay-off. We thought that those who were not responsible for the strike should not suffer. The Navigators who were responsible for the strike are now talking with the management unconditionally.

SHRI SANTOKH SINGH : Keeping in view the huge loss of Rs. 105 lakhs, especially foreign exchange of Rs. 75 lakhs, may I know, Sir, what steps are being taken by the Government to see that these strikes do not recur ?

SHRI N. SANJIVA REDDY : It is true, Sir, that periodical strikes like this are a great loss to the nation. But we are thinking of how best we can meet these things in future. We have not taken any final decision.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA : Sir, in order to avoid the strikes, may I know if the Government is considering to have a permanent machinery in case there is a dispute between the employer and the employee before that matter is referred to arbitration, arbitration of a compulsory nature, to avoid either strikes or lock-outs ?

SHRI N. SANJIVA REDDY : Here, the situation is little peculiar. These are senior officers drawing thousands of rupees as salaries. The Government has to examine all aspects whether the people drawing thousands of rupees could also be called workers and they could creat

strikes. In the steel plants, if I remember correctly, people drawing a particular salary are not allowed to be in the Union. The Government is considering so many aspects of the question. I do not think it is possible to create a permanent agency to resolve these disputes.

SHRI KRJUN ARORA : May I know, Sir, if this conversion of lay-off period as leave was done with the consent of the employees and their unions or was it done by the management unilaterally ?

SHRI N. SANJIVA REDDY: The management is in touch with the Unions. Whatever is permitted by the rules is being done. They are always in touch with the Unions.

SHRI ABID ALI: Of course, these particular employees had no business to resort to a strike or anything of that kind. May I know, Sir, if the Government have considered the necessity of evolving a system by which the reasonable demands of the workers are given speedy consideration so that this idea that the Government do not act unless they resort to strike, that their legitimate demands also are not given due consideration and disposal unless they take to demonstration or strike and such methods, is dispelled ?

SHRI C. M. POONACHA : The hon'ble Member would be no doubt knowing that as far as the employees of the Air-India and also the I.A.C. are concerned, we have agreements with them for a period of time. After that they came forward with a charter of demands. Later the Government decided to refer these demands to arbitration. Justice Khosla was appointed for this purpose. Under the Industrial Disputes Act, Justice Khosla went through the whole set of demands and the award was given, the National Industrial Tribunal Award. The present agitation was against the award, not against the management. This point will have to be clearly understood. This was an agitation against the award. As such this strike was itself bad. The pressure that was brought to agitate against the award could not be accepted. The Navigators saw that they were not within their rights, they were not properly advised in resorting to this kind of agitation, and they went back to work.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA : Sir, we know the Navigators are a very highly paid staff of the Air-India. I do not know whether they come under the definition of "workers".

SHRI N. SANJIVA REDDY : They do now unfortunately.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA : The questions that are put in this context need not be confused. I would like to know from the Minister whether any investigation or examination has been made or whether possibilities are being explored to have electronic mechanical navigators so that we can do away with the Navigators altogether.

SHRI N. SANJIVA REDDY : Sir, the proposal is there before the Corporation to instal electronic navigators. It will take some six months to instal them. Therefore, we will have to get along with the Navigators as we do now. We will take steps to see if we can provide the foreign exchange necessary for equipping the planes with these electronic navigators.

POST OF BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

◆104. DR. SHRIMATI PHULRENU GUHA: Will the Minister of FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have any proposal under their consideration to convert the post of the Block Development Officer into any other post; and

(b) If so, what is the proposal and what functions will be allotted to that new post ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE) : (a) and (b) The Central Government have no proposal to convert the post of Block Development Officers into another post. The arrangements in