

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can ask him.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: This statement has been compiled by the Central Ministry. In this statement it has been mentioned that this Chief Engineer had come all the way from Hirakud to Delhi to attend a conference. My question is, what was that conference? My second question is whether he returned back as soon as the matter became hot. So does it not lead one to infer from this that the Chief Engineer wanted to evade this whole question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it is a wrong argument and you are making insinuations.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Is it a fact that a suggestion for an impartial enquiry has already been placed before the Government?

SHRI J. S. L. HATHI: I have no information.

PROF. G. RANGA: Did the Engineer not take advantage of his visit to Delhi to consult the Government of India as to the policy he should pursue in regard to this strike?

SHRI J. S. L. HATHI: No.

PROF. G. RANGA: According to his own information, has it not happened in this way that a day after he returned this firing had taken place?

SHRI J. S. L. HATHI: Of course it was a coincidence. He reached on the 28th. The law and order position reverts with the Orissa Government and not with the Central Government. If that is what my hon. friend wanted to suggest that he had come here to find out whether lathi charge should take place or not, that is not the position.

FIRE IN NORTH BLOCK OF THE CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

*151. SHRI S. MAHANTY: Will the Minister for WORKS, HOUSING AND SUPPLY be pleased to state:

(a) the circumstances under which the fire broke out in the first floor of the North Block of the Central Secretariat at about 2-00 A.M. on the 16th February 1954; and

(b) the extent of damage caused by the fire and the steps proposed to be taken by Government to prevent such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS, HOUSING AND SUPPLY (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH) : (a) The circumstances under which fire broke out are under investigation.

(b) Three rooms which had been formed by enclosing verandah spaces were completely burnt out. Two pillars and the domes and arches in two other rooms, adjacent to the affected rooms collapsed and seventeen pillars have developed cracks. The furniture and records in these rooms have also been burnt.

A fire squad remains on day and night duty in the North Block. Such further steps as may be necessary will be taken after the investigation into the causes of the fire has been completed.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: May I know under whom this investigation is proceeding now?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: We have constituted a Committee of 3 officers— a Chief Engineer, a Superintending Engineer and a Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

SHRI H. D. RAJAH: Will he state the extent and value of the damage due to the fire?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: The estimated cost of reconstruction of the portion of the building damaged by fire is about Rs. 50,000. As to the losses which had been incurred through records being ruined etc., no one can estimate them in terms of money.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: What kind of records have been burnt?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Official files, registers, etc.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: To which Ministry did these records belong?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Finance Ministry.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: In view of the fact that fire squads are stationed usually in the Secretariat buildings, what steps were taken by them to prevent this fire in the beginning?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: They reached the spot immediately on learning of this, within a minute or so, and it was by their effort, helped by the fire squad of the New Delhi Municipal Committee that the fire was brought under control within a comparatively short period.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: Is it not a fact that fire squads are located in the Secretariat building itself?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: That is what I said earlier. They were there and that is how they immediately reached there and they were helped by other fire brigades also.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: In one minute the loss was to this extent?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Within one minute after its detection.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: How long was the fire on before it was detected?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Who could answer such a query, because I would only know the time of detection? If anybody knows the time of starting then that would be the time of detection.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Does the Government attach any special importance to the fact that the records of the Finance Ministry were burnt down just before the Budget Session?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: That had nothing to do with the budget.

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SHRI B. GUPTA: I hope no Guy Fawkes has entered the Finance Department.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Unless my friend himself has any information to the contrary.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Have we any arrangements for watch and ward at the places in the Secretariat?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Very much.

SHRI H. C. MATHUR: Is there not a man all the time there?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Not one man—quite a number of men are there all the time and this breaking out of the fire was actually noticed by one of the men who was on a round. He saw it through a stone *jali*, and he immediately reported the matter to the fire people who were on the spot and it was thereafter that the fire was extinguished.

SHEET GLASS INDUSTRY

*148. SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR (ON BEHALF OF SHRI B. RATH): Will the Minister for COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only a little more than 25 per cent, of the installed capacity of the sheet glass industry is utilised; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons for not utilising the industry to its full capacity and what steps Government propose to take to encourage the utilisation of its full capacity?

THE MINISTER FOR COMMERCE (SHRI D. P. KARMARKAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A statement is laid on the Table of the Council.

Statement

During 1952, only two sheet glass factories were in production and even