

SHRI R. G. AGARWALA: Sir, I beg leave to withdraw my amendment.

**Amendment No. 1, was, by leave, withdrawn.*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That clause 2 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 8 were added to the Bill.

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

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: Sir, I move:

"That the Bill be passed."

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

MOTION RE MAJOR RAILWAY ACCIDENTS

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The debate will close at five o'clock.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): We can continue a little later, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I move:

"That the statement of the Minister of Railways regarding certain major railway accidents which occurred recently, laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on the 27th November, 1961, be taken into consideration."

Sir, I would invite the attention of the House to the concluding words of the statement of the hon. Railway Minister. He says:

"In the end I would like to assure the House that to minimise the

number of accidents on the Railways no effort is being spared and safety measures are being intensified."

Only 'our men' is not there. Why I say this is because after that accident such brave words were uttered. In fact, Sir, braver words have been uttered after the Ariyalur accident. Not only the Minister had made a statement of this kind then, but also he went out of office and resigned and the Chairman of the Railway Board also thought it fit to quit office. And after that the Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, said in the other House that he would not allow such a thing to happen any more. In other words he said that such things would not happen. Now we are having a repetition of these accidents. Some of them are even more serious than the previous ones.

Now let us see what happens. Sir, in the decade before independence we had accidents resulting in the loss of 661 lives and 2,352 were injured. This was the figure before independence, under the British. In the decade, that followed independence, i.e. since 1947-48 we have had accidents causing 1,414 deaths and 4,631 have been injured. Well, the progress is not bad, but the only thing is that our people died. Now this is the position. And then the hon. Minister there comes and asks us 'Give comparative figures. What is happening in England?' Now, Sir, since independence we have got the figures here between 1957 and 1961. I have worked them out. Nearly 2,000 people were injured as a result of railway accidents and 240 people died as a result of such accidents. Such is the position. These are the statistics, Sir. And only today in the course of his reply to a question or a supplementary he has said that in the current year there have been 10 serious accidents, 121 people have been killed and 428 have been injured. Now these are the figures. I wish they speak with a little moderation in this matter and

*For text of amendment, see col. 2462 *supra*.

do a little introspection as to the working of the particular Department he is in charge of instead of expressing sympathies for those who have died and doing nothing to assure that others will not die.

Now, Sir, mainly I would confine myself to the Ghatsila accident because it took place in the part of India from which I come and I am somewhat more conversant with what happened there. Now here again there are other two accidents mentioned in the statement. But before I start, Sir, I immediately make a demand for a judicial enquiry into the Ghatsila accident at least. I would like the other accidents, serious accidents, to be covered but I immediately demand a judicial enquiry. I find the hon. Minister and his colleague, the Minister of Transport, trying to make out that there is no case for any judicial enquiry and that the Inspector in the Ministry of Transport had gone into this matter and that the hon. Ministers opposite were all satisfied. But the country is not satisfied, the people are not satisfied and Members belonging even to the Congress Party are not satisfied, the drivers are not satisfied and the railway employees and workers are not satisfied, and passengers are horrified at the attitude of the Government. Therefore, there is a case for enquiry and I will presently show where there is a case for such a judicial enquiry.

As you know, Sir, this accident took place on the midnight of 20th/21st. Now, the number of killed is given here as 45 according to the official computation but many people in that region say that more people had been killed. People in that part where this accident took place, including railwaymen, do not accept this figure of 45 killed. The number of injured they have not given here. It is a very serious matter. Now as soon as the accident took place, within 48 hours the story went that there was sabotage. And I find that though the Chairman, Railway Board, visited the spot, he did not

himself say this thing, he did not put it in a proper way. In his statement he spoke about relief and so on. But other officers in the Kharagpur area were saying such a thing and it went round in the newspapers of the 23rd and also of the 22nd, story about the official version saying that the accident had taken place as a result of sabotage. Now, this was done even before the enquiry took place. Some Railway officers responsible there started spreading the story that the accident took place on account of sabotage. The British used to say the same thing in the olden days but they used to add that sabotage was committed by the terrorists or the Congress Party. With all their anti-Communism they have not said that we did it. Since it is a secular State, they did not say either that it had been an act of God. They have not said that. They say "sabotage". The first reaction is sabotage. Then comes the procedure. They would see if public opinion could be managed, then some enquiry, then judicial enquiry and they would see that somehow or other Parliament could be pacified and public opinion could be pacified. Sabotage is announced and there is the enquiry by an Inspector of the Ministry of Transport. Enough. Well, Sir, this sort of reasoning should depart—I do not like any Minister to depart. I am not talking about it. But this approach and mentality should definitely go from the Railway Ministry, from the Railway Board.

Now, Sir, coming to this ill-fated train, Ghatsila Express, this engine No. 7354 WP, according to our information, was brought from Puri to Howrah and then it was brought from Howrah to Kharagpur, not to the loco shed. Now, the engine drivers did not want to take this engine because they felt it was an over-aged engine, "pagla engine" as they called it—he would not call it "pagla engine" but they were calling it that way. Whether they call it "pagla engine" or not, the employees there and the Railway drivers and so on called it "pagla engine". I have got

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with me the statement in which 17 drivers are reported to have told a Member of the local Legislative Assembly that the engine was defective. However, an effort was made to attach the engine to the Puri Express but the driver could not be persuaded to do so and then it was kept within that proper section. It was sent to the Kharagpur loco shed and from there it was attached to the particular train which ran into that accident. This is the "pagla engine" story.

Now, Sir, you see how cryptic the answer of the hon. Minister is. They take a long time, as it is, to answer a supplementary question. Now with regard to this great accident that took place to the Ranchi Express at Ghatsila, which took so many lives, only one page and a half is given and in that everything is said and we are asked to be satisfied with that when newspapers contained all kinds of allegations, charges, giving facts and figures and names of the employees. Therefore, Sir, this is a matter which should not be dealt with in this manner at all.

Now, Sir, many people, the drivers whose names I shall presently give, according to our information, complained about this particular engine. Their names are:—D. Haginse, S. C. Chakravarthi, Mr. Ratnachalam, B. G. Berry, K. P. Gopal Krishnan. These people are supposed to have complained about the defective nature of this particular engine. We should have been told whether the complaint was right or not. It was published in the newspapers. So many drivers had complained against this engine. The report of the Minister should say that these drivers never complained against the engine. The Railway Board, I think, should have read it in the newspapers. Perhaps they read only the charge-sheets that are given against the Railway employees. If they knew it, why was there no enquiry about it? This thing appeared in the newspapers of 23rd October.

Two days after the accident some Calcutta papers gave it but nothing is given in the statement after the House assembled here.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I must point out that there are defects in the Kharagpur Loco Shed. But before I touch upon that aspect, I pay my tribute to Mr. Rao, the driver of that ill-fated train who died. I do not know whether the Government or the big guns are considering the question of rewarding him, giving a posthumous reward. Certainly, a driver who, according to the version of the Chairman, Railway Board, served the Railways with efficiency and loyalty for thirty years, who even in the midst of that disaster to that train on that occasion gave an excellent account of his sense of duty and patriotism deserves to be rewarded. I do not know, but if I were to give a *Padma Vibhushan*, I will give him this one posthumously. These should not be meant only for the Tatas and Birlas. Sir, such people who give an excellent account of themselves in the course of their duty should be acclaimed by the whole nation, and due recognition should be given to such people.

Now, Sir, I come to what happened there. There is a schedule maintained by the Railway Board about the work of the loco shed in Kharagpur like other loco sheds. It is called M.O.H. There are three principal schedules. According to Schedule No. 1, every engine, after it has run 2,000 kilo-metres, should be cleaned and so on. This is not done. Periodical cleaning and overhauling is also not done. According to Schedule No. 2, we are told that small engines require overhauling after every 6,000 miles of run and bigger engines after 10,000 miles of run. But we are told from very reliable sources, by 17 Railway employees without giving their names in the papers that this is not done. In the case of smaller engines overhauling is done after 50,000 miles of run whereas in the case of bigger engines it is done after 84,000 miles and so on. This is what

they say. Whether it is true or not, I am not going into it but this is what the Railway employees there say. That particular code is violated by the Government. Similarly, there are certain other rules also that are being violated. Then, Sir, you will find that there is not enough grease and other equipment and some of the equipment that is there is very old. That was there even in 1947. Things have not been properly changed and replaced with new things. So, Sir, this engine was not working well. It is not put in the statement. Somebody should tell us that after a proper enquiry they came to the conclusion that they are not prepared to take that statement. Now the Inspector under the Ministry of Transport goes there and submits a report. We want to know it from a judicial enquiry. Previously 4 P.M. the railwaymen started talking and some of them went to the Press. Previously bad, defective engines had been attached to certain other trains. For example, a few days before, to the Puri Express, an attempt was made to attach a bad engine and when the drivers objected, then it was abandoned. These are stated in the newspaper reports.

As far as the track is concerned, many controversial reports have appeared. Some say that it cannot be a case of sabotage, while others, as the Railway Inspector, may say that it is a case of sabotage but a great controversy is going on over this matter also there. These are to be looked into by whom? Should it be by the Inspectors when so many lives have been lost and according to official figures even, 45 lives have been lost? Is this thing to be enquired into only by an Inspector and nobody else and we have to eat out of the hands of the Inspector and what he says and the Minister's job is only to dole it out here? I cannot understand the approach in this matter, the mentality behind it.

Then comes the other question. Discontent is there. Overwork is there

and what is more, the casual labour is too much. That number is too big in Kharagpur and other places. The new technique of the Railway Administration is to get things done through casual labour because they are advantageous to them. What is more, in Kharagpur, if you go there, you will find that most of these people who are on the labour casual list are made to work for officers, almost all of them. It is a kind of 'begar' as in the olden days. We had 'begar' in Zamindaries but now under the Congress, in the Railway Administration, we are having this kind of thing, casual labour. Fatigue is there. On the part of the administrative authorities, there is a mentality or attitude to disregard whatever the drivers and others say. Generally they go by what they feel or what report comes to them but whenever drivers or others tell them that there is something wrong, there is a tendency to reject it. Also I understand from that area, from Kharagpur and other places, that these people feel afraid of approaching the Railway authorities there with any suggestions or with any criticisms, lest they should be misunderstood and persecuted and suspected of being something or other. This is the position there. We do not get any indication although the hon. Minister refers in the statement to the human element. Yes, human element is there but how are you treating people when so many railwaymen made statements, gave their names also to the Press—anyway do not persecute them—which you must have got? When it was known that they were talking to the Press, was it not your duty to properly examine them? Was it not your duty to call the representatives of the Union and see what they had to say? Was it not your duty to see that you got the co-operation of these people, these courageous people, in order to find out what is what in the Administration and the possible cause of this accident? Nothing of the kind was there. Therefore the Ghatsila accident remains a tragedy. It is all the more tragic because after the death of so many people, the Railway Adminis-

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tration has not thought it fit to appoint or to even accede to the demand for a judicial enquiry. A judicial enquiry will be an enquiry through their own agency that they will be appointing but even so they will not grant it. Yet Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan, when he was the head of the Committee which enquired into the railway accidents made a very bold suggestion that in all major accidents, there should be a judicial enquiry but before he came to the Treasury Benches, he used to do bold things whether in Imphal or Manipur pass or as a Member in the Railway Accidents Enquiry Committee but when he is in those Benches, in that great august company, he also toes the line of the Railway Board. The Railway Board's line is that Mr. Jagjivan Ram is hardly any more expert in railway matters than I am.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA (Uttar Pradesh): You are a bigger expert. You underrate your capacity.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: No, no. I thank you very much. If I compete with him then there will be more accidents. I do not want that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have to finish.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Therefore this has to be gone into. I have got plenty of materials to show how rules and schedules are violated in Kharagpur but charge-sheets are made right and left. Human relation is talked about in the report. In Kanchrapara and Kharagpur charge-sheets are given calling people as sympathisers of the Communist Party and because they vote for the Communist Party—they suspect, whether they vote or not, nobody knows and only the ballot boxes know—but this is what they are doing and we are thinking whether to withdraw our candidates from those areas because of the attitude of the Government, of the Railway Administration, of inti-

midation, baseness and terrorism that they are conducting there. Do they want to develop human relations in that way? Therefore the question of human relations he should not talk about. He may talk personally but the Railway Board has forfeited its right to talk in terms of human relations because the other day I gave you the accounts of the charge-sheets. Nothing has been done. Mr. Jyoti Basu, the Leader of the Opposition in Bengal, asked me: "Bhupesh, ask your Congress democrats whether we have to withdraw the candidates from that area or we are in a position to fight a free and fair election".

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What has all this to do with this?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: It has got to do with this because these people behave in this way. I know that it is a Congress matter and therefore it is not likeable to some people . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order. This is about accidents.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Here, in the statement he says about human relations. Now all these People who are coming forward to criticise the Railway authorities are being called suspects and so on, subversive elements and so on, and this is how you want to build human relations. Cannot I say this? Where can I say this? Therefore take out that portion from the statement. All I can say is that a sort of division has arisen because of the behaviour of the Railway Administration at the top and the Railway employees at the bottom on account of the behaviour of some people—I am not saying all—and as a result of which things are not looked into in proper time. This is the position. When people come with suggestions and criticisms of engines or other arrangements in the workshops, they do not look into them. On the contrary, they criticise these people and have a fling at them at Kharagpur and Kanchrapara. I demand that in this connection you appoint a judi-

cial enquiry That demand should be conceded Even Dr B C Roy, the Chief Minister, said that some such thing should happen He did not use the word 'judicial' but he cast some grave doubts as to the statement made by the Railway authorities and publicly he did it—he is a blunt man—and he said this thing publicly

As far as relief is concerned, people have co-operated and some Railway employees have certainly done it --we pay a tribute to them—but why the relief trains came late? When Tatanagar is only 1½ hour-run from where the accident took place, it took 3 to 4 hours for the trains to come Dr Roy pointed out that they could have come much earlier According to our information, things were not ready there and therefore they could not come This is another thing About relief matter, there again, some criticisms had appeared Here is a statement Letters have appeared in the Bengal newspapers Newspapers mostly supporting the Congress were filled with letters of complaints with regard to the administration of relief, the manner in which certain people behaved, while paying a tribute to others who had helped in the relief work, officials and non-officials These have not been looked into and the hon Minister expresses his satisfaction even about the relief work, the manner in which it was conducted

All that I can say in the end is that I have moved this only with a view to pressing the demand for a judicial enquiry into the entire case, especially this particular case which has shocked many people in the country, and I hope that it would be accepted. Nothing will be lost by a judicial enquiry If the Government's case is so strong they have nothing to fear If something is wrong, that will be revealed That will be good for them and good for the country This is what I say

The question was proposed

PANDIT HRIDAY NATH KUNZRU (Uttar Pradesh) Mr Deputy Chairman, I have read the statement placed on the Table of the House on the 27th November by the Railway Minister with great attention, but I find nothing in it really of a reassuring character He no doubt says that the question of the prevention of accidents is occupying the close attention of the railway authorities But I am afraid that something more than that is needed The other day, when some questions were put about this matter, I suggested to the Railway Minister, in view of the seriousness of the accidents that had taken place, that a general enquiry should be held in order to find out what the causes of these accidents were His idea was that as each case was enquired into by the Commissioner for Railway Safety, no further enquiry was needed I venture to point out that there might be questions not looked into by the Commissioner for Railway Safety, for instance, the condition of the track in general, and so on, and he seemed to me to agree, and I believe he agreed in the other House also that an enquiry of a general character was needed Now, when these accidents take place, very often it is asserted that they were due to sabotage Take even the accident that occurred near Mainpuri itself It was given out that it was due to sabotage, but subsequently I think

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN) :
It was never given out like that, Sir

PANDIT HRIDAY NATH KUNZRU It was, on the very day the Commissioner for Railway Safety arrived there, it appeared, at any rate in the UP papers, that there were clear indications of sabotage But two or three days later the Chairman of the Railway Board issued a statement saying that the cause was due to the negligence of the driver who had driven the engine at a much higher

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speed than he should have done on the particular section on which the engine was passing

Now, Sir, my hon friend Shri Bhupesh Gupta has gone into one particular case, but I should like to take a wider view of the matter and discuss whether there are any grounds, apart from what is called human failure, for these accidents

Sir, it is well known that during the last ten years the traffic carried by the railways has doubled. Now this means that maintenance has to be carefully looked into. Maintenance is perhaps even of greater importance in view of the increase in traffic than the construction of new works. But what is the actual condition with regard to the renewal of the track? Either it is complete renewal or it is partial renewal. Taking the year 1959-60, the arrears of track renewals on the 31st March, 1960 taking all gauges, amounted to 4,172 miles—complete track renewals 1,589 miles of through rail renewal, and 1,462 miles of through sleepers renewals. This means that, in all there was a deficiency in the arrears of track renewals covering about 7,000 miles. Now, Sir, our track mileage is about 39,000, and you can therefore see that the mileage where track renewal has to take place is not small in proportion to the track mileage.

Again, Sir, we have to consider what the position of speed restrictions is. This has been going on for a long time. I have drawn attention to it several times but I am pointing this out again because of the increase in traffic that has taken place even during the last five years. For what are known as standard locomotives, the speed restriction is in force on about 1,100 miles of broad-gauge and 1,300 miles of metre gauge, that is, 2,400 miles in all.

Now I read the other day an article by a retired Additional Member of the Railway Board, which was published

in the 'Hindustan Times' a few days ago. He is Mr N K Roy, and he says there with regard to the speed restrictions—in addition to the restrictions that I have already referred to—that there are hundreds of other temporary and permanent local speed restrictions all over the railways. How many more restrictions, he asks, the railways can bear for track, ballast and girder renewal? He also says that the position in regard to the rebuilding of bridges and the renewal of girders is at least as serious as track renewals. He also says, Sir, and I should like really this point to be noted by the Railway Minister and replied to

'On the one hand permanent-way materials, girders and signalling equipment are being utilised for new works and on the other the railways are being starved of these materials for maintenance.'

I think, Sir, that the facts pointed out by the retired Additional Member of the Railway Board deserve to be looked into. We should know whether it is a fact that equipment which should be properly used for maintenance is being used in connection with the construction of new works.

Now, Sir, I have just one word more to say with regard to the deficiencies that I have ventured to point out. I have referred, Sir, to the arrears of track renewals and the speed restrictions on various sections of the railways. I now want to point out what the condition of our locomotives is. The over-aged rolling stock on the broad-gauge was about 25 per cent of the total number of broad-gauge locomotives, and on the metre-gauge it was about 17½ per cent. In gross coaching stock, in terms of units, the over-aged stock was 35 per cent of the total coaching stock on the broad gauge and 29 per cent on the metre gauge. Can it be expected, when this is the condition of our rolling-stock and of our railway track and of the girders and bridges, that any enquiry by the Commissioner for Railway Safety can remedy the basic defects of the situation? I think that unless the

Railway Ministry wakes up to the seriousness of the position, these accidents will never stop. In any case, I hope, when the Railway Minister replies, he will say today that he will appoint a committee to enquire into the causes of the accidents generally. Let the terms of reference of that committee be so wide as to enable it to cover the points that I have mentioned.

I have already referred to the statements made by Shri N K Roy in regard to the condition of the track, their maintenance etc. I should like to draw attention or rather to quote one more passage from his article. He says here

"If the Railways have genuine difficulties, the Railway Board must come out with these before Parliament and not unnecessarily take the blame on itself."

Now, what does this mean? To me it seems that it means that there is some difference of opinion between the Railway Board and the Government of India or between the Railway Board and the Railway Ministry on this subject. Perhaps the Railway Board wants more money for the maintenance of the track and equipment than it is able to get. Who is responsible for that we do not know. But the Railway Minister, when he replies to the debate I hope, will tell us what is the real position. I know in a general way that the Railway Ministry has always asked the Planning Commission to provide it with a much larger sum than has been agreed to by the Planning Commission. This has happened in connection with the Second Plan and this has happened in connection with the Third Plan too. But what I should specifically like to know is whether the provision made by the Planning Commission sets apart an adequate sum for the maintenance of the railway track the rolling-stock and bridges and our equipment generally. If the money is not sufficient for this purpose, then it is obvious that some of the money that

is being used for the construction of new works in order to move our additional traffic, ought to be diverted to maintenance. This would undoubtedly cause difficulties with regard to the flow of traffic, and I wonder whether the anxiety of the Railway Ministry to move traffic is partly responsible for the present state of things. The Railway Ministry has already been blamed for want of wagons, for their failure to move commodities or goods lying at certain places, and it may be that the Railway Minister may, therefore, feel nervous about spending more money on maintenance lest the ability of the Railways to move traffic be further restricted. But the accidents that have taken place have made it necessary for us to look closely into these things. The statement of the Railway Minister, while it may give the facts with regard to the three cases dealt with by him cannot be regarded as satisfactory. I think something more than the usual phrases and reasons are now needed to explain the present situation. The Railway Minister says that taking per million vehicle miles, the number of accidents was 1.41 in 1957-58 and 1.22 in 1960-61, thus meaning that actually the number of accidents has declined. Again, he says that per one thousand billion passenger miles, while the number of those killed and injured was 12.77 in 1957-58, it was only 4.98 in 1960-61. But can this kind of an explanation satisfy anybody? If his statistics convey the whole truth then even if the number of accidents per million vehicle miles are increased or even doubled, he can still say that they are nothing in comparison with the distance covered, or he may be able to say that it is less than the number of accidents in some other country. I am sure, he realises that such an explanation will not satisfy the public at all. What the public wants is that such accidents should be stopped in so far as they can be stopped by human endeavour, and it is this that the Railway Minister has to attend to. Such explanations will satisfy nobody. If these accidents occur, say, next year in 1962-63, and the number of those injured and

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killed is less than the number of people killed and injured in 1960-61, will he be able to satisfy anybody by saying that per billion passenger miles, the number of those killed and injured was only 2 or 2.5? Nobody will be satisfied with that kind of an answer. Therefore, this matter requires deeper and closer consideration than has been given to it. It further requires that the Railway Minister should be frank with us and tell us what in his opinion are the deficiencies that may have contributed to these accidents. If, Sir, you have a large number of over-aged engines, a large percentage of over-aged engines, if your track is weak, if your girders and bridges are weak, accidents may take place more easily than they would if there were no deficiencies of this kind. It is to this point that I want to draw his attention.

SHRI K SANTHANAM (Madras).
Mr. Deputy Chairman, I fully endorse whatever Dr. Kunzru just said and I also endorse his plea for an enquiry. I shall not repeat any of the points he has made but shall try briefly only to supplement. It is true that accidents are as unavoidable as they are unfortunate but at the same time when a series of major accidents occur, naturally people want to be sure that nothing that has been done by the Railway Administration by way of commission or omission has contributed to these accidents and no enquiry by a Railway Inspector, whether he is under the Railway Ministry or under the Transport Ministry, can satisfy the public that the policies of the Railway Administration relating to track, relating to rolling stock and relating to the efficiency of their drivers and others, have not contributed in any measure to these accidents. Sir, between 1950 and 1960 there have been seven enquiries, five judicial enquiries on particular accidents and two general enquiries. It has been argued by the Railway Minister that judicial enquiries also agree with the Report of the Railway Inspector and so they are superfluous. Let me give the House one instance

On 2-9-1956 No. 565 Down Secunderabad-Dronachellam passenger crashed from a bridge into the swollen Pochani Nala when 121 people died and 37 were injured. In view of the seriousness of the accident, the Government of India appointed a Commission of Inquiry. Mr. Justice Sunderlal Trikamlal Desai, a Judge of the Bombay High Court was the sole member of the Commission. The Commission came to the conclusion that the principal cause of the accident was the inadequate ventway of Bridge No. 229 to accommodate discharge of the flood water and the inadequate watch kept at the bridge was another cause. The Commission held the Central Railway and some of its senior engineering officers responsible for the accident. Thus the conclusions reached by the Commission differed from those of the Government Inspector who had held that the accident was due to erosion and subsidence of the bridge approaches and no one was responsible for the accident. The Government made a reappraisal of the facts of the case. Sir, I think the recent accident at Ghatsila is something similar to this and it is quite likely that if a judicial enquiry is held, the Government may have to make a reappraisal of the facts.

SHRI SATYACHARAN (Uttar Pradesh). Sir, would the hon. Member also shed light on this particular aspect? When the Commissioners have already conducted enquiries and have also given their judgment, does he think that that is not enough? If it is not enough, I would like the hon. Member to give his own opinion in what way a judicial enquiry would improve the matter.

SHRI K SANTHANAM. Enquiries by the Commissioners are purely technical enquiries. They have no right to summon witnesses; they have no right to cross-examine anybody and therefore their enquiry cannot satisfy the public as a judicial enquiry and that is the reason.

SHRI D A MIRZA (Madras) Was there any such judicial enquiry when the hon Member was Deputy Minister of Railways?

SHRI K SANTHANAM Yes, Sir, in 1950 A big accident occurred and immediately a judicial enquiry was ordered I hope that will satisfy him and I suppose he will now join me in asking for an enquiry

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA That is perhaps why the Railway Board did not like him

SHRI K SANTHANAM No, no Therefore I think that either he should agree to a judicial enquiry into all these three accidents where lives were lost or, as in other cases in 1953 and 1955, I think, to a Committee of Inquiry to review the accidents since the last Committee met and find out whether the policies of the Administration or their failures have contributed to these accidents At least in two cases it has been admitted by the Railway Board that the drivers exceeded the speed limit and caused the crash Sir, those drivers and firemen have paid with their lives and it is not fair on my part to say anything whatever but a responsible official has written to me saying that the accident at Kosgi would not have occurred if the driver had been in a sober state of mind I do not endorse it because it is not fair for me to make any allegation about the dead man It is quite possible that drivers have become more addicted to drink in recent years and that might be the cause of the accidents Is this not a matter to be properly enquired into? Again, I was told that the driver who ran the Madras-Bombay express and met with the accident at Kosgi was only 34 It is a general rule that only very experienced and senior drivers should be put in charge of fast express trains Were there no senior drivers in that line, senior to this man of 34? I say nothing against this man because I do not know anything but still I believe that there should have been many senior drivers who should have been

but in charge of that train I say all these have to be gone into I do not want to pronounce any judgment but all I can say is that we cannot be satisfied with a mere Railway official's Report Sir, he may be now under the jurisdiction of the Transport Ministry but after all he is only a Railway official We want a man of the standing of a High Court Judge—either one or more of such people—or a general Committee of Inquiry of influential public men like my hon friend, Pandit Kunzru, to review these things and give us a fair estimate If they come to the conclusion that there was no failure on the part of the Railway Administration or the Railway Board or the Zonal Railways and that these accidents were purely fortuitous, the hand of the Railway Minister and of the Railway Board will be immensely strengthened There should be periodic washing out of these accidents There has been no enquiry for the last three years and therefore on its own merits there is a strong case for an enquiry and I plead with the Railway Minister that he should accept the plea for an enquiry He may agree either to a wider enquiry as suggested by Dr Kunzru or, if he prefers to judicial enquiries on each of these accidents and if the judicial enquiries show that there were more fundamental reasons like track or rolling stock, then the other enquiry may have to come Or if he likes to have only one enquiry, that is, a general enquiry, I shall be content Sir, I know that it is difficult in such matters to say anything which will not have some element of injustice Of course, neither the Railway Minister nor his Deputy Ministers could from here have prevented the accidents, nor the members of the Railway Board What all they can be responsible for is something which they did or did not do long before the accidents happened That is a matter on which they should not be content with their own certificates They should not say "We have done nothing which invited these accidents" This is a thing on which other people, impartial people, should pronounce opinion and it is a matter of impor

[Shri K. Santhanam]

ance for the good name of the Railway Administration which I cherish as much as any of our friends. Therefore I think in the interests of the Government of India, of the Congress Party and of the Railway Administration, the Railway Minister will be well advised to announce his acceptance of the plea for some kind of an enquiry.

Thank you, Sir

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM) Mr Deputy Chairman, as I said in the other House it is very difficult to speak on a subject like this. As Dr Kunzru has remarked, statistics give no satisfaction and even if there is one single accident, one fatal casualty, that is a regrettable thing. Therefore, I am not here to defend or to produce statistics to prove that the incidence of accidents on Indian Railways is lower than it is even in the case of the railways in advanced countries of the world. Nor is it my intention to prove and derive satisfaction by showing that the incidence of accidents on Indian Railways is on the decrease. As I have remarked, even if there is one single accident resulting in fatality, it is unfortunate and regrettable and every care has to be taken to see how far we can eliminate that.

There have been two, three major accidents in quick succession. That is why it has attracted the attention of the whole country. It has caused serious concern to the Railway Ministry, the Railway Board and the Railway Administrations. The statement that I placed on the Table of the House was only to indicate that the Railway Board and the Railway Administrations have always been engaging themselves, and even in the years when fortunately the number of accidents was very small, in giving attention to this important aspect of minimising the incidence of accidents on the Indian Railways. Their attention has never abated. The whole intention of the statement was to show that

we have been constantly alive to this problem and even in those years in which fortunately the number was very small, our endeavour towards this end never slackened. It was never my intention, as I said, to prove it by statistics, and even in those years when the number was small, there was never any sense of complacency. That was the whole intention of my statement, where I have extensively quoted from my own speeches and statements in this House or the other House while presenting the Railway Budget or otherwise. And I can again assure the House that we are fully alive to this problem and there has been no sense of complacency. So long as there is one accident, as I have said, it is regrettable and we cannot derive any satisfaction by saying that there has been only one accident. There are certain accepted standards of determining the incidence of accidents throughout the world. But while quoting that, even impliedly I never meant and I will never mean to say that because the traffic has increased or because the number of passengers have increased two-fold the number of accidents should also increase two-fold. It has never been my contention and there cannot be a contention like that.

Then my friend, Mr Bhupesh Gupta, has spoken about the Ghatsila accident. An enquiry has been held. The Inspector has come to certain conclusions. I reached the place of accident the same day. By the evening I was there. I also learnt it that it appeared to be a case of sabotage. It is not correct to say that it was officially announced by the railway officers or it officially appeared in the Press. Whenever there is any accident we visit the place and a number of Press correspondents also accompany the officers. Naturally there is curiosity to know the reasons and the causes for the accident. In a major accident like this, where the fatalities and the injured persons were quite sizeable, naturally there was anxiety on the part of the Press correspondents also to know what was the cause of the

accident. When some obvious things are found, naturally people talk amongst themselves that it should have happened like this. So, what came in the Press before the investigation was made by the Inspector of Railways was the talk among the people there, maybe railway officers and others, and it was reported in the Press. It is very difficult for us to control the Press in these matters. Anybody who has to deal with public affairs knows it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Control your officers first.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: And if it was given out by any officer, as I remarked in the other House, I will again remark that it was very indiscreet on his part, whosoever he may be. I have made it clear that in no case should any railway officer indicate or say anything about the cause of any accident till an investigation has been held by the proper authority, who is the Inspector of Railways.

My friend, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, has remarked that the incidence of accidents has increased on the Indian Railways after independence. Sir, I presented a pamphlet two years back, I think, in which I compiled the number of accidents on Indian Railways and the trend of accidents for the last twenty years. Apart from Volume II of the Railway Board's Annual Report, every year along with the Budget papers, I have been circulating a booklet on railway accidents also. I have made it a regular feature. So, any Member who cares to go through these papers will come to a conclusion other than what my friend, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, has drawn. I have not much to say on that aspect, because we have been giving full details about the accidents, whether train accidents or otherwise, on the Indian Railways. Along with their number, casualties, loss to the railways, etc. every detail is there. Anyone who cares to go through them can draw his own conclusions.

Then, to say that in the Ghatsila accident more people died than what has been stated, is just like those primitive remarks where people used to say so many things. I used to hear in my early days that when there was any train accident, railway officials took out the dead bodies and threw them away, so that nobody could know it. Well, I do not think that Mr. Bhupesh Gupta is living in those ages to believe any such rumours.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I did not say I believed or disbelieved. I pointed out to you that many newspapers wrote it. An enquiry of the type I have suggested would set the matter at rest, rather than what you are saying.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: And one of them is the mouthpiece of the Party to which my hon. friend has the honour to belong . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA. And amongst them are mouthpieces of the Party to which you belong.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: . . . and the House knows what credence should be attached to the news in that paper.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: What about the papers which belong to your Party? Do not talk about mouthpieces now.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Sir, he has said again today about the *pagla* engine. He is very fond of *paglas*.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Because you are fond of *paglas* in the administration. But you are a very sensible man.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I have not called my friend a *pagla*. I have only said that he is very fond of *paglas*. When I reached there one of the Press correspondents enquired of me whether I had heard that this engine was defective and that the driver had retorted to give me some details. Well, I had the correspondent: "I am hearing it for the first time from you". Then

[Shri Jagjivan Ram.]

one M.L.A. to whom my friend has made a reference and who has again the honour of belonging to his party, Mr. Narayan Choubey, also made that allegation, and I asked Mr. Choubey to give me some details. Well, I had no time, I had to rush from one hospital to another hospital, from Jamshedpur to Kharagpur, to see the injured persons in the hospital. But all these allegations appeared in some newspapers and more prominently in Bengali papers belonging to the Communist Party.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Also in Congress Party papers like the Jugantar, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Anand Bazar Patrika, and so on.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: "Swadhinata" took a prominent part in it. I suggested to the Railway Board that all these matters should be brought to the notice of the Inspector. I have the report of the Inspector of Railways who investigated into the cause of this accident saying that he made it a particular point to see Mr. Choubey, and he enquired from him as to what was his authority on the basis of which he said that this engine was defective and the driver had refused to take it out. He asked him to give some instances or some evidence, and Mr. Narayan Choubey said: "Well, I just heard it here and there"—just like the Communist Party. Sir, the engine was not defective, and in view of all these allegations appearing in the Press, the Inspector took particular care to examine the engine, the site of the accident and everything. The engine was not over-aged. It had its due periodical overhaul. It was only eleven years old, it was just running its eleventh year. The track condition was also good. It was only in September that the track was inspected by the track recording machine which records the condition of the track on a graph. So far as the track and the rolling stock were concerned, there was nothing defective in them. I am myself not a technical man. The Railway Inspectors are technical men

with long experience of railway working, keeping themselves abreast of all new developments in the railway world. The Inspector has by graph and everything that are technically accepted proved that it was a case of a sabotage.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Give me a few minutes for the reply.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Then again, my friend, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, has given out that there are instances where drivers are forced to take out defective engines. This was raised in the other House and I requested hon. friends there and I request my friend, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, to give me instances where any driver has been forced by any officer on pain of penalty or punishment to take out defective engines. I assure them that I will take the most drastic and serious action against such officers. The driver of this engine which was involved in the Ghatsila accident was one of our best drivers, and we are sorry for his death. We have lost one of our best drivers. I visited his family, and I have assured the family that in every way we will take good care of the family. We have been appreciating the services not only of the officers but also of the staff, even of the lowest staff, and we have been giving certificates of appreciation to railway officers and staff every year. We are giving them rewards also along with certificates. We have been giving them rewards, a minimum of Rs. 500 in National Savings Certificates, every year to 15 or 20 or 30 people who have done meritorious service on the railways. Most of them, I may inform the House, belong to Class III and Class IV. Not only that, we have recommended to the Home Ministry and some of our National Awards have been given to railway employees of the lowest category, not only officers but also staff. So, we have been appreciating the services of the employees. It has always been our endeavour to maintain good relations with the staff, and I can say with some knowledge of labour relations

that the labour relations on the Indian Railways are very satisfactory, and the relations between the officers and the staff are sweet. Even where there is no cause for any difference or dissatisfaction, of course my friend will always try to find some, but I may assure him that it has always been my endeavour to take the railway employees into confidence and benefit by their advice for improving the efficiency of the Indian Railways. Perhaps my friend is not aware that we have been giving rewards to railway employees for giving valuable suggestions by which efficiency can be increased and economy can be effected. Loco-sheds and workshops have drawn the praise of people who have visited our country from outside. Even the Team which the World Bank sent to India to see the efficiency and working of the Indian Railways before the World Bank agreed to advance loans to the Indian Railways were very much satisfied with the working of the Indian Railways and with the efficiency and working of the workshops.

PANDIT HRIDAY NATH KUNZRU: Were they satisfied with the maintenance too?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Yes, Sir.

PANDIT HRIDAY NATH KUNZRU: A report was made by the World Bank and copies of it must have been sent to the Government of India. Can the Government of India by agreement with the World Bank place a copy of that report in the Library?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I am very doubtful whether they will agree to it. They may not agree to making the report public.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Will you write to them that Parliament desires this report to be placed before it? At least write a letter and get their reply to it.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I will be very happy to make that public because it goes to the credit of the Indian

Railways that we have received appreciation from world authorities. But as I said, they may not agree. I will request them, and if they agree, it will be to the advantage of the Indian Railways. Sir, I say these things because my friends get some brief from somewhere and mostly it is from some disgruntled railway employees.

5 P.M.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Well, I do not get any brief from the Railway Board Members, but certainly from the railway employees. But why call them 'disgruntled'?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: So, Sir, I can say that our workshops are well maintained and well equipped and our periodical overhaul of the locomotives is kept up to the schedule.

About relief work, Sir, I have not much to say except that the accident took place—the Ghatsila accident—at midnight, one o'clock. It was night time, very dark. But as soon as the news reached the Ghatsila station, one passenger train was standing there with a view to giving passage to this train. One railway officer was travelling by that train. As soon as he learnt of this accident, he collected one engine and a few coaches from there and got hold of one doctor who was travelling by that train and improvised some kind of relief train and rushed to the place of accident. Immediately the civil police authorities were informed and the Sub-Inspector of Police rushed to the place of accident. The Ghatsila Copper Corporation people were informed and their staff and officers and trade union workers rushed to the place of accident. They were the people to reach there first. The relief train from Tatanagar and Kharagpur would naturally have taken some time but before that these people reached there and they rendered whatever relief they could during that dark night. The regular relief trains reached in the morning and they were fully equipped with

[Shri Jagjivan Ram.] doctors, nurses, provisions, medicines, water and all sorts of things. As a matter of fact, we have issued standing instructions what should be carried when there are accidents. But it was a very major accident, high embankment, midnight, etc. One can obviously understand the difficulties and handicaps in rendering effective relief before the sunrise. So, Sir, I have not much to say because much exaggerated things have appeared in the Press. Anyway, I am pursuing whether there are any loopholes with regard to our instructions about relief so that we can tighten them.

Then, Sir, Dr. Kunzru, whenever he speaks on the Railways, he brings vast knowledge with regard to the working of the Indian Railways to bear on the subject, and I attach great importance to his suggestions. There has been tremendous increase in traffic and we are trying to have the maintenance of the Indian Railways fairly satisfactory. I can assure him that no new work is to be executed at the cost of maintenance. Mr. N. K. Roy who was till recently Additional Member, Railway Board, now in the employ of one of the biggest business magnates of this country has come out with an article.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Why should there be any prejudice against this man? After all, Sir, a Minister's son may be in the employ of big business, an I.C.S. may be in the employ of big business.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Sir, I am not saying anything. I have not expressed any opinion. I am just stating the facts. I do not know why Mr. Bhupesh Gupta is so solicitous about this gentleman. I am stating only some facts. Till recently he was Additional Member of the Railway Board. Now he is in the employ of one of the biggest business magnates, and the firm of that business magnate is interested in some of the Railway contracts also. Mr. Roy at pre-

sent is supervising one of the contract works which this firm is executing.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I do not deny that, but that is very common with you.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Now, Sir, Mr. Roy has said nothing new. He has said something about speed restrictions, about track renewal. Well, these informations are published every year, about track renewal, about sleeper renewal, etc. These are all published figures which Dr. Kunzru can easily find. It does not require any Additional Member or ex-Additional Member to come out with these figures, because these are the figures available in the Railway publications themselves.

Now, Sir, there is one thing which I want to refute, and that is this. No maintenance work is stopped and that material is not used for increasing the Railway capacities. Sir, we are having an expanding economy, and transport always lags behind production. It happens, and we are facing that contingency. Fortunately for the country, Sir, our production is increasing, we are moving in a planned economy. We have to fix priorities and determine allocations for the projects to be undertaken. We have been complaining that allotment to the Railways is not up to the requirement of the Railways, so that we may keep pace with the growing economy of the country. But I may again assure the House that the maintenance work is not affected or new works are not done at the cost of maintenance. Speed restrictions we have.

PANDIT HRIDAY NATH KUNZRU: What Mr. Roy says is that there are many other restrictions on speed in other parts of the Railways.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: There are restrictions. Sometimes some work is going on, we have to do doubling. Dr. Kunzru knows better than any-

body else that when we have so much civil work going on in the Railways, we have doubling of long mileage, then naturally speed restrictions will be there. Track renewal itself leads to speed restrictions. Then, Sir, in our country, in several parts, we have heavy monsoons. Whenever there is overloading on both sides of the track, then naturally speed restrictions have to be imposed. Then there is the improvement of signalling. We are going in more and more for automatic signalling; we are going in more and more for interlocking. All these things that we are doing for the improvement of railway track do require speed restrictions. What Mr. Roy has said is this that we have many temporary and small speed restrictions. Well, there is nothing new in it. Even the officer who just starts ABC of Railways, of railway working, knows these things. It does not require any Additional Member to bring these things to the notice of the public, and that does not do any credit to that Additional Member of the Railway Board to bring such preliminary things so prominently in the newspaper—trivial things. It does not add to his importance or to his reputation.

Mr. Santhanam has said something about the experience of the driver. Mr. Santhanam has been very much connected with journalism. He is a regular writer and I presume he reads newspapers also. He wrote something. And in those very papers something appeared about the age, experience, qualifications, etc. of the driver concerned. I presume Mr. Santhanam has cared to read those things and if he has cared to read those things, he knows what experience the driver of the Bombay-Janata train which met with the accident at Kosgi had. I wish he had not raised that point after that knowledge.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: I remember I have read that his age was 34. Was it correct?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Yes, that is correct. And if my friend read that his age was 34, I presume he might have read what his experience was. That he conveniently forgets.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: I read that he had experience in goods trains and that he had been recently promoted to this train. But what I wanted to know was whether there were not many more senior people who were not on such Express trains.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: He had experience of goods trains, he had experience of passenger trains also, and he had experience of more than one year of passenger trains before he was put on the Mail train. All these things appeared in the very same paper in which Mr. Santhanam was very kind enough to write two articles about accidents.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: I have written only one article.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Yes, one article. I accept the correction. And if he expects us to read his article, we expect him to read the information that is passed out for his benefit.

Sir, Dr. Kunzru has made very useful suggestions. The other day also he made the same suggestion and I have said that in the interest of the Railways and the railway employees, who are so faithfully and patriotically discharging the onerous duties placed upon them, we will consider the setting up of a committee of some important public men, Members from this House and the other House and others to examine the question of accidents on the Indian Railways and to suggest ways and means, or to suggest measures by which we can further minimise the incidence of accidents. It is a wide term which may cover everything. And in view of this I do not think there will be any necessity to have any judicial enquiry in individual accidents.

[Shri Jagjivan Ram.]

Sir, I have not much to say except that my feeling . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, on a point of order I rise . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let him finish.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, you have exceeded the five minutes given to the Minister and now I have a right of reply.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If the House sits, I have no objection.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Since he exceeded his time I should be given a few minutes.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I have not much to say except that we have never had any sense of complacency and even one single accident gives us serious anxiety and concern and it will always continue to be our endeavour to take all possible measures to minimise the incidence of accidents on the Indian Railways.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is the House prepared to hear Mr. Bhupesh Gupta's reply?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You did not ask when he was speaking. It is not fair.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House stands . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Just a minute. Well, Sir, you can shut me out, the majority can shut me out . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No. There is no question of shutting out. The House is not prepared to sit. What can I do?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I accept the verdict of the House. I do not want to speak but this is not right. When he exceeded five minutes . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.
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SHRIMATI SAVITRY DEVI NIGAM: (Uttar Pradesh): After such a convincing reply we do not need his reply.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: On a point of order, Sir . . .

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN (Andhra Pradesh): In fairness he should be given five minutes. Let him speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.
(Interruptions).

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: The only thing that I want to point out is that this is not the right way of dealing with the Opposition. They have a majority. You may shut me out . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you not want to hear the Government reply?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: When you said that at 5 o'clock the debate must end, I said that it should be extended. Then you did not apply your own ruling at that time. You allowed the Minister to continue. You did the good thing and I do want to hear him. When the Minister exceeded the time given to him under the rules, even so I did not object to it because what he says is more important. Therefore, I did not come in the way at all. Now, Sir, you ask the House and give your opinion. If you think that we beg for speaking like that . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: . . . I shall never speak on the subject.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at fifteen minutes past five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Friday, the 15th December 1961.