

[श्री शेर सिंह]

दूसरी बात यह है कि जितने भी काम हम चुने, लोगों का चुनाव करने में एक हजार आदमी जो रखन हैं उसमें एक हजार आदमियों पर हम इनसिस्ट नहीं करेंगे क्योंकि कई जगह अभी काम शुरू नहीं हुआ। तो उसमें मैन-डेज का हमने ध्यान रखा है। ढाई लाख से तीन लाख मैन-डेज हो जाने चाहिये। तीन चार महीने कहीं काम होता है तो एक हजार की जगह 2 हजार भी हो सकते हैं, लेकिन मैन-डेज इतने पूरे हो जाने चाहिए।

कुछ लोगों ने कहा कि इसमें इनकम टैक्स देने वाले लोग भी आ जायेंगे। तो इनकम टैक्स देने वाला ऐसा कोई नहीं है जो मिट्टी की टोकरी उठाकर सड़क के ऊपर डालता फिरे। इसमें तो वही आदमी जायेगा जिस बेचारे को कोई काम मिलता नहीं है। और इसमें इस बात का ध्यान हमने रखा है कि उन्हीं लोगों को चुने जो बेरोजगार हैं। जिन लोगों के पास रोजगार बिलकुल नहीं है या बहुत कम है कभी मिलता है कभी नहीं मिलता है, जिनकी आर्थिक अवस्था बहुत खराब है और जिनके परिवार में कोई आदमी रोजगार में नहीं है पूरी तरह स उन लोगों को विशेष ध्यान में रखेंगे। इसीलिए इसमें समय भी लगा। यह एतराज होता है कि चार महीने लग गये, काम क्यों नहीं शुरू किया क्योंकि कुछ स्टेट्स में ही काम अभी शुरू हुआ है, कुछ से नहीं शुरू हुआ है, तो इसमें यह कठिनाई थी कि हमको एक तो काम का चुनाव करना था कि फला-फला काम होने चाहिये जिसमें परमानेंट एम्प्लॉयमेंट हो और पैसा बरबाद न हो। उसकी गाइड लाइस हमने उनको दी। दूसरी बात यह है कि उसके एस्टीमेट्स भी ठीक ढग से तैयार हो ताकि यह न हो कि इसमें पैसा बरबाद हो। और फिर यह कि इसमें लोगों का चुनाव भी करना है कि कितने लोगों को यह काम दिया जाय।

ठेकेदारों से यह काम न ही करना है। वैसे यह काम तो सरकार ठेकेदारों को सौंप देती तो भी हो जाते, पक्की सड़क भी वह बना सकते हैं, सारे काम कर सकते हैं। लेकिन हम यह नहीं चाहते कि उनको यह काम मिले जिसमें वह कहीं से लैबर ले आये और उसको एक्सप्लायट करे। इस बात की इजाजत हम नहीं देंगे। जो लोग बेरोजगार हैं जिनके घर में कोई काम करने वाला नहीं है उनको काम मिले इस बात को हमने ध्यान में रखा है और इसी ढग से हमने चुनाव किया है।

श्री रामजी राम (अकबरपुर) मैं एक जानकारी चाहता हू कि गावों में उन लोगों को भी रोजगार मिला हुआ है जो 2 रुपये हर हलवाही करने के लिए मजबूर होते हैं और ऐसे लोगों को और काम करने में रोका जाता है। तीन रुपये चार रुपये रोज का काम करन नहीं दिया जाता है। क्या ऐसे लोगों को भी काम दिया जायेगा? मैं अपने जिल की बात कह रहा हूँ।

श्री शेर सिंह : अगरे माननीय सदस्य इसक बारे में अधिक सूचना द कि किस जगह पर ऐसा होता है तो उन सरकारों में हम कहेंगे कि उन लोगों को मौका देना चाहिए कि और काम कर सकें।

मैं समझता हू कि यहीं प्रश्न विशेष रूप में उठाए गये हैं जिनका जवाब मैंने दे दिया है।

18 25 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE . COLLAPSE OF A PORTION OF ROOF OF STEEL MELTING SHOP OF ROURKELA STEEL PLANT

SHRI J. B. PATNAIK (Cuttack) : Mr. Chairman, I am beheld to you for giving me this opportunity to initiate this discussion on the Minister's statement. Much water has flowed in the river Jamuna between the day the roof collapsed of the

Steel Melting shop of the Rourkela Steel plant and today, the penultimate day of this session of Lok Sabha.

The Minister deserves our congratulations for appointing a high-power experts committee to go into the whole affair and this committee is now three weeks old and I am sure most of the precious work entrusted to them in regard to this task would have been completed. Again, there was a fact-finding committee appointed immediately after this accident by the plant authorities to collect all available evidence. So, this hon. House has no reason to regret for this delay in the discussion on the Minister's statement as the Minister would now be able to give more information to the House in regard to the whole issue.

This accident by the sheer enormity of it is probably the biggest accident in the history of our public sector enterprises. The Minister has mentioned in his statement that about 10,000 sq. metre area of a total roof area of 38,000 sq. metres of the steel melting shop has come down as a result of which 6 LD converters along with two blast furnaces have stopped working, besides causing great damage to a number of machinery and systems of work. Now the Minister would be in a better position to give an approximate, if not exact, estimate of the loss to the plant. The loss is on several counts. Firstly, there is the damage of the roof itself—the cost of clearance of the debris. The designing and reconstruction of the whole structure may run to crores of rupees. The designing part has already been given to CEDB and construction of the roof is to be entrusted to Jessops. So, some estimate must have been made about the cost.

Now, in regard to production, the damage is more serious there. In the year 1969-70 owing to labour trouble the shortage of saleable steel in Rourkela was of the order of 1,12,000 tons. There was a loss of 2,92,000 man hours and in the terms of money it came to Rs. 12 crores. Now, according to the statement made by the hon. Minister, the commissioning of the LD converters will take about six months. Only one converter is expected to be commissioned in September.

According to some experts, and here I quote Shri Sarin :

“Every hour lost in a two million ton

steel plant costs Rs. 2,00,000 in gross value of output.”

In this particular plant, most of the plant will not work for six months. Although steel is produced by openhearth process, it is the LD process for which India's first public sector steel plant is known and which is now the most modern process of producing steel. Now this LD process has come to a halt and is not going to be commissioned for six months. So, the staggering loss to the plant and the country's total steel output could easily be imagined.

This loss would now affect our foreign trade and our internal demand for steel, both of which are growing over the years. In 1970-71 we exported 4,64,773 tons of pig iron and 5,33,262 tons of steel and the public sector accounted for 65 to 70 per cent of this. In terms of foreign exchange the public sector plants expect to earn Rs. 53 crores. For the current year a higher target must have been fixed in regard to the amount of steel to be exported and the amount of foreign exchange to be earned. As a result of this accident I am afraid we shall not be able to earn even half of this amount and fulfil half of the quota fixed for the purpose. The Rourkela Steel Plant is known for producing a special kind of steel which is needed for defence purpose and as a result of this accident it must have reaction on the defence industries. I do not know what the reaction would be on these industries. Again, there are a number of ancillary industries dependent on the steel produced in Rourkela Steel Plant and they must have already been affected or would be immediately affected as a result of this accident. We are yet to know what are these industries and how it is proposed to meet their difficulties.

Regarding labour, the casual labour employed must be putting up with great difficulty and we want to know from the hon. Minister what alternative arrangements to absorb them have already been made. Now, I come to the time to be taken for re-commissioning the L. D. converters. The hon. Minister has said that it would take six months time. May I ask him if the time could not be shortened or if he has explored any possibility of shortening this time? May I also ask him if there is any proposal from the German sources that they would send a team of experts from West Germany on

[Shri J. B. Patnaik]

short notice to re-commission the L. D. converters within weeks and this long period of six months could be reduced ?

I now come to the point regarding the causes of accident. As I have already said, a very high-level expert committee has been appointed by the hon. Minister, and it would not be proper to pre-judge their findings, but in this particular case this accident is not the first one of its kind. There has been another accident in the year 1962 or 1963 of a similar nature, though not of similar dimension. A much smaller portion of the roof of the same still melting shop came down at that time, and there was a Committee appointed to enquire into the cause of that accident and they also gave a report. According to that report the reason of the accident was accumulation of iron-ore dust deposits from the steel melting shop and improper maintenance and not proper clearance of the tons and tons of iron dust which are deposited every day on it. Suggestions must have been made by that enquiry Committee at that time regarding the maintenance of the Steel Melting Shop regarding the quick accumulation of iron-ore dust deposits and the findings must have been there and action must have been taken according to the findings, but still this accident of a similar type took place in the plan. I am told as a result of that earlier finding a smoke cleaner costing about a crore of rupees was put in the Steel Melting Shop so that no heavy deposits or siting of iron-ore dust would be there on the roof. I am told again that this costly machine was set up but never worked. Again this is a case of bad maintenance and the hon. Minister has admitted—of course, not here but in Rajya Sabha—that among the three public sector steel plants the basic weakness of Rourkela and Durgapur is in the proper maintenance.

18.35 hrs.

[SHRI SEZHIVAN *in the Chair*]

Somebody must be responsible for this maintenance. A similar accident had taken place and the findings are there. If they were not acted upon, why was immediate action not taken against the officers responsible for it? Nobody says that they should be dismissed but certainly, in view of

the serious nature of this accident, the concerned officials in charge of maintenance of the steel melting shop should have been suspended immediately.

ICS officers in the olden days of the British raj were considered as sacred cows. They were not to be touched; nothing could be said against them. But in our present state we are committed to socialism and democracy. The highest official of the land is not immune from criticism, including the hon. Minister and other high office holders of Government. Then why should there be an attempt to protect officials who are found to be responsible for bad maintenance and for causing this very serious accident which has resulted in heavy losses to the national revenue and dislocation in various industries of our country?

I have nothing to say against the hon. Minister. Of course, as I have said earlier, he has made a very honest attempt to find out the causes of this accident and has already appointed a high-power committee. But he has said while giving that statement to this House—I would like to read out one sentence from his statement:—

“Following heavy and incessant rain for about two hours, a part of the roof structure of the Steel Melting Shop over a length of about 150 metres collapsed round about midnight.”

I do not want to read too much in this statement. I do not say that this is the reason for the collapse of the roof. But certainly he is using words as a very discriminating person. He should not have brought in this factor of rain while he was giving that statement to this House. There must be some connection between heavy and incessant rain and the collapse of the roof. It may be the immediate reason but it may not be the whole reason for the collapse of the roof. This iron dust was accumulating.

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM) : This is a factual statement. That is all.

SHRI J. B. PATNAIK : Maybe, this heavy accumulation of iron dust, coupled with this heavy and incessant rain, must have made it difficult for that roof to take that burden and it must have come down.

The point is, in view of a similar accident in the past and in view of the reasons already found out for that sort of accident, why was some action not taken—not dismissal but some sort of action—to create public confidence in our public sector plants so that there should not have been so much uproar now in the country about this.

As regards the working of the Ministry, I have all praise for the Minister. He is a very dynamic personality. He has brought in youth and exuberance coupled with a great sense of responsibility and dedication to his duty. But, as a great lawyer that he is, I would crave his indulgence to suggest that justice should not only be done but justice should appear to have been done.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the hon. Minister should fix a firm date for the final report of the inquiry to be submitted so that the House could know what its findings are. They should not take such an inordinately long time. Now it is three weeks and we know nothing about the procedure of the inquiry or whether they have given any interim report to the Minister. There is again this collection of evidence by the Committee which was appointed immediately after this collapse. Those findings must be there with the Minister. We hope that we would inform the House as to what the findings were about the evidence.

Then, I would request the hon. Minister that from the point of view of maintenance this public sector plant has been most neglected in the past and, along with Durgapur, as this plant is a great asset to the nation in terms of earning foreign exchange and in terms of speeding up of industrialisation of the country, there should be no stone unturned in the maintenance of this industry properly. Some assurance should be given by the hon. Minister to the House in this respect.

**SHRI P. K. DEO (Kalahandi):** Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all, I thank Mr. Patnaik for having given us an opportunity to discuss the sordid state of affairs in our public sector undertakings.

With an investment of Rs. 3902 crores in the public sector undertakings, there is a return of 1.3 per cent. We can afford to play ducks and drakes with the tax-payers' money. But if it would have been in the

corporate sector, the Directors would have been sacked long before.

Mr. Patnaik described it to be an accident. It cannot be an accident; it cannot be a mismanagement. It is a calculated neglect on the part of the contractor who was entrusted with the duty to keep clean the roof of this shop. This did not happen all of a sudden. This is the second time that it happened.

Rourkela is one of the two steel plants which has been paying us. From the Annual Report of the Ministry of Steel and Mines, we find that in respect of an overall loss of Rs. 104.73 millions, Rourkela made a profit of Rs. 78.30 millions. In spite of the fact that there were serious difficulties on the labour front during the period April-September, 1970, the Report further states that it has been estimated that in Rourkela about 2,92,000 man hours were lost in 1970-71 due to the labour trouble and that the value of loss of production was of the order of Rs. 12 crores. Since then, there has been good relationship between the labour and the management and the things were improving as the balance-sheet has shown.

In this regard, I would charge the bureaucracy and those in the management of dereliction of their duty. Why has the contractor not been taken to task? Why all protection is being given to him? This is not the first time. If it would have been the first time, then there would have been some plea for it. But this is the second time that this has happened and, as a result, the entire shop will be out of order for a period of six months which will lead to the closure of 5 LD converters and the closure of 2 more blast furnaces. It will slow down the work of the permanent unit and other various units and it will slow down the ancillary industry. There will be a loss of revenue to the State and to Centre and, more so, of foreign exchange.

The loss has been estimated to the tune of more than Rs. 100 crores in a period of six months. I again charge the top-brass, the bureaucracy, who has been responsible for it. It is due to the fight that has been going on in Rourkela. There has been no unity of purpose. There have been quarrels; there have been promotion aspirations between G.M. and G.S. All this has led to this sad state of affairs. The

[Shri P. K. Deo]

Minister might speak with bravado while addressing the officers, "The heads will roll. I will chop right; I will chop left." Let us see, only the future could tell. It is a matter of concern to us

**SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMANGA-LAM :** I have never used those expressions, "I will chop right; I will chop left."

**SHRI P. K. DEO :** I am quoting from a pamphlet which has come to me this morning by post.

**SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMANGA-LAM :** But that pamphlet was not issued by me, I think.

**SHRI P. K. DEO :** Anyway, I will be satisfied if there is an inquiry instituted under the Commissions of Enquiry Act presided over by a High Court Judge, a representative of the employees, a representative of the Ministry and a representative of the Hindustan Steel authorities. Then, the actual thing will come out.

Then, there has been a loose talk of lay-off.

I would like to have a categorical guarantee from the Minister that not a single labourer will remain unemployed because it is not a fault of his for which he has to be penalised. That guarantee I want from the Minister, that there will not be any lay-off of the labourers

**SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMANGA-LAM :** Hon. Member will excuse me. May I ask him a question to help me, that in any industry with which he is associated, he will also, even though it may be due to difficulties for which the labour is in no way responsible, never lay off anybody ?

**SHRI P. K. DEO :** I thank you very much. At the same time, I would like that let no innocent person suffer. They should continue to get their pay and gratuity and whatever is due to them.

Lastly, I beg to submit and quote the instance of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri who submitted his resignation over a railway accident. I quote the example, a recent example, where a Japanese Minister sub-

mitted his resignation because of an accident in which a Japanese Air Force plane and a commercial plane collided in mid-air. I hope the same noble, democratic and socialist tradition will inspire our Minister and he will submit his resignation.

**श्री सरजू पांडे (गाजीपुर) :** सभापति जी, रूरकेला में मॉल्टिंग शोप की जो छत गिरी है, यह बहुत ही दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण दुर्घटना है, और जैसा दो माननीय सदस्यों ने कहा है यह पहली बार नहीं हुआ है बल्कि 1962 में भी छत गिरी थी। उस जमाने में एक इनक्वायरी कमेटी बनायी गयी। उस कमेटी ने कुछ अपनी रिक्मन्डेशन्स दी थीं। मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि उस कमेटी की रिक्मन्डेशन्स को क्यों नहीं ठीक से लागू किया गया ?

मंत्री महोदय ने अपने स्टेटमेंट में यह कहा है कि ज्यादा बारिश की वजह से छत गिरी। मगर मेरी सूचना यह है कि उस कमेटी ने भी यह कहा था कि अगर ठीक ढंग में लोहे की डस्ट साफ नहीं की जायेगी तो उससे नुकसान हो सकता है।

**SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMANGA-LAM :** On a point of explanation, Sir. That is a wrong translation. The Hindi translation makes it appear as though the reason for the accident was the heavy downpour. That is an incorrect translation. What I stated was that following the heavy downpour, this has happened. I did not say it was due to the heavy downpour but in the Hindi translation it was made to appear that the actual reason for the accident was the heavy downpour. I apologise for it.

**श्री सरजू पांडे :** तो उस इनक्वायरी रिपोर्ट में कुछ रिक्मन्डेशन्स की गयी थी। दूसरी बात मुझे यह जान कर ताज्जुब हुआ कि इसकी छत का निर्माण कांटेक्टर से कराया गया, जबकि सरकार के पास सिविल इंजिनियरिंग डिपार्टमेंट है जो उसका निर्माण कर सकता था। आपकी मान्यता है कि हमारे देश के

कॉन्ट्रक्टर कितने और ईमानदार है और किस तरह से पैसा खाते हैं और लाखों और करोड़ों रुपया देश का बर्बाद होता है फिर भी ठीक से चीजों को नहीं बनाते। तो इतनी बड़ी राष्ट्रीय सम्पत्ति का प्राइवेट कॉन्ट्रक्टर से क्यों निम्न किया गया ?

इसी तरह से पट्टे आस्ट्रेलियन कन्वोशियम ने कुछ सुझाव दिये थे जिसने यह कहा था कि इसकी डस्ट साफ की जाय, इसके लिए कुछ सुझाव दिये थे। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि उन सुझावों पर क्यों ध्यान नहीं हुआ ?

1। तारीख को यह दुर्घटना हुई और मंत्री महोदय 7 तारीख को वहाँ पहुँचे। सबसे आश्चर्यजनक बात यह है कि मंत्री जी इतने बड़े लेबर लीटर हैं, लेकिन वहाँ जा कर सिर्फ ब्यूरो-क्रेमी से या बड़े अफसरों से कन्सल्टेशन किया, मजदूरों से नहीं मिले। जबकि सही स्थिति की जानकारी के लिए उनको मजदूरों से मिलना चाहिये था। छोटी-छोटी चीज अगर बिगड़ती है तो उसके लिए मजदूरों को सजा दी जाती है, मगर इतना बड़ा नुकसान हमारे देश में हुआ, एक भी बड़े अफसर के खिलाफ कोई कार्यवाही नहीं हुई। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ ऐसा क्यों ? मेरा ऐसा ख्याल है कि लाजमी तौर पर जो भी गलतियाँ होती हैं, वह ऊपर से ज्यादा होती हैं और छोटे-छोटे आदमी सजाये पाते हैं। इसका कारण मेरी समझ में नहीं आया कि जब मंत्री जी गये तब वहाँ जा कर उन्होंने लेबर के लोगों से क्यों मुलाकात नहीं की ? उनको लेबर से मिलना चाहिये था और उनसे मासूम करना चाहिए था कि छान गिरने का क्या कारण था ?

जो एम्बेयरी कमेटी बनाई गई है उसमें बड़े गवर्नमेंट ऑफिसर्स को रखा गया है। मैं जानता हूँ कि इस तरह के मामलों में गवर्नमेंट ऑफिसर्स अपनी चमड़ी बचाने की कोशिश करते हैं और सारी जिम्मेदारी छोटे लोगों पर ढालने की कोशिश करते हैं और इस तरह से अपनी गद्द

बचा कर दूसरे लोगों पर जिम्मेदारी ढाल देते हैं। इस बात को जानते हुए कि ऐसी व्यवस्था हो सकती है और हमारे देश में ऐसा होना सम्भव भी है, मंत्री जी ने इसमें लोक सभा के मेम्बरो को क्यों नहीं लिया या हाई कोर्ट के जजेज को क्यों नहीं रखा जो जा कर पता लगायें कि मही मायना में मामला क्या है ?

मेरा सुझाव यह है कि अभी एम्बेयरी कमेटी की रिपोर्ट माने वाली है, उसमें जैसा अभी से देखने को मिन रहा है कुछ ठेके ऊपर के चारण बना दिये जायें और उन तमाम चारणों को तलाश नहीं किया जाएगा, जिनके चारण इतनी बड़ी हानि हुई है। यह मामला सिर्फ क्रकेला का नहीं है पूरे देश का है और जैसा मंत्री जी ने कहा है, 6 महीने में यह काम पूरा नहीं हो सकेगा। उनको देखना चाहिए कि इतने बड़े नुकसान के लिए कौन जिम्मेदार है। कौन बड़े लोग हैं जो छोटे लोगों के मुकाबले में बहुत ज्यादा कमाने हैं लेकिन सही मायनों में काम नहीं करते हैं।

अन्त में मैं पूछना चाहता हूँ कि जिन दो कमेटियों का जित किया गया है, एक तो एम्बेयरी कमेटी 190 की है, और दूसरी अमेरिकन कन्वोशियम—इन दोनों की रिपोर्टों में क्या कहा गया था और इसके मेटेनेंस के लिए जो जो सुझाव दिये गये थे, उन्हें सदन में रखा जाय और मासूम किया जाय कि कौन से लोग हैं जिन्होंने एम्बेयरी कमेटी की रिपोर्टें में दिये गये सुझावों को लागू नहीं किया और सरकार उनके खिलाफ क्या कार्यवाही कराने जा रही है। इसका पूरा विवरण सदन के सामने आना चाहिये।

SHRI S. S. MOHAPATRA (Balasore) :  
Mr. Chairman, Sir, I will not repeat what has already been said by my other friends. But, I would like to mention one thing at the outset, before I begin my speech, that I am not one with my hon. friend, Mr. P K Deo when he demanded the resignation of the Minister. The Government cannot afford to lose such a dynamic trad,

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unionist as Shri Mohan Kumaramangalam, and, holding an important portfolio as he does, namely, the Ministry of Steel, we hope, he will do very much, not only in respect of steel production in the country, but also in respect of the entire labour problem in our country.

The Steel Minister, in his speech here in the Lok Sabha said that by 1980 India would have 20 million tonnes of steel. He said, by that time we would have spent Rs. 5,000 crores. At present we have spent Rs. 2,000 crores on investment.

I have got to tell you one thing. On the investment in all these public sector undertakings we are incurring losses. In Bhilai we have invested Rs. 3632 millions; loss Rs. 271 millions; in Durgapur the investment is Rs. 2968 millions; loss Rs. 840 millions. In Rourkela, investment Rs. 4153 million; loss Rs. 322 millions. After this disaster in the Rourkela steel plant our country is going to have massive investment in foreign exchange.

One thing that other speakers have not pointed out is this. All those iron dusts were accumulating on the roof of the steel melting shop. That was the only reason. I have consulted even the experts. Mr. Patnaik had quoted Mr. Sarin's report; I have consulted some experts in the steel industry who have experience in design and construction. They say, the collapse was caused due to the structural modification of the roof structure in between column B-8 and B-10 and they tried to introduce an assembly crane in this section, thereby weakening the structure of the roof and in addition, there was the extraordinary load of the LD dust. You can imagine this situation: For months together the dust was accumulating on the roof of that steel melting shop. Not only that. With heavy rains, the dust was getting more weight. You can imagine the heavy weight of the iron dust due to such heavy rains. The dust remained inside the pipe and closed the route and naturally it corroded the joints and when there was incessant rain on the 11th night, it gave way.

The question is one of maintenance. The maintenance there is very poor. I have gone inside the steel plant, being the vice-president of the labour union. I have seen the maintenance to be very poor there.

Further, there is no safety also. Within four weeks, four people have died inside the Rourkela steel plant. Can you imagine it? Two persons died while trying to safeguard the property of the steel plant. There were no armed guards. Dapoits came from outside and the robbers killed them. One died on the spot and the other one died in the hospital. Another day a big iron slab fell on somebody's head and he also died on the spot. This is the third instance when the roof has collapsed and one Govardhan Singh has died and 19 men have been seriously injured and I do not know whether anyone else has succumbed. The question is why the officers were not careful. In 1963 when there was a miniature roof collapse, nothing happened. This time Mr. Saxena, DIG of the CBI had been to Rourkela before the Looma Committee went. The hon. Minister may be interested in going into the findings of Mr. Saxena, then he will be convinced, in fact more than convinced of what I am saying here on the floor of the House.

He may kindly understand that the contractors are playing a very dirty game in the steel plant.

Millions of rupees are going into the pockets of the contractors. With your permission, I would like to read out from the copy of a letter written by Mr. S. B. Raman, Assistant General Superintendent, the man next in command. He has written this letter to the chief engineer, wherein he has himself said that there is a vested interest in the steel plant in the matter of giving contracts to the private parties. This is what Mr. Raman writes:

..My dear Pujari,

Early in November, I had pressed Shri Suresh Gupta, Wagon Repair Shop, to engage a contractor for a period of one month."

Sir, the story is this. There is a wagon repair shop where we have our own staff to manufacture bogies. There is an Industrial Engineering Department there which is the root of all evils. The Industrial Engineering Department told the steel plant authorities that the worker had only capacity up to 30 per cent or so, and they would not be able to do the job, and, therefore, the work might better be given to the private parties. Then, some trade unionists like us went to the steel plant authorities, and particularly

to Mr. Raman and said 'Give the work to us, and we will do it in record time, and we shall show better production and produce better bogies.' Will you believe me when I say that the contractor was agreeable to only four bogies ?

Mr. Raman then writes

"On 13th, I was informed that the wagon repair crew have done 5 bogies in eight days, and we were running short of electrodes. And these engineers were not helping our workers

I thought the shop management would have shown enthusiasm to see that the elementary responsibilities from their side are taken care of and there is no break in work.

I am extremely distressed to learn this morning that for want of electrodes, the crews have been idle for the last three days. I am very happy that the Mr. Panda has carried out his portion of the work. Five bogies in eight days by two crews is equivalent to 19 bogies per month.

Believe me, I feel as if I had just come out of a game of strip poker, completely naked".

In the circumstances, can anybody contradict the allegations made that there is a vested interest for letting out work on contracts ?"

I shall leave the copy of this letter with the hon. Minister who will see from this for himself that the assistant general superintendent admits that there is a vested interest inside the steel plant for giving contracts to the private parties. Here are the papers with me which will go to show that every month more than a lakh of rupees is being given by the steel plant as demurrage, because they are in league or hand in glove with the contractors.

What is the way out ? What can Shrimati Indira Gandhi do to transform the society ? What can the hon. Minister do ? He is a dynamic trade unionist. But what can he do ? The technocrats and the bureaucrats will not allow him to do anything.

I may tell you on the floor of the House that there is a difference between the general manager and the general superintendent of the Rourkela Steel Plant who only a few years ago used to draw a salary of Rs 500 but who is now drawing a salary of Rs. 2500

a month. Has his brain gone up five times in these few years ? Certainly not. But what about the workers ? A worker has to be in his job at a salary of Rs. 112 for nearly fifteen years without any increment and without any channel of promotion.

What will be the reaction of the workers ? Try to appreciate my feelings as a trade unionist. Unless you have the co-operation of labour, there will be no safe running of the plant. The bureaucrats have come from either the administrative side or from the private sector. The General Superintendent is from the private sector. The Chief Engineer is from Private Sector and another senior Engineer is from Tatas. They have no sympathy for socialism.

19 00 hrs.

I say this on the floor of the House that when Shrimati Indira Gandhi went to Rourkela in the first week of March, on the second or third, the officers—I will not name them, but I have told the Chairman of HSL—a very senior officer said : 'Miss India is coming to Rourkela to win us over'. This is the feeling of the bureaucrats to our Prime Minister, towards the people of India.

The steel melting shop will not work for six months. You have assured the people of India that there will be no lay-off. But that is no remedy. Rourkela is not reaching the target. You have admitted yourself that from September 1970 there has been no labour trouble there. It is we, the INTUC people, who had assured Shri Bhagat and Shrimati Nandini Satpathi at Rourkela that there would be no labour trouble. There was a situation then, I would not call it a casual strike, when workers refused to work in cranes due to some trouble.

I assure you when Shrimati Indira Gandhi wants to transform the society, we have in Rourkela a gem among public sector undertakings. There will be no labour trouble. Till now there has been no labour trouble. You have admitted that yourself.

But what is the response from the bureaucrats ? The workers are charged every day, they are suspended or dismissed. I have been telling the Minister about two workers who have been victimised. They

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have tried to prove their allegiance to the plant, to the Government. They are good workers. But they have been victimised. The bureaucrats say, 'We will not take them back'. In Durgapur, you have reinstated workers who were harbouring aggressive designs, who were beating officers, who were almost Naxalites. Shri Chandi went there and reinstated them. But what do you do to the people victimised in Rourkela? Nothing, because they are Oriya, peace-loving people who do not create trouble, who believe in constitutional means.

Rourkela is a vulnerable point, with communal riot, regional riot, provincial riot. Unless you remove the bureaucrats who are responsible for all these things, Rourkela may not be peaceful. When such a thing happens, the responsibility for it will lie squarely on the bureaucrats who are there.

There is a personnel department in charge of labour relations. The Personnel manager does not know anything about labour management. He has no degree. The Deputy Personnel Manager is an industrial engineer with no degree. I understand from a very reliable source that one of the top officers of the personnel department at the head office was in a mental asylum a few years ago. These are the things that are going on in the Rourkela Steel Plant.

I have to tell the hon. Minister. There will be no labour trouble in Rourkela if he intervenes and sets things right. If he does not do it, there will be trouble. There is difference between the Chairman and the General Manager who are not pulling on well. There will be difference between the General Superintendent and the General Manager. There is no co-operation between the General Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent. There is no co-operation between the Assistant Superintendent and the Chief Engineer. It is a complete hotch-potch. It is all a palace intrigue going on every day. You cannot stop it, unless you take very bold steps.

As I have said, it has been admitted that there is no labour trouble, but if things are not mended there will be trouble. In Durgapur, everyday there is trouble. Shri Chandi is being embarrassed over the situation. So I appeal to the hon. Minister to intervene and set things right. He has said that there will be no lay-off. But I

am not going to be satisfied. I am going to request him that he must intervene, look into all these things and take drastic steps to remedy the situation.

Lastly, this trouble is due to heavy investment and the profit not being commensurate with the investment. I have come to know from very top engineers of India and from two German engineers that with the Minister there is a file concerning Shri Iqbal Bharati who is a top scientist in steel. He has entered into a contract with Koppers of West Germany for producing steel in India at a price something extraordinarily and unimaginably cheap.

He says, and it has come out in the *Statesman* of the 5th of this month, that steel can be produced, a tonne of steel can be produced at Rs. 5. Am I to believe it? He said that the price of steel, at site, will be Rs. 50 a tonne. I would not have believed it, but I have seen for myself the contract made between Koppers and Mr. Iqbal Bharati. I understand Mr. Chandy, the Chairman of Hindustan Steel, went to Germany with some officers of Hindustan Steel and he also was satisfied. And the file is lying with the Minister. You are a dynamic Minister, having new ideas and having a new dimension. The people of India would be amazed to see that an Indian scientist can produce steel at a price of Rs. 50 a tonne and the production cost will be Rs. 5. If it is not done immediately, I understand Shri Iqbal Bharati is going to leave India. The Chancellor of West German Government is very serious about it. They may take him out of India, and if he goes out of India, the same thing will happen as it happened in the case of Mr. Suri. One Punjabi, Mr. Suri, discovered something, but the Indian Government did not take advantage of it. He went to Germany. They are now having the Suri transmission. Similarly, if this is not taken advantage of, the Iqbal Bharati process will be flown out from India to other countries.

**SHRI SWARAN SINGH SOKHI** (Jamshedpur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, after the accident in the Rourkela steel plant, I visited Rourkela steel plant to assess the loss and damage due to the collapse of the steel melting shop and the reasons of the accident which occurred on the 11th July this year.

A few years ago also, a part of the roof of the LD plant had collapsed due to the negligence of the top officials and also due to the dust which had settled on the roof. A fact-finding committee was appointed. Although it was established that some officials were responsible for the accident, no one was punished. It also appeared that at that time they swallowed the money in collaboration with the contractors who were entrusted with the roof-cleaning operation.

While the dust of the LD converter was again settling on the roof of the steel melting shop, the General Manager and the General Superintendent were having their private battle for promotion and party politics. It is the stupidest disaster of this type in the history of steel-making in the world. One worker died and many others were injured, as stated by the hon. Minister of Steel, Shri S. Mohan Kumaramangalam, in this august House on the 19th July.

There is of course a deliberate negligence of duty on the part of the officers and it should not be taken lightly. Sometimes, for small and flimsy reasons, workers are suspended. The sabotage and deliberate negligence of duty is a major offence, and the hon. Minister of Steel knows it. All the persons, however highly placed they may be responsible for the collapse of the roof, should be ruthlessly taken to task. It is surprising that no officer has yet been suspended. I may call it a planned sabotage by the top officers of the Rourkela Steel Plant.

The structure that had collapsed, as stated by the hon. Minister, is 10,000 sq. metres, and the dust accumulation on the top of the roof, in 6" deep 4 mm trap plates, is approximately at the rate of 30 tonnes per day, which comes to 900 tonnes per month, and I have no doubt in my mind that this disaster has taken place due to the negligence on the part of the officers directly in charge of the operation and maintenance of the steel melting shop of the Rourkela steel plant.

The down pipes were still choked and the gutters filled with the L. D. Converter's dust were seen by me on the top side of the roof when I went up on the roof on the 29th July. In my opinion there is nothing wrong with the design of the steel structural trusses, purlins, and columns, though they looked weak lying in twisted condition. The

estimated total loss is to the tune of several crores of rupees.

Further, I would like to say, Mr. Chairman, Sir, that the gas cleaning plant which was installed at a cost of rupees one crore last year at the Steel Melting Shop for catching the dust of the L. D. converters was commissioned in June last year and worked only for 7 days and then stopped by the Management. For the last one year it has been lying idle and it is going to be scrapped. As you know, Sir, if any machine is not used for long, it gets rusty and useless. When I put this question to the General Manager of the Rourkela Steel Plant on 30th July, during my visit to his Office, he had no proper answer to it. The repair work of the Steel Melting Shop and the Conveyers are no doubt in full swing and were to my satisfaction. The Chief Engineer of the Plant, Shri Khetri, was seen doing a good job dismantling and fabricating the conveyers structurals at site and doing the erection work.

As you know, Sir, this is a national plant. Negligence, laxity and sabotage by the well-paid, well-fed and well looked after top bosses should not be tolerated. They must be punished to set an example for the future.

I appreciate the work of our hon. Minister of Steel Shri S. Mohan Kumaramangalam, who is also an able lawyer and a good administrator. He has tackled the situation without any loss of time by taking prompt steps as far as possible as soon as he returned from abroad to get the plant repaired and re-commissioned and apprised this august House by stating the facts. Though the Steel Ministry is doing a very good job, but this is not sufficient. Shri Kumaramangalam should further take immediate action against such officers found guilty and punish them as soon as the Enquiry Committee submits its report towards the end of this month.

I think electrical equipment worth Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 lakhs will have to be imported from Germany or other places. The plant, I think, is going to start work without the roof very shortly, may be early next month. The conveyer will be ready by the end of this month. I have not seen any labour idle there. My hon. friends who spoke have not cared to visit the plant after the accident, except for Mr. Majhi. They could have visited the plant and seen things for them-

[Shri Swaran Singh Sokhi]

selves. They are wanted there by their own men.

SHRI GAJADHAR MAJHI (Sundargarh): I represent the constituency in which Rourkela is situated. Hundreds of workers work there from my locality. So, what happens in HSL, particularly an accident of this type, deeply affects me.

Apart from the national interest, I beg your indulgence to allow me to present this personal factor.

This is not the first accident of this type. This is the second of its kind resulting in loss of life and property, and as no serious action was taken against the culprits of the first accident, the second accident took place. Of course, I have nothing to say against the Minister. He is energetic and active and he has generated a sense of vigour and confidence. But his Ministry owes an explanation to the House why action was not taken before and what action is being taken now to bring the guilty to book.

It is a case of careless officers and contractors. I have collected information from various sources that due to non-clearance of the big roof of the steel melting shop dust deposited which caused the closure of all the water outlets. During the time of rain water sift through the layer of dust corroded the joints of heavy structure and finally weakened it. As a result of this, five LD converters, two blast furnaces in addition to the one already unserviceable and ancillary industries were closed. Work of permanent units such as raw materials, traffic, B.F., S.M.S., coke ovens, electric sheet mills and all units of rolling mills were suspended and work of some of them were slowed down.

Now both the Central and State Governments have to incur heavy losses of revenue and also foreign exchange because of outside order. The estimated total loss may be Rs. 100 crores, if not more than that.

From the government side nothing is done to find out the real cause immediately. No official papers were seized which might have given proof of carelessness of officers and no high official was sent immediately for on the spot inquiry, but an order was sent to remove the broken materials as soon as possible. So, I am in doubt whether the present inquiry committee will be successful in getting at the real cause. The low paid

workers, who were in contact with the melting shop, may not give proper evidence for fear of their higher bosses. In the past hundreds of workers have been suspended on trifling charges. Secondly, the concerned officers may try their best to mislead the investigation to safeguard their own interest.

So, I request the hon. Minister to suspend the concerned officers and to give an assurance in this House to safeguard the service of those workers who want to give evidence before the inquiry committee.

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM): Mr. Chairman, may I, first of all, express the deep concern of the government about what has happened in Rourkela? I am in entire agreement with the hon. Members who used justifiably strong language about the disaster there. It is not possible for me now to go into the question of who is responsible for what has happened and what are the causes. The enquiry committee which has been appointed by the government is at present carrying on its investigation and we have asked the committee to submit its report at the latest by 31st August, that is, by the end of this month. Considering the fact that the disaster took place on the night of 11/12th July, I think it is not a very long time and we can certainly afford to wait for that.

But while saying so I would also like to mention that there is no reason for us to believe that any of the evidence which should have been made available to the committee has disappeared, or could disappear. I say this for three reasons. First of all, on the 16th an officer of the Central Bureau of Investigation had reached Rourkela. On the 17th I was there; not that counts very much, if you ask me. On the 20th the committee was appointed and on the 21st two members of the committee reached there. As is clear even from what has been stated in this House by my friend, Shri Sokhi, plenty of things were lying there even when he went there, which was considerably later. I do not propose to comment on what he saw, because I am sure what he saw was seen also by other persons, including the members of the committee, and I am confident that the committee would take into consideration all the facts in order to come to a proper conclusion.

The report that has been submitted by the officers of the CBI who went down there has been handed over to the committee and I am sure the committee would take that report into its consideration when coming to a final decision. I would like to mention however, that the suggestion made by Shri P. K. Deo on the one hand, which I was surprised to find my hon. friend, Shri Sarjoo Pandey agreeing to, namely, that a High Court Judge should be appointed to investigate the matter, is not a suggestion with which I am in agreement at all.

I think that the Committee that we have set up is entirely a proper committee. It is a committee composed of technical people who are peculiarly competent to investigate a matter of this character. I am always afraid, if lawyers are associated with committees of this character—and I think I speak with some experience—that at the end of it all we will get a report probably after six months after following the tortuous processes which lawyers love to indulge in if given the opportunity. On the other hand if you put practical men who are technically capable to do the job we should be able to get a report quickly and directly in regard to the issues which are involved and which led to this disaster. I do want to repudiate the insinuation that the members of the committee are likely to white-wash the bureaucrats and so on and so forth. It is, I think, necessary to mention that all the Members of the Committee including the Secretary, whose name I was not able to announce in the Lok Sabha on the last occasion when I made the statement, are persons who are very competent technically to investigate a matter like this. So far as the Chairman of the Committee concerned he is a person who has retired as Engineer-in-Chief in Army Headquarters recently, was President of the Institution of Engineers and has been in charge of major works amounting to even something like Rs. 80 crores in a year when he was Director General of Works in the Army Headquarters. He is also an officer of very high standing and I do not see why we should have any reason to minimise his competence on the one hand and his integrity on the other in giving us a report as to what happened in Rourkela. After all he has no connection with Rourkela or Hindustan Steel. There seems to be a popular idea among some people that once a person dons the robes of a judge he has

higher integrity than a person who dons the robes of an engineer. I do not share that view, I think both are equally good. I think we should choose whether a judge or an engineer for the purpose in hand is more competent.

I also do not think it would be correct to do what Mr. P. K. Deo suggested, namely to appoint a commission of enquiry. The reason is, a commission of enquiry will have to take evidence. You will have to cross-examine, re-examine, lawyers appearing, and by the time the commission finishes its work the expansion of Rourkela may be over. What we want is a report by persons competent to investigate speedily which will help both to re-build Rourkela on the one hand and also to locate the real reasons and the persons responsible so that action may be taken against them and we may learn for the future to see that these things do not happen.

Hon. Members have urged that we should immediately take action against the persons responsible. I would only like to say—I appreciate entirely the concern expressed by them and their anxiety that whoever is responsible should be brought to book quickly—and I will assure them that there will be no reluctance on the part of the Government to take action against whoever is responsible, however highly placed he may be. But at the same time I do not think that it will be proper for me immediately to take action merely on the basis of certain suspicions. We have received of course an interim report from the Committee. But the interim report does not define and categorise exactly who is responsible, nor are the Members of the Committee yet clear definitely as to what are the causes. There are certain suggestions about the possible causes, but it is not of a character on the basis of which one can come to a final conclusion and, therefore, I do not think it is possible for me immediately to take action and I do not think it will be proper. I would only repeat my assurance that we shall certainly take action as soon as we are in a position to know who is responsible. I can appreciate entirely the hon. Members' concern about this.

As to the reference to the previous inquiry committee report, the statement made by my hon. friend that there was dust on the top and that the gas cleaning plant was

[Shri Mohan Kumaramangalam]

not working and so on and so forth, I think, it would again be improper on my part to say 'Yes' or 'No' in all these matters because they are really matters now before the committee and it will be wrong to pre-judge the view or the findings of the committee.

So far as the question of losses is concerned, it would not be in the region of Rs. 100 crores. I do not know why suddenly people stumbled upon Rs. 100 crores except that it is a nice round figure which you can throw about like this. But I will give you a figure; I will not say that it is a final figure because it is impossible to give a final figure at this stage, but this figure will be somewhere near the final figure.

So far as the question of construction is concerned, we have got off comparatively cheaply, namely, about a crore of rupees or so. It is not a small amount but by steel plant standards a crore of rupees is not much. By my standards or by your standards or by the standards of Members of this House, of course a crore of rupees is a lot. But to have got off with one crore of rupees in a disaster of this character is comparatively to have got off lightly. It may be a little more than a crore of rupees but I do not think it will be much more. The reason for this is that really the equipment has not suffered any serious damage. Maybe, the cranes are damaged as also some small structurals which are being manufactured to a large extent in our country. That is why the loss would be around one crore of rupees on this account.

Loss on production is far more serious. Our assessment is that we should perhaps lose somewhere in the region of 3,00,000 tonnes of steel; that is to say 3 lakh tons of steel costing somewhere in the region of Rs. 36 crores. Without making an allowance for raw materials, power etc., which we do not use when we are not producing steel, we can take it that the loss will be somewhere in that region. That is not a small loss. That is a very serious loss. I am not seeking to minimise it when I am comparing it with the figure of Rs. 100 crores. When I mention it against Rs. 100 crores, it is not to lessen the seriousness but it is to give you a more accurate figure so far as the loss is concerned. This is something serious.

Let me go next to the speed with which we are trying to bring the plant back into operation. The original date that I give to the House, when I made the statement, was 15th January but now we are fairly confident—let me not put it higher than that—that we should be able to get the plant back fully into operation by 15th December. We have been able to push it back on the basis of our schedule for a month. We are still trying to speed that up but I do not want to make any promise more than the 15th December. That is the firm date which everybody has accepted on the basis of whatever work that has been going on for the last month or so. Almost all the debris has been cleared. That is not a small thing, as Shri Majhi who came with me, will remember. It was all a-shambles when both of us went down there on the 17th July. But with very effective and careful work, the debris entangled over a height of 30 metres has been completely cleared. Maybe, very little is left now at the time I am speaking. That is the latest report that we have received today.

The most unfortunate part of the accident, apart from the fact that we are losing all this production, is that some of the cranes seem to have been very badly damaged. It may taken even three or four months to bring them back into operation. If we can speed that up, we will probably be able to speed up production to come into operation again. The gas cleaning plant is also not working properly and we hope to bring it back into operation by early September.

I must also take this opportunity, with your leave Mr. Chairman, to express my thanks to the railway authorities who are giving us every assistance in treating this as a national crisis. Ordinarily what one would have expected to take 10 to 15 days to reach Rourkela is being sent in a short space of 24 to 48 hours. I think, that is something for which all Members of the House will join with me in thanking the railway authorities.

We have also appointed a deputy steel controller entirely to devote full time attention to the procurement of steel and all the steel is being made available on an emergent basis. I can assure the hon. Members that the entire crisis is being treated on a national level as one of the most serious matters

which the Government has to attend to, and all the resources of the Government are being drawn into trying to get Rourkela function again as soon as we can.

I do not think with all respect to hon. Members that there is much else that I can say now.

Finally, I would like hon. Members to be satisfied that not merely the Engineer-in-Chief who is the Chairman of the Committee but the other two Members and the Secretary are also very competent persons with high technical qualifications. That is why they have been included in the Committee.

The Director of the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee, Shri Dinesh Mohan, is a civil engineer with a very long experience and, in his own Institute, there is a Section which does work on modern Steel Structures. I wanted him inside the Committee because we wanted the experience of that Institute to be available for testing material and things of that character.

Then, Mr. H. P. Bodhanwala is one of the most experienced engineers with Tata and he has worked for the last 28 years starting as the Chief Draftsman and coming right upto the Technical Adviser. He is himself a structural engineer with considerable experience in steel structures.

The Secretary of the Committee, Dr. Narahari Rao, is a Ph.D. in Structural Engineering from the University of Sydney, Australia and in-charge of the Section on Steel Structures in the Structural Engineering Research Centre.

What we have tried to do is to bring into this Committee all the talent that we have got in our country because it is not merely those individuals but the organisation behind them that will also be involved in helping us to identify what were the reasons for the disaster and how we can, in future, see that it does not happen.

The House will excuse me from not entering into the controversy as to whether

the report on the previous disaster went right down to the bottom of the matter and whether the directions given on the basis of the report have been implemented or not. Because that is really a part of the Enquiry Committee Report which will come from the technical committee and, I think, it would be wrong for me to say anything that will in any way prejudice the finding that we are to get from them. After all, today is 11th August and, within another three weeks, we will have the report in our hands. I think, when we have the report in our hands, we will be in a position to take all the final decisions both regarding preventing the disaster of this character and regarding what action has to be taken against those who are found responsible for this disaster.

Before I close, may I just mention one word about this Bharati process about which my hon friend Shri Mohapatra was speaking so eloquently. We appointed a Committee of high level technological experts headed by an expert of the National Metallurgical Laboratory to examine this process. The report of this Committee was received in the Ministry yesterday and is under consideration. We will go into the views of experts, consider them most carefully and, I think, very soon we will come to a decision on the validity of Shri Bharati's claims. I do not think I should go further into that. The persons who composed that Committee also were persons of high technical qualifications in the country and, I think, on the basis of that report, we should be able to finalise that also.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 11 A. M.

19.35 hrs

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till eleven of the clock on Thursday, August 12, 1971 (Sravana 21, 1893) (Saka).*