

दुए इनकी परिलब्धियां निर्धारित की जाती है।

12.03 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED RETRENCHMENT OF HARBOUR WORKERS IN ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

SHRI SEZHIYAN (Kumbakonam): I call the attention of the Minister of Shipping and Transport to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:—

The reported retrenchment of about 700 harbour workers in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR): The Andaman Harbour Works Organisation was set up in 1966-67 as a purely temporary project for the development of harbour facilities at different sites in the Andaman & Nicobar group of islands. A number of works were completed towards the end of 1972-73. As in all projects, this necessitated the retrenchment of workers not required for later maintenance and operation.

Due to reduced budget allocation for the year 1973-74, it was necessary to slow down the works still to be completed and the workers thus rendered surplus had also to be retrenched.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, 714 workers had to be retrenched. About 670 workers are working at present.

Retrenchment compensation consists of one month's pay in lieu of notice and 15 days' pay for every completed year of service is admissible to all the retrenched workers as per rules. Most of the retrenched workers have accepted the compensation and other dues and have either left the islands in a peaceful way for the

mainland or are in the process of leaving depending upon the availability of passage.

A few workers—numbering not more than 10—have resorted to relay hunger strike at Port Blair and Campbell Bay as a protest against this retrenchment. The situation is peaceful.

SHRI SEZHIYAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Minister in his reply has tried to give us a picture of peaceful and contented situation there. I am afraid the situation may not be as peaceful and sweet as described by the Minister, judging by the number of telegrams coming out and giving instances of pitiable cases. For instance, I have received a telegram from the Andaman and Nicobar Government Employees and Workers' Federation which reads:

"Federal Council decided Boycott Independence Day throughout territory by all its affiliated Unions by continuing mass hunger strike and black flags procession 15th August protesting against nonsettlement harbour works employees demands specially reinstatements retrenched workers and Federations Demand: joining time free passage bringing employees completing three years of service to workcharge, etc despite moving matter at Prime Minister's level also Stop agitation hunger strike by Harbour Works Union continuing. Request settle demands immediately."

I have also received telegrams from the Harbour Workers of the Campbell Bay and Port Blair. I do not blame the Minister. The administration is so drowsy and so lethargic. As you are aware, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are far removed from the mainland by about 750 miles, and without proper communication and quick transport facilities, probably the news of any mishap or an incident that happens there takes weeks, if not months, to reach the mainland and also probably further delay is caused to reach the authorities that are at Delhi. Therefore, isolated and left to

themselves, the officials and the administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are having their own way.

Last time when I visited the Islands in the company of the Public Accounts Committee, very many things came to our notice. All is not well in the State of Denmark there. I can say one thing. The Chief Administrator, Mr. Hanumath Singn, is an honest and sincere officer, but barring him, and one or two other officers, all the other officers are very reluctant to work there. They are always looking for the first opportunity to come to the mainland. Therefore, they are not involved in the work there. They are simply pampered and during the short spell of stay there, they are being pampered and kept in good humour by the only trading company who hold the monopoly of the entire trade in the Island and by Birlas and others who are out there getting the major and maximum amount of licences to exploit the forest wealth.

My point is, simply answering the question saying that there is bound to be a surplus because of the slow-down in the works there, and "therefore we are throwing out of employment those people" is the most cruel and inhuman way for the Government to deal with this problem. There is no industry worth the name, and there is no employment potential in the Islands except the Government works, the harbour works, the PWD works, the forest exploitation work and the transport work. Therefore, it should be the duty of the Government to open out these trade jobs to the employees there who went there. While the officers are very reluctant there, the employees have been brought there on the promise that they would be given good jobs and other things. They were taken because the employees in the mainland refused to go there and many persons were brought over there, if not forcibly, at least on the promise that they would be given good work. Even now, all the labour

laws available in the mainland are not operative there. Regarding very many of the things that are available here for labour, like protecting labour when they are without employment—these labour laws simply do not operate there.

I can say one thing. There is no Employment Exchange at all there. Suppose some jobs become vacant or new jobs are created, without assessing the local availability, without assessing the number of workers who are already there, who are ready to take the work, they are bringing workers from outside so that the workers who are already there are not given any alternative employment. When we went there we pointed out that there should be an Employment Exchange. There is no Employment Exchange there. What they do is, whenever they find that some work is over, they simply throw out the employees from their jobs.

They bring their set of employees and they are also thrown out after three or four months. Though he does not deal with it directly, on behalf of the Government he should take the responsibility for answering this question. An employment exchange should be started there and job seekers should be registered. Of course priority may be given to the natives, tribals, etc. there and less priority should be given to the other people who are there. It is not as if anybody can swim to Port Blair and Campbell Bay. Those who go from mainland have to get a certificate, a visa, etc. The labour situation can therefore be fully protected by the Government if they want. My first plea is about alternative arrangements for employment for those large number of people. 700 out of 1300 in the harbour works have been retrenched. More than fifty per cent are involved. One may say that the works are complete. But you have to view it from the point of view of the workers also and provide them some employment. There are harbour works going on in Little Nic-

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bar; in Kachar deforestation is going on and in Campbell Bay there is a road being laid and the Long Andamans Road is being put up by the PWD. Why not absorb these people there? Those who have put in three or four or even five years have all of a sudden been retrenched. It is against all canons of labour law. I do not know how these people came to be retrenched without any alternative employment being given to them.

Thirdly, as I have already pointed out the Minister should not take a complacent attitude; as these islands are 1500 miles away and everything has been peaceful, and only ten persons have gone on hunger strike. Even if one person has been affected, it is the duty of the Government. It is not as if only ten persons have been affected. I have read out the telegram from Andamans and Nicobar. For the Government employees there 15th August is not going to be a day of jubilation; it is going to be a black day and they are going to take out processions to protest against retrenchment.

The big business, the Birlas, the Jadav company are keeping the entire administration at their mercy. At one stage one of the previous Chief Commissioners recommended that it should not be there and proposals were sent to the Government. Government took the decision not to end the monopoly, but to transfer the Chief Commissioner from that place. These big monopolies are having way and are exploiting local people, the tribals and the labourers. They are fattening themselves at the cost of the people who till the land and toil in the forests unmindful of the unhygienic conditions. In its latest report, the Estimates Committee on page 49 says:

“The Committee note that Government have formulated various developmental schemes for the setting up of industrial and wood-based

complexes on the Islands. These include raising of Red Oil Palm Plantations and Rubber Plantations. The Committee note that these schemes would provide employment opportunities to 5-6 thousand skilled and unskilled workers.”

The Government themselves have got schemes which are there. A study team went there three years ago and submitted a report but it is gathering dust in Government's files. I want to know whether the retrenched employees will be given the first opportunity before they are sent out of the island for absorption in the contemplated schemes. 5-6000 can get employment; here only 700 employees are involved. How do they propose to have employment exchanges? How do they propose to meet the regular demand of the workers there and how they propose to implement the labour laws there and how do they propose to give priority to the employees already retrenched; these workers have already gone there. Under the new schemes they may generate vast potential; potential is there in the virgin islands with vast forest life and unlimited resources. I want the hon. Minister to consider these questions.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: I do not want the hon. Members to have the impression that I was complacent about the retrenchment. One can never be happy about it. But the fact of the matter is that certain works have been completed and this is borne out by the fact that the total estimated cost of the project was Rs. 514 lakhs, out of which works amounting to Rs. 399.20 lakhs have already been completed. So it is not fair to say that officials have been lethargic. They have completed the works on time and before the target dates. The katchall unit had three parts; two have been completed; only one have to be completed by March 1974. In Little Andamans also there are two works and both of them are to be completed by March, 1974. There

may be some delay in all the three because of cut in the present year's allocation... (Interruptions) I was only saying that it is not fair to say that officials have been lethargic in the completion of works.

So far as telegrams are concerned, may I also say that we have received telegrams, dozens of telegrams, from both sides. I have one here from the other side; the other side means the other union, other people also. There is a feeling among the people of the islands that they are not getting sufficient jobs and people are coming from the mainland and are taking away their jobs... (Interruptions) Almost wholly, with a few exceptions, those were mainland people; out of 714 retrenched, as many as 585 have already taken their compensation and gone or are in the process of going. The remaining number 129 or whatever the number have come forward to get compensation. This is the regular practice; people come from mainland and work there and earn money and go back; there is nothing unusual. This telegram says: "Understand bogus telegrams have been sent by.. leadership in different names. They have failed on the labour front and are resorting to these tactics. Our union strongly condemns and disapproves and demands ignore those telegrams.. " I do not fall back upon them; I am pointing out what the other side says.

About job opportunities, I do appreciate the need for employment exchange. Local people are also wanting jobs. I shall certainly communicate this particular suggestion to the Ministry concerned.

SHRI SEZHIYAN: Give priority to the local people; identify and assess the local supply so that many men need not be brought there.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: He made the suggestion that other departments should be asked to absorb them. That has already been done. We have con-

sulted the border roads development department, PWD and others. There was the question of practical realisation of the whole thing which we have done, which labour also has recognised. The maximum that can be done has been done.

About labour matters, even in the union representing about retrenchment the President and the general secretary have fallen apart; the general secretary has resigned. This is not a matter for me to discuss here. I would say that we have accepted already many demands of labour. All casual labour who have completed three years' service have been brought on work-charged establishment in the appropriate scales. The process is repeated every 1st March. Skilled workers who have completed one year of service are brought on work-charged establishment. Then, the Jungle allowance of Rs 5/- P.M. admissible to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands Administration staff was extended to the Andaman harbour workers. Then the daily rate of casual labour was suitably revised. The interim relief recommended by the Pay Commission was extended to the work-charged staff and interim relief was being sanctioned to them from time to time. Certain dismissed workers were reinstated on the request of the union just to ensure smooth working. Water supply and sanitary arrangements were improved to the extent possible. Arrangements for sea passages were made for workers coming to the mainland on leave by taking it up with the harbour master. Improvements were made to the barracks of workers. They were provided with better living conditions. There was postponement of retrenchment of workers by more than one year by temporarily transferring them to places where they can get alternative employment. All possible steps have been taken to meet the demands of labour. There is hardly anything of which they can complain. With due regard to the effort of the people who are responsible for this, they have done all that

[Shri Raj Bahadur]

was humanly possible to mitigate the suffering and hardship of these people.

SHRI SEZHIYAN: What about the application of the casual labour laws in existence in the main land? Will they be enforced in the main land?

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: I have said that the casual labour who have completed three years of service were brought under the work-charged establishment.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Ahpore): He was asking about the Central laws on casual labour being brought into force in the island.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: So far as my information goes, they are being enforced. I will check it up.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Saminathan, Shri Mayavan and Shri C. T. Dhandapani, all are absent

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): Sir, I have given notice of an adjournment motion on the power crisis in New Delhi.

MR. SPEAKER: Do not make adjournment motions so common and cheap. I appreciate the matter of one of your adjournment motions. Kindly look at your back and then say whether I should allow it or not. I have already allowed a Calling Attention.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: That is not enough.

MR. SPEAKER: Should I allow the adjournment motion? See at your back. No members.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I know you will not hit below the belt.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): One opposition member is equal to five.

MR. SPEAKER: I had a mind to allow it. But I am not allowing it to let you down. I have allowed a Calling Attention Notice.

12.24 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

CORRIGENDUM TO NOTIFICATION UNDER MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, NOTIFICATIONS RE. ANDHRA PRADESH MOTOR VEHICLES RULES, AND ORISSA MOTOR VEHICLES RULES

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR): I beg to lay on the Table—

- (1) A copy of Notification No. G.S.R. 716 published in Gazette of India dated the 7th July, 1973 containing corrigendum to Notification No. G.S.R. 136 dated the 10th February, 1973, under sub-section (3) of section 458 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1958.

[Placed in Library See No. LT—5386/73].

- (2) (i) A copy each of the following Notifications (Hindi and English versions) under sub-section (3) of Section 133 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939 read with clause (c) (iii) of the Proclamation dated the 18th January, 1973 issued by the President in relation to the State of Andhra Pradesh:—

(a) G.O.Ms No 921 published in Andhra Pradesh Gazette dated the 10th August, 1972 making certain amendment to the Andhra Pradesh Motor Vehicles Rules, 1964.

(b) G.O.Rt. No. 2801 published in Andhra Pradesh Gazette dated the 18th November, 1972 making certain Amendments to Andhra Pradesh Motor Vehicles Rules, 1964

(ii) Two statements (Hindi and English versions) showing reasons for delay in laying the above Notification. [Placed in Library See No. LT—5387/73].

(3) A copy of Orissa Notification No. S.R.O. 483/73 (Hindi and English versions) published in Orissa Gazette dated the 30th May, 1973 making certain am-