

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

Heavy Electricals Ltd., Bhopal

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S.N.Q. 18. { **Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath:**
Shri R. S. Pandey:
Dr. L. M. Singhvi:

Will the Minister of Steel, Mines and Heavy Engineering be pleased to state:

(a) whether efforts are being made to restore normal working in the Heavy Electricals Ltd., Bhopal;

(b) if so, when the factory is expected to resume work; and

(c) when the promised inquiry into the unsatisfactory labour management relationship will be undertaken?

The Minister of Steel, Mines and Heavy Engineering (Shri C. Subramaniam): (a) Yes, Sir. The Training Sections of the Heavy Electricals Limited, Bhopal, have already been reopened. The Construction and Erection Departments are expected to reopen with effect from to-day.

(b) The shut-down on the remaining sections of the Factory will be lifted depending on the assessment of the labour situation in Bhopal by the management of H.E.L. and the State Government.

(c) No enquiry has been promised.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: Considering that the genesis of this trouble is or was, according to the Minister's statement, some dispute with regard to recognition between two rival labour unions, may I know whether the Government has issued instructions, either open or secret, to all public sector projects, the Heavy Electricals Limited as well as other public sector projects, only the labour union affiliated to the INTUC shall be and must be recognised, and no other labour union?

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: That is what they are doing everywhere.

Shri C. Subramaniam: No, Sir; no such instruction has been issued.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: With regard to part (c) of the question, he said, if I heard him aright, that no enquiry has been promised. If I remember what he said last week, he said that after the trouble was over, he himself would undertake an enquiry into this matter. Is it a case of amnesia—forgetfulness or loss of memory? May I also know whether the production bonus recently introduced in Bhilal will be introduced in Heavy Electricals Limited, Bhopal as well?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I thought part (c) related to a promise which had been given by me. I tried to refresh my memory with regard to what I had stated in the Parliament. I have not given any such promise.

Shri Hem Barua: In reply to a supplementary question, he said so.

Shri C. Subramaniam: The question is "When the promised enquiry..." etc. He wanted to commit me that I had given a promise. But I had not given any such promise. Whether an enquiry should be made into it or not is a matter for judgment, as I said, after normalcy is attained in Bhopal. That is quite a different question. As far as bonus is concerned, that is also under consideration.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I would like to know whether it is a fact that nearly 74 employees are in jail and they were also mercilessly beaten inside the jail; if so, may I know whether before the shut-down or the lock-out is lifted the hon. Minister would take up this issue with the State Government and see that all those people are released and no victimisation takes place so that the plant may work in a normal manner?

Shri C. Subramaniam: These persons have been arrested for the commission of offences. Therefore, the law will take its own course with regard to them.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: I would like to know what positive steps, if any, the hon. Minister is taking to regain the goodwill and co-operation of these employees, with whom this plant will eventually have to be run, rather than rely merely on the local administrative policy of victimisation and repression?

Shri C. Subramaniam: There is no question of victimisation. As a matter of fact, I have made every effort possible to get the co-operation of the HESTU Union also. But they are adamant in their attitude. If at all they want to get recognised they have to do it by taking proper steps under the law. They are not prepared to do it and bypassing the law they want to be recognised, which cannot be done.

Shri Daji: Is the Government aware that even the INTUC have characterised the lock-out as completely illegal and are taking steps to see that the lock-out is declared illegal?

Shri C. Subramaniam: In these things one union has to compete with the other for popularity. That is the real difficulty in all these things. Therefore, if INTUC has characterised it so, I am not surprised.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: May I know what specific steps were actually taken to secure the resumption of working of the Heavy Electricals at Bhopal? May I also know whether any persons were arrested; if so, whether they have been charge-sheeted and whether their arrests secured the actual resumption of working of the Heavy Electricals?

Shri C. Subramaniam: As was pointed out by one hon. Member in a supplementary question, about 74 persons or so have been arrested under various sections of the law—some of them under the Defence of India Rules. They will be charge-sheeted and the courts will take care of them. Every effort is being made to see that section by section the factory opens and opportunity is given to the la-

bourers to go and work in a peaceful manner.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: I wanted to know whether their arrests actually secured the resumption of the working, actually helped or facilitated the resumption of the working of the Heavy Electricals.

Shri C. Subramaniam: It is a question for the State Government to decide, when an offence is committed, whether a person should be arrested or not. Whether it facilitates the resumption of the working of the factory or not, when an offence is committed the law has to take its course.

Shrimati Maimoona Sultan: In view of the seriousness of the problem, would the Government consider the feasibility of sending some Members of Parliament to Bhopal to bring about a conciliation between the two parties? Is there any such proposal before the Government?

Shri C. Subramaniam: No, Sir; there is no such proposal.

Shri R. S. Pandey: Due to the closure of the factory, may I know: (a) how much loss has been there up till now in terms of money to the factory; and (b) how much the labour is losing in terms of money per day?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Roughly the production loss is about Rs. 4 lakhs per day. I am unable to give the figure with regard to labour wages.

Shri Radhelal Vyas: May I know whether the rival union or the union other than the recognised union was given an opportunity by the State Government to produce documents and evidence in support of its claim for recognition, and whether that rival union failed to produce such documents?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I have answered this question once before. The matter of recognition of the union came up in 1962 when each union was asked to file the documents before the Labour Officer—Registrar—for the

purpose of scrutiny. As far as the HESTU Union was concerned, it took three or four adjournments—I do not exactly remember the number—to produce the documents. Ultimately they did not produce the documents. Therefore, the INTUC Union was recognised. After that this matter was taken on appeal to the Labour Court where a High Court Judge was the Presiding Officer. There also they lost the case. Again they continued to create difficulties. Later on, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh intervened and advised this union to apply once again, because there is provision for that in the Act of Madhya Pradesh, to de-recognise the existing recognised union and to recognise another union under section 17 of the Act. An assurance was given that an independent machinery would be instituted for this purpose of scrutinising the membership. In spite of these assurances, till now they have not chosen to apply under section 17, but they want to take recourse to intimidating methods to get recognised.

Shri Hem Barua: Is it not a fact that different labour unions are making certain demands to the Government, including the extension of the Central labour laws to this factory? Is it not a fact that the hon. Minister gave an assurance the other day that as soon as normalcy returns to this plant he would examine all those proposals and do the needful? Now the Minister has opened a training school there, but my information is that nobody is attending that school.

Shri C. Subramaniam: The hon. Member is quite wrong. All the trainees are attending. No doubt, one or two are trying to raise certain difficulties. Even then the school is running well. The construction section would be opened today and my information is that there would not be any difficulty.

Shri Hem Barua: What about the first part of my question regarding

extension of Central laws?

Mr. Speaker: Shri Ranga.

Shri Ranga: In view of the decisions of the tripartite labour conference and some sub-committees appointed by it also the code of conduct and also in view of the fact that several of the political parties associated with these rival unions are represented in the tripartite conference, has the Government considered the advisability of asking anyone or any group of people representing the tripartite conference to study this question of labour relations in this plant and give necessary advice to the government and also to the labour force concerned?

Shri C. Subramaniam: As far as the HESTU union is concerned, it is creating all these difficulties. Officially, it is not attached to any of the all-India labour unions. I do not know whether the Communists are exploiting the Union or the Union is exploiting the Communist Party. But the difficulty is, when we want to apply this code, they say it is an independent union. I find there is a link between the Communist Party and this union. I would request hon. Members to take interest and see that these people behave in a disciplined manner. Though the Communists are very much interested in the successful working of the public sector projects, I am sorry to say that they have not acted in the manner they should, as far as this matter is concerned.

Mr. Speaker: Now papers to be laid on the Table.

Shri Jashvant Mehta: Sir, on a point of order. Under the proviso to rule 46, I would appeal to the Minister to request you to reply.

Mr. Speaker: So, I should request him to make a request to me to answer the question? Now, papers to be laid on the Table.