

the Centre should come in to eradicate famine. As long as you do not undertake this responsibility, all your talk of drought relief is deceptive, hypocritical and famines will be the permanent feature of our economy.

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** Will the hon Member like to take some more time?

**Shri Esvara Reddy:** Just five minutes.

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** Then he can continue tomorrow.

15 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER  
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORT-  
ANCE—contd.

STRIKE BY CREW UNDER BOMBAY PORT  
TRUST AUTHORITIES—contd

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** We now take up the Call Attention Notice Shri Hem Barua; he may put a question without any preface.

**Shri Hem Barua (Mangaldai).** Without any preface This will be as brief as a woman's love

Sir, apart from the defence cargo ships and apart from the dislocation as also the congestion that has happened as a result of this strike in the Bombay port, it is reported that a food ship is immobilised in the Suez Canal and other food ships have to come via the Cape of Good Hope I would say that this is a situation that has developed only because of the intransigence on the part of the Government.

Now, the Port Trust workers union has come out with a very helpful suggestion that there should be arbitration of their demand and they have said that they would be satisfied if a Central Minister or Mr. Khadikar, the Deputy-Speaker of the Lok Sabha—this is a great honour to you, Sir—is appointed as the arbitrator to go into this. In that context, may I know what is in the mind of the Government, whether they are

going to accept this suggestion or to reject it on the plea that no official communique has yet reached them or they would work on this proposal because of the dislocation in the movement of food ships as this because of the increasing scarcity of food in our country that we are facing famine conditions?

**The Minister of Transport and Shipping (Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao):** From the latest information I have, the proposal that has been made by the General Secretary of the Union, Mr. Maltra, does not mention the name of the Deputy-Speaker or a Central Minister. He wants either Mr. Hidayatullah or Mr. Gajendra-gadkar to be the arbitrator. He has also outlined what should be arbitrated upon and he also wants that the arbitration results should be made available within seven days. On top of that, he has given six other demands which are the subjects of dispute out of which four are for adjudication and two are for negotiation and one of those issues is very complicated, that is, the extension of privileges under the Minimum Wages Act to people who do not qualify under the Minimum Wages Act. He wants all these disputes to be settled and an arbitrator to be appointed.

The hon Member is speaking from press reports. I have got the latest information from the telex which we got at 4-15 P.M. or 4-30 P.M. This is the position. As far as the strain on the Bombay port is concerned, the Navy started working sometime yesterday at about 12 O'Clock and they were able to clear about five ships yesterday. Today, they have been more active and I understand a foodgrains tanker has been brought in as also one or two oil tankers. Then, I understand—I am not certain about it, we just contacted Bombay on telephone before I came here—the number of vessels which are waiting to enter is about 84, and 17 vessels are waiting to go out, and the estimate is that all these will be

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cleared in about four or five days because the normal clearance is about 9 or 10 vessels a day.

The difficulty is this. We have tried our best and, I think, the statement that I have given is very complete and detailed.

Shri Hem Barua: The statement is not more detailed than it ought to be.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: I am extremely anxious that the most sympathetic and reasonable attitude should be taken towards labour and that one should not stand on prestige. But if, after one has been most reasonable, unreasonable demands are made, then we should also be firm. I think this is the policy which we should follow. We should not be too firm and then go on yielding afterwards under pressure.

Shri Hem Barua: Who decides if the demands are unreasonable?

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: Let the House itself judge it. I am prepared to discuss it with the hon. Member or any other Member and give all the facts.

The position is this. There are different types of workers. There are the shore crew workers and there are the flotilla workers. The shore crew workers have been working on what they call a 12-hour shift. I do not like this 12-hour shift business at all. I negotiated at the last strike with Shri Shanti Patel and Shri Kulkarni. I asked them: Why do you have this 12-hour shift? I was told then that this has been there for the last 10 years. The nature of work is such that you cannot have an 8-hour shift. I am not absolutely certain whether it is really correct or not. In any case, it is not possible to shift the 8-hour shift because then the whole question of what you pay for 8-hour shift will arise; you cannot reduce the existing earnings, etc., etc. So, they said that the 12-hour shift

should continue. I asked what was this 12-hour shift. This means that the time is purchased; they cannot go anywhere, they have to be on all. They also agreed that they would have no recess. I asked, how is it going to work. They said that they would have no recess and would be on call all the time; they cannot do anything else. Then I thought that it was proper that they should have four hours overtime. They were already getting 2½ hours overtime in the Princess and Victoria Docks during the 12-hour shift and 3½ hours overtime in the Alexandra Dock; they were getting this as a result of the interim settlement which was reached in January. They went on a strike and an interim settlement was reached. Then there was a great deal of further confusion. They were threatening to go on another strike and so on; I intervened and said that 12-hour shift means 12 hours' work without recess and anybody who is on a 12-hour shift and who does not claim any recess and whose time is completely available to the employer for a period of 12 hours, in my opinion, was entitled to 4 hours' overtime. This was the position that I took up.

Then came the question of Flotilla crew. The Flotilla crew had been somewhat better off than these people a little earlier. The Flotilla crew are on a 12-hour shift whenever their barges or launches are in commission which is approximately 9 to 10 months a year. Then for a period varying between one and three months—there have been odd cases when it has been even more, but the average is about two or two and a half months—the barges or launches are re-commissioned, for survey purposes, for repair purposes and so on, and it is the condition of the service of the Flotilla crew that, during that period, they will be on an 8-hour shift and not on a 12-hour shift. (Interruptions)

Shri Hem Barua: Shore people.

**Dr. V. K. V. Rao:** They have got to be on call for 12 hours a day throughout the year because the nature of the work on the shores is such. This is what I have been told during my discussions with various people. The nature of the work is such that they have got to be on call, they cannot go away. In the case of flotilla workers the 8-hour shift is given to them when the boats are laid off, when they are decommissioned. In order to reduce the distress as much as possible, the Port Trust has been following this practice. Supposing there are several ships which are not decommissioned and they are short of staff or if there are leave reserves attached to them, they put these staff on duty. Some of these people can take leave during that period and they get a little more money. For others they get an 8-hour shift and they get 8 hours' wages. If, by any chance more work is available after these 8 hours then they are given regular overtime. This was the position.

The BPT Union, i.e., Mr. Maatra's Union has been agitating for a long time.

**Shri C. K. Bhattacharyya (Raiganj):** Why is he explaining so much. (Interruptions)

**Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao:** I cannot help it. Willy-nilly, after some time I will adjust myself and become a non-professor.

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** I will request him to be brief.

**Shri Ranga (Srikakulam):** This is a question on call-attention. The reply should be brief. (Interruptions).

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** He has been a teacher throughout his life. Naturally it takes time to adjust oneself to this.

**Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao:** I have not been in politics for as long a period as my esteemed friend, Prof. Ranga, has been in politics. (Interruptions)

May I proceed? The BPT Workers Union or Mr. Maatra's Union, has been fighting for the last several years. They have been agitating. They said "we want a fixed 4-hours over-time". This matter was referred twice—once in 1961 and for the second time in 1963—for adjudication or award and each time it was stated very clearly that they were not entitled to it because the principle is that if there is no work, they cannot get overtime. (Interruptions)

**An hon. Member:** Both are professors.

**Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao:** I thought that it would help the House if I explained in detail.

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** He may give a brief reply.

**Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao:** I was not going to make another speech. I thought, it would be helpful, if I explained the whole thing.

**Shri Hem Barua:** I like his attitude.

**Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao:** The position is this. These people want 4 hours fixed overtime irrespective of the fact whether there is work or not. It is suggested that they may be given work of chipping and painting and so on. The job of chipping and painting is being done by other workers who are registered with the Dock Labour Board, and their union naturally took strong objection to any action which would reduce their work, and they said that this could not be done. I was also quite firm on that because I did not think that I could give more emoluments to one class of workers at the expense of the employment of another class of worker who were already in employment.

[Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao]

This is the actual position. As far as I am concerned, we are very anxious to see what could be done, I have also ordered that a thorough scrutiny should be made of the process of decommissioning of these launches, whether any time is being wasted because some materials are not available and so on so that the period of lay-off could be reduced and that would increase the emoluments.

Secondly, when we are going to add to the fleet—I think we shall be adding five or six more barges and so on—as more units are added to the fleet, let us try and see that the leave vacancies are more or less reserved for the people who will be out of the four-hour overtime period. I said, therefore, that we were prepared to consider very sympathetically, and we told them 'Please resume negotiations, and let us talk across the table'. It is a great pity that Mr. Maitra who was conducting negotiations till 4.30 on the 28th June.

Shri Hem Barua: For negotiations being resumed, is he laying down any fresh conditions?

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: No, I am only mentioning what has happened. I would like to add that they should resume negotiations and call off the strike, then, let us discuss the whole thing, and if there is any difficulty we shall discuss it, if discussions fail, and if they want arbitration, I am certainly prepared to have arbitration on the question whether we can give our hours' overtime when there is no work and whether work can be given to them otherwise.

Sir, I have done.

Shri George Fernandes (Bombay South): On a point of order. मेरा ब्यवस्था का प्रश्न है, 197 पर । जो बयान मन्त्री महोदय ने दिया है कांतिन

मदौशन नोटिस पर उन को लेकर मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है । मैंने पूरा बयान पढ़ा प्राथमक महोदय, इसने दो महत्व के हिस्से हैं । एक जो यूनिन के जनरल सेक्रेटरी की ओर मन्त्री महोदय की दिल्ली में बात हुई उसके तिलसिले में और दूसरा

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I know that rule. Those who have tabled the calling-attention-notice will get an opportunity to put questions. He cannot raise a point of order on the merits of the statement. That is not permissible.

श्री जाज़ करनेडीज नहीं, उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा कहना यह है कि मन्त्री महोदय का जो बयान है उसमें जो दो महत्व के हिस्से हैं उन दोनों हिस्सों में जो उनकी ओर से सीधा बयान माना चाहिए था हकीकत के ऊपर वह नहीं था।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That is his complaint or that is his reading of it.

Shri George Fernandes: It is not my reading मैं गफार्ड दे रहा थापकेमामने

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: At this time, this type of point of order cannot be entertained.

श्री जाज़ करनेडीज मैं थाप के मामने गफार्ड पेश कर रहा हूँ

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have understood his point. At this hour, I would not entertain any point of order on the merits of his statement.

श्री जाज़ करनेडीज दो मिनट के लिए मुन लें



10125 *Strike by* ASADHA 15, 1889 (SAKA) *Crew under Bombay* 10126  
Port Trust (C.A.)

Shri Sheo Narain (Basti): Sir, there is no quorum in the House. adjourned to meet again at 11 A.M. tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Shri Sheo Narain has challenged the quorum. So, let the bell be rung— 18.17 hours.

The bell has stopped ringing. Still there is no quorum. The House stands  
*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the clock on Friday, July 7, 1967/Asadha 16, 1889 (Saka).*