

Death of Workers in Explosion in Gua

*347. **Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** Will the Minister of Works, Housing and Supply be pleased to state:

(a) whether any enquiry has been held into the accident and death of five women and two male workers preparing gunpowder for explosion work under Messrs. N. M. Khan, contractor of Indian Iron and Steel Company, Gua; and

(b) if so, the result of the findings?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply (Shri P. S. Naskar): (a) and (b). A magisterial enquiry has been held. The report has not been received yet.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: May I know why the Chief Inspector of Mines and the other officials have not carried out an enquiry into this?

The Minister of Works, Housing and Supply (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna): An enquiry has been held by the Inspector of Explosives over and above the magisterial enquiry.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: It is several months now since these deaths have taken place. I would like to know whether any enquiry is going to be made into all the accidents taking place in this area where the safety rules are not being implemented?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Both the factory and the magazine were inspected in September 1960. Everything was found to be in order then. Unfortunately, the explosion took place early in January, 1962. Since then a magisterial enquiry has been held. The Inspector of Explosives has also looked into the matter. A complaint was lodged with the police. The owner and *munshi* have also been arrested, and, I believe, they are on bail. I am hoping that the report will be with us very soon.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: May I know whether the Labour Department

officials also conducted any enquiry into the working of this particular mine where such accidents are the order of the day?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I do not know anything about the Labour Department, but my Inspector of Explosives has looked into the matter fully and has made certain recommendations too.

Shri Jaipal Singh: May I know whether any compensation or interim relief has been given to the dependants?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I could not answer that at all; I am very sorry.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Sir, such a question should have been answered by the Labour Ministry also. Here is a question about explosives. Merely that portion of the question relating to explosives is being answered by the Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply. The main question concerns the Labour Ministry. I would request you, Sir, to ask the hon. Labour Minister, who is here, to answer this question and say if he has any information.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I would refer the hon. questioner to the question itself. The question has been fully answered.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: What about the compensation? The accident took place in January, 1962.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I will have that matter looked into. I have no idea about it at present.

Shri Nambiar: He should have collected that information.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. He says that he will have that matter looked into.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: This shows, Sir, how lightly the Question Hour is being treated.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Sir, these adivasis live in very very

remote areas. That is why this question is so very important, because none of the labour laws or safety rules is observed there.

Mr. Speaker: We do appreciate the importance of that. But he has said that a magisterial enquiry is being carried on. About compensation also he has said that he will have it looked into.

Shri Jaipal Singh: The question is very obvious. Information regarding compensation or interim relief was bound to be asked, and the hon. Minister should have anticipated that.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: This is an omnibus question, where if some information was required from the Labour Ministry I would have looked into it. The question relates to an unfortunate explosion (*Interruption*). There was an unfortunate explosion. This factory and the magazine were both inspected by the Inspector of Explosives, Calcutta, only a few months before the unfortunate accident took place. After that every possible action has been taken. The police has taken up the case. The persons concerned have been arrested and, I believe, they are on bail. We are looking into the matter. I assure the House, about this question of giving any compensation, I will refer it to my colleague in the Labour Ministry.

Wage Board for Working Journalists

+

*348. { Shri Indrajit Gupta:
Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad:

Will the Minister of Labour and Employment be pleased to state:

(a) when the decisions of the first Wage Board for Working Journalists are due to expire;

(b) whether the pay scales fixed three years ago have become inadequate to meet the journalists' present requirements; and

(c) Government's reaction to the

demand for appointment of a second Wage Board?

The Minister of Labour in the Ministry of Labour and Employment (Shri Hathi): (a) to (c). Presumably the hon. Member refers to the recommendations of the Working Journalists Wage Committee. Government order fixing wage rates in terms of the recommendations of that Committee was issued on the 29th May, 1959. Under the Working Journalists (Fixation of Rates of Wages) Act, 1958, another Wage Board can be appointed only after the expiry of three years from that date. The demand for the appointment of a second Wage Board is being examined.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: According to what the hon. Minister just now stated, the previous award will expire on the 29th of this month itself. I would, therefore, like to know whether the question of appointing the second Wage Board is under active consideration and whether we can expect an early decision?

Shri Hathi: Yes, Sir. The question is under active consideration.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: May I know whether the Ministry had any discussion with the representatives of the working journalists; if so, whether they have also given their idea about the appointment of a Wage Board or Wage Committee?

Shri Hathi: I had discussions with them and, of course, they suggested that a second wage board should be appointed.

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: Is it a fact that after the decision of the wage board there is a pronounced boom in the industry which is not reflected in the structure of the wage? If so, what actions are being taken by the Government to correct this imbalance?

The Minister of Planning and Labour and Employment (Shri Nanda): These factors will be taken into consideration while taking a decision about the setting up a wage board.