

examined the original decision of 1971 to set-up mini steel plants and whether he thinks the decision was motivated by economic considerations or otherwise?

**SHRI BIJU PATNAIK:** On this issue I have already made full statement while replying to the Demands of my Ministry.

**SHRI S. R. DAMANI:** I would like to know whether the Minister thinks that the concessions given in the Budget are sufficient to revive the health of this industry? If not, what action is he going to take to revive the closed units?

**SHRI BIJU PATNAIK:** My earlier answer covers this question.

**चौधरी बलबीर सिंह :** मंत्री महोदय बताएंगे कि मिनि स्टील प्लांट जो बन्द हो गए हैं उनको ठीक ढंग से चलाने के लिए चैम्बर आफ कामर्स की तजवीजों के अन्वया क्या सरकार की अपनी कोई पालिसी है और उन्होंने कोई स्कीम इसके लिए बनाई थी ?

**SHRI BIJU PATNAIK:** I am provoked to speak that the defenders of the mini-steel plants may be on either side of the House but I have no defence for starting these plants.

#### Reinstatement of Jute Mill Workers

\*369. **SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU:** Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) total number of jute mill workers laid off/retrrenched during the last two years;

(b) what steps have been taken to get them reinstated/re-employed;

(c) what steps Government are taking to compensate them for the lay off/retrrenchment period; and

(d) what steps Government are going to take to enable them to pay

off the debts incurred for their livelihood during the lay off period through payment of compensation?

**THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA):** (a) to (d). The matter falls essentially in the State sphere. According to the information made available by the Government of West Bengal, the total number of workers laid off on different dates during the last two years is 1,38,628. During the period the State Government did not receive any application for prior permission under the recently amended Industrial Disputes Act, for retrenchment. In cases of lay-off and retrenchment, the State Government takes the necessary steps under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, and according to the Government of West Bengal, lay-off compensation has been offered to the workers in almost all cases of lay-off for the lay-off period.

**SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU:** Sir, this golden industry which could have employed lakhs of people and benefited millions of people in the jute growing areas like Assam, Bengal, Orissa, etc. has become an industry of misery and sorrow. In 1947 when the Britishers left this country there were 3.5 lakh workers employed in this industry. In 1975 it has come down to 2.5 lakh. Sir, I am distressed to find in the answer that during the last two years—the so-called golden era of Mrs. Gandhi—1,38,628 workers have been laid off to starve on the streets of the country. Now, Sir, I want to know how could the Minister justify his saying that it is the responsibility of the State Government. The foreign exchange earnings on this account go to the Central Government. But the responsibility goes to the State Government. The State Governments get very meagre resources. The State Governments in the country are not better than the Municipal Offices. The hon. Minister has quoted the figure of 1,38,628. Does it include badli workers or non-badli

workers also? Where from did the hon. Minister get this figure? Whether the Government has got any machinery to collect a clear dependable statistics about jute growers and the industry or depend on the I. J. M. A.? How many recognised jute mill labour unions are there in the jute industry and how many bi-partite or tri-partite meetings take place every month?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** The hon. Member in his remarks referred to the industry as a golden industry. I do not know why he did so, why did he not described as a hen that lays golden eggs. That is the way some people have worked upon it. In any case the main question was how since 1947 when the number of workers were 3.5 lakhs, it has fallen today to over one lakh workers. As far as the main question itself is concerned, it refers to the lay-offs during the last 2 years and the figure that we have placed before the House is on the basis of the information that we have collected from the Government of West Bengal in the last 10 days. I would like to add that according to the available information with the Government of West Bengal, no permanent workmen or special badlis in jute mills have been retrenched. But it is not known whether a large number of casual workmen who are generally treated as badlis working in place of permanent workmen could not be provided with employment. The exact number of such persons may not have been correctly estimated. Here, I have to refer to the second question about the means of collecting these figures. It will not be correct to say that the Government of West Bengal depends entirely on the Jute Mills Association alone. In fact, the present Minister of Labour in the West Bengal Government has made a statement that nearly 80,000 people are affected by this lay-offs. But it turns out that the source of this information is an old figure quoted by the trade unions,

particularly the C. I. T. U. But as far as the verification of the figures is concerned, the Government is discussing with the trade unions as well as Employers' Associations to see that a correct figure is arrived at. I must also add that since there is some discrepancy between the figures quoted by the IJMA and the trade unions the Chief Inspector of Factories has now been asked to collect and verify the exact figures.

**SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU:** There are reports that workers were more or less forced to resign during Emergency telling them that "if you remain in service, your CDS cuts will be taken away, all other cuts will be taken away; so better take a little money and go home." Like that there are thousands of cases. If the hon. Minister covers that part, I shall be grateful.

Since the Central Government is the major and main beneficiary of the jute production and jute industry, will the hon. Minister kindly tell us what specific steps are going to be taken to ensure that the workers get a need-based income? It is their health question because people working in jute industry get tuberculosis and asthma very quickly. Their housing problem, job security, lay-offs, retrenchment, wage-cuts are not looked after. There is no check on the employers who are committing economic offences. There is a cut in their CDS, provident fund cuts and there is employees' State Insurance cuts.

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** There are two aspects of the question. The first one was about the recognised unions. Actually, though there are 6 or 7 unions affiliated to the different central trade union organisations, none of these unions has been recognised by the industry as the bargaining agent. In fact, in individual factories there are unions, though there is no *de jure* recognition even in these

factories sometimes negotiations are conducted with the unions on a *de facto* basis. The fact is that the industry has not recognised any of the existing unions. Here, Sir, this matter is again a matter which the State Government has to look into because the question of recognition of the unions in this industry has to be dealt with by the State Government.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Sir, the Central Government is the main beneficiary.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: There is an Industrial Relations machinery in the State also. In this case, the proper Government according to law happens to be the West Bengal Government. I am sure that the new Government which is a people's Government, will certainly look into this matter and answer the questions that Mr. Bosu has raised. The other question that he raised was about....

MR. SPEAKER: I think Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu is now satisfied.

(Interruptions)

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Sir, it involves lakhs of people.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, the second question that he raised was a very important question if I may say so. All his questions are very important. This was even more important. In addition to the methods of retrenchment and lay-off which are quite well known, there is evidence of a new example of ingenuity on the part of owners—that is what he referred to as a system called 'send-off'—sending off workers by paying two or three hundred rupees and telling them that they should go home and await further instructions and further summons. This does not come either under the category of retrenchment for which the workers can seek protection and compensation under Industrial Disputes Act or

under lay-off. There are a number of cases—they run into hundreds—in which the management has resorted to this new practice which is a practice that should be regarded as unfair.

श्री जगदम्बी प्रसाद यादव :  
अध्यक्ष महोदय, हमारे मंत्री महोदय बिहार को रिप्रेजेंट करते हैं लेकिन उन्होंने जूट मिल के बारे में केवल बंगाल का ही उल्लेख किया है। यह सुन कर मुझे दुःख हुआ।

मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि बिहार के पूर्णियाँ, सहर्षा और कटिहार में जूट का उत्पादन होता है। वहाँ की एक मात्र जूट मिल कटिहार में है, वह बहुत समय से बन्द पड़ी है और कितने ही मजदूर बेकार बैठे हुए हैं, क्या उसके बारे में श्री माननीय मंत्री जी कोई चिन्ता है? अगर है तो उसके बारे में क्या करने जा रहे हैं?

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA: Sir, the hon. Member is correct in saying that this is a problem which affects some parts of Bihar as well. The particular mill to which he has referred is a mill about which the Government is aware and we are looking into the question of what can be done in this case. But I am sorry I do not have figures in the case of Bihar as I have in the case of West Bengal. I can send the information to the hon. Member or lay it on the table if you so direct.

MR. SPEAKER: You can send it direct to him.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SAUGATA ROY: I would like to know from the hon. Minister (a) how many people have been laid off or retrenched in West Bengal after the Janata Government took over at the centre (b) how many people who have been retrenched or laid off have been reinstated after the new Government

took over in West Bengal (c) in view of the fact there is great indebtedness among the workers, whether the government is contemplating any legislation to wipe out the indebtedness of the workers and save them from the kabuliwalas.

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** There is no specific information about the last two months. But if the hon. Member is very anxious to know it, he may file a question, and I shall give the answer. In regard to the other question—Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu also referred to it—about need-based incomes, housing facilities, hazards, job security, etc., these are all matters which the Government is looking into and when we bring forward our legislation in regard to industrial relations as well as trade union activities, we hope to have provisions in this regard.

श्री राम सेवक हजारी : क्या यह सही है कि पिछली कांग्रेसी हुकूमत में बिहार में मुक्तापुर जूट मिल के सैकड़ों कर्मचारियों को नौकरी से हटा दिया गया था और मैनेजमेंट ने 81 लाख रुपए की बिजली की चोरी की ? यदि यह सरकार को जानकारी है तो सरकार इस पर कौन सी कार्रवाई करने जा रही है ?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** I do not think this arises out of the main question.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU:** In view of the statement of the hon. minister that out of 2.5 lakh jute mill workers, during the last two years 1.48 lakhs and odd have been laid off or retrenched may I know whether he has examined the fact that this has been possible because there has been a large increase of the work-load? He would agree that there has not been a proportionate fall in production. The production has more or less remained the same, with less number of workers. Is it not a fact that IJMA has resorted to increase of work-load. Would the minister look into it and see that

there is no disproportionate increase of work-load? Secondly, may I know whether it is also not a fact that the erstwhile government decided upon certain mechanism for the absorption of the badli workers into regular employment? Will this government also see that some mechanism is evolved for the continuous absorption of the badli workers?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** About the figure of 1,38,628, it does look appalling, but this does not mean that on any given day, 1,38,628 workers were laid off. It is the total, which also means that there are cases of the same people being enumerated more than once under this head. Therefore, the figure refers to the total number of laid-off workers during the period of 2 years and not the number on any given date. He wanted me to look into the question of work-load, whether it has increased in the last few years. I shall look into this question.

(Interruptions)

**MR. SPEAKER:** About Bihar, he has said, there is no information with him now. What is the use of putting questions about Bihar? Shri Samar Guha.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA:** The present crisis that has developed out of the threat of the jute mills, association to resort to closure is not something new. Whenever there is a shortfall in their income or when some legitimate demand is made by the workers, the mill-owners always take recourse to retrenchment, lay-off or lock-out or some kind of closure. Jute being one of the largest foreign exchange earners and the industry being one which employs a very large number of workers, may I know whether the government have thought of devising any mechanism to see that freedom is not given to the jute mill-owners to resort to lock-out, retrenchment, lay-off etc. as and when they like, but before taking any of these steps, they should take the advice or instruction

of some permanent machinery? Is the government thinking of setting up such a permanent machinery?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** The hon. member himself pointed out that this is a sick industry and has been a somewhat sick industry for long. My distinguished colleague, the Commerce Minister, the other day made a statement in this House on this question. The House knows that he went to Calcutta and had discussions with the parties concerned, including the new Government of West Bengal. On this question, he has made a statement. The government is aware of the situation and is anxious to see that the sickness of the industry is dealt within time so that the industry may be restored to health, and workers do not suffer for the conditions that have been created because of the anxiety to make maximum profit without ploughing back profit into the industry to modernise it and make it more viable.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA:** I want to know whether Government is thinking of setting up some kind of a machinery so that complete freedom is not given to the mill owners.

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** Since this concerns more than one Ministry we are considering the possibility of the Labour Ministry, the Commerce Ministry and the Finance Ministry together looking into this question to see that the kind of difficulties that the hon. Member referred to do not arise.

**श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय :** यह बात सत्य है कि जूट उद्योग देश का एक बहुत बड़ा उद्योग है और इसका महत्व है। इससे काफी विदेशी मुद्रा कमाई जाती है। मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या यह बात सही है कि पिछली सरकार जो बंगाल में थी उसने जूट मिल - असोसियेशन और मालिकों से साठ-गोंठ कर और चुनाव में बड़ा चन्दा

लेकर मिल मालिकों से मजदूरों की छटनी कराई है? क्या आप राज्य सरकार को इस प्रकार के दंगे आदेश कि जो अनियमितताएं हुई हैं उनके लिए मालिकों के विरुद्ध मुकदमा चलाया जाय, और एक लाख से अधिक मजदूर जो निकाले गए हैं उन्हें पुनः काम पर वापस लिया जायें। ऐसे आदेश आप देंगे?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** Those who were in power before us had collected large sums of money from many associations and many and that fact is well-known. As far as the second part of the question is concerned the West Bengal Government is quite competent to deal with the situation. As far as the solution of this problem is concerned, our Government will be keen to cooperate with the Government of West Bengal to see that the workers do not suffer either because of lay-off or because of retrenchment or the new system that is being introduced, via send-off.

**श्री शिव नारायण :** केन्द्रीय सरकार की नीति है कि मजदूर का हित देखे। ऐसी हालत में मजदूर का भला देखना हमारे श्रम मंत्री का परम कर्तव्य है। इसलिए मैं चाहूंगा कि नई सरकार को नये दृष्टिकोण से लेबर प्रोबलम को सौल्व करना चाहिये। क्या मंत्री जी इस बारे में आवश्यक कदम उठावेंगे?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** He is a senior Member and he must be aware that Labour is a Concurrent subject. According to the law, different Governments are identified as the appropriate Governments for different industries and it is on that basis that I said that this is a State subject.

**श्री कचरू लाल हेमराज जैन :** मैं आपके माध्यम से श्रम मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि आपातकाल समाप्त होने के बाद भी मजदूर संगठनों पर आपातकाल लगा हुआ है,

उनके नाव नहीं हो पा रहे हैं। क्या मंत्री जी जितने मजदूर संगठन हैं उनके मतदान द्वारा चुनाव करा के उनको मान्यता देने की कोई योजना बना रहे हैं? हर यूनियन में अभी भी अनियमितताये बरती जा रही हैं। क्या आप यूनियनों को मतदान द्वारा अपने प्रतिनिधि चुनने का अधिकार देंगे और बहुमत के आधार पर मान्यता प्रदान करेंगे?

**SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:** It is a general question about the recognition of unions which does not arise from the question on jute mills.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now, we will take up the Short Notice Question.

#### RE SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

**SHRI K. LAKKAPPA:** I rise on a point of order, Sir, I draw your kind attention, not to the admissibility of the Short Notice Question, but the general admissibility of the question as such, because it attracts the provisions of rule 54(7). It says:

"(7) In other respects, the procedure for short notice questions shall be the same as from ordinary questions for oral answer with such modifications as the Speaker may consider necessary or convenient."

It also attracts rule 41. I think that that provision will amply apply. Rule 41(iv) says:

"(iv) it shall not ask for an expression of opinion or the solution of an abstract legal question or of a hypothetical proposition."

41(v), 41(viii) and 41(ix) are also attracted. They say:

"(v) it shall not ask as to the character or conduct of any person except in his official or public capacity";

"(viii) it shall not ask about proceedings in a Committee which have not been placed before the House by a report from the Committee";

"(ix) it shall not reflect on the character or conduct of any person whose conduct can only be challenged on a substantive motion."

**MR. SPEAKER:** Which portion of the question is objectionable?

**SHRI K. LAKKAPPA:** The portion which relates to the appointment of the individual. The question has been drafted in such a way that makes an insinuation on a person; and his character and bona fides are questioned. It asks whether Mr. Nurul Hasan, fulfils these conditions.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister can reply 'Yes' or 'no'.

**SHRI K. LAKKAPPA:** Is it not an insinuation and an assassination of character?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Why do you say so?

**SHRI K. LAKKAPPA:** He is a professor. What will be public's reaction? (Interruptions).

**MR. SPEAKER:** Both the hon. Members will have to sit down. He is a professor. The question is whether a professor's appointment is there. The answer can be 'yes' or 'no'. Why do you presume that somebody is going to assassinate his character, and all that? After all, it is a question asking for facts. It is so simple. If you want to read into it, in between the lines, I cannot help it. You see the question. It is so simple. It asks: (a) "whether Mr. Nurul Hasan, former Minister of Education has been appointed as an Emeritus Professor of History, Delhi University." The answer can be 'yes' or 'no'. Is there an insinuation? No. You must get the information.

(Interruptions)

**MR. SPEAKER:** No, Mr. Rajagopal Naidu. When I am on my legs, I will not allow anybody to stand. If you