

SHRI A. K. SEN: No, and a perusal of the scheme will negative such a suggestion.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: The hon. Minister's reply is not all satisfactory because the Union Government undertakes a good deal of legislation which is first applied to the Union territories and which is brought in as a model legislation for the States to follow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She is merely stating her views.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: The reply should come . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 368

DAMAGE TO BLAST FURNACE OF ROURKELA STEEL PLANT

*368. SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: Will the Minister of STEEL, MINES AND FUEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that No. 1 blast furnace of the Rourkela Steel Plant was recently shut down due to certain damage to the blast furnace;

(b) if so, what was the nature and the probable cause of the damage and for how long the said blast furnace remained shut down; and

(c) what is the estimated loss in production because of this shut down?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL, MINES AND FUEL (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH):

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

In the morning of the 10th September, 1960, hot metal and slag started coming out through the shell on the left side of the tap-hole of the first blast furnace at Rourkela. The hot metal flowed down the shell of the furnace and through the runner. It continued to flow for nearly an hour. The furnace was immediately shut down and repair work was started.

The repair work was completed on the 15th September, 1960 and the furnace was put on wind the same day.

The break-out was possibly due to an air gap in the lining through which air might have penetrated and burnt part of the carbon block. Another reason might be that the furnace was not fully dry after tapping. The loss in production on account of the shut-down is estimated at about 4,500 tons.

SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: Does the Minister realise that while the production loss or financial loss in such a case is rather insignificant, as this is a big job, the real damage is the reduction in the life of the blast furnace? A blast furnace, once it is lighted, goes on burning for 7, 8 or 9 years. It is very unusual for it to be shut down in this manner and if that happens, its life can be reduced to half its normal life. I want to know if the Minister realises it and, if so, what steps has he taken to ensure that this sort of thing does not happen in the future?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I am not a technical man. I will pass on his comments to the local people. He himself had been the Senior Deputy General Manager in the same plant.

SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: If I was there at that time, certainly, I would not have allowed this to happen. My purpose is not to apportion blame but to avoid the recurrence of this in the future. Was it or was it not a fact that this happened because the blast furnace was not really ready to be fired and all the auxiliary services were not ready and has the Minister taken steps to ensure that in the future no plant Manager is permitted to commission any unit of a steel plant, for the sake of kudos or publicity, unless it is really ready to be commissioned and thus avoid damage to national property?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Sir, the first part is denied and the second part is a suggestion for action.

SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: Is it a fact that one of the Directors of the Government Steel Corporation, Mr. K. C. Mahindra—a man of considerable steel experience—warned the people concerned at the time that due to lack of adequate preparedness, this sort of damage was likely to happen and that Dr. Colclough, the eminent British metallurgist who visited the blast furnace soon after it was commissioned did, in fact, predict that this sort of damage was likely to take place?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I am not aware of that.

SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: Sir, will he kindly enlighten himself on this subject adequately for our education as well as for his own education and give us the full particulars of what actually happened in this case?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It is not customary to make public what passes on between the Directors and the management. Any information that the hon. Member derives, he can pass on to me. These are not things which can be discussed in public.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You do not want to discuss it.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA: May I know, Sir, if there was some structural defects or defects in the construction of this blast furnace at Roukela?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: No, Sir.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA: May I know if the Government will institute an inquiry as to how these defects came to be there in the blast furnace, if the Government is not aware of these facts?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It is not necessary. This type of defect is a sort of operational defect and when we are dealing with complicated

plants, some shut-down or some trouble here and there may be there and that is not something which need alarm hon. Members and I think to make a suggestion of that type is to take an unduly alarmist view which is absolutely unjustified.

I may, for the information of hon. Members, tell them that this blast furnace, No. 1, produced on the 30th November, 1960 as much as 1,155 tons of pig iron which is a record and the combined contribution of the two furnaces, Nos. 1 and 2, at Roukela was 1,758 tons which again is the highest daily output recorded so far. So there is no need to take an alarmist view. It is not necessary to institute any enquiry.

SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: The point is this. Since the loss is great and . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put your question.

SHRI SUDHIR GHOSH: Yes, Sir. The question is this. Does the hon. Minister realise that a blast furnace is not a machine which he can switch off and repair and again turn on? It is a furnace that goes on burning continuously for eight or nine years. Therefore, it is a very serious thing to shut down a blast furnace and, if it is shut down, that reduces the life of the blast furnace very considerably.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He knows that, of course.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I don't know it, Sir. The hon. Member is adding to my education. That is all I can say. I know it is a continuous process and normally it should not be shut down. But I may assure the hon. Member as well as the House that we do not shut down a blast furnace lightly. To shut down a blast furnace is a very serious matter and it is not resorted to unless there is something more serious which as to be set right. That is the way to do it.