

particular complaint in respect of the goods imported from the Soviet Union.

(b) The trade position between India and the U.S.S.R. during 1957 and 1958 is as given below:

(Rupees in Lakhs)

| | 1957 | 1958 |
|------------------|---------|------------|
| | | (Jan.-May) |
| Imports | 2,268 | 1206 |
| Exports | 1,753 | 765 |
| Balance of trade | (—) 515 | (—)441 |

12 hrs.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

LAY-OFF OF WORKERS IN BURN & Co

Mr. Speaker: On the 28th August, 1958, Shrimati Renu Chakravartty and others gave notice of the following adjournment motion, decision on which was postponed for today:

“Serious situation arising out of 1135 skilled workers of premier engineering firm Messrs. Burn & Co., Howrah, being laid off resulting in creating a situation where priority orders in wagon building and steel fabrication for Plan core projects at Bhilai and Durgapur have been stopped and there is threatened en masse closure facing the Engineering Industry as a whole in and around Calcutta.”

That is the text of the adjournment motion. Does the Minister of Commerce and Industry propose to make a statement in this matter?

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri): Yes.

As the hon. Members are well aware, due to serious foreign exchange difficulties, drastic reductions have had to be effected on imports even in respect of essential commodities resulting in shortages in supply within the country. The position in regard to the supply of steel during the current year has been particularly acute. The total availability during the current year will be of the order of about 2 million tons as against about 3 million tons during each of the preceding two years. On the other hand, the demand for steel from the engineering industries has been growing fast and could not have been met in full even if the supplies had been maintained at last year's level. The problem of steel, is therefore, one of demand far outstripping the available supply. All possible efforts are, however being made to make the most advantageous use of the available supplies, and towards this end, a number of steps have already been taken. Details of these are given in the statement which I am laying on the Table of the House. I would only add that arrangements are being made in co-ordination with the Ministries of Labour, Steel and Railways as well as the State Government of West Bengal to convene a tripartite meeting comprising representatives of labour, industry and the State and Central Governments to look into the question relating to the lay-off of labour and to consider how best this problem could be tackled. Further, Government also propose to constitute an inter-Ministerial Committee at Secretaries' level to plan out a long-term programme for the placement of such orders as are possible to fabricate within the country, for the core projects and also to plan the supplies of raw materials required for such orders. It is expected that this step which is being taken as a result of consideration over a period of time would lead to effective co-ordination,

so that difficulties as have arisen in this particular instance, do not recur.

I may also inform the House that the Labour Department of the West Bengal Government is currently looking into the case of Messrs. Burn & Co., and certain discussions with the representatives of the workers have already taken place. The final outcome of these negotiations is awaited. I will also read out the statement re: supply of steel to engineering industries:

"The general position in regard to the supply of steel to the engineering industries as a whole has already been mentioned to the House. The position of the wagon-building and structural units has, however, been less difficult than that of other steel using units, for the reason that most of the orders from the former class of units have a high priority. Even so, the position is not uniform in the matter of supply of steel as between the different wagon building and fabricating units. The main difficulty is not merely the general shortage of steel, but even more, a shortage in certain categories. In view of this position, meetings were held both by the Iron and Steel Controller in Calcutta and in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi with the representatives of the firms concerned, as well as the representatives from the concerned Ministries to see as to what extent the position could be remedied on an immediate basis. The position that has emerged from these discussions is somewhat like this. Excepting in the case of Burn & Co., Howrah, the other wagon building and structural companies in this region have enough stocks to carry them on till November. It is expected that orders placed by the Railway Board in Japan under the D.L.F. programme will begin flowing in towards the end of this year. The real difficulty is, therefore, between now and the end of the year.

As a result of the meetings held already, the Iron and Steel Controller is examining as to what extent the indigenous supply could be maximised to meet the requirements during the intervening period. One difficulty in this connection is that Tatas are the only indigenous producers supplying plates; their production of plate has been practically halved since April last on account of the re-vamping of the plate mill. The position was further aggravated by the recent strike in Tatas and the consequent loss of production. Even now, 50 per cent. of the plate supplies is being made available to wagon builders, and the Iron and Steel Controller is now trying to see if this proportion cannot be increased to the greatest extent possible even by diversion from other top priority users.

Two other lines of immediate assistance that are also being explored by the Iron and Steel Controller are, firstly, to obtain a very detailed inventory of the stocks of materials in all categories held by different firms, to see to what extent a re-distribution between them could bring about an improvement in their day-to-day working. Towards this end, meetings had already been convened with the representatives of all the firms concerned, and further action is being expedited. Secondly, it is also being examined as to what extent, certain categories of steel arriving from Russia and West Germany could be diverted to these units either for wagon building or other structural work.

The position, therefore, is that while we are admittedly faced with a very difficult situation on account of the acute shortage of steel, everything possible is being done to relieve the situation by such adjustments as are possible on the lines mentioned above."

[This statement was also laid on the Table].

Shri Prabhat Kar (Hooghly): May I say something on this adjournment motion?

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to allow a speech now.

Shri Prabhat Kar: It is only on a matter of clarification. The Minister has said that there will be a tripartite conference on this matter between the representatives of labour, industry, the West Bengal Government and the Central Government. He has also informed us that the Labour Department of West Bengal is looking into this matter. Will the Minister kindly ask the West Bengal Government to see that the cases of the 1135 odd workers may not be decided finally until this tripartite conference has finalised matters?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: The West Bengal Government are fully seized of the matter. But if the hon. Member so desires, I have no objection to referring that particular point to the Labour Department of the West Bengal Government.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the statement of the hon. Minister, I do not think it is necessary to give consent to this adjournment motion.

ALLEGED BREAK-DOWN OF CONSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY IN PONDICHERRY

Mr. Speaker I have received notice of another adjournment motion from Shri V. P. Nayar, which reads as follows:

"The situation arising out of the failure of the Chief Commissioner of Pondicherry to accept the names submitted by the majority party in the Assembly for nomination as Councillors and the consequent break-down of the Constitutional machinery due to the manoeuvres of the Government of India and the Chief Commissioner."

I would urge all hon. Members not to use such language as 'manoeuvres' and the like.

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): There is also my adjournment motion, where the wording is different.

Mr. Speaker: All right. I am glad then. Nothing is gained by casting aspersions. If there is a serious default on the part of Government, certainly, I shall give consent, and they may have the adjournment motion discussed.

Shri V. P. Nayar (Quilon): May I explain? At that time, I could not get another word. It is open to you to correct the wording.

Mr. Speaker: Is it contended that hon. Members must take liberties to use their own words, and it is for me to go on correcting them from time to time? I am really surprised. Hon. Members must use such language as would be befitting and would show that we are conducting the proceedings in an orderly manner.

Has the Minister in charge to say something?

Shri Tangamani: May I make a submission?

Mr. Speaker: I shall read out his adjournment motion:

"Situation in Pondicherry following Chief Commissioner's refusal to accept majority group".

Accept majority group? Very well, whatever it might be, this is the adjournment motion.

Shri Tangamani: May I make a submission? The Pondicherry Council.....

Mr. Speaker: It is clear already. The notice of adjournment motion is there. I am only trying to ascertain facts from Government in order to enable me to decide whether it is urgent or is of recent occurrence. I am asking the Minister. If I have a doubt, I shall call the hon. Member.

Shri Tangamani: May I make a submission to show the urgency, because this Pondicherry Council was formed, and there was the majority party, and this breakdown has been continuing