

SHRIMATI T. NALLAMUTHU RAMAMURTI: Is it not that the bogies which were nearest to the engine and which rolled over contained a number of children and women—the Hyderabad bogies?

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: I said that sixteen persons were slightly injured.

ASSAULT OF SHRI B. L. MUNDA, A TRAINEE IN THE RAILWAY PROTECTION FORCE TRAINING SCHOOL, KHARAGPORE, BY A HAVILDAR

*311 { SHRI T. BODRA: ‡
SHRI GHASIRAM SANDIL:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that on the 22nd January, 1960 at 4.30 p.m. one Havildar of the Second Platoon mercilessly assaulted Shri B. L. Munda, a trainee of Chakradharpore Division, in the Railway Protection Force Training School, Kharagpore, South Eastern Railway; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the incident and the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI S. V. RAMASWAMY): (a) and (b). Information is being obtained from the railway administration and will be laid on the Table of the House shortly.

ASSAULT OF TRAINEES OF CHAKRADHARPORE DIVISION

*312. { SHRI T. BODRA: ‡
SHRI GHASIRAM SANDIL:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in January, 1960 one Havildar of the Sixth Platoon mercilessly assaulted Shri Surendra Sundi and Shri Lal Singh Zaguri, trainees of Chakradharpore Division, in the Railway Protection Force Training School, Kharagpore, South Eastern Railway; and

‡The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri T. Bodra.

(b) if so, what are the details of the incident and the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN): (a) and (b). Information is being collected from the railway administration and will be laid on the Table of the House shortly.

DR. R. B. GOUR: Has the hon Minister repeated the answer to the earlier question by mistake?

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: No, Sir, but the answer is the same for both the questions.

SHRI T. BODRA: What is the reason for their inability to collect the information? Is it due to lack of will or want of any impartial officer to go into this question or is it due to shortage of time? We have already given ten days' notice for you to enquire into the small incident.

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: We made every effort to secure the information but the Administration has not been able to communicate the details to us in time. We hope that it will be available very shortly.

DR. R. B. GOUR: May I draw your attention to this fact, Sir? Here, it is a simple question concerning a concrete instance. We would like to know as to why and how in this simple case they are not able to collect information. After all, when they demand time, there should be some *prima facie* reason for that.

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: The question is whether it is a fact that one havildar of the 6th Platoon mercilessly assaulted and so on and so forth. This has not to be established and they have got to hold some sort of an enquiry.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Was there at all an attack, mercilessly or unmercilessly? This "mercilessly" seems to be causing trouble.

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: It has got to be enquired as to whether there was at all an assault. As soon as the necessary information is available, I shall place it before the House.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: When it is a question of assault, the question is a simple one and it is whether a person was assaulted or not. When every detail was given, why should there be so much of delay over this simple fact?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We do not want to punish the innocent. We want to establish the guilt or innocence first.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: But then why should there be so much delay?

(No reply)

*208. [The questioner (Shri Dahyabhai V. Patel) was absent. For answer, vide cols. 1852-53 infra.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions are over.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION AND ANSWER

DISTURBANCES AT BHILAI STEEL PLANT

1. SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: Will the Minister of STEEL, MINES AND FUEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that use of tear-gas, baton-charge and firing followed by mass arrests had recently to be resorted to for dispersing some unruly crowds of striking workers at the Bhilai Steel Plant;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a zonal engineer was assaulted and two jeep cars were set on fire by a section of the workers there;

(c) if the answers to parts (a) and (b) above be in the affirmative, what were the circumstances which led to those incidents; and

(d) what action has been taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL, MINES AND FUEL (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

†STATEMENT

I regret to inform the House that there was dislocation in the work at the Bhilai Steel Works owing to disturbances to law and order on the 17th and 18th of this month. Sri Deo Saran Dube, the General Secretary of a local trade union—the Bhilai Steel Kamgar Sangh—went on hunger strike near the coke ovens on the 10th of February 1960 in protest against possible retrenchment of construction workers and alleged inadequacy of amenities like housing, water supply and safety measures. Some construction workers stopped work on the 12th and 13th, but they were persuaded to resume work. On the 16th again a few hundred construction workers in the open hearth and railway divisions left work, but most of them were persuaded to return.

The situation, however, took a more serious turn on the 17th morning when a crowd of construction workers surrounded a construction engineer and demanded promotion, better wages and so on. When he made efforts to persuade them to disperse, he was manhandled and his jeep as well as another jeep was set on fire. Thereafter, crowds of construction workers began to collect in other areas also. The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police arrived with a police party. Nevertheless, the crowd continued to throw stones and various groups of construction workers continued to move within the plant site trying to intimidate the operation staff and turn them away from work. The coke-pusher and the locomotives carrying iron and slag from the blast furnaces were surrounded. The pushing of coke and the tapping of the two blast furnaces had, therefore, to be suspended. On the evening of the 17th, the Commissioner of Raipur Division arrived on the spot and immediately arranged for police reinforcements.

†With the permission of the Chair the statement was read out on the floor of the House.

On the 18th morning, the situation became more serious. Between 10-30 and noon, large crowds of people collected in the power house area, cut the pipe carrying liquid fuel and took possession of the ash pump house. Work in the power house, including the blower and the boiler had, therefore, to be suspended. The District Magistrate then promulgated an order under section 144 Cr. P. C. prohibiting the gathering of more than five persons in the steel plant area. With the arrival of more police reinforcements, the situation was gradually brought under control. In the process, the police had to resort to cane-charges and the use of tear gas to disperse violent crowds. Some people were hurt. There was no firing except for a few shots in the air which hurt nobody. About 60 persons were arrested.

By the evening of the 18th, the pushing of coke and the operation of the power house and of the first blast furnace was resumed. Later in the evening the second blast furnace was also restarted. The area is patrolled by police and no serious incidents have been reported since.

For the last two days the situation has been peaceful and it appears that normalcy has been restored.

As a result of the disturbances, production in the steel works was affected. The output of pig iron which was about 1,950 tons a day, before the disturbances, fell to 680 tons on the 17th February. It has been gradually rising since the 20th February and it is hoped that by today or tomorrow the normal output would again have been restored. Ammonium sulphate which is manufactured from the by-products could not be produced during these days. So was sulphuric acid. Production of steel was badly affected and the output which was about 770 tons a day before the disturbances fell to 240 tons on the 17th and there was no output of steel whatsoever on the 18th and 19th. There was some small production on the 20th and it is hoped that it will return to normal in the next day or two.

Because of the rather sudden dislocation, there may be damages caused to the refractory work in the coke ovens, the blast furnaces, the ladles and the open hearth furnaces. But the effect of these will be known only with the passage of time. There has been no serious damage otherwise to any part of the plant.

I am sure the hon. Members will agree with me that in a situation like this, the first duty of Government is to restore peace and order. Disturbances of this nature can do no good to anybody and result only in losses to the nation. Legitimate grievances will be looked into and redressed. But violence and intimidation is not the right way even to call attention to grievances.

12 NOON

SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: I am very glad that the hon. Minister has given an assurance that the grievances will be looked into. At the same time, may I know whether it is a fact, as reported in some papers, that the workers invaded the power generating plant in the power-house and attempted to destroy vital installations in the Bhilai Steel Plant? May I also know whether any damage has actually been done to such installations and how he reconciles the reported statement with his own statement that there is no serious damage otherwise to any part of the plant?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I do not reconcile; it is not for me to reconcile. I have given factual information. I have said that there has been some damage and I have also said that the damage is not serious. If the word is not liked, I can withdraw the word because any damage can be regarded as serious.

SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: I do not mean that. What I mean to ask is whether, as reported in the papers, there has actually been any damage done to the installations.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I have said so in my statement today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Maheswar Naik, you accept his statement in preference to the Press report. That is all.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA: May I know if the Government have any information about the political party to which Mr. Dube or other office bearers of that labour union belong? What are their political affiliations and to which party do they owe allegiance?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: We normally do not look into the political affiliations of these trade unions but he claims to be a Praja Socialist Party leader, but I do not know whether the Praja Socialist Party as such has got anything to do with that union.

मौलाना ایم - فاروقی : کیا انریبل
منسٹر کو پتہ ہے کہ ہر اس طرح کے
ڈسٹریبنسز میں کسی نہ کسی پولیٹیکل
پارٹی کا دخل ہوتا ہے

†[मौलाना एम० फारुकी : क्या
आनरेबिल मिनिस्टर को पता है कि हर
इस तरह के डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन में किसी न किसी
पोलिटिकल पार्टी का दखल होता है ?]

सरदार स्वर्ण सिंह : हो सकता है,
ताल्लुक रखती हो, मगर यूनियंस कहती है
कि हमारा किसी पोलिटिकल पार्टी से
सम्बन्ध नहीं है ।

SHRI M. H. SAMUEL: Is it a fact that the employees of the plant are not really responsible for it but it is some construction workers who are responsible for this trouble?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: The trouble started with the construction workers and later on some of those who were working on the operational side were also affected.

† [] Hindi transliteration.

SHRI M. H. SAMUEL: Have any of these people who caused damage to the plant been apprehended and arrested and, if so, what steps the Government propose to take to punish them for damaging the national plant?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I have already said in the statement that some persons have been arrested. So far as action that the Government could take to punish them is concerned, Parliament has in its wisdom established a certain pattern. That is, the courts are there and cases will be put before the courts. Some of them have already been convicted and the law will have its course with regard to others.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I know whether it is a fact that certain representations with regard to medical facilities, school, retrenchment of construction labour etc. were made to the authorities on behalf of the workers and that these and other grievances have been accumulating for about two or three years and may I also know whether in this connection a delegation of the Communist Party led by Comrade A. K. Gopalan talked to the General Manager and drew his attention to these things?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I am not sure if the hon. Member is trying to align himself with the particular union that created trouble there.

DR. R. B. GOUR: It is not his lookout, Sir.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: That is an utterly irrelevant statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: His question is whether certain representations were made with regard to medical facilities and other amenities which have been accumulating for the last two or three years.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Yes; whether it is a fact that the other day—

Mr. Gopalan has returned only today—he went there after the incident and drew the attention of the management that the grievances had been accumulating and giving rise to discontent and frustration among a large section of the workers.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It is not correct that any demands or grievances were accumulating for over two years or so. With regard to these construction workers, whatever difficulties were felt from time to time, they were looked into. It is very difficult for me to admit that all the decisions taken by the Administration were always so lacking in the sense that all the demands remained unfulfilled.

But so far as the latest information that the hon. Member is giving is concerned, I have no reason to doubt his statement. Mr. Gopalan must have met the General Manager after the incident, as the hon. Member says he has met. But I cannot give any more information as to what he said and what the General Manager replied.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I know, Sir, whether there is any machinery in that plant for dealing with such grievances and representations made on behalf of the workers and, if not, whether that is also a factor contributory to the unfortunate development that has taken place there?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: The normal machinery is there. The workers can represent and the management can consider that. I do not think that this was in any way responsible for the creation of the present trouble, which I submit was absolutely without any justification and there was absolutely no reason for the rowdy and unruly behaviour in which the workers indulged.

DR. R. B. GOUR: May I know, Sir, from the hon. Minister whether in this particular plant the construction workers are being retrenched and also being recruited and whether the workers' demand, that only those who

have been retrenched must be recruited with continuity of service, was presented to the Government? And for how long has it been under consideration?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It is a matter of detail. But so far as the construction workers in this project or elsewhere are concerned, it has to be squarely faced by the country and by all of us that construction is after all construction and those who are engaged on construction are for that period, and when the construction work comes to an end, retrenchment is inevitable. Nevertheless, Government do whatever is possible for them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No more.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

†BOMBAY PORT TRUST

*208. SHRI DAHYABHAI V. PATEL: Will the Minister of TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bombay Port Trust was informed a few months back regarding fraudulent dealings in the matter of supply of labour; if so, when;

(b) whether any enquiry has been made in the matter;

(c) what steps Government have taken against those who are involved in the fraud; and

(d) whether Government have taken any steps to prevent such occurrences?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR): (a) Yes, about five months ago.

†Postponed from the 22nd February, 1960.