

RESOLUTION REGARDING SAFETY MEASURES IN THE WORKING OF THE COAL MINES

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE (West Bengal): Mr Deputy Chairman, at this fag end of the day I have the honour to move the following Resolution:

"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."

Imagine, Sir, for a moment, during \ period of three months three major disasters in the coal mines took place although one of those major disasters has been ignored by the Government in their Report 1954-55 which was circulated to us only this morning. There they have taken cognizance of only two accidents, one in the Parasia coalfields in Madhya Pradesh on December 24, if I remember the date aright, and on the 5th February in Jharia at a coalfield called Amlabad. But in another accident, which is none the less important, which took place on the 2nd of February in Model Dharamband colliery near Jharia, ten deaths occurred as a result of the ground where the workers' tenements had been built caving in. These three accidents in quick succession taking place within a period of, to be exact, 43 days, ought to have roused the conscience of the Government to do something immediately. It will be astonishing, surprising and I may add, it is reprehensible that in the Year of Grace 1955, regulations framed in 1926 are still in force although the Mines Act of 1952 has been enacted. Although in that Act there is provision for the framing of rules, byelaws and regulations they have still not been finalised. Still the coal miners are working under those antediluvian rules and regulations of 1926 and ev^n than these rules are

not properly enforced. I would only ask my eteemed friend and colleague the Deputy Minister for Labour who claims to take interest in labour, not as much as we do but more than what ' we claim to do, that he will immediately publish or finalise the regulations under the 1952 Act. Coal industry is the most valuable industry that a country can possess. It is the key industry. On the development of this industry, depends the industrial development of a country, and the workers who work in those mines are the most important section of the working class in a country because they produce that wealth from the bowels of Mother Earth, and in India they produce annually not less than 52 million tons. Do you know the incidence of deaths from accidents which have occurred in our country since 1950 onwards? Let me give you some figures. In 1950 the total number of deaths has been 241; in 1951 the total number of deaths 319; in 1952 the total number of deaths has been 353; in 1953 the total number of deaths has been 330 and in 1954 the total number of deaths has been 334. And if we calculate we shall find that the rate per million tons of coal produced is 7 deaths the highest in the whole world, and per thousand workers employed .72 persons dead. That is also higher than most of the countries.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR LABOUR (SHRI ABID ALI) : No, no, I will give you the figures. This statement is not correct.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: I am anxiously' waiting for your figures and for your answer, and before I proceed further I will only ask you to spare me from inflicting a speech upon you which will be the case if you accept this innocuous, simple, straight-forward Resolution. If you accept it you lose nothing but gain, gain in prestige in the eyes of the people of the country.

SHRI ABID ALI: We have plenty cf it.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Don't be too sure of your prestige. If you are over-confident of your prestige the earth is going to slip away from underneath your feet. Therefore if you do not accept, I do not know what will be your fate.

SHRI ABID ALI: Glorious.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Glorious! Glorious; or vain glorious? Which is it?

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN (Madras): The latter.

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Probably. Let us hope it is the latter. Sir, that is the position. And now let me tell you the nature of the accidents, what are the accidents like? Accidents occur on account of (1) collapse of roofs, (2) snapping of haulage ropes and derailing of tubs, (3) falling of side coal, (4) flooding of mines with rain water from surface, (5) flooding of mines due to eruption of water from waterlogged mines, (6) explosion of gas and (7) explosion of gelignite.

These accidents are preventable accidents. These accidents can be prevented by simple means. If you have a sufficient inspectorate staff, then these accidents can be prevented, at least can be minimised. You will be astonished to hear, Mr. Deputy Chairman, that the mine in which the accident occurred on the 2nd of February was not inspected since 1953. If any inspection had taken place with regard to that mine, that accident could have been easily prevented.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Will you take more time?

SHRI SATYAPRIYA BANERJEE: Yes, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Then we will take this up on the next non-official day.

The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Saturday, the 19th March 1955.