

will be in a position to make more and more wagons available for coal transport.

Shri Frank Anthony: The Minister has given us to understand that the supply of wagons does not meet with the demand. I want to know whether that statement is correct or a communique with purports to have been issued by the Railway Board only a few days ago stating that there is a surplus of wagons and the demand is not sufficient to meet the supply?

Shri K. C. Reddy: I am not aware, Sir, if the Railway Ministry as such has issued a communique recently. I remember to have read certain reports in the newspapers regarding this matter. The hon. Member has not grasped the full implications of that statement as it has appeared in the press. The newspaper report does not say that there is any amount of wagon availability in our country at present. It refers mostly to movement in one direction. Anyway, Sir, I do not want to base my statement on the newspaper report.

Dr. M. M. Das: May I know, Sir, whether the complaint made by the Collieries that invidious distinction and discrimination is made regarding the allotment of wagons and the distribution of Government orders for medium grade coal by the Coal Commissioner's office?

Shri K. C. Reddy: There is no discrimination. This is a matter which depends on what grades of coal do several industries require and to what extent they could be supplied by the various Collieries. For example Railways and certain public utility concerns require high grades of coal and certain other industries require low grades of coal. Coal has got to be distributed judiciously to meet the demands of the various categories of industries. It cannot be that we can distribute this coal on a *pro rata* basis to each colliery as the Indian Collieries Union has been demanding. It is a very complicated matter and I can assure the hon. Mem-

ber that keeping all factors in view an equitable distribution is always attempted by the Coal Commissioner with success.

Dr. Hari Mohan: Will the Minister be pleased to state whether the Indian Collieries Union functions at all and if so is it a recognised Union?

Shri K. C. Reddy: Indian Collieries' Union is a recent growth; it is not yet recognised and I do not know how many collieries are members thereof.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Short notice questions Nos. 90 and 92. They may be taken together.

SITUATION IN BURNPUR

II. Sardar A. S. Saigal: (a) Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state whether it is a fact that fourteen thousand workers of Burnpur are out of employment and a situation has arisen making it necessary to guard the mill area by calling the military?

(b) How and with whose consent was the military called to protect the surroundings of the mill area?

(c) Do Government propose to state the full facts regarding the situation at Burnpur?

(d) Has the steel production gone down since this situation arose?

(e) If so, by how much has it gone down this year as compared to the last three years since 1950 to 1952?

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): (a) Due to the lock-out of the Indian Iron and Steel Company and the Indian Standard Wagon Company at Burnpur, since 24th August, 1953, all the workers numbering about 14,000 are out of work excepting the essential services consisting of about 1,500 workmen. Both the military and police are guarding the factory, waterworks, etc. which have been declared by the Government of West Bengal as "protected places" under the West Bengal Security Act.

(b) At the request of the Government of West Bengal, the military has moved in.

(c) The trouble started on the January 19th when the workers in the Sheet Mili started a "go-slow" policy. This spread to the rest of the Works on the 13th June, 1953. The principal reason for the "go-slow" movement, according to the labour in the Sheet Mill, was that the Labour Union did not present to the Management their grievances while the Management refused to deal with the workers direct. A number of attempts at conciliation made by the State Government Officers including the Labour Minister of West Bengal and Officers of the Central Government failed, culminating in the workers giving a strike notice on the 21st August, and the Management declaring a lock-out on the 24th August, 1953.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House. [See Appendix V, annexure No. 1.]

LOCK-OUT IN INDIAN IRON AND STEEL COMPANY

III. **Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Iron and Steel Company, Burnpur, has ordered a lock-out of its workers since 23rd August, 1953;

(b) whether there is any truth in the report that the said Company has, during the pendency of the lock out, terminated the services of nearly 14,000 workers; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to prevent deterioration of the situation and restore production to normalcy?

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari):

(a) Yes, Sir, from the 24th August and not from the 23rd.

(b) The Company have informed us that they have not actually terminated the services of their workers,

and would do so only in the case of those workers who, within a time to be specified by the Company, fail to give an undertaking that they will be willing to return to work and give normal production.

(c) It is, I think, for the workers to give the necessary assurances that they will desist from resorting to the go-slow tactics employed by them and thus create a favourable atmosphere for the resumption of work and for the consideration of their demands.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Sir, is it a fact that the manager is trying to humiliate and ill-treat the workers?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: These charges are often made, but I do not think, Sir, there is any basis for this; or at any rate there is any specific grievance that has been mentioned.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: There was a press report that as early as on 26th June, Government had agreed to the demands of the workers regarding the reinstatement of the dismissed workers and a fair and free election of the Union by all the workers. May I know why this attitude, which was described by the Action Committee as helpful, was given up?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I do not know what the Action Committee says is helpful and what is not. So far as the Government of West Bengal is concerned, they only know this fact—that the Action Committee leaders have persistently stuck to their determination not to allow production to be increased by more than 5½ annas, as they call it. And naturally, Sir, the management did not agree, and that is why the grievances could not be considered. They wanted the grievances to be redressed but they would not step up production beyond 5½ annas.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Shri Mukerjee.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Was there any apprehension of breach of peace and so the military was called?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have called Shri Mukerjee.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: The legal procedure being that after a lock-out, the matter must be referred to adjudication, what steps are the Government going to take to see that the company's virtual termination of the services of these 14,000 workers is set at naught?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: The legal position in regard to that matter has apparently been considered by the West Bengal Government.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Was there any apprehension of breach of peace and so the military was called?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: Yes, Sir. It is obvious that the military would not be called by the State Government unless they apprehended that the police force at their disposal was not adequate for the purpose of maintaining law and order.

Shri H. N. Shastri: Are the Government aware that in the course of the last ten days, two mass meetings of Burnpur workers, each attended by eight to ten thousand workers, were held under the auspices of the Union in which the workers unequivocally condemned the anti-social "go-slow" tactics inspired by interested parties and pledged their full support to the union leadership in restoring normal work and, if so, what steps do the Government propose to take to ensure early resumption of work in the factory?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: To the best of my information, I can say that there have been two meetings held by the union leaders and resolutions passed by the workers assembled in that meeting, condemning the "go-slow" policy. Sir, it depends upon the number of workers who are prepared to come in, for the management to decide whether they will be able to reopen the works. I am not able to envisage what the position will be, but it is hoped that some definite improvement may take place next week.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Who is the owner of the Burnpur Factory?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: It is a company called The Indian Iron and Steel Company.

Shri A. S. Saigal: Who has got the chief share?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: For each year the proprietor changes.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: In view of the statement of Mr. Giri that the employer should not lock-out and in view of the statement of the President of the Action Committee who has said that they would be prepared to accept the intervention of Mr. Giri, the Union Labour Minister, what has he done for terminating the dispute and coming to a settlement?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: That question must be addressed to Mr. Giri.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: May I know why, when the workers, in spite of having given strike notice, have kept the essential services going, they are being humiliated by having to produce passes signed by an unrepresentative gentleman called Mr. John?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: These are matters of detail about which the hon. Member apparently knows more, and I do not see why such a question should be addressed to me.

Shri K. K. Basu: May I know whether, before the lock-out was declared by the authorities, the Government of India were consulted, and what has been done over it?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: These are matters of day-to-day occurrence. May I re-state the position? Here, as I said the troubles started some time in January in the sheet mills, and the tactics adopted was one of 'go-slow' which reduced production and that fever spread to the general works in June, and the total production was reduced considerably. The action committee leaders, whoever they might be, have said that they would

not allow production to be stepped up by what they call more than five annas, which might come to 35 per cent. This is entirely unheard of in labour disputes. We understand strikes, we understand lock-outs. Strikes sometimes are caused by workers, lock-outs by managements, but the question of 'go-slow' policy in an iron and steel works—where, as I have said before, the coke oven, blast furnace and melting shop have to be maintained at a high temperature, and if it is not maintained there will be damage, and I have to say there has been damage—is something unheard of. I am sorry to see that responsible Members of Parliament should give any moral support to an attitude of workers which is detrimental to the future of industry as a whole in this country.

Shri Bell Ram Das: May I know whether this lock-out is legal or justified or it is supported by the Government?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: No lock-out is supported by Government. It is a matter between management and labour. So far as the question whether it is legal or not is concerned, it is for the management to take such legal advice as is available for them and face the consequences.

Shri Thanu Pillai: May I know how many unions are functioning in that State and which union sponsors the 'go-slow' policy and which union supports the increase in production, and what help do the Government propose to give to the union which supports increase in production?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: To the best of my information, there is only one union and that union does not support the go-slow policy. That is the information I have now.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: In view of the fact that it is such an important industry, why does the Government of India take an attitude that it has nothing to do in the matter? Will the Government state what they propose

to do in the matter or will they just leave it to go on in this way?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: The position, Sir, as I said, is this. I think if my hon. friends here will join with the Government and say that we do not want to countenance any 'go-slow' policy in any important national work, we can get a move on to remedy the situation. But so long as hon. Members really support the action of labour which want to go slow and would produce not more than 35 per cent. of the total producing capacity, Government can do nothing. After all, Government are dependent on public support. Apparently no such support is forthcoming.

Shri Frank Anthony: Is it a fact that all this trouble arose only after Government, in pursuance of their policy to encourage what is regarded as a stooge union, have refused to deal with the real representatives and insisted on dealing with the gentleman who had entirely lost the confidence of the workers and the members of the Union?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: My hon. friend, in his eloquence, assumes a lot of facts which have no basis really. I must deny everything that he has said.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Sir, on a point of order. The Minister seems to reflect on the *bona fides* of Members who ask certain questions regarding a very important centre of production in this country. I want to know whether this kind of thing could be countenanced.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: As regards this point of order, all that I can say is, not only questions are put for eliciting information, but I find very often, notwithstanding my trying to correct hon. Members, that hon. Members give information or suggestions. They ought not to make suggestions—various suggestions for action. Various suggestions for action emanate from one Member or the other. Naturally, the hon. Minister feels that the suggestions are encouraging those persons in continuing the strike, or the management conti-

aining the lock-out—one way or the other. I would therefore urge upon hon. Members not to make suggestions at all on the floor of the House, but confine themselves, during Question-hour, to eliciting facts in which case I will not be called upon to decide on points of order.

The Prime Minister (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): With all respect, Sir, may I express my entire agreement with what you have been pleased to say. An hon. Member just now called somebody a stooge. These are insinuations and if insinuations and attacks of this kind are made in this House naturally, the response is going to be something like that. There has to be restraint on both sides—on the Government as well as on the other side.

My hon. colleague asked for the co-operation of hon. gentlemen on the other side. He did not accuse them of anything. He asked for their co-operation to stop a policy of 'go-slow' not about anything else. In this particular matter, as a matter of fact, the Government of India has been intensely interested, intensely involved and continuously consulted for the last three or four months. Apart from the whole Government of India, I, as Prime Minister, have continuously been consulted about it. I do not, of course, mean to say that every little thing done there is our responsibility. It may be the Government of Bengal's responsibility or the company's responsibility. But the major fact is that we are concerned—apart from the question of production—in the safety of that very valuable plant. The Government of India's money is involved in it—we have given plenty of money; it is a question of about Rs. 10 or 20 crores.

In this dispute, as far as I know, the major dispute is not between the management and the workers. The major dispute is *inter se* between the workers. Let it be settled. An hon.

Member mentioned something about the elections. We have no doubt that elections should be held; everybody is agreed that elections should be held. But one can hardly have an election when a 'go-slow' policy is pursued and trouble is happening all over. As soon as this matter is settled there is bound to be an election. Let the workers choose their leaders, whoever they may be and let them go ahead with their Union. Whoever may be the office-bearers, or the committee of the union they will deal with it. Here is a simple course. But an attempt is made to force the issue by 'go-slow' policy and, as a matter of generosity, we are told: "All right, we will not go so slow as we have been going, but in future we will produce 35 per cent." Remember, Sir, that the normal production is supposed to be 100 per cent. Presumably, they are paid for it; presumably they do work for it. Now as a matter of generosity, the offer is made by the hon. gentlemen of the action committee, "We shall produce in future 35 per cent. if you do this and that." I do submit, Sir, this is not a reasonable frame of mind, at least on the part of a responsible set of persons. It is impossible to deal with. The first thing—quite apart from any dispute, let it be settled, let there be election—is that we should see that this exceedingly valuable national property should not be ruined.

An. Hon. Member asked: Is there fear of breach of peace? I hope not, I don't know. But I dare take no risk of any injury to the plant. It is for the protection of the plant that this is being done.

I submit we are all interested, every Member of this House is interested, in putting an end to this dispute, in protecting the plant, in maintaining production and in these 14,000 workers working, not suffering, not being victimised and so on and so forth. But what I wish to make clear is that the go-slow tactics will not be tolerated whatever happens.