

Title: Reported strike by Air India Unions and coal mines in Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (PANSKURA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very sorry to raise an issue which involves the functioning of the Central Government. I hope the Leader of the House will kindly respond to it.

The Ministry of Labour, Government of India had ordered election in a particular category of employees in Air India, that is, engineering employees and ground staff. The order was passed by the Ministry of Labour and the election was scheduled to have started from 5 o'clock this morning. The officials of the Ministry of Labour who are supposed to conduct the election were stationed and polling booths were fixed throughout the country. The polling was supposed to have started at 5 o'clock this morning, but suddenly it was found out that the Air India officials have put the rooms where the ballot boxes were placed under lock and key. As a result of that, the decision of the Ministry of Labour is being blatantly and cynically violated by a public sector undertaking under the direction of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

This is a peculiar situation. The Government has an undivided responsibility. One department calls for the election, another department stops the election. This has resulted in a lightning strike by 7,000 Air India employees throughout the country. All the air services run by Air India have come to a standstill and hundreds of passengers are stranded. I called up the Chairman of Air India in the morning and requested him to allow the election to be held and said that they can go to court if they have any grievances. I even called up the Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and enquired from him as to how the Labour Ministry's directive can be flouted by his Ministry. Both of them promised to call me back, but they have not. Even I could not find the Minister who is in charge of this Ministry. As a result, there is a lightning strike. The country is affected, crores of rupees are being wasted and the Labour Ministry's directive is being flouted by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The Government appears to be totally divided on the issue.

While saying so, I must submit that 80,000 employees of Singareni Collieryâ€¦

MR. SPEAKER: That is a different matter. You cannot raise two matters. I will allow you on some other day.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Okay. I request the Government to kindly respond to this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: You give a notice for the other matter. I will allow you.

SHRI SURAVARAM SUDHAKAR REDDY (NALGONDA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the matter raised by Shri Gurudas Dasgupta.

MR. SPEAKER: Your association is recorded.

MD. SALIM (CALCUTTA – NORTH EAST): Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Gurudas Dasgupta is not only a veteran parliamentarian but he is also a veteran trade unionist. I do not know anything about trade union. So I have to learn a lot from him.

MR. SPEAKER: As a student you are speaking.

MD. SALIM : But my concern is about Air India. Though I am not a trade unionist, I was the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport and Tourism in my earlier incarnation and so I know a little bit about Air India also and I have seen how Air India had steered through difficult times. So, I am concerned about the health of Air India. I feel that there should be a single union in a single industry and it should be determined by ballot as to who is going to rule the union. There is no problem in that. But in that case I am not for more than one union in a single industry and particularly in a public sector undertaking like Air India because we have to see the health of Air India also and my concern is regarding that.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, his concern for one union cannot allow a particular Department of the Government of India from preventing the elections...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : That is a particular category of workers...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : That is a separate issue...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: If you do not agree with each other, you need not respond.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, what I am saying is that whatever may be the concept about the category...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: You said, election was called and it should be allowed to take place.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Yes Sir. It should be allowed to take place. The Aviation Ministry is creating a situation where crores of rupees are being wasted and my friend in other Party should also see that law takes its own course. They should not speak of principles allowing them to violate the law of the Government.

12.31 hrs.

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