

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: And the general discussion will also start in this House first, not in the other place?

12.25 hrs.

**RAILWAY BUDGET—GENERAL
DISCUSSION—Contd.**

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: This House is having the general discussion first. It is not going to be changed.

Shri Alvares (Panjim): Yesterday, towards the conclusion of my speech I was stressing the necessity of the appointment of a statutory Transport Commission in order to have a unified transport policy for the entire country. It is obvious from a perusal of the statistics that road transport can be highly competitive, and that the railways, because of their physical inability to compete with road transport, are at a great and relative disadvantage. Railways, road transport and inland waterways are complementary to one another, and it is unnecessary in the coming future that they should be allowed to be competitive. There is the question of labour also, which has demanded that such a Commission be set up both from the point of view of the interest of the industry itself and of labour.

श्री किशन पटनायक (सम्बलपुर) :
अध्यक्ष महोदय, राष्ट्रपति के अभिभाषण पर लोक-सभा में श्री लाल बहादुर शास्त्री के भाषण के बाद सारे देश में तथा अखबारों में यह धारणा बन चुकी है कि शायद सरकार का रख चीन के मामले में बदल रहा है। मैं चाहता हूँ कि इस के बारे में एक वक्तव्य सरकार की तरफ से दिया जायें।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : नहीं, यह सवाल इस वक्त नहीं उठ सकता।

We shall now continue the General Discussion on the Railway Budget. Shri Peter Alvares was last on his legs.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi (Jodhpur): There is one point on which I wanted some information.

Mr. Speaker: When those things were discussed, he did not stand up.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: I could rise only after the Minister had completed his statement.

I find an omission in the Order Paper. According to the Order Paper, the Finance Minister was to lay on the Table a copy of the Economic Survey for 1963-64.

An Hon. Member: It has already been laid on the Table.

Mr. Speaker: Shri Peter Alvares.

In the 1960 strike of the Central Government employees we have witnessed how any demand from labour, however reasonable it may be, has been taken to mean a challenge to Government. A mere issue of increase of dearness allowance, even if it is for resolution through arbitration, has been taken up and interpreted as a challenge to civil authority. I suggest that Government divest itself of the responsibilities implied in the running of railways, and set up a Transport Commission, so that industry and labour can find satisfactory development.

I do not see any justification for complacency in respect of performance also. From the statistics we will see that it is impossible for the railways to move the traffic, especially the high-rated traffic, as they want to do. The average mileage of broad gauge wagons is about 50 per day, and on metre gauge it is 35 per day. Compare it with the rapid mobility of road transport, and you will find that the complacency in regard to performance is misplaced and entirely

[Sri Alvares]

unjustified. And so long as the railways move so slowly in comparison with road transport, there cannot be any justification for this state of affairs.

Let us take the question of overcrowding on trains. The hon. Railway Minister has said that traffic is increasing by 3.36 per cent, while overcrowding being reduced by only 6.6 per cent. Therefore, every year there is an increase in overcrowding by three per cent in effect. It would mean that the railways would never be able to prevent overcrowding at all. Or, to put it in mere understandable terms, even by the end of the Fifth Plan the railways would not be able to provide sitting accommodation to every third class passenger in the Indian railways.

Shri Ranga: There will be 15 per cent overcrowding.

Shri Alvares: Therefore, I have to make this submission that this complacency is entirely unjustified, and efforts must be made. I agree there has been improvement, but you have not reached the stage when the Minister can come to the House for a certificate of merit.

The railways are both a big industrial complex and a labour complex. In fact, the personalised services of railwaymen mean more to the efficiency of the industry and the travelling public than the mechanisation that is taking place. It is, therefore, necessary to pay attention to the conditions of these twelve lakhs of railway employees suffering from various policy disabilities in respect of their economic conditions and industrial relations. The very first issue that is to be taken into consideration is the issue of railway accidents. We are all anxious to reduce the frequency and intensity of these accidents and I will never condone the negligence whenever it has been the cause of any particular accident. But the liberality and the irresponsibility with which

the phrase 'human failure' is used in order to condemn poor railwaymen is entirely misplaced and therefore the House must give some consideration to what it means. Day in and day out, for years on end, a railwayman who performs a particular service in a very mechanical manner is likely to slip; we all slip in our lives and these slips are not attended with such disastrous consequences. If a railwayman who is manning a level-crossing or a lever or a station master just commits one slip during so many years of his service and if at that time a train is approaching by sheer coincidence, an accident may take place. This is not human failure attributable to negligence or carelessness as the railwaymen are the first to suffer from any purposeful negligence or carelessness on their part. So, this human failure is a failure that can be expected from any other human being, more particularly from the railwaymen, both because of the monotony and the type of duties that they perform; and the remedy is not to condemn all railwaymen unilaterally for human failure but to go on to a process of mechanisation by which human failure and reliance on manual operations can be reduced to a minimum. The other issue is about the economic conditions obtaining in this vast section of railwaymen. The Minister says that the introduction of incentive bonus scheme in the railway workshops has contributed to the reduction of imports from 30 to 14 per cent; that is a justified tribute to the railwaymen's efforts. But the Railway Ministry has refused to consider giving these very men involved in this incentive bonus scheme a guaranteed base wage at which rate they want the bonus. It is obvious that the rate of wage on which calculation must be made must be the revised wage of the Second Pay Commission. But the Railways have arbitrarily held down this guaranteed base wage so that these men are the losers every month by large sums of money in spite of the fact that they have been the main contributory factor to raise

productivity, which in turn contributed to the reduction of imports from 30 to 14 per cent within the last two years. This scheme must be speedily implemented by the Railways so that these people may not continue to be the losers.

There is another point which I may mention in passing pension scheme for the employees who have retired earlier than the date made applicable to the railway employees. I understand that the hon. Railway Minister has been approached in this connection and that he has agreed to consider the question sympathetically. When the State Governments are trying to implement pension schemes and social security measures for the general public, I think that the railways may consider some form of commuted pension for those employees who are not entitled to have this, so that at least they do justice to those who served them in the past but because of the date-line of implementation do not qualify themselves for this purpose. The pension has been roundly assessed to be of the value of ten years' pension equivalent to the total provident fund that the railways have paid to them by way of bonus. It will not be difficult to make this calculation, and in the affluence in which the railways claim to be at the present moment in regard to finance, I do not think that this is a burden which the railways cannot undertake for their ex-employees.

Industrial relations play a very important part in the efficiency of the railways, and it is, therefore, a great pity that the industrial relations have not been satisfactory. There is a reference that they have been cordial. They have been cordial because of the efforts of the organised labour to try and understand the point of view of the Ministry. But they have been far from satisfactory, as I shall try to

make out in a few moments. Why is it that of all the organisations in India, the organisation which employs the largest personnel adopts an attitude of hostility to railway labour? During the course of the last year, we have had several attempts made by Government to deprive the railwaymen of their fundamental rights, as in the withdrawal of rule 1708 of the Establishment Code which had protected them against dismissal except on certain specific conditions, and which withdrawal makes today a railway employee subject to dismissal for any fault whatsoever. There was then an attempt made by Government to amend article 311 of the Constitution, depriving all Central Government employees including railwaymen of the right to make an appeal in certain disciplinary actions. The Supreme Court has recently struck down the rule 149 of the Establishment Code as invalid, by the application of which thousands of railwaymen have been removed from service for the past so many years. There is also the arbitrary dismissal from service during the last strike. All these have their cumulative effect on the satisfactory state or otherwise of the industrial relations in the railways. Unless the Government gives a new look to these industrial relations, I am afraid that they are bound to deteriorate rather than improve.

Are the railways exempt from honouring the spirit of the judgment of the Supreme Court or can they ignore the rule of law established in this country? The Nagpur Bench of the Maharashtra high court has reinstated a number of people in the other departments after the last strike on the ground of natural justice just on the fact that their dismissal could not have been discriminated against. And yet, there are a large number of railwaymen removed from railway service without a charge-sheet on grounds similar to which a reinstatement was ordered in the Nagpur high court.

[Shri Alvares]

Last month, the Supreme Court struck down as invalid rule 149 of the Establishment Code. Have the railways done anything to honour that decision of the Supreme Court by reinstating unconditionally and unilaterally all those whose dismissal or removal from service has been rendered invalid, or has been invalidated? The railway must give a clear answer to this position not merely in the sense of industrial relations but in the sense that they have a responsibility to honour the ruling of the Supreme Court and to observe the rule of law at the subsequent stage. I do hope that the Railway Minister will take this into consideration and pass orders immediately that this state of affairs should continue any longer.

My colleague, Shri A. P. Sharma, made a reference to the strike in Liluah and Golden Rock Workshops at Tiruchi. How did these strikes occur? The one at Tiruchi was not a strike. When the late Mr B. C. Roy died, the Government declared a holiday. The entire labour felt that they should also participate in the general condolence because this eminent son of India had passed away. They led a deputation to the works manager and that was treated as a strike. Nothing could be more authoritarian than this decision of the railways to cause a break in service on the slightest pretext. The House should know what a break in service implies. Summarily, without any enquiry, the services of thousands of employees are collectively negated, done away with, with the result that all the provident fund bonus that they have earned, all the right to pensionary benefits, all the leave that they have accumulated in the past many years and all the past privileges are summarily forfeited and never restored. There may be sometimes exceptions made, but that such a draconian measure could exist on the statute of the establishment code and, be used time and again in these

modern times will surely prove that industrial relations on the railways are far from satisfactory and that they need to be remedied as soon as possible.

It is in keeping with this same policy of understanding, suspicion and hostility towards labour that Government have introduced what they call the Joint Consultative Machinery or the Whitley Council. I do not know whether the House is aware of what the Whitley Council happens to be. The humiliating conditions imposed, in this draft of the Whitley Council, asking industrial labour to abjure strikes, to renounce their own leaders, with provisions for recognition of craft unions as against the industrial set-up that is there today are, to say the least, very unhappy features of the introduction of this Joint Consultative Machinery. No self-respecting trade union organisation would barter the right of strike for this mess of pottage, viz., the Whitley Council in the form placed before us. It is not a question of wanting to strike. But the fundamental right of organisation, the right of strike, if need be, which is very rarely exercised among the Central Government employees, but very liberally exercised in the private sector, is fundamental to democracy, and not until either the Home Ministry or the Minister of Railways is prepared to remove the humiliating condition of abjuring strikes or breaking the power of the trade union movement in this country will labour have any other look at this very pernicious and invidious documents!

Very often issues have been raised in this House about dearness allowance. We had the spectacle of a very miserable offer of Rs. 1.62 or Rs. 2 on 126 points offered by the Government only a few days ago. Even before the money reached the pockets of railwaymen or the Central

Government employees, in anticipation, the prices of foodgrains had already increased, thereby negating even the small amount of dearness allowance that Government had given. The manner in which all these issues are tackled, the approach to these fundamental problems, is so halting, hesitant and slipshod that railwaymen and other Central Government employees have rejected this little offer of neutralisation. They have demanded on the contrary that there shall be full neutralisation at least on the basis of what the Second Pay Commission had granted and that the Consumer Price Index formula should be revised in the manner in which the Maharashtra Government has already revised through the process of the Lakdawala Report. Today the all-India price consumer index is computed by striking an average of the consumer price indices of 26 principal cities in India. If Ahmedabad, Bombay and Nagpur have come to the conclusion that the price index compilation is faulty, it is necessary that the Government of India take the initiative in asking other Governments immediately to set up a commission to revise the consumer price index, so that justice may be done for the compilation of the all-India consumer price index, on which the Central Government employees get their own dearness allowance.

There is one more issue and that is the question of compensatory allowance. We welcome the announcement by Government of the increase of compensatory allowance in certain cities by raising or by bifurcating the category B into B₁ and B₂. But that has not met the needs of the circumstances all over India. It is not merely on the basis of population that compensatory allowances can be adjudged to be necessary or to be increased. There are very many areas in this country—smaller cities—where the cost of living is higher than in the other bigger cities, and who do not

qualify for extra compensatory allowance because of their low population ratio. I am glad that the Finance Minister had admitted that mere population statistics are not a scientific basis for the classification of cities for the purpose of compensatory allowance. It is, therefore, necessary to rationalise this process. The basis must be both population and high cost of living. I hope Government will immediately introduce a scheme whereby these issues can be resolved very easily and cities like Nagpur, Vijayawada, Ranchi etc., and some others, also similarly situated, not favourably for this purpose on the basis of population ratio, but certainly qualifying because of high cost of living, will also be included for compensatory allowance.

There is one more issue, viz., indebtedness in the railways. Very recently when the Minister of Railways had gone to visit Madras, a petition was presented to him—a very curious thing—that when salaries are attached by the High Court for indebtedness, the limit of Rs. 100 should be raised to Rs. 150, because Rs. 100 is no longer relevant, the dearness allowance having been merged in the pay. The consequence of this was that a very large portion of their salary was being attached by the courts because of decrees. This highlights the extent to which there is indebtedness among railwaymen. This is a very serious problem for us to consider. For some time immediately after independence the State Governments had undertaken a survey of rural indebtedness in order that some form of relief should be given to the peasantry in the form of amortisation of debts. I do not ask for amortisation of debts as far as railway labour are concerned, but in view of the circumstances where 90 per cent of the railwaymen are indebted many times over, there is need for considering a revision of their pay scales and other facilities so that this indebtedness can be wiped out and the railway

[Shri Alvares]

labour can find satisfaction economically in serving the railways and the public in India.

12.51 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: RECOGNITION
OF ZANZIBAR

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs (Shri Dinesh Singh): Hon. Members were interested in the situation in Zanzibar and I thought they would be interested to know what we have done. In response to a request from President Karume of Zanzibar, the Government of India have decided to accord recognition to the Republican Government of Zanzibar. Our High Commissioner in Nairobi has been instructed to proceed to Zanzibar to deliver a message from the President and to establish contacts with the new regime.

Shri Nath Pai (Rajapur): Sir, we welcome the announcement and the recognition of the new Republic. May we know how far the reports regarding destruction of life and property of Indian citizens are true and what relief is being accorded to the Indian nationals in Zanzibar?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Barrackpore): May I know whether the Government is going to take up with the new Government there the entire question of the Indians there and decide as to how the matter is going to be settled there?

Mr. Speaker: Our High Commissioner is going there and he will look into it.

Shri Dinesh Singh: Sometime back I had informed the House of the situation so far as the Indian citizens are concerned. We have not heard of any killing of Indian citizens as such. There have been reports of death of people of Indian origin. Two of our officers from the High Commission in

Nairobi were making an attempt to go to Zanzibar. They have not been able to go there. Now our High Commissioner will go there and we hope he will be able to give us a report.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): With closer contacts established now, it should be possible.

Shri Ranga: It should be his task to see to it.

Mr. Speaker: That is what I said.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: That is what you said; he did not say that himself.

Shri Dinesh Singh: When the High Commissioner goes there he will naturally look after the interests of Indian nationals.

Mr. Speaker: The Government should see, because there is anxiety here, that now that we have a High Commissioner there he should take it up.

Shri Ranga: From the announcement of Shrimati Lakshmi Menon we are not encouraged to hold any hopes at all (*Interruptions*).

12.54 hrs.

RAILWAY BUDGET—GENERAL
DISCUSSION—Contd.

Shri B. K. Das (Contai): Mr. Speaker, Sir, in spite of the charge of complacency levelled against the Railway Administration by my hon. friend who preceded me, I must congratulate the Railways for the achievements and performance that have been presented to us in the speech of the hon. Minister of Railways. We find that although it is expected that there will be a total traffic of 241 million tons in 1965-1966, they are carrying on a programme of developing a capacity for carrying a total traffic of 260 million tons during the