

THE MINISTER FOR REVENUE AND DEFENCE EXPENDITURE (SHRI A. C. GUHA): 6,732 maunds and 20 seers of opium were exported to foreign countries during the eleven months ending February 1955.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO SHRI NARENDRA DEVA

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to inform the hon. Members that the following letter has been received from Acharya Narendra Deva:

"I am lying ill in hospital since February 5, and have therefore been unable to attend the Rajya Sabha up till now. I therefore request the House to kindly grant me leave of absence from February 21 to April 14, 1955."

Is it the pleasure of the House that permission be granted to Acharya Narendra Deva for remaining absent from the meetings of the House from the 21st February to 14th April, 1955?

(No hon. Member dissented.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Permission to remain absent is granted.

RESOLUTION RE SAFETY MEASURES IN COAL MINES—continued

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Banerjee, you have taken ten minutes already; you have twenty minutes today.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARNAND (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, may I request that as a special case today the recess be shortened, if possible, so that all the Resolutions can be got through?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We shall think about it.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, when the House rose on the other non-official Resolution day, to be exact on the 18th March last, I was on my legs. And while moving the Resolution that stands in my name, I was referring to the fatal accidents that are taking place very frequently; in the short period of about 45 days three fatal accidents occurred in quick succession; antiquated regulations are still in force; and even those antiquated regulations are not observed. In 1952 an Act has been passed, but the regulations and rules to be framed under that Act have not yet been finalised. I also mentioned the number of fatal accidents from 1950 onwards. I also briefly described the nature of the accidents.

Before I proceed further I want to refresh the memory of the Members of this House by repeating the number of accidents that took place from 1950 onwards:—

In 1950 there were 241 accidents
In 1951 there were 319 accidents
In 1952 there were 353 accidents
In 1953 there were 330 accidents
In 1954 there were 331 accidents

And the rate of death per thousand workers employed is :72 in 1950, :90 in 1951, 1 in 1952, 97 in 1953 and :98 in 1954. And the rate of deaths per million tons is 7 in 1950, 9 in 1951, 10 in 1952, 9 in 1953, and 9 in 1954.

Now, the question before us is: Can we minimise these accidents, if not entirely prevent them? It is a fact that the mining engineering technique has advanced to such an extent that these accidents can certainly be minimised, very largely minimised, if not entirely prevented. It is also a known fact that the accident rate in India is higher than in the other countries, in spite of the acknowledged fact that the geological condition of our coal fields is more favourable. Indian coal mines are not as dangerous as those

[Shri Satyapriya Banerjee.]

in Europe, or in the U. K., or in the U.S.A. Pits are comparatively shallow and less mechanised, inflammable gas is not fairly common, and in a number of previous years, many of the mines could be safely worked with naked lights. But still, the death-rate was 10 per million tons extracted in 1952 and 9 in 1953 and 1954 higher than the rate in Great Britain, etc., etc. I am quoting this not out of my imagination, but out of the standard work by Dr. N. R. Seth, "Labour in Indian Coal Industry".

Now, in spite of the favourable conditions prevailing in our country, what are the reasons that so many accidents of a fatal character, and in such quick succession, take place? The reasons, Sir, are not very far to seek. They are the callous attitude of the Government, in whose care and keeping the lives of 3,40,000 mine workers of 890 coal mines have been placed, and the greed for profit of the mine-owners, and these two are in an unholy alliance with each other not to make any safety regulations for the coal-miners, who add to the national wealth by Rs. 58 crores. The Regulations regarding safety measures formulated in 1926 are deemed to be adequate even now. Even those rules are observed more in their breach than in their performance. As I have already told this House, the rules to be framed under the 1952 Act have not yet been finalised. I do not know what stood in the way of finalisation of these rules. Is it not the indifference and the callousness of the Government with regard to the lives of the coal miners, and their solicitude for the owners of the mines?

It is said, Sir, that these safety measures mean spending money by the owners, and they do not have any profit from their coal mines. If that is so, why have the Birlas and others asked for a mining lease in the Hyderabad State? Why have Karam Chand Thapar and Brothers purchas-

ed mines from MacNeil Berry in January 1955? Knowing the capitalists as a class, as you do, could it be imagined that the Birla Brothers and their friends would go in for a lease of mines in the Hyderabad State, knowing full well that they would incur a loss? I, for my part, cannot bring myself to believe, and I am sure that you, Sir, and the other Members of the House cannot bring yourself and themselves to believe this fact. There are others also who do it. The Dunlop Company is moving the Madhya Pradesh Government to lease out to it Korba coalfields. What do these things indicate? They indicate they are misleading both the government and the public. They want a lease of fresh coal mines on the one hand, and on the other, they say that they do not have any profits. It is for the Government to decide whom to believe, me or them, the public or the mine owners.

Then, Sir, I will give three instances in which the Government have done nothing. They pertain to the following collieries:

1. Chinakuri colliery.
2. Damon colliery.
3. Dhemo Main colliery.

In the first case, an eye-wash enquiry was held, followed by an eye-wash report. And the result of that report was that nobody, in particular, was held responsible for this accident, and no court of enquiry was appointed to enquire into these things. Then, Sir, in the second case, the accident was attributed to bidi-smoking. What should I say, Sir? You can call it a tragedy or you can call it a comedy. This accident was attributed to bidi-smoking. And what led the Government to this conclusion? They found a bundle of bidis. Imagine, Sir, and consider that a number of miners was charred to death and thrown to a considerable distance as a result of explosion, but a packet

of bidis was found intact, as it was—and this is the thing that the Government believes, and asks us to believe. And in the third case, Sir, similar bungling took place. And in all these cases, no court of enquiry was appointed. Why do the Government fear the exposures of the court of enquiry? They ought to be above suspicion. If they say that they are impartial, which I am afraid they are not—impartiality is not the virtue of this present government.....

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMA-
NAND: Question.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: I know you will question it but the fact remains. If there is any virtue, partiality is the only virtue, partiality not for the people who suffer but partiality for those who make people suffer.

What has been the result? These accidents are treated lightly, the mine-owners are allowed to go scot-free, and this has enlarged the scope of the accidents. You will be surprised to know that three Commissions were appointed in England to investigate and enquire into the conditions of work inside the coal-mines. Have the Government of India, after these eight years of independence, cared to institute even one Commission, a Commission for 3,40,000 people employed in 890 coal-mines? The only conclusion that I am forced to come to is that the Government of India, with all their professions of sympathy for the workers, are not true to their professions. In practice they show just the contrary. If you look into the cases of the prosecutions, you will find that the prosecutions are few and far between. It is amazing to note that though 330 workers were killed in more than 250 fatal accidents prosecutions were launched only in 14 cases. We have not got the latest report on prosecutions. The latest report of the Inspector

of Mines is of the year 1951 and this is the year of grace 1955. If you look at that report, you will find that some prosecutions are pending, some had been fined Rs. 15 or Rs. 10 or at the most Rs. 150. In one case only I have found that there has been six months' rigorous imprisonment. What does this go to show? It shows that this government shows consideration for the owners and callousness and indifference for the lives of the workers. What is to be done?

The A.I.T.U.C., which I have the honour to represent in this House, has submitted for the consideration not only of the Government but also of the people at large, and the coal-miners in particular, the following points: "The A.I.T.U.C., demands that the Central Government should take immediate steps to overhaul the safety regulations in the mines and also the Inspectorate for check-up of their implementation. The A.I.T.U.C., further demands that labour, which is most vitally concerned, must have its full say not only in framing regulations, but also in their actual implementation and inspection."

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMA-
NAND: May I know in how many coal-mines the A.I.T.U.C., is functioning? What is the percentage?

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: They may not function only in the coal-mines in which you and your friends are functioning. Otherwise, in all the others.

"The mine-owners have throughout shown a callous indifference to the safety of the workers in their greed for more and more profits. Under them, our mines have become virtual death-traps for the workers." In fact, some years ago they were called by the General Secretary of the A.I.T.U.C. as death pits.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMA-
NAND: What paper is that?

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE:
This is the *New Age*, a sort of bug-bear to you.

"In these circumstances, the question whether these lines should not be taken over by government in order to ensure safety and decent conditions of work to the workers, has assumed importance and urgency." I would ask the Labour Minister to consider very seriously whether these coal-mines should be rationalised and whether after nationalisation the workers should have adequate control in conjunction with the Government of the administration of the coal-mines. There is another Resolution coming forward urging the nationalisation of the manganese industry, but I am afraid the coal industry is a far more important and key industry for being nationalised.

Sir, I am afraid my time is coming to a close. On the last occasion, I referred to the nature of the accidents and let me now tell you how these accidents could be easily prevented.

Snapping of haulage ropes.—This can be prevented by oiling and greasing at intervals and inspection. I am putting these concrete suggestions and I hope the Labour Minister will see to it that they are carried out. Though the rules and bye-laws provide that the history of the ropes, such as the date of manufacture, the period it will last, the last date of inspection, etc., should be maintained at the winding engine room, this is seldom done.

Derailing of tubs.—The accidents of this nature can be obviated by maintaining the haulage road in good condition with ballast and providing for man holes at various places along haulage line.

Falling of side coal.—This can be completely eliminated by proper dressing and fencing off the area

where there is noise of bumping heard.

Flooding of mines with rain water.—It is very necessary that proper survey should be maintained in the mines as well as in the Mines Department. Advance bore-holes, though statutorily provided for, are not done in many mines.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just one minute more.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE:
These are the things that I wanted to impress upon the Labour Minister.

In conclusion, I suggest that the following steps should be taken to minimise accidents and increase the margin of safety:

1. The Mining Boards as laid down in the Act should be immediately constituted.
2. Thorough inspection of mines to the satisfaction of the workers should be carried out on a complaint made by the workers. The check-up of the implementation of the regulations should not be left to the Government inspectorate alone. The miners, who work under grave risks, should have a right to see that the regulations are implemented. The trade unions also representing the workers must have the right to check up the implementation of the regulations.
3. Judicial or non-official enquiries should be held in all cases of fatal accidents.
4. Deterrent punishment should be meted out to owners when ever there is a contravention of the Act and the provisions of the Regulations, bye-laws and rules.
5. The Indian Bureau of Mines should arrange for inspection by the Bureau of at least 50 per cent. of the mines with a view to finding out whether the develop

ment of mines is taking place in a scientific manner.

- 6 All enquiries should be public and the findings of the Inspector should be made known to the Trade Unions.
- 7 The strength of the Inspectorate should be increased three-fold. This is the most important thing that should be done here and now.
8. Security of service of Managers: If the Managers take a stiff attitude with regard to the safety in the coal-mines, the employers come down on them and make their lives miserable.

They have, for the security of the service, to dance to the tune of the employers. Publication of rules, bye-laws and regulations in Indian languages . (Time bell rings.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution moved:

"This House is of opinion that Government should take immediate steps to ensure safety measures in the working of the Coal mines and recommends that deterrent punishment should be meted out to persons responsible for violating the safety provisions laid down in the Coal Mines Regulations."

SHRI RATANLAL KISHORILAL MALVIYA: (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, I move:

"That in the Resolution, for the words 'to ensure safety measures in the working of the coal mines' the words 'to appoint a Committee consisting of qualified technicians and representatives of the employer and the employees to inspect the mines in the various States and suggest necessary safety measures' be substituted."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Resolution and the amendment are before the House. Mr. Malviya.

SHRI RATANLAL KISHORILAL MALVIYA: Sir, the recent disasters in the coal mines especially in Parasia and Amlabad collieries in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have perturbed the whole of the mining area, especially the labour and the organisations who have been working among the labour class in these coal mines. These are not the only two disasters which took place, but in the recent past, disasters of such magnitude took place in the Rewa Coalfields and in the Chanda Coalfields as well, in which the pits were inundated with water and some other major accidents had taken place. Of course, I know excepting in these two disasters, viz., the Parasia and the Amlabad Colliery disasters, no enquiry was set up in the other two. I am glad and I congratulate the Government on appointing Committees of enquiry within 3 days after these two disasters had taken place. Not only that. Help was forthcoming from the organisations, from the State Governments and from other bodies to the dependents of the deceased and some works were opened and the Government did its level best to see that the dependents were not put to any inconvenience. So there is no doubt that the Government is alive to the problems which face the workers owing to these accidents, and the Government have taken precautions to make enquiries soon after they happen, but my submission is that this alone is not sufficient. The enquiries are confined to particular areas, to particular collieries and the activities of the Enquiry Committees cannot be extended beyond those collieries. In fact, the geological situation and the situation which has been created by small leases in Bihar is so complex that unless each and every colliery was examined, inspected and a thorough report given on each of them, it would be difficult to

[Shri Ratanlal Kishorilal Malviya.] find out the actual situation of the individual colliery and the safety measures which that colliery particularly requires. These disasters simply open the eyes and they have given an indication that if in a big colliery like Parasia these accidents occur—it is not a minor colliery but it is a big colliery and so is Amlabad—then there are hundreds of small collieries which have got no machines and which are working by hand and which cannot provide finances. What will happen to those collieries? So, one of the suggestions, which have come about the nationalisation of mines, is no doubt a remedy but there is a suggestion with regard to small collieries in the report of the working Party on coal set up by the Central Government about three years ago. The suggestion was that these small units may be amalgamated. If nationalisation of the Coal industry cannot be undertaken immediately, then it is of imperative importance that this amalgamation of the smaller coal-mines should be undertaken as early as possible. This is not the voice of the workers only or that of the Government but this is also the voice of the employers themselves. The three representative organisations of the employers—the Indian Mining Association, the Indian Colliery Owners' Association and the Indian Mining Federation—have, with one voice, said that there is a good case for amalgamation of the small collieries. This would, to some extent, reduce the burden of the Government so far as safety in the coal mines is concerned. My amendment to the main Resolution points out that an Enquiry Committee has to be set up in view of what I have just said and if that Enquiry Committee is agreed to, then the Committee must have representatives of the three sections—the Government, the employers and the labour representatives. Unless this Enquiry Committee is set up, I am very doubtful that any good result will

follow from the recommendations of a particular Court of Enquiry because of their nature. They are bound by the law under the Mines Act. They cannot go beyond the scope of a particular mine. So far as the accident rate is concerned, I may submit that the rate of accidents is lower than in other countries.

12 NOON

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Is that so?

SHRI RATANLAL KISHORILAL MALVIYA: Yes, it is a little less. But we cannot be complacent on account of that. The geological conditions are definitely better in India than in any other country in Europe or even in America, though, of course, American conditions are more or less the same as those in India. Sir, I had the opportunity to go down a mine in Germany, about 3,000 feet down and I could look into the conditions of the mine and the precautions which the management took in taking me inside the mine. Of course, those precautions were not particularly taken for me, they were the ordinary precautions they took in the case of every worker. I was satisfied with the precautions that they took, because those were gassy mines and those were the precautions which should be taken in our mines as well, which are said to be gassy mines. For instance, a match box should never be allowed in such a mine. If there is truth in the statement made by my hon. friend, Shri Banerjee, that a match box was taken inside the mine, it could certainly cause an explosion. There is no doubt Sir, that the.....

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: I did not say that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was a *bidi* not a match box.

SHRI RATANLAL KISHORILAL MALVIYA: A *bidi* cannot produce any such explosion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, go on

SHRI RATANLAL KISHORILAL MALVIYA: Sir, so far as the rules are concerned, though the new rules are being framed, I am sure that the old rules also are sufficient to give a good measure of safety, though not absolute safety to the workers. But the whole difficulty is this. As has been found now during the enquiry into the Parasia explosion, the machinery is not adequate for implementing or enforcing those rules. That is one of the main difficulties. What is really necessary is to see that those rules are really made effective. Secondly, the new rules should be framed in consultation with labour and the attempt should also be made to amalgamate these smaller collieries which generally exist in the Jharia area in Bihar. This is very necessary if we want to safeguard the interests of the workers in the coal-mines. And I will also suggest that this can be done only by appointing a Committee with comprehensive terms of reference so that it may deal with all these things and be representative of all the interests of persons who can look into the affair as a whole and make suitable suggestions. With these words, Sir, I move my amendment.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: Mr. Chairman, I would like to support the amendment because it is more practicable, but I would like to add that there is a lot of substance in what the Resolution says. I don't know whether that is the exact form in which it should be, but it does not ask for anything more to be done than recommend "that deterrent punishment should be meted out to persons responsible for violating the safety provisions laid down".

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

Sir, we had the recent experience of the disaster in Parasia where the I.N.T.U.C., as was rightly admitted by Mr. Banerjee, is the most representative union, of which I happen to be the President. So I know something and I have some first-hand information with regard to it.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: No, I did not say that I only said.....

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: Well, never mind, if he did not say that, then the words that I used do not apply to what he said.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Please don't mislead the House.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: Even if I had not understood his words rightly, the House would have; I perhaps did not catch his exact words.

I proceed to the point I was coming to, that mine owners are somewhat careless, or perhaps in many cases casual in the observance of the rules as they now exist. I find that this is not perhaps a thing which is peculiar to our mines only, for I feel that it is a sort of national characteristic, more or less, with regard to safety rules and regulations, on account of the fatalistic attitude that we have of things, of being casual about these things. For instance, if you were to see these aeroplane accidents, it cannot be said that since the airlines were nationalised, accidents have gone down; if anything, unfortunately, their number is increasing.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: The workers have not been associated with the management; if they were, accidents would not occur like this.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: I will come to that. I would be the last person to denounce the workers; but we must own up facts and not misrepresent them. After all, the worker today is less educated and is less aware of his duties than the persons who are in charge of the mines, who too are to a certain extent wanting in this respect, because they are all drawn from among the people who by nature allow these things to take their natural course and tend to be casual. Sir, I was reading the other day an article written by a foreigner—an American—soon after

[Dr. Shrimati Seeta Parmanand.] that accident near Nagpur. This man had been travelling in a plane on the other line. He says that he was surprised at the way in which some of the crew after the plane had taken off would hand over the engine to the assistant pilot and go to the crew room and carry on conversation and that was not the way in which things were done in other countries. So, what I say is that we need not at once come to the conclusion that immediately there is nationalisation, the figures of accidents will come down. Take, for example, the railway collieries. I have not the figures of accidents with me, but we have these nationalised mines, I mean these railway collieries. Can anybody say that we have ensured that there are no accidents there at all, or that they are comparatively few?

I would like to point out that in spite of what I have said just now, I would be the first person to emphasise that there is need to make the observance of these regulations very strict. Why is it that these rules and regulations, as they now exist, are not as effective as they should be? The first reason is that the regulations are taken more or less, word for word, from the regulations which are in vogue in England. But the ordinary worker as well as the technical men in England are more conscious of their duties and so with those regulations; the mining accidents are less there. It is not the case here. Moreover, the inspectorate staff is inadequate here and that is also a strong reason for the greater number of accidents.

A strong reason for this inadequate inspection is that in the old days most of the coal mines were owned by the British people. Even now there is a large British interest in them. So, the old regime did not want unnecessary investigation and interference into the management of those mines and it was more convenient for them to have as little inspection as possible. So, for these 850 mines—or for the matter of that 3,500 mines, if we take their total number—there was one chief

inspector, and though there are nine circles yet there are only a few inspectors who are aided by some assistant inspectors and they managed the inspection of those mines. Often, these inspectors with only about four to five years of service are allowed to inspect these mines as the final inspection.

What kind of inspection it may be has to be seen when it is remembered that for one big area there is only one inspector. I can speak about Chhindwara circle. The area extends right from Hyderabad to Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Vindhya Pradesh. The result is that there are 50 plus 200 or so other mines in one circle. This long stretch has to be examined by one inspector and his junior who is often a man with one year of service employed immediately after passing his course. The result is that only a few mines are examined once in three or four years and some are not examined at all. Even in such cases of stray inspection, there are no rules and regulations laid down. For instance, when the Mines Inspector was asked as to whether he satisfied himself about the safety rules, he said that he was not called upon, according to the regulations, to go into the safety rules. Therefore, it is not only absolutely necessary to provide for deterrent punishment but before that, to provide for very useful and strict supervision of these mines.

There is another thing about the regulations which may perhaps give wrong impression from the way the matter has been discussed. From my experience, I find that in spite of better mining knowledge of conditions in England, the mines owned by the Britishers often are not run in a better way than those run by Indians because most of the managers also are Indians. No notice of anything is taken because there is nobody to protest very much. And Government does not often get the information it should in these cases, because it is very wrong to blame the Government with the insufficient inspectorate that it has got. Only within the last seven

years have Government come to know about these things and even with that insufficient inspectorate they have been able to find out many of the defects. In the old days, when powers were sought to be concentrated in the hands of one man the Chief Inspector of Mines, he was allowed, from a distance, to give sanction to start working a mine which had an abandoned mine next to that. In such circumstances, it is not understood how the Chief Mining Inspector can give permission without causing an inspection. No provision was laid down that the Senior Inspector would have to have the mine inspected before giving any such permission. Similarly, it was required under the law that a note giving full workings, etc., should be sent to the Chief Inspector of Mines along with the maps, plans, etc., of the abandoned mines. If it is sent, well and good, but it is not laid down that if it is not sent, what happened!

There is another regulation providing for two exits. I just now told you that the mines under British management are no better and I would try to prove that with reference to the use of two exits. Every mine is to have two exits so that in an emergency the worker can use them but no precaution is taken to see that every miner is made conversant with the location of the second exit. The miners, being human beings and being naturally lazy, use the easiest and the nearest exit and in an emergency the second exit become worse than useless and very often rescue work which could have perhaps saved most of the people is not effective. Similarly, Sir, there is no checking of other equipment, like the blowing of the sirens and there is no attempt at making the miners conversant with all rules and regulations. There is no drill given to the miners for emergency exits, etc. This is not done in the British-owned mines also. At least people who are used to these things in their own countries could set an example by doing these things here

but that is the general way in which mines are being managed. I would, therefore, think that it would be, to begin with, better than leaving the Resolution at present where it is if the Government, with all the suggestions it has about making changes in the Regulations, were to appoint a Committee as suggested in the amendment, to go into the rules and regulations and provide also rules for better administration of the mines through the inspectorate. When a case is finished the argument becomes public property and it is published in the press also. I conducted the case on behalf of the I.N.T.U.C. and my arguments have been sent to the court. I would like to refer to one of the recommendations; that is that it is necessary for Government to give deterrent punishment so that accidents which are, on the face of it, openly due to the negligence of the management may be avoided. In the face of that recommendation of mine, I feel I have to support the Resolution as it is because I believe there is a good deal in it. Even if Government does not find it convenient to accept it—I do not know why it should not—I hope the purpose would be served if Government, by making a note of the discussion on the floor of the House, were to proceed to take all precautions so that the regulations are made so stringent that nobody can escape in the way they have been escaping heretofore.

The amendment moved by Shri Malviya is based on this Resolution adopted by the I.N.T.U.C. at its annual session: "While appreciating the action of the Government in appointing a Court of Enquiry, this Congress is of the opinion that prompt action should be taken in this and similar other reports and suggest that the Government should appoint a Committee consisting of qualified technicians along with representatives of the employers and employees, to inspect the mines in various States and recommend necessary safety measures".

[Dr. Shrimati Seeta Parmanand.]

Before I conclude, there is one more point to which I would like to draw the attention of the Government. For some reason, until 1950, the second seams in our mines were not considered to be an economic proposition but now, perhaps because of certain difficulties in the taking of new leases, the proprietors are working the second and third seams. In Parasia and Pench Valley coalfields particularly, the second and third seams are only 4 1/2 feet high. You can well imagine how difficult it is for a miner to go on digging in that darkness, not being able to stand up even but only in a bent position. It would be necessary for Government, if those seams are to be worked at all, to see that no permission is given unless those mines are electrically worked. Then only will the working not be so strenuous. It was absolutely necessary for Government and for the inspectors to have seen to this long ago that wherever electricity was available—in Madhya Pradesh it is available at cheap rates because of the Khapper Kheda scheme—all the mines were worked by electricity. The cages, etc., should be electrically operated.

These are some of the things which would again come out in the course of the enquiry, through the Report of the Court of Enquiry and through the arguments of the counsels and Government should immediately turn its attention to them and change the regulations. Sir, I support the amendment.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: Sir, I give further support to the amendment moved by my hon. friend Mr. Malviya and so ably supported by another hon. lady Member, Dr. Seeta Parmanand. I am under a sort of undertaking to my hon. friend Mr. Banerjee who requested me to speak a few words on his original Resolution. Now, I had gone into the contents of the Resolution and since, largely speaking, I agree with the motive, the intent and the purport of the Resolu-

tion, I said I should have no difficulty in giving my support to his Resolution. But, I am very sorry to state that the language that he used in moving his Resolution was so unhappy that his whole case was demolished by the use of that very language.

SHRI S. MAHANTY (Orissa): You can reconstruct it.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: It alienated all my sympathies for his Resolution that I had previously, but an undertaking is after all an undertaking and I am not going to oppose the Resolution.

Sir, originally I was not satisfied with the language that he had used in framing his Resolution "This House is of opinion that Government should take immediate steps", etc. Now 'immediate steps' in matters like this cannot be taken. They will be taken only in due course. It is a lengthy and tedious process. 'Immediate steps' cannot be like this, take a bundle of these papers in hand and put them on the other side. Thus it cannot be done. Now this was an unfortunate phraseology used in the framing of the Resolution. And the other was "deterrent punishment should be meted out to persons responsible for violating the safety provisions laid down in the Coal Mines Regulations." I am not satisfied with the use of the word 'deterrent' even. If the wording, so far as the type of the punishment is concerned, had been more severe, I would not have been sorry, but then to put it in a Resolution and to make it a sort of a demand was a thing that I did not like.

Now, Sir, my friend Mr. Banerjee demolished his own case absolutely out of existence when he talked of the callousness of this Government. There is a wide gulf between his outlook and my outlook on the Government. He looks upon the present Government as the villain of the piece. I look upon the Government as a redeemer and an upholder of all good and noble causes and more particularly of the downtrodden, the weak, the

starving and the teeming millions who constitute our labour. Now, the conditions as we find today and the background in which these conditions have existed for so long a time do not permit of magical changes and magical remedies. Remedies are being taken: things are being improved and they will take time to improve to our satisfaction.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE (Hyderabad): In the Second Five Year Plan?

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: It is for the Chairman of the Planning Commission to tell you, Mr. Dhage; I cannot do it.

Now, Sir, Mr. Banerjee talked of these mine pits as death pits and death traps. He forgot that these so-called death traps and death pits were the bread-suppliers and *Bhojanalayas* of the poor. He should have taken that fact also into account. The mines will have to be worked. The workers will be men of flesh and blood and the poorer the person the stronger the temptation and the stronger the need for working in a coal-mine, which is never a bed of roses. It is always attended with all manner of risks that go with working in a pit, in a coal-mine. Sir, I am very sorry that these friends on the right.....

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN (Madras): Why not of the left?

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: On my right indeed. You are a left-winger; I know it.

Now, Sir, Mr. Banerjee spoiled a very good case by the means that he adopted for getting his Resolution accepted by the Government. How is it possible on the one hand for you to condemn the Government and yet, on the other, to ask it to accept your Resolution? The two do not go together.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: Why not?

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: Mr. Mahanty will take another 25 years to

understand how the one follows from the other. His intelligence is yet too immature to understand these things.

Now, Sir, indifference and callousness on the one hand and solicitude for the interests of the coal-miners on the other do not go together. The one thing that I have not been able to comprehend, which Mr. Mahanty might have comprehended, is how these can go together. Now, here is a description, a very vivid and graphic description of the working of the mind of the Government, that is, of the Government people, the Ministers and so on and so forth, that they are indifferent and callous to the interests, to the safety and even to the lives of the workers of the mines, and they are full of solicitude, sympathy, affection and dearness and all that for the owners of the mines. The two, I emphasise, cannot go together. If there can be any solicitude on the part of the present-day Government it can only be on the side of the workers, the labour which works in the mines, and not on the side of the owners, and now unless and until my friend Mr. Banerjee divests himself of this wrong notion that he has deliberately and studiously entertained for a very large number of years towards Government.....

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: If, it were wrong, I would certainly have divested myself of it. But it is perfectly true.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: I have only to remind Mr. Banerjee of his old days when he was an object of pride for us. He is still an object of affection and admiration for me with his flowing locks and all that, but then, Sir, I only.....

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: My hair attracted the attention of the police also in Calcutta.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: wish and I only pray that there be a little change in the mentality and in

[Shri H. P. Saksena.]
the outlook of my hon. friend. Now, if that were so, the conditions in the mines, the condition in other industries of the country, will be changed soon, much sooner than he or I can ever expect. But then, Sir, he is very anxious to improve the condition of 3,40,000 mine workers. So is the Government. So am I. Our sympathy is active. Our sympathy is objective and our efforts are directed in the right channels. Yours is only a piece of propaganda meant for the consumption of people outside this House, not intended for the relief of the workers.

Now, on the other hand, I find that the amendment which I have stood up to support.....

SHRI S. MAHANTY: Which amendment?

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: There was only one amendment. Mr. Mahanty ought to know which has got concrete shape, and if it is accepted by the Government, concrete steps will have been taken for the purpose in view.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Persuade the Government to accept the amendment.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: I cannot speak for the Government.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: But you have been speaking all along for the Government.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: I support the amendment and in supporting the amendment I say what I think proper. Now Mr. Banerjee and I go together in this respect and even if we do not succeed forthwith to prevent the occurrence of accidents in mines, at least we ought to take steps, 'immediate steps' if Mr. Banerjee is pleased with it, to minimise the occurrence of accidents.

There can be no two opinions on this matter but I would again request Mr. Banerjee to call a halt to his

A.I.T.U.C. activities which simply jeopardise the cause which he thinks he is upholding and supporting.

Now, another piece of argument that he advanced was about the greed of profit on the part of the miners. That goes without saying. We take them to be very insatiable hungry and heartless earners of profit who have no interest in the welfare of the labour. Now, merely abusing these avaricious mine-owners will not serve the purpose. Necessary steps have to be taken for which the Government's hands have to be strengthened.....

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: If you do the right thing.....

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: It will do the right thing. I am engaged in that piece of business and I would request my friend to extend the same helping hand to the Government so that things may be done easily and within the least period of time. I only hope that my words will have some influence on the working of the mind of my hon. friend Mr. Banerjee and with these words I support the amendment which indirectly means that I support the object and purport of his resolution.

श्री टी० बात्रा (बिहार) : उपसभापति जी, मैं श्री बैंनर्जी को हार्दिक धन्यवाद देता हूँ कि उन्होंने गरीब जनता की बात साँची, उस गरीब जनता की जो कि अपनी भूख मिटाने के लिए कोल माइंस में, जिसको हम माँत का कुआँ कह सकते हैं, हजारों फीट नीचे जा कर एक गैँती और एक छोटी सी बत्ती ले कर के अपनी रोजी कमाने के लिए काम करती हैं। माननीय सदस्य सक्सेना साहब को कोई फिक्र नहीं यदि हजारों गरीब, जो इस माँत के कुएँ में काम करते हैं, जब एकसीडेंट होता है तो मर जाते हैं। सक्सेना साहब के लिए यह कोई बड़ी बात नहीं है। वह तो कहेंगे कि लोग जन्मते हैं तो मरेंगे भी।

श्री जी० के० ठगे : वह तो उसे भोजनालय कहते हैं।

श्री टी० बोन्ना : यदि कोई करोड़पति मर जाए तो कहेंगे कि कचहरी बन्द हो जानी चाहिए, पीब्लिक डे होना चाहिए, उसका स्मारक बनाना चाहिए। खैर, वह तो कांग्रूसी मम्बर हैं और कांग्रूस गवर्नमेंट को सपोर्ट करने के लिए, हमारे बैनर्जी साहब ने जो बहुत अच्छे अच्छे बहुमूल्य सुझाव हमारे सदन के सामने रखे हैं, उनको वह यों ही ठुकरा सकते हैं, परन्तु उन्हें समझना चाहिए कि हालाँकि बैनर्जी साहब कांग्रूसी मम्बर नहीं हैं और कांग्रूसी विरोधी दल के आदमी हैं फिर भी उन्होंने इस सदन के सामने इन गरीब लोगों की जान और प्राण की रक्षा के लिए, जो कि इन मौत के कुओं में काम करते हैं, इन सुझावों को रखना ठीक समझा है। मैं तो कहूँगा कि उन्हें इसके लिए हार्दिक धन्यवाद देना चाहिये और मैं उन्हें हार्दिक धन्यवाद देता हूँ। उनके जो सुझाव हैं वे बहुत ही बहुमूल्य हैं और सरकार को चाहिये कि वह जल्द से जल्द इस चीज की ओर अपना ध्यान आकृष्ट करे।

शायद मिस्टर सक्सेना किसी कोयले की खान के अन्दर नहीं गए हैं और मैं नहीं समझता कि हमारे माननीय लैबर मिनिस्टर भी किसी कोयले की खान के अन्दर गए होंगे।

श्री एच० पी० सक्सेना : कभी नहीं।

श्री टी० बोन्ना : मैं अनुरोध करता हूँ कि यदि लैबर मिनिस्टर साहब नहीं गए हैं तो उन्हें जल्द से जल्द किसी कोल माइन में जा कर उसका निरीक्षण करना चाहिए और तभी बैनर्जी साहब ने जो सुझाव यहां रखे हैं उनको वह एग्जिप्ट कर सकते हैं, वर्ना नहीं।

मैं एक ऐसे इलाके से आता हूँ जहाँ एक नहीं बल्कि बहुत सी कोल माइंस हैं, जैसे भीरिया हैं, कटरास हैं, पाथरडीह हैं, रानीगंज हैं। वहाँ और भी दूसरी माइंस हैं। तो हमको सब से पहले यह देखना चाहिए कि माइनिंग लीज मिलती कैसे हैं। पहले कांटेक्ट्स आते हैं और जिले के डिप्टी कमिश्नर को दरखास्त करते हैं कि लीज के लिए इतनी सलामी, इतने हजार रुपया देने वाला हूँ और फिर उनकी रिक्वेस्टेशन

होती है। उनकी दरखास्त तब प्रॉविशियल गवर्नमेंट के पास जाती है जहाँ प्रॉविशियल गवर्नमेंट के लीवल पर उस फाइल को डील किया जाता है और उसके बाद जो रिव्यू मिनिस्टर हैं वह उस लीज को सैंक्शन करते हैं। यह तो माइंस की लीज किस तरह से सैंक्शन होती है उसकी वर्किंग है। ६६ वर्ष की लीज हुई है। मुझे बतलाया गया कि जो प्रॉविशियल रिव्यू मिनिस्टर हैं उनकी हमने क्या खोजी और जब उनकी कृपादीष्ट हुई तो यह लीज हुई। बड़े बड़े ठेकेदारों के बीच में से एक या दो ठेकेदारों को चुन लिया और जिन पर कृपादीष्ट हुई उनको माइनिंग की लीज मिली। उसके बाद आप देखें कि इलाके इलाके में माइनिंग इंस्पेक्टर हैं, चीफ इंस्पेक्टर हैं। मैं कहता हूँ कि जब सिनेमा हाल बनाने के वास्ते दरखास्त देते हैं और वह दरखास्त सैंक्शन होती है कि फलां आदमी फलां जगह सिनेमा बना सकता है तो उसके साथ भी सेफ्टी मेजर्स की एक किताब दी जाती है कि उसे क्या क्या सेफ्टी मेजर्स लेने हैं। तो डा० सीता परमानन्द का यह कहना बिल्कुल गलत है कि माइंस के जितने प्रॉप्राइटर्स हैं उनके पास सेफ्टी मेजर्स की किताब भी नहीं है, उनको मालूम ही नहीं रहता कि सेफ्टी मेजर्स के रूलस और रैगुलेशंस क्या हैं।

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: I never said that. They have their books of regulations but they do not observe the rules because they are careless.

श्री टी० बोन्ना : I am sorry. मैं कहता हूँ कि कोल माइंस के जो प्रॉप्राइटर्स हैं उनको, हर एक को, यह अच्छी तरह से मालूम रहता है, वे अच्छी तरह से इस बात को जानते हैं कि उनको कौन कौन सा काम करना चाहिए और कौन कौन सा नहीं करना चाहिए। वे इस बात का ज्ञान रखते हैं कि इतने एरिया में काम करना है, इतना नीचे जा कर खोद कर पिट से कोयला निकालना है, वगैरह, वगैरह। उनको सब बातों का अच्छी तरह से ज्ञान रहता है लेकिन, जैसा कि मिस्टर बैनर्जी ने कहा, वे अपनी प्रॉफिट मैकिंग की प्रवृत्ति को रोक नहीं सकते हैं और

[श्री टी बोद्धा]

इस कारण से इस ओर ध्यान नहीं दते हैं। वे जानते हैं कि यदि सैफ्टी मेजर्स पर इतना रुपया लगाएंगे तो हमें जो ५० परसेंट का प्राफिट होता है वह ३० परसेंट ही रह जाएगा। अगर वे रूल्स और रंगुलेशंस के ऊपर चलें, सैफ्टी मेजर्स को अपनाएं, तो उनको जो ५० या ६० परसेंट का प्राफिट होता है उसमें रिडक्शन हो जाता है। बात दरअसल यह है कि जितने भी कोल माइंस के प्रोप्राइटर्स होते हैं उनका प्रान्तीय सरकार के जो रवेन्यू मिनिस्टर होते हैं उनके यहां लगातार आना जाना होता रहता है।

ऐसी बातें हैं जिनकी मुझे जानकारी है, मैं उन्हें कहना तो नहीं चाहता लेकिन मैं आनरबल मिनिस्टर के सामने इस बात को रखता हूँ कि जब तक कोल माइंस की लीज की मंजूरी के सवाल को गवर्नमेंट आफ इंडिया अपने हाथ में नहीं लेती है तब तक कोल माइंस में एक्सीडेंट्स होना बन्द नहीं हो सकते हैं। जब तक माइनिंग लीज की दरखास्त को मंजूर करना था उसको रिजेक्ट करना स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के हाथ में रहेगा, जब तक यह चीज स्टेट लेवल पर होती रहेगी कि अमुक आदमी को माइनिंग लीज दी जाए तब तक माइंस में एक्सीडेंट्स होना कभी बन्द नहीं हो सकता है। मेरा यह कहना है कि सिर्फ रूल्स और रंगुलेशंस के बनाने से ही काम नहीं चलेगा। जैसा कि मिस्टर बैनर्जी ने कहा, जितने माइंस के प्रोप्राइटर्स थे उनके ऊपर १५० रुपया जुर्माना हुआ या वह भी नहीं हुआ। मैं कहता हूँ कि अगर आप आज यह कानून बना भी दें कि फलां फलां नियम का तोड़ने पर तीन वर्ष का रिगरेस इंप्रिजनमेंट होगा तो भी निश्चय ही एक्सीडेंट्स होते ही रहेंगे क्योंकि यह काम स्टेट लेवल पर होता है। मुझे यही कहना है कि अगर कोई कमेटी बनाते हैं तो उस कमेटी में गवर्नमेंट के आदमी रहने चाहिए, एम्प्लाइज के आदमी रहने चाहिए और जो लेबर लीडर्स हैं, चाहे वे कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के हों, चाहे सोशलिस्ट पार्टी के हों या कांग्रेस पार्टी के हों, किसी भी पार्टी के हों, जिनको आत्म-ज्ञान है, जो जानते हैं, कि माइनिंग फील्ड में

क्या क्या खतरा होते हैं, उनको इसमें रखना चाहिए।

मैं तो आखिरी बार यही अर्ज करूंगा कि माइनिंग लीज के सैंक्शन का काम, माइनिंग की वकिंग को सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट को अपने हाथ में ही रखना चाहिए वरना एक्सीडेंट्स होते ही रहेंगे। इतना ही मुझे कहना था।

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: Mr. Deputy Chairman, listening to the various speakers on this Resolution, it struck me that it is a very dangerous thing for a trade unionist to dabble in psychology or for a psychologist to dabble in trade unionism because, when I heard Dr. Seeta Parmanand speaking, I could not make up my mind what she was and what she was dabbling in. Because on the one hand, she said that she was speaking as President of a particular union which belonged to the Indian National Trade Union Congress; and at the same time talked in terms of the drifting of those employed in the coalmines, of their laziness, and so on. It hurt me for the reason that when the accident took place in Parasia.....

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: I did not say miners; they are not lazy.....

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: You talked of the national character of the people who include workers and all others.

Sir, workers also are part of our nation. It hurt me because in Parasia, just after the accident there I saw that no one there could be accused of laziness; no one there could be accused of drifting. Even at a time when it was not known why the accident had taken place, what its causes were, even those who had been involved in that accident were going back into those pits, going back into those mines to conduct the rescue operations. Day and night they were working without knowing whether they would be safe even for the next minute. Therefore,.....

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARVATHANAND: Sir, it is a deliberate perversion of my statement. The Resolution requests that the management be awarded punishment.

MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order. Let her continue.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: But, Sir, if she would read her own speech again she would see that she has used the terms or given the impression that it is a sort of weakness that is there amongst our people, and so on. She has not specified only the management, and that general reference is what provoked me into making this remark.

I would like here to bring to the notice of the hon. Members that those who work in the coalmines work with their lives in their hands; and the families, who wait for these workers to come out every day from those mines, also realise the tremendous danger that exists. And they themselves have no confidence that day, night or in the morning the bread winner will be coming back and partake of the meal that is waiting.

This is the position in our mines today and I would like here also to mention that when we met the hon. the Labour Minister after visiting the scene of accident, he expressed himself to be aware of this fact. He also said that he was looking into the matter and that he wished to see that conditions were improved. Knowing that he was in that frame of mind at that time, I trust that he continues to be in the same frame and perhaps even more amenable to listen to us. And, therefore, I have confidence that he will accept this Resolution in view of the fact that since the Parasia disaster two further disasters have also taken place in the country.

Now, Sir, I come to the Resolution itself. Firstly, one aspect to which I would like to draw the attention of the Government is the under-staffing of the inspectorate. Today in our

country with 890 mines there is an insufficient number of inspectors to go round these mines to inspect them and check them as thoroughly and as efficiently as is necessary in order to avoid accidents. We know from the reports that we see in the newspapers, from the statements that are made by various people in positions of authority, by trade unionists, that many of these accidents today are taking place because of inaccurate plans being kept, because of insufficient checking by the inspectorate staff. When an inspector has to cover a whole mine belt, when he has to travel miles and miles every day to cover this belt, then it is inevitable that the tendency develops to go into the office of the manager of the mine to have a cursory glance at the plans that are put before him and to initial these plans and then go on to the next office. Because within a certain period of time he has got to finish visiting all these various mines. If, on the other hand, there was a larger number of staff, then the opportunity and the situation would be there for the various inspectors to go in for a detailed check-up of the plans that are put before them and in this way ensure to a great measure against certain accidents taking place. For instance, in the Parasia disaster it has become almost clear that the plans were kept in a very careless manner and the checking up of those plans was carried out in an equally careless and slipshod manner. In this way, the possibility of accidents is always there, unless and until the inspectorate staff is strong enough and large enough to cope with the inspection that they have to carry out.

Secondly, in this connection I would also like to draw attention to the statement made by the Deputy Minister in the Lok Sabha that the Model Dharamband Colliery, where a disaster took place on the 2nd February this year, had not been inspected since 1953. This itself shows how very under-staffed the inspectorate staff must be if a mine can go unchecked for as long a period as that. And no wonder that the accident took place

[Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan.]

when there was no check being put on the management or on the owners to ensure that proper plans were being kept.

Another point to which I would like to draw the Minister's attention is the fact that in our country the practice of giving an incentive bonus to those who are employed in the mining companies continues. So long as that practice continues, there is always the danger of the managers of the various mines trying to induce the workers to produce more and more coal in a shorter period of time in order that their bonus will be of a greater amount and therein there is a great danger. Because there is the practice inside the mines that only up to a certain area can be mined until it is further inspected by the surveyor or whoever is in charge. But sometimes the managers in their greed for their bonus might induce the workers to go a bit further and then they come up perhaps against pockets of poison gas or against a seam that is already flooded with water. And in this way accidents are likely to take place. Therefore, this practice of the incentive bonus being paid should be stopped forthwith and in that manner a certain check can be put on those who are in positions of authority in the various mines, because we know today that in the mines the workers receive perhaps the lowest wages paid to workers in any industry in our country. But on the other hand, if one were to go in for a detailed examination of the amount of money that is earned as incentive bonus and the profits that are being made by the managements of the various mining companies, you will find that the disparity is also perhaps the greatest that might exist in any industry in this country. Therefore, one of the checks that can be brought to bear on the managers of the mines is the abolishing of this incentive bonus. It is just these two points that I would like to add to what has already been said, because I felt that this is a very important Resolution, a Resolution affecting an indus-

try that is of national importance, an industry on the development of which depends the development of all industries in our country as a whole. Because in our country with its acute shortage of electric power, with the many thermal stations that are there, to make up for the electric power, unless and until the coal industry is developed, safeguarded and carried forward, our country itself cannot progress. Sir, one of the persons, who went down into the Parasia mine to look into it after the accident had taken place, as soon as he came out, made a remark. He said unfortunately Dante, when he wrote his "Inferno", did not know of the existence of the Newton Chikli colliery. This was his reaction after going inside the mine. And, therefore, when a Resolution is here before us, I trust that the Labour Minister will accept this Resolution, will take that first step forward in ensuring the safety of the lives of those who work in the mines and those who go deep down into the earth in order to bring up the wealth of our country, in order to do that which is necessary to take our country forward.

We are very much accustomed, Sir, to hearing here that famous phrase that things are under consideration, and things are under active consideration. And today, I would appeal to the Labour Minister to go beyond the stage of consideration and to go beyond the stage of active consideration, and actually to show some activity on the floor of this House by accepting this Resolution, to which I am sure there can be no single voice of opposition in this House.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (SHRI KHANDUBHAI DESAI): Mr. Deputy Chairman, the Government is in sympathy with the spirit of the Resolution, as well as of the amendment moved by Mr. Malviya. When I say that I am in sympathy with the substance of the Resolution, it does not mean that either I sympathise or I appreciate the jibes that were thrown about in the House by the mover of the Resolution.

We, Sir, on this side of the House, are as much concerned about any accidents taking place anywhere in this country as the other side. In fact, some of us are probably more closely associated with the working class than those who show some sympathy with a view to making capital out of such unfortunate disasters. As far as the working of the 1926 Act and of the Regulations is concerned, I may say that they have worked fairly well till these last two unfortunate disasters brought to our notice certain lacunæ in the Regulations.

The results have shown that since 1940, the rate of fatal accidents per thousand of employees has gradually gone down, which can be shown by the figures. In 1940, the rate of accidents was 1·36 per thousand; in 1941, it was 1·23; in 1942, it was 1·35. Then it has gone down to 1·33 in 1944; in 1945, it was ·95; in 1946, it was ·91; in 1947, it was ·74; in 1948, it was ·43; in 1949, it was ·75; in 1950, it was ·72; in 1951, it was ·90; in 1952, it was 1; in 1953, it was ·97; and in 1954, it was ·98.

Now, up to 1950, the rate of accidents had been going down as a result of the working of these very Regulations which are now being criticised. Since 1950, no doubt, the rate of accidents has gone up. But it was due to the fact that after independence, some of the Part B States had come into the Union, and the proper inspection arrangements were not possible in the initial stages. And so, the rate of accidents has gone up a little. In the year 1954, but for the heavy disaster which took a toll of about 65 lives the accidents would have been less. But by all this, I do not mean to suggest that we are satisfied, or we are complacent, about the matter. We are taking the necessary steps in order to see that the frequency of inspections is increased. I do agree that the strength of the inspecting staff is less. But we are trying to strengthen it. Very recently, we have strengthened the staff by

about six more inspectors. When we requested the Public Service Commission to recruit some staff for us, we got only half the number required by us. But that situation is now being improved, because we are prepared now to pay higher salaries to the people who are found to be fully equipped for this purpose.

Sir, if we compare the rate of accidents here with that in other countries, the position will be as follows—I have got the figures only for the year 1950:

Country	Rate of accidents
India	... 72
Japan	... 186
U. K.	... 83
France	... 110
U. S. A.	... 215
Canada	... 319
South Africa	... 166

While I am quoting these figures, Sir, I would like to say that the rate of accidents in India is not very unfavourable as compared with the rate of accidents obtaining in other countries. But that does not mean that we should be complacent about it. We are looking into this matter very carefully. The Regulations have already been finalised. They had to be sent to the various States for their opinions. They have also been sent to the employers and employees for their criticisms. Now we have received those criticisms. And within a short time, those Regulations will be finalised. At the same time, I would like to say that the last two disasters would also give us some clue in order to be able to improve the Regulations. But we would not like to wait for promulgating the Regulations till the reports of the two courts of enquiry have been received by us. The Regulations that have already been revised will be promulgated immediately they are finalised. At the same time, Sir, I would like to assure the House that on getting the reports of the two courts of enquiry, if the Government finds that an overall investigation or an enquiry is needed in the matter, it

[Shri Khandubhai Desai.]
will have no hesitation in appointing a sort of an enquiry committee to look into the Regulations, even though they may have been revised, in order to find out if any further improvement is necessary.

Now, Sir, I do admit that as far as the prosecutions are concerned

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would you like to take some more time?

SHRI KHANDUBHAI DESAI. Yes, Sir, about five or seven minutes more.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Then, you may speak after lunch

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARMANAND: May I make a suggestion, Sir? So much time has been taken up today by the questions in the morning. And these are all important Resolutions. In order to give a chance to all the Resolutions to be moved and considered, I suggest that we should have only half an hour's lunch interval. I hope the House would kindly agree.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is the House agreeable?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So, nobody agrees with you. The House stands adjourned till 2-30 P.M.

The House adjourned for lunch at one of the clock.

The House re-assembled after lunch at half past two of the clock, MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair

SHRI KHANDUBHAI DESAI: Sir, I have placed before the House certain facts with regard to the accidents in the coalmines, which prove that the accidents in our coalmines are not in excess of those in other countries. The accidents have gone on decreasing from year to year except in the last

year when that unfortunate Parasia accident happened, which increased the percentage to a little over 10 or 12

In spite of these facts, the Government has neither been complacent nor less vigilant. As I said this morning, we still want to strengthen the inspectorate staff to such an extent that the frequency of the inspection increases. Even from the facts which I have been able to collect, I find that the inspections have increased from 5,467 in 1951 to 5,978 in 1952, to 6,469 in 1953 and to about 7,200 in 1954. The number of inspections per mine has also increased from 1.8 in 1951 to 2.3 in 1954. Still we want to increase the frequency of inspection in the mines.

I do admit that in the prosecutions which were launched by the Government for the breaches of regulations before magistrates, the punishments have not been heavy. This has been brought to our notice, and we have already written to the various State Governments, where the mines are located in large numbers, to appoint special magistrates to try these cases so that these magistrates will become fully acquainted with the technicalities and other factors pertaining to these accidents.

My friend, Mr. Satyapriya Banerjee, if he had been true to his name, would have paid some care to the facts of the situation. He said that the Government is too lenient to the employers. In his usual style he tried to make the charge that we are in collusion with the employers to see that the death rates go on increasing. The facts prove otherwise. The number of prosecutions launched in 1951 was 166, whereas it was 276 in 1954. Whenever any breach of the regulations of a major kind comes to the notice of our inspectors, our instructions are that prosecutions should be launched, not only that, but that they should see the prosecutions through. When it was brought to our notice that magistrates do not take a serious view of these offences, we moved in the matter, not after these

major accidents but much earlier, and asked the State Governments that special magistrates should be appointed to look into these cases and award deterrent punishments. These are the facts. I would like to tell my hon. friend, Mr. Banerjee, that so far as the steps for minimising these accidents are concerned, we have a common purpose, whether we belong to this party or that party. This is a human aspect; this is a human factor, and as such, instead of clothing his facts or arguments with invectives and destructive criticisms, he should have brought them to our notice. Even if he does not bring them to our notice, we in this Government are human enough to be moved by this question. Everybody is moved by such accidents, wherever they happen. He should have come forward, with all his experience, to place before us constructive suggestions to improve the regulations, improve inspection and improve the administration of the law.

Sir, as I said, two courts of enquiry are sitting now and looking into these two major accidents. We are awaiting their report for improving the regulations, if it is so indicated by their reports. We have not even waited for their reports. Whatever has suggested itself to us in the light of experience has been incorporated in the regulations which will soon be promulgated.

Also, as I said we have already addressed the State Governments to constitute special magistracy to try these cases. We are as much vigilant and careful about this matter as any in this House I would ask our friends on the other side to tackle all such questions as arise in human affairs with a common purpose in view and never make an attempt to take any advantage, political or otherwise, of such disasters. Assuming that I accept this Resolution, what does it say? It says 'to ensure safety measures for the miners'. As I have already put it to the House, we are making all human efforts to ensure safety to our miners or workers.

The amendment that is moved by our friend Mr. Malviya asks us to appoint a Committee to look into the matter. As I said this morning, we are awaiting the reports of these two courts of enquiry under the Chairmanship of a High Court Judge assisted by a technician and a Member of Parliament. If those reports indicate that an oral enquiry into the conditions of the mines with a view to securing safety is necessary, we will have no hesitation in appointing such an enquiry but at this stage, I would not say that I accept the amendment. I would therefore hope, in view of the facts which I have placed before the House and in view of our own vigilance in the matter, that the mover of the Resolution will withdraw his motion because as I said, I am in agreement with the spirit and substance of the Resolution and the amendment that is moved to it. And the House should be assured that the Government will leave no stone unturned in order to ensure safety to our workers working in the mines or factories as far as is humanly possible.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE. Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have listened with great attention to the speeches by the hon. Members delivered so far, and particularly to the speech of the hon. the Labour Minister, all of whom had nothing to say against the Resolution. The Labour Minister has said that he accepts the spirit of the Resolution as also of the amendment.

At the outset let me say that I accept the amendment. That being so, I would implore the hon. the Labour Minister not only to accept the spirit of the Resolution but also the body of the Resolution as amended. He has said just now so many things—about the proper shape of things to come—and so it logically follows the acceptance of the Resolution as amended by my friend Mr. Malviya. He has referred to the invectives and jibes that he found in my speech. If my calling a spade a spade has wounded his feelings, I express

[Shri Satyapriya Banerjee.]

my regret but it has been my irrepressible habit to call a spade a spade. I have done that till today and will continue to do it till the last breath of my life. He said so many times that Government are vigilant and are not complacent, that they are fully alive to the dangers and risks involved to the mine workers. Even my friend, Mr. Malviya has said that a court of enquiry is good but that court of enquiry is confined to a particular mine and a particular accident. Therefore, there is no ground to oppose the motion which was an amendment to my main Resolution and which I have already accepted. Let the court of enquiry go on with their enquiry. Let a real committee of enquiry with members representing the different interests involved the mine-owners, the coalminers and the Government go into it. There is no harm in doing that. That will bring the truth to the surface and that will be of benefit to everybody concerned. He has quoted facts and figures from other countries showing that the percentage of the rate of accidents is lower here than in other countries but I would like him only to look to the figures from 1950 to 1954 and he will come to the conclusion that the rate is not decreasing but is on the increase. He has agreed in fact excepting my so-called invectives—I say deliberately so-called, advisedly so-called, because they are not invectives but they represent the true state of things as I conceive them to be.

Then, he has said that as the punishments have not been up to the mark, they have instructed the State Governments to constitute special magistrates' courts to try these particular cases. I congratulate the hon. the Labour Minister on having done that but that relates to some future events but what we are concerned with here and now is that Government has not upto now dealt with a firm hand with the mine-owners. That being so, I would, in all humility but with all the earnestness at my com-

mand, request him to accept the Resolution as amended. That will not decrease their prestige—that will only enhance their prestige. I may refer in this connection to the attitude taken by the hon. the Home Minister, Shri Govind Ballabh Pant, who in his wisdom and in the bigness of his heart, accepted a non-official Resolution relating to enfranchisement of the refugees. That was a political matter and this is an economic matter. I would again ask him to reconsider his decision and accept the amendment, which is in reality the Resolution, which was accepted—I think you were also present there—in the annual convention at Nagpur of the INTUC only the other day. I would again ask him to consider the matter and to be great enough, wise enough, good enough, noble enough to accept the Resolution as amended.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What about your amendment, Mr. Malviya?

SHRI RATANLAL KISHORLAL MALVIYA: In view of the assurance given by the hon. the Labour Minister, I beg leave of the House to withdraw my amendment.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: I have already accepted the amendment. Has he any right to withdraw at this stage?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If he withdraws?

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: How can he withdraw? It is part of the resolution now.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House has to accept it first. Has he the leave of the House to withdraw his amendment?

(No hon Member dissented.)

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

†For text of amendment, vide col. 4843 *supra*.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Curious are the ways of the procedure.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will now put the Resolution.

DR. SHRIMATI SEETA PARNAND: But, Sir, is it not the practice to put the amended Resolution first and then put the Resolution itself?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order. The amendment has been withdrawn.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: How is the amendment withdrawn when the mover of the Resolution has accepted the amendment? It has become part of the Resolution.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, it is the property of the House and the House has to accept it or reject it.

SHRI JASPAT ROY KAPOOR (Uttar Pradesh): But, Sir, the amendment can, I suppose, be withdrawn only with the leave of the House; and even if one hon. Member is opposed to the withdrawal, that leave cannot be granted. As I understand it, that is the rule.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): On a point of order, Sir. You said the amendment is the property of the House. Naturally we want to discuss this thing, whether the leave should be granted or not. In our view, that leave should not be granted to the hon. Member for withdrawing his amendment.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But the House has already granted him this leave.

(Interruptions.)

SHRI S. MAHANTY: How, Sir? The House has not granted this leave.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House has granted leave and nobody objected to it at the time.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: No, Sir, I objected to it. I was on my legs and.....

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, Mr. Mahanty, it is too late in the day.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: And Mr. Banerjee also objected.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He only accepted it, he did not object, it has already gone on record.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, it is not the wording that really matters. It is for the House to deal with this thing and....

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I put the amendment to the House. I asked the House if he has leave of the House to withdraw his amendment, and nobody objected.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Probably you had this in mind.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I had nothing in mind, I only wanted the opinion of the House.....

SHRI S. MAHANTY: Mr. Deputy Chairman,.....

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I left it open to the House.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: And the consensus of opinion of the Opposition is that it was not placed before the House.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It was placed and nobody objected to the withdrawal.

The question is:

"This House is of opinion that Government should take immediate steps to ensure safety measures in the working of the Coal mines and recommends that deterrent punishment should be meted out to persons responsible for violating the safety provisions laid down in the coal Mines Regulations."

The motion was negatived.