

Clauses 2 to 16 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI S. K. PATIL : I beg to move : "That the Bill be passed."

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE ELECTRICITY (SUPPLY) AMENDMENT BILL, 1966

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF IRRIGATION AND
POWER (DR. K. L. RAO) : Madam Deputy
Chairman, I beg to move :

"That the Bill further to amend the
Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948, as passed
by the Lok Sabha, be taken into
consideration."

In suggesting this I shall briefly explain the circumstances under which we had to hdng in this amending Bill. The supply of electricity and the other aspects coned with it are being regulated by two Electricity Acts, one, the Indian Electricity Act, 1910, and the other, the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948. I may be permitted to submit that the electricity, though it has engulfed the fabric of civilisation and though it is being employed in the rest of the world in a very mighty way to help mankind, it had not received any attention—any attention worth the name— in India in the days before independence. It is only after the independence, after three Plans, after pursuing a very large number of projects, and expensive ones too, that we are now generating electricity which is six times as much" as it was in 1948. That is indeed "a very good achievement, but nevertheless I should say that, compared to the world production of electricity, we are very low down in the list. The world produces something like three thousand billion kilowatt hours a year but our production is only about 1.25 per cent. . . .

श्री राजनारायण (उत्तर प्रदेश) : कोरम
नहीं है।

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please,
whether there is quorum.

SHRI RAJNARAIN : No quorum.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please
continue, Dr. Rao.

DR. K. L. RAO : I was submitting, Madam, that while the world produces quite a large amount of electricity, we in India produce only 1.2 per cent, though from the point of population, we are nearly 16 per cent, and we are entitled to produce and use electricity on a much bigger scale. So the objective of the Government in further years is to advance in electricity more and more. For example, in the Fourth Five Year Plan it is our intention to double the electricity that we have so far built up. But what I want to submit is that even in the fifteen years of planned development that we have had since the last 1948 Act, we have achieved a large amount of expansion of electricity, so that it is now time when we had to bring forward a few amendments to the Act as a result of the practical experience of the electricity supply in the country. There are two urgent reasons why these amendments were taken in hand. The first reason is that the Bank Rate was raised from 5 per cent, to 6 per cent, in February, 1965.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR AU
KHAN) in the Chair.]

Now, the private licensees are allowed to charge, what we call, trie standard rate of 2 per cent, above the Bank Rate; that is, 5 per cent, plus 2 per cent.=7 per cent, is tlie rate of interest that is applicable and chargeable up to a point of time in 1965, and later on, for the further period, it will be 6 plus 2=8 per cent. Now if we do not amend the Act, what will happen is that the licensees might charge 8 per cent, for the entire amount of money invested at different times in the whole of their electricity undertakings. This will unnecessarily increase the rates and the licensees supplying electricity may increase the rates for the supply of electricity. So what we have done here is this. We have divided the periods into two sectors. One is that up to April, 1965, they will charge only at the rate of 7 per cent., the rate prevailing at the time. It is only for the future investments, for the investments made thereafter that the increased Bank Rate plus 2 per cent, wilt apply. This is being done in order to safeguard against 1 and ensure that there shall be no raise in

[Dr. K. L. Rao.]

the rates in the field of electricity due to the Bank Rate raise. Now this is one very important thing, this is one of the important amendments that we have to make, so that the consumer may not be made to pay an increased rate of electricity.

Then the other reason is—we find the Members of this hon. House and of the Lok Sabha have been pressing too—that there should be one uniform rate for any particular type of load all over the country. In fact that is our idea. For example, whether the domestic lights are burnt in Calcutta or Madras or here or anywhere, it should be charged at the same rate. That is indeed very good but, unfortunately, in our country we have not developed the grid lines, or electric lines which will transmit power from one end to the other, so that it is not possible to do that. But, nevertheless, our aim has been at least to have the same rate in the regions, in each State in the first instance. So we advised the State Governments to adopt one uniform rate in each of the States. Many States have agreed and many States have fallen in line with the view of the other States. But, unfortunately, so far as this uniform rate is concerned, the provision made in this connection seems to be interpreted in a different way by the law courts, by the Bombay High Court, for example, in the case Kalyan Borough Municipality *versus* the Maharashtra State Electricity Board, where they took the case to the High Court and won it. There they argued that uniform rates cannot be applied, that the rates for urban areas must be different from the rates for rural areas, and so on. Now, this is contrary to what all the hon. Members have said and is contrary to our principle of having the same uniform rate irrespective of the locality. Therefore we had to bring this up as an emergent measure to make that section clear and ensure that there shall be uniform rates in any particular State, the uniform rate being irrespective of considerations like geography, nearness, and so on. So that is a very important amendment. Now these are the two amendments which we are incorporating and which, on account of the urgency of the matter, had to be taken up.

Then, taking advantage of this opportunity we are introducing a few minor amendments, minor ancillary amendments. I will just briefly mention a few of them before the hon. Members make their comments. One of these is that Members of Parliament are, at the moment, debarred from being members of the State Electricity Boards for a period of twelve months after they cease to be such Members. Now this is a very peculiar provision that was made in that particular old Act. It is very contrary to what obtains elsewhere in the world. For example, when they cease to be Members of Parliament, they can immediately become members of the Electricity Boards in England. And similar is the case elsewhere too. Therefore, in our country too there is no necessity for having a distinction of this type, namely, that a Member of Parliament be disqualified for a period of twelve months, specially when these Members are taken in as non-official members. The Board consists of three sets of members. One is the official members, the full-time members. And then there is the Chief Engineer and other people, the technical members. And then there are a set of people numbering about 3 to 4 in any Board as non-official members, and there is no reason to exclude the former Members of Parliament for a period of twelve months. These people are paid or given the travelling allowance, and the daily allowance, which varies from State to State but which generally is between Rs. 10 and Rs. 50 a day for the days of sitting. This is a service which, Members of Parliament, or Members of the Assemblies, or even members of the Panchayat Boards are debarred from rendering under the present Act. Now this disqualification is one which disqualifies a very large percentage of persons who are public-spirited men. Therefore it is thought that this is unnecessary and this may be removed.

Then the other one, a minor amendment, really, is this, which I may explain to the hon. Members of this House. These are some of the predominant amendments which are sought to be incorporated in the Act. We have followed and have really improved the 1948 Act based on the British experience and the British experience has undergone a number of changes and they have amended their Act which is now much more modernised than before. But we have not done anything like that. Umhr

the existing Act, we have to publish every power scheme, whether it be for a few lakhs or for crores, twice, once at the draft stage and then again after it had been sanctioned. This is really unnecessary and what we are doing in, the new Act is to do away with this obligation of having to publish all projects. In the case of projects for less than Rs. 25 lakhs there will be no publication and in the case of a project costing up to Rs. 1 crore there will be one publication and for projects above Rs. 1 crore, we continue the present practice. It may be that when we bring forward a more comprehensive Bill later on, we may change this also. Next time we hope to bring a modernised and comprehensive Bill and then we may dispense with this publication also. We do not publish in the case of irrigation projects. This publishing twice was thought to be necessary in the case of electrical projects because electrical development was then in the infant stage, not known to many people. But now things are different.

Now, these are the few amendments that we have introduced in this Bill. Similarly we found that when electricity was owned by the State, the dues could be recovered for sixty years. That is to say, the period of limitation was sixty years. When the Electricity Department was handed over to the Electricity Board, under the law of Limitation, the period was only three years and so after some years they could not recover the dues simply because of the changeover of the management. This is not really fair. Therefore, this measure now provides that the period of limitation should be extended by another three years from the day of its passing, so that State Electricity Boards can recover the amounts due on account of the use of electricity, on account of having supplied electricity during a much earlier period.

There are now some 214 private electricity licensees in this country, with a capital base of Rs. 120 crores. Some of them are doing good work. But some of them are rather too small and they do not fit into the present picture of development of electricity on such a big scale. Therefore, it is our intention and the intention of the Electricity Boards that in course of time, these private licensees may be taken over. But till such time as that happens, we have to ensure that the private licensees keep

their projects in an efficient condition, that they have a certain amount of money for keeping up the efficiency of their concerns and to modernise their electrical plants. Therefore, in that regard we have made a few amendments such as that the loans obtained from other sources, that is to say, other than the Electricity Boards but from approved sources, may be treated in the same way as loans from the Electricity Board. This gives them a small advantage. It is not much, but it will assist them to organise themselves and to make them more efficient.

Similarly, private licensees cannot at the moment charge a minimum guarantee when they give connections. They may give a connection and it may not be used and then there will be loss to the licensee. The Electricity Boards insist on a minimum amount as guarantee when they give the supplies. So we thought that the same power should be given to the private licensee also. They can insist on a minimum amount as—guarantee, subject to the approval of the State Government. I mean, the amount should be approved by the State Government.

I have mentioned a few of the changes that this Bill aims at effecting by means of amendments. I may submit that we may again come with another measure, a more comprehensive measure. We have not done it this time. The Act was passed in 1948 and it is an old Act and it has got to be modified in a bigger way than what we are doing at present. But for the present we have come forward with this measure on account of the two urgent reasons that I had mentioned. We have to amend the Act quickly and that is how this Bill is before the House now. I therefore, beg to move that this Bill be taken into consideration.

The question was proposed.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS (Orissa): Mr. Vice-Chairman, while generally I give my support to this amending Bill, I want to point out a few facts for the consideration of the hon. Minister. Before going into the details of the Bill, I want to mention that the hon. Minister wanted to have power grids during the Third Plan itself. But I am sorry to say that we are already in the Fourth Plan and we do not see any national power grid nor any regional power grid.

[Shri Bauka Behary Das.]

It is no use amending this Electricity (Supply) Act in this way. What is important is that whatever system we have, should be worked properly and efficiently. During last summer, we had bitter experience of power shortages not only in Bombay, Orissa and Maharashtra but in other places also. We know how many industries came to a halt and how they had to reduce their power consumptions because of the shortage of power. Had we the national grid or the regional grid, I think, some of those problems would not have arisen.

The next point that I want to emphasise is that during the course of the debates here we have seen that there is great disparity between different regions as regards the *per capita* consumption or production of power. Most of the States, which are remaining backward, have not been provided with enough power and the Central Government also has not devoted enough attention to assist them both financially and technically in order to see that these backward States have their own power stations—whether thermal or hydro-electric—so that the industrial progress of those States can go ahead and they may also come up to the level of the other States of our country which are developed States. Therefore, what I would emphasise is that they should, when they consider the subject of power, especially during the Fourth Plan, place enough emphasis on the question of generation of power in those backward States where the *per capita* production of power is very low. As we all know, without power, the economic development of those States can never take place. So before I come to the subject of Electricity Boards, I would like to say that when they frame the Fourth Plan—and they have not been able to do it up till now—they should give more emphasis on those States where the *per capita* production and consumption of power is low.

Now I come to the Electricity Boards and here I want to emphasise that they have not been able to fulfil the aspirations of the people. We have planned that after independence every village would want electricity and it should be given this supply. They want power not only for agricultural operations but also for the development of cottage industries. But the Electricity Boards

in the various States have given more emphasis to the supply of power to the urban areas than to the rural areas, though these rural areas need the electricity most. Sir, I do understand the difficulty of the Electricity Boards. They are run as commercial propositions. Every State Electricity Board has to function as a commercial proposition and so they cannot function as a department of the Government. As a commercial institution, wherever it is remunerative, it extends its activities and takes its transmission lines. Therefore, there is naturally the tendency to go to urban areas. I have experience of my own State. After the formation of the Electricity Board, they have not given enough attention to rural electrification. They put more emphasis on urban areas or on the newly developed industrial areas so that the power could be made available to the factories and so on, not to the agriculturists. The agriculturists are not getting enough attention, nor the cottage industries. In this connection, I would say that though the Electricity (Supply) Act was passed in 1948, according to which every State should have this Electricity Board, I am sorry to say that there are some States which have formed their Electricity Boards only some two or three years back. I know the case of my own State where in spite of the pressure of the Union Government, the State Government did not form its Electricity Board till a few years back. It yielded to that pressure only two years back. So at last the Electricity Board has come but when the first Electricity Board came, there was a conflict between the Centre and the State about the constitution of the Board and I am very sorry to say that here in this amending Bill the hon. Minister has yielded to the pressure of the State.

Now, the hon. Minister has suggested an amendment to section 5 of the Act. That section governs the constitution and composition of the State Electricity Boards. The original section stipulated in that section 5:

"(1) The State Government shall as soon as may be after the issue of the notification under sub-section (4) of section 1, constitute by notification in the Official Gazette a State Electricity Board under such name as shall be specified in the notification.

(2) The Board shall consist of not less than three and not more than seven members appointed by the State Government.

* * * *

(4) Of the members—

(a) one shall be a person who has experience of, and has shown capacity in, commercial matters and administration;

(b) one shall be an electrical engineer with wide experience; and

(c) one shall be a person who has experience of accounting and financial matters in a public utility undertaking, preferably an electricity undertaking.

(5J) One of the members possessing any of the qualifications specified in sub-section (4) shall be appointed by the State Government to be the Chairman of the Board.

(6) A person shall be disqualified from being appointed or being a member of the Board if he is, or within the twelve months last preceding was a member of parliament or of any State legislature or any local authority."

It is here that, the hon. Minister wants to amend so that if the party in power wants to appease anybody, he could be brought in as Chairman or member of the Board because of this amendment. Sir, the country does not lack technical persons to man these electricity Boards. I know when the Electricity Board was formed in Orissa, at that time the Orissa Government wanted to appease one of their men who, whatever might be the reasons, could not be a Minister. They had a long correspondence with the Centre and it went on for six months to a year. And that was the reason why the Electricity Board could not be formed earlier in Orissa. They put pressure upon the Centre to this extent that they wanted the Electricity (Supply) Act to be amended so that this particular person can be accommodated as Chairman of the Board. At that time, the Centre did not oblige them and consequently after one year of conflict, controversy and correspondence, the Electricity Board was formed consisting of officials and some technical people. Orissa did not lack people satisfying these conditions. In other States also there are persons who will satisfy all these conditions because we

have more of engineers, more of public administrators and more people knowing, accounting. And Orissa had all these persons but in spite of that the State Government wanted to put pressure on the Union Government only to accommodate a person of theirs, who could not be a Minister, to be the Chairman of the Board.

I can also cite here that in the Statement of Objects and Reasons the hon. Minister has clearly stated that some of the States are always putting pressure upon the Government to relax this section so that they can bring in persons whom they desire to be Chairmen or members of the various Boards. Therefore; though generally I support the Bill, I am very sorry to say that this amendment is not for any purpose which will help the Electricity Boards. The hon. Minister is himself a technical man—he was in the Central Water- and Power Commission—and he knows very well how outsiders, the administrators and non-technical men, are manning technical corporations and institutions as a result of which there is so much discontent among the technical persons in this country. So, by this amendment he is making way for such disgruntled politicians, for such persons whom the party in power wants to help and oblige for whatever might be the reasons, to be brought in as Chairmen or members of Electricity Boards. With the elections coming there might be many persons who will be defeated and there might be many persons who won't get tickets. This is the chance for the party in power to oblige such people and make them Chairmen or members of the Boards. That is why I am opposed to this particular amendment.

I also want to point out to the Minister who is a technical man . . .

कुमारी मनिबेन बल्लभभाई पटेल
(गुजरात) : मैं इस बात की सफाई करना चाहती हूँ कि ये जो कहते हैं कि किसी कांग्रेस वाले को लाने की बात है, मुझे मालूम है स्वतंत्र पार्टी का एक आदमी जो इलेक्ट्रिसिटी बोर्ड का चेयरमैन था उन्होंने अमेन्डमेन्ट भेजा है कि अमेन्डमेन्ट करने की जरूरत है।

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS : Whatever might be the opinion of the Member opposite, whether it is the Suatantra Party

*. ISbri Banka Behary Das.]

•or any party, are you going to succumb to such pressures of politicians of whatever colour they might be ? We know what is happening in this country everywhere. The technical persons are raising a hue and cry against the I.A.S. officials, against the administrators and politicians. There is enough reason behind it, there is enough justification for it. So I want to oppose this particular amendment so that we do not allow such corruption to creep into our Electricity Boards.

Then, I want to emphasize another fact. This Electricity (Supply) Act was passed in 1948 and it provided that there will be State Electricity Consultative Councils in every State but I am sorry to say that in most of the States such Councils are not there even now though this Act was passed as long back as 1948. I am mentioning this so that when this amending Bill is going to be passed, the Centre will put pressure on the States to see that the Act is implemented in full and that State Consultative Councils are set up in all the States.

The hon. Minister referred to the question of power tariff and said that to a certain extent there should be uniformity. The Act also provides that there should be no discrimination, No firm or no particular person should be given any advantage over others. In this connection, I am again sorry to say, in spite of this old law which provides against such discrimination we find in India everywhere there is discrimination between person and person and between firm and firm. I know of a particular instance in my own State and the hon. Minister must also be knowing it because he was in the Central Water and Power Commission. The Orissa Government ten years back gave 'power to a very important concern, the Indian Aluminium Company, at a very cheap rate, at a rate much lower than the cost of production, with the result that the Public Accounts Committee of the Orissa Legislative Assembly pointed out a few years back that the Orissa Government is losing about Rs. 85 lakhs every year because of supplying power to this Indian Aluminium Company. In spite of this Act, which is there from 1948, such discriminations are going on. And it is the same power ■which comes from Hirakud and which is supplied to the agriculturists and which is also used for supplying water through canals

to the agriculturists. And we know that these agriculturists have to pay for the water they consume and throughout India there is agitation against the water rates. The total revenue^ of Orissa from irrigation—not only from Hirakud but from all sources of irrigation major, medium and minor, throughout the State—is hardly Rs. 80 lakhs whereas for the benefit which this one; particular concern gets in the matter of supply of electricity, the State Government is losing Rs. 85 lakhs a year for the last ten years. I want to stress on this that in spite of the existence of this Act, in spite of the fact that the Government of India wants to have a uniform rate as far as possible and there should not be discrimination between firm and firm, there are certain parties who for political reasons are getting the benefit, not only benefit in comparison to other but benefit even to this extent that they are supplied electricity at rates which are lower than the cost of production. I want that those State Governments which are giving such benefits to certain parties for political reasons should be cautioned and they should be pressurised through other means, through Plan outlays, Plan assistance and other things, to change their mode of working and the Centre should see that they have a uniform tariff without any discrimination.

Sir, I have not much to say. In the end, I want to impress upon the hon. Minister, who is a technical man, that it is a technical question. It is not a political question. So, let us not be pressurised by political opinion, of whatever colour it be, to see that the constitution of the Board is changed, to see that this Council does not come into existence, to see that there is discrimination about the tariff to such an extent that the taxpayers are fleeced. With these words, I broadly support this amending Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIAKBAR ALI KHAN) : Mr. Rajnarain, will you be able to finish in ten minutes ? Otherwise, I will give you a chance next time.

SHRI RAJNARAIN : I shall speak later on.

SHRI N. PATRA (Orissa) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, this is a desirable measure and it should have come earlier. The Bill should have been more comprehensive so as to include a common grid. There is no mention about the provision of a common grid to

obviate the difficulties in the supply of electricity. At the time of exigencies and when there is a shortfall of rains, we have bitterly experienced the failure of electricity supply with the result that all our industries have to work much below capacity.

Now, from the working of the Electricity Boards, we find that they are more for making profits. When Electricity Boards are going to be formed, their main concern should be the public good. There are more than 300 projects run by private concerns like Tatas. They are making about 35 per cent, profit. In no other private concern, such a large amount of profit is being made. A small attempt is now being made to have a uniform rate for electricity through this Bill. Your first concern ought to have been to supply more electricity for energising the tubewells in the rural parts. What do we see nowadays in the cities? In such big cities like Bombay and here also in Delhi at marriage functions a lot of electricity is wasted. Nobody cares about it. In the rural parts it is very difficult for the agriculturist to obtain some amount of electricity. It is so dear and he is not able to pay it. They are charging about 12 paise per unit. We have to encourage the agriculturist on whom the socio-economic development of the country depends. We expect that production should go up and the country should become self-sufficient. Unless we take to mechanised farming, where electricity is a necessity, we cannot have better production.

In this amending Bill there are certain good features brought out. By an amendment it is contemplated to run these Boards more efficiently and regulate the private licences. How will they be able to regulate private licences, unless there is a provision here? There is no provision to convert these into State undertakings. We have seen how the private sector undertakings are behaving. I was just pointing out that Tatas are making a 35 per cent, profit. Profitability and service to the consumer cannot go together. If you want to have economic development in the country evenly, you will have to pay more attention to the backward areas. You have to mark out and make a survey of the country. To the most backward areas you have to give more concessions in regard to supply of electricity at a much cheaper rate.

My friend opposite just now was talking about the deletion of the stipulation disqualifying a person from becoming a member of an Electricity Board if he, within the twelve months last preceding, was a Member of Parliament or of any State Legislature or any local authority. Now, a lady Member from our side pointed out that the suggestion came from the Swatantra group.

(Interruptions)

DR. B. N. ANTANI (Gujarat) : He was a Congress patron in those days.

SHRI N. PATRA: He may be anybody, but there should be no objection to accommodating Congress people also and doing justice to our technical persons- with a good knowledge about the running of the concern. You will find that in several committees, parliamentary committees and committees organised in the States also, the Opposition is accommodated.

AN HON. MEMBER: Here it is a Hoard.

SHRI N. PATRA : In respect of Boards also, in Orissa, everybody is not a Congressman. My friend was just repeating that in order to accommodate a certain Minister it was done. It is not a fact.

DR. B. N. ANTANI : It is nothing but backdoor patronage.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Please go on.

SHRI N. PATRA : So far as Orissa is concerned, the majority of them are not Congressmen. My friend knows it, but he refers to things which are not relevant to the Bill, telling us that about two years back when, the Board was formed something was done. It is not relevant to the provisions of this Bill. When you discuss a good and essential legislation in the House, it is not good always to bring in extraneous matters and try to sling mud at the person with whom you do not see eye to eye. In the end, I congratulate. . . ,

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: They have had some correspondence with the Centre on this.

SHRI N. PATRA : It is natural for the State Government to have correspondence with the Centre when it is a federal structure. Now, in a federal form of government in the country there should be a lot of correspondence before anything is done. Therefore, there should be no objection to any correspondence between the Centre and the States.

5 P.M.

In the end, I congratulate the Minister for bringing so many essential amendments, but I would urge upon the Minister to pay more attention to the formulation of common electrical grids in the country.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED HUNGER-STRIKE BY EMPLOYEES OF THE EXPLORATION WING OF THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA AND THE INDIAN BUREAU OF MINES

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN (Andhra Pradesh) : Mr, Vice-Chairman, with your permission, I call the attention of the Minister of Mines and Metals to the reported hunger-strike by the employees of the Exploration Wing of the Geological Survey of India and of the Indian Bureau of Mines.

THE MINISTER OF MINES AND METALS (SHRI S. K. DEY) : The Indian Bureau of Mines Employees' Union has represented from time to time about certain demands of the Indian Bureau of Mines' staff. On the 12th July, 1966, the Union submitted a Memorandum on this subject. Subsequently, on 20th July, 1966, the Union addressed a more comprehensive communication to the Director-General, Geological Survey of India in which a reference was made to certain outstanding demands and grievances of the erstwhile employees of the Indian Bureau of Mines, who had since been transferred to the Exploratory Wing of the Geological Survey of India consequent on the decision to set up an integrated prospecting organisation under the unified control of the Director-General, Geological Survey of India. In the same communication, the Union authorities informed the

Director-General of the decision of the staff to resort to mass hunger strike on the 2nd August, 1966 simultaneously at the headquarters of the Exploratory Wing, i.e. Nagpur and in the field camps in various parts of the country. Accordingly, about 200 workers (both regular and contingent) participated in a token relay fast in batches from the 2nd to 6th August, 1966, each batch fasting for a period of 24 hours only. The fast was staged at Nagpur, Chilhati, Rakha, Sandur and Tatanagar; the staff working at Bhagoni, Kolihan, Akwali and Degana mining camps, however, did not observe any such fasts.

A brief description of the major demands of the Union and the action taken by Government thereon is as follows :—

- (i) *Regularisation of the Muster Roll Staff, who have completed 240 days of service in the Department. Relaxation of their age, qualifications, etc. wherever necessary.*

The regularisation or confirmation of muster roll staff against regular vacancies depends on the number of the availability of such vacancies and the persons concerned fulfilling the requirements of the recruitment rules for the various posts. Other things being equal, preference is given to the departmental contingent workers. Concession is also given in respect of age to the extent of contingent service rendered in the Department. In all, there are approximately 3,500 contingent workers in the Geological Survey of India, including Exploratory Wing. Of these, only 22 are employed in workshop and 27 in stores. In the Pilot Plant of the Indian Bureau of Mines, there are 4 contingent workers.

Efforts will be made to absorb as many of the contingent workers employed in the workshop, stores and pilot plant as possible against regular vacancies in the Geological Survey of India and the Indian Bureau of Mines, in accordance with the recruitment rules, preference being given to contingent staff over new recruits. During the Third Plan period, out of the total of 888 Class III and Class IV posts, approximately 32 per cent. i.e. 281 posts, were filled by candidates from among muster roll employees.