

17.00 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE****CLOSURE OF HEAVY ELECTRICALS
FACTORY, BHOPAL**

Shri A. N. Vidyalankar (Hoshiarpur): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Steel, Mines and Heavy Engineering to the following matter of urgent public importance, and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The closure of the Heavy Electricals Factory, Bhopal."

The Minister of Steel, Mines and Heavy Engineering (Shri C. Subramaniam): On the 12th February, 1963 Madhya Pradesh Government passed orders declaring Heavy Electricals Employees Union (INTUC) as the representative Union for the electrical industries. The application of Heavy Electricals Servants Trade Union (HESTU) was rejected on the ground that in spite of being given several opportunities they had failed to adduce evidence to substantiate their claim that they had the largest membership among the workers of H. E. L. They were also not able to give any evidence in support of their objections against Heavy Electricals Employees Union not qualifying for being declared as the representative Union.

The immediate result of this declaration was that the Heavy Electricals Employees Union came to be associated in various bi-partite bodies in the factory like Joint Committee, Grievance Procedure Committee, Emergency Production Committee etc. The HESTU, in desperation, engaged itself in fomenting labour trouble in various sections of the factory on the slightest pretext. During the current financial year, there have been as many as 10 such incidents, including 2 cases of assault inside the Plant and one case of the Union authorities forcing their way in the administrative block of the factory, after abusing and

threatening the security staff on duty there. Whenever HESTU people or their spokesmen raised the question of their strength among the workers and complained against the action of Madhya Pradesh Government in declaring the INTUC Union as the representative Union, they were advised to file an application before proper authorities under Section 17 of the Madhya Pradesh Industrial Disputes Act to get the alleged wrong undone. HESTU continued to engage itself actively only in fomenting labour trouble in this factory.

The situation came to a head on the 9th of January 1964 when they started hunger strike in batches of two in front of the administrative building of the factory and declared that unless all their demands were fulfilled they would give a call for general strike in the factory from 13th February, 1964. As 13th February approached they intensified their activities, held several meetings in the precincts of the factory and also staged a demonstration in front of the house of the Chief Minister. The State Government at this stage issued an order under rule 126 (1) (a) D. I. R. banning strikes by the employees of Heavy Electricals. On the 13th February, the Chief Minister discussed the whole issue with the HESTU representatives and persuaded them to withdraw the hunger strike so that their grievance could be considered in a peaceful atmosphere. The Union agreed to do so and the Chief Minister showed them the courtesy of reading their letter in the Vidhan Sabha as a part of his statement on the situation obtaining in H. E. L. The hunger strike was given up.

A series of meetings then followed between the Chief Minister and the representatives of the Union. The Union demanded that the Registrar of Representative Unions should take action to cancel the recognition of HEEU of his own accord under Section 16 of the M. P. Industrial Relations Act. The Chief Minister did not agree to this,

[Shri C. Subramaniam]

as none of the conditions laid down in the said section, were applicable to the present case, but advised them to move the Registrar under Section 17 of the Act for recognition. The Union was also assured that necessary steps would be taken to ensure a fair and impartial enquiry into their application.

Suddenly, on the evening of 20th February, 1964 HESTU held a meeting and took a decision that they would go on strike from the 24th February, even though a large number of workers opposed such a move. The President of HESTU also resumed his hunger strike simultaneously.

The situation in Heavy Electricals became fraught with serious consequences and the State Government felt that it could not be allowed to deteriorate any further. They, therefore, arrested Shri Bhowmick, President of the Union and 7 others under Rule 30 of the Defence of India Rules and promulgated orders under Section 144 Cr. P.C. prohibiting meetings, processions etc. within the Heavy Electrical Township. As a result of this firm action, the President of the Union sent a letter from the jail advising the worker; not to go on strike and asking them to await instructions from their leaders. The Union authorities also indicated that they would proceed according to Section 17 of the M. P. Industrial Relations Act to get themselves declared as the representative Union for the electrical industries and the arrested persons were thereafter released.

Soon after, with the concurrence of M. P. Government, I agreed to receive a deputation of Heavy Electricals Servants Trade Union. They wanted to discuss with me various grievances which they had against the management. They were told that according to the existing provisions of M. P. Industrial Disputes Act, the demands of the workers could only be discussed with the representative union, which they were not. I also explained to them that the proper forum for discussing the demands of the workers

was the plant management. In spite of this, the workers later wrote a letter to me which conveyed an impression that I had discussed their demands and had agreed to look into them. Consequently, a clarification was issued from the Secretariat reiterating the position stated by me above.

The Heavy Electricals Servants Trade Union, on receipt of this letter, started a vicious propaganda against the management and the Central Government and asked the workers to assert their right by every means. Overnight the agitation was taken up by a so-called Committee known as "Gandhi Samiti", which issued directions to the workers to commit all sorts of acts of indiscipline on the shop floor. They were asked to raise slogans, to stop work and take rest during working hours, not to punch their cards and not to obey the orders of the management. Those who did not agree with these things were intimidated to fall in line with the rest. This started on 19-3-1964. The acts of indiscipline and hooliganism went on increasing day after day, and on 25-3-64, the General Manager and Resident Consultant were followed by a group of workers when they went round the factory and were hooted down all through their rounds. Effigies of officers were burnt inside the factory. On March 27, 1964, Shri B. U. Varishni, Test Engineer, Traction Motor Department was surrounded by the workers because he chided them for their indiscipline on the shop floor and was hit on the back of his head by somebody in the crowd. There has been practically no production in the Heavy Electricals during the last 10 days on account of these acts of indiscipline, which continued to increase both in intensity and viciousness. We as well as the management hoped that better sense will prevail among the workers and they would restore to normal work. The increasing tempo of demonstrations and acts of indiscipline, however, convinced us as well as the State Government about the futility

of such a hope. The Management as well as the State Government became anxious about the deterioration in the law and order situation, which was going from bad to worse every day. They were particularly worried as the workers were stopping work and holding these demonstrations etc. in deliberate defiance of orders under Rule 126 (1) (a) of the DIR.

Action, therefore, had to be taken to put a stop to these acts of indiscipline and hooliganism by the workers of Heavy Electricals. The State Government issued warrants of arrest against the persons who were either acting in defiance of orders under the DIR or from whom breach of peace was apprehended. They have so far arrested 54 persons—14 under the DIR and 40 under Section 107/117/151 Cr. P. C. Orders under Section 144 Cr. P. C. have also been promulgated banning demonstrations, processions, collection of persons etc. In order to avoid trouble inside the factory, which may have led to serious consequences including damages to the valuable equipments installed in the factory, the General Manager has, as a precautionary measure, shut down the factory under Clause 48 of the Standing Orders with effect from 6:00 A. M. today.

Even today, the Gandhi Samiti has come out with a bulletin condemning the arrest of the workers and has laid down a programme for to-day's demonstrations, including strike for half a day and taking out a procession of workers for demonstration before the Vidhan Sabha to protest against the arrests. Only 12 persons attempted to hold this demonstration and they have been put under arrest.

In spite of this, the situation in the Plant area as well as in the township of Heavy Electricals (India) Ltd, is at present quiet and peaceful.

Shri A. N. Vidyalkar: May I know what specific act after the arrest of some of the workers were noticed by the authorities that constituted, in their opinion, as a threat of vio-

lence and danger to the safety of the plant?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Do you mean after the latest arrests?

Shri A. N. Vidyalkar: Yes.

Shri C. Subramaniam: No, Sir. It was done simultaneously, because in the heat of the struggle if the plant should be kept open there might be acts of sabotage.

Shrimati Maimoona Sultan (Bhopal): May I know whether the demand for the increase in Dearness Allowance was also discussed when these workers sought an interview with the Minister and whether any assurance was given to them? If any assurance was given, may I know the details of that assurance?

Shri C. Suramaniam: They handed over to me a pamphlet containing 13 demands. One of them referred to dearness allowance. As I already explained, this matter had to be discussed with the representative union and also with the plant management. Therefore, I told them that their first duty is to go and apply under section 17 of the Madhya Pradesh Act and get themselves recognised as a representative union, and every other thing should follow that.

Shri R. Barua (Jorhat): May I know when this Gandhi Samiti was formed and how many of the arrested persons belonged to it?

Shri C. Subramaniam: We do not know the composition of the Gandhi Samiti. Pamphlets were being issued in the name of the Gandhi Samiti. We do not know the composition and we cannot say how many of the Gandhi Samiti men have been arrested.

श्री योगेन्द्र झा (मधुबनी) : मध्य प्रदेश में जो पिछले दिनों कांग्रेस की ट्रेड यूनियन का झगड़ा बहुत बढ़ गया था, उस झगड़े के कारण य कम्युनल रयट के कारण अथवा किन कारणों से वह कारखाना बन्द किया गया? यह मैं जानना चाहता हूँ ?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I thought I gave detailed reasons why it has been shut down now. That is because of the competition between the HESTU Union and the INTUC which is the representative union.

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): May I know if this Ganhri Samiti which is trying to exploit the name of the Father of the Nation is a wing of this Heavy Electricals Servants Trade Union; if so, what are their political affiliations?

Shri C. Subramaniam: This Heavy Electricals Servants Trade Union claims to be an independent trade union, but by all accounts which I am able to receive and from the information I have, it is a Communist-inspired union.

Shri Hem Barua: He has not replied to my question. I want to know whether this Gandhi Samiti is a part of that union?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Yes, yes. It is a part. As a matter of fact, persons who hold responsible positions in the Heavy Electricals Servants Trade Union are participating in this Gandhi Samiti.

Shri Vishram Prasad (Lalganj): The Minister has just stated that the trouble started from the month of February and now the situation is peaceful. May I know why within this period the Government did not take proper action so that the matter could have been solved beforehand peacefully?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I have already stated that the present series of trouble started on the 19th March 1964. I was constantly in touch with them and, as a matter of fact, I was hoping that after a few days of agitation and demonstration they would calm down and take to normal work. But they thought it as a sign of weakness and every day indiscipline increased.

Shri Warrior (Trichur): May I know whether the intention of the

Government is to sit quiet until the situation cools down or the Government is ready to set up any machinery to reconcile the situation and thus keep the production going?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Government's intention is to take firm and strong steps to put down this indiscipline.

Shri Vasudevan Nair (Ambalapuzha): Is it not a fact that as far as dearness allowance is concerned the workers in this factory are given much less an amount than even the workers in the Bhilai plant which is also in Madhya Pradesh and, if so, has the Minister agreed to examine this genuine problem instead of trying to put one union against another, as is very clear from this?

Mr Deputy-Speaker: No insinuations should be made.

Shri C. Subramaniam: This insinuation is completely wrong that Government is trying to put one union against the other. I am sorry to say that the party to which the hon. Member belongs is trying to exploit the situation (*Interruptions*).

Shri Vasudevan Nair: No, Sir. point of order. The Minister from the very beginning, leave alone my insinuation, if there is any, was insinuating. Let him answer my question.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He has answered it.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: No, Sir. He only referred to my party. What about the difference in dearness allowance between this factory and the Bhilai plant?

Shri C. Subramaniam: That does not arise at all now. It is a question of trying to find out whether the labourers are going to function in a disciplined manner or not (*Interruptions*). As long as this indiscipline persists, I am not going to look into any demands. (*Interruptions*).

Shri Swell (Assam-Autonomous Districts): As far as we could see, the main grouse of the HEL Trade Union is that though they claim they enjoy the membership of 80 per cent of the workers there . . . (Interruptions)—I said "they claim"; will you kindly here me—though they claim they have majority of the membership, that claim has been by-passed; when the Madhya Pradesh Government gave recognition to the employees union of the INTUC, did they try to ascertain by private ballot as to . . . (Interruptions)—why should you try to interrupt; you are not the Minister—which union really enjoys the majority of membership?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I am glad the hon. Member put this question, because I wanted to clarify this. Under the Madhya Pradesh Act, when an application is made for recognition under section 13, the membership in that union for three months previous to that application is taken into consideration. There should have been permanent membership, they should have paid subscriptions regularly, they should have had pass books showing that the moneys were deposited into the banks and everything was done in an orderly and regular way (Interruptions). When the HESTU Union applied for recognition, they were called upon to produce the registers, the account books, bank pass books etc. They applied for three adjournments for producing these documents and yet they did not produce them. After that, they took the matter in appeal. A High Court judge presides over this appellate court. That Court went into it fully and found that the HESTU Union, which was asked to produce documents to prove its membership did not produce the relevant documents. Even now I have been telling them: you kindly apply under section 17 and produce all your documents. They are not prepared to apply. Evidently, there is some-

thing wrong with them or with their documents. That is why they are avoiding an application under section 17.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): In view of fact that the closure of this vital plant is so detrimental to the defence effort, has come quickly in the wake of the Minister's statement on Friday or Saturday in answer to my question that the work of the plant is bedevilled and plagued by very unsatisfactory management-labour relations—that is what he himself admitted—and that he will look into the matter very shortly, does he propose to expedite the enquiry either by himself alone or with the assistance of any other machinery or any other agency for this purpose?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Our first task should be to restore normal conditions and set the plant working. We shall try to do our best to restore these normal conditions and set the plant working and, I am sure, this firm action will yield good results. After that whatever inquiry is necessary could be made.

श्री यशपाल सिंह (कैराना) कुछ समाज-सेवकों ने ऐसा कहा और उन की हरकतों से तंग आकर सरकार ने इस कारखाने को बन्द कर दिया। देश में जो फ्रस्ट्रेशन फैला है, उन को दूर करने के लिए सरकार क्या कर रही है और कब तक यह कारखाना दोबारा चालू हो जायगा ?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I did not follow it fully.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Can somebody translate it? श्री यशपाल सिंह अंग्रेजी में बोल दें। वह अंग्रेजी जानते हैं।

श्री कृष्णाय (देवास) : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, जो अंग्रेजी नहीं जानता है, क्या उसके प्रश्न का उत्तर ही नहीं दिया जायेगा। आप मंत्री महोदय को समझा दें।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He does not know Hindi.

Shri Birendra Bahadur Singh (Rajnandgaon): One pertinent question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He has not signed the calling-attention notice.

Shri C. Subramaniam: No doubt, production is suffering in a very vital sector. We are discussing irrigation and power not now as a matter of fact, the power programme in the next few years depends upon the production in this factory. But unfortunately those who are working in this factory, particularly, those belonging to the HEST Union do not seem to realise that; or, if they realise it they want to torpedo it.

Shri Birendra Bahadur Singh: I come from Madhya Pradesh.

श्री यशपाल सिंह : उन कारखाने के खुलने में कितना टाइम लगेगा ?

श्री बृजराज सिंह (बरेली) : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, पहले तो मैं यह निवेदन कर दूँ कि मंत्री महोदय किसी हिन्दी जानने वाले को अपने पास बिठा लें। मैं हिन्दी में मवाला करूँगा। इस तथ्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए कि भिलाई के अलावा, जो कि रणियन कोलंबोरेशन में चल रहा है, बाकी जितनी गवर्नमेंट अंडरटेकिंग है, उन में किसी न किसी प्रकार के उपद्रव एक ही साथ शुरू हो कर चल रहे हैं, क्या सरकार इस नतीजे पर पहुंची है कि एक ही विचार-धारा के अन्तर्गत ये सब कार्यवाहियाँ की जा रही हैं, यदि हाँ, तो उस मूल को पकड़ने के लिए, उस मूल को काटने

के लिए, सरकार क्या विचार कर रही है ?

Shri C. Subramaniam: The hon. Member seems to indicate that if it is Russian collaboration, trouble is not likely to be there, particularly from one quarter. But even there they have started trouble. Because we are doing well there and are producing and adding to the strength of the economy, there also they have given notice that they would have hunger strikes and all those things.

Shri Brij Raj Singh: That was not my question.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty (Barrackpore): Why in English now?

श्री बृजराज सिंह : मेरा यह प्रश्न नहीं था। मेरा प्रश्न यह है कि भिलाई के अलावा जितने भी सरकारी कारखाने हैं, उन में एक ही समय और एक ही प्रकार के उपद्रव शुरू हुए, तो क्या सरकार इस से किसी नतीजे पर पहुंची है ; यदि हाँ, तो उस कारण को मूलतः नष्ट करने के लिए क्या साधन और क्या उपाय सोच रही है ? यह कहना काफी नहीं होगा कि भिलाई में भी कुछ होगा।

Shri C. Subramaniam: I do not want to draw any inferences. No doubt, there are troubles everywhere and we have to face these troubles and to the best of our ability we will try to solve them.

Shri Kapur Singh (Ludhiana): That is no reply.

श्री कृष्णाय : मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या यह बात सही है कि मिस्टर सुबैया, जो रेलवे में जेनरल-मैनेजर थे, माननीय मंत्री, श्री सुब्रह्मण्यम्, के द्वारा हेवी इलेक्ट्रिकल्स में जेनरल-मैनेजर बना कर लाए गए, वह स्थिति को सम्भाल नहीं सकते और उन

में गुंडों को पनाह देने की जो आदत है, उस के कारण वहां आतंक मचा हुआ है और वह स्थिति को सम्भाल नहीं पा रहे हैं। मैं यह भी जानना चाहता हूँ कि उन की शान-शीकत में प्रति-वर्ष कितना खर्च होता है और हेवी इलेक्ट्रिकल्स के बन्द होने से सरकार को कितनी हानि हो रही है और उस हानि को पूरा करने के लिए सरकार क्या उपाय कर रही है।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I think, it does not arise out of this.

Shri R. S. Pandey (Guna): My constituency being a neighbour constituency of Bhopal . . .

श्री कछवाय : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा सवाल बड़ा महत्वपूर्ण है। मि० सुबैया रेलवे में जेनरल-मैनेजर थे, उन को इस प्रकार क्यों लाया गया है? वह स्थिति को सम्भाल नहीं सकते हैं। मेरे सवाल का जवाब मिलना चाहिए।

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : ग्रांडर, ग्रांडर।

श्री कछवाय : मेरा सवाल केवल यह है कि जो व्यक्ति अपने काम में असफल रहा है, उस को यहां ला कर क्यों थोप दिया गया है। वह यहां पर स्थिति को नहीं सम्भाल सकता है।

Shri P. Venkatasubbaiah (Adoni): In view of the fact that the HEST Union has been following a deliberate policy of sabotage and is hampering production in the Bhopal electrical plant, what steps do Government propose to take to declare that Union as illegal?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Just now we have taken certain steps. I think it would be possible to restore normal conditions and even the HESTU should see reason now at least and

see that normal conditions are restored.

श्री कछवाय : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा सवाल बड़ा महत्वपूर्ण है, उस का जवाब दिया जाय।

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have disallowed that question.

श्री कछवाय : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरे सवाल का जवाब नहीं दिया गया है। आप मंत्री महोदय को अंग्रेजी में ममझा दीजिए।

श्री राम सेवक यादव (बाराबंकी) : मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है कि वह वहां की स्थिति को सक्ती से दबायेंगे। मैं यह जानना चाहूंगा कि जब वहां पर शान्ति स्थापित हो जाये और हड़ताली लोग अपनी हड़ताल वापस ले लें, तो क्या वह उन की तीस मांगों पर सहानुभूति से विचार करेंगे और जो लोग पकड़े गये हैं, उन को जल्दी से छोड़ कर इस कारखाने को जल्दी चलाने का प्रयास करेंगे।

Shri C. Subramaniam: The Government's policy is always to deal leniently and generously with the labour and, therefore, if normal conditions are restored, certainly we will try to take a lenient view of things. But those who are responsible for creating trouble continuously will have to be dealt with in a serious and firm manner. Otherwise, perhaps, we may not be able to enforce normality.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. . . Not here.

Shri Bagri. . . Not here.