

(b) if so, what are their demands and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA): (a) and (b). It has been reported that the Newspaper employees went on a day's token strike on January 24, as a protest against the withdrawal of the employers' representatives from the Wage Boards and the delay that they fear this may cause in the presentation of the final report of the Wage Boards. Discussions have been held by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Labour with the representatives of the employers and employees, separately and jointly, to resolve the deadlock. The next round of these discussions is expected to take place early next month.

Setting up of Standing Committee to Organise Rural Labour and Extending them Social Security Schemes.

480. SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up a Standing Committee for continuous monitoring of the progress made in organising the rural labour and extending to them Social Security Schemes; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and what steps are being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI LARANG SAI): (a) and (b). Yes. Action has been initiated to set up a Central Standing Committee on Rural Unorganised Labour as recommended by the Special Conference held on the subject on 25-1-1978.

Coal Supplied to Steel Plants

481. SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN:

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA:

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the coal being supplied to Steel plants was found to be of deteriorating quality;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether he had written a letter to the Energy Minister as has been reported by Hindustan Times dated 13-1-1978 and had suggested that the Department of Coal and Washeries be transferred to his Ministry; and

(d) if so, the details and with what results?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI BIJU PATNAIK): (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. There has been a gradual deterioration in the quality of coal being supplied to the Steel plants. The ash content in the coal has gone up to about 20 per cent as against the norm of 16.5 per cent to 17 per cent. Consequently, the ash in Blast Furnance coke has gone up to the level of 26 per cent to 28 per cent as compared to the design stipulation of 22-23 per cent.

(c) and (d). A reference was made to the Ministry of Energy suggesting the transfer of coking coal washeries (and the connected collieries where these are integrated units) from Coal India Limited to Steel Authority of India Limited as it was felt that if the quality of washed coal from the washeries could be improved, it would,