

MR. SPEAKER : It is me to decide. Do not discuss it again and again.

[*English*]

SHRI C.K. JAFFAR SHARIFF : I am grateful to you, the exact thinking of the Ministry has been held out by you. This is exactly the live that we are having.

MR. SPEAKER : We are on the same wave length.

SHRI C.K. JAFFER SHARIEF : We have already called the Inspector General of Police of the States for a discussion with us. We have also requested the Home Minister and his representatives to associate themselves. It is going to be a fool proof arrangement to see that in future such things do not happen and at the same time to see that every possible effort is made to book the culprits who are responsible for this kind of a conspiracy.

[*Translation*]

SHRI CHEDDI PASWAN (Sasaram) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to give a suggestion which would be very convenient for the hon. Minister. During English regime, an officer was invariably used to be transferred after a period of three years of his posting at one station, but I feel that the hon. Minister is fully aware that now-a-days officers remain at one place for more than 15-20 years and the number of such employees is much more than five thousand. If an officer is posted at one place for more than fifteen to twenty years, he loses his interest in his work. So attention should be paid towards this issue too.

**Re : Strike by Postal Employees**  
[*English*]

12.33 hrs.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN (Chirayinkil) : It is shocking that the postal strike is declared illegal. Actually for this strike the demand notice was given in April. Because the Government did not move, the strike notice was given in October. Even then the Government did not take steps and they were forced to go in for strike. This is actually a shame to the country that this strike is made illegal. It is surprising and atrocious that out of the six lakh employees in this Department, 3,04,568 employees are extra-departmental employees and the rest are less than 50 per cent. Over 50 per cent are extra-departmental employees. They get a paltry sum of Rs. 465. Over 90 per cent of the people are getting this amount. They have no pay scales, no pension, statutory gratuity, no leave, nothing. If they have to go on leave for one day, they have to appoint another man themselves. This is a shameful thing.

12.34 hrs.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER IN the chair : It is said that this is a loss making concern which we actually dispute. Actually the Social Audit Panel itself has recommended that the Finance Department is showing a stepmotherly attitude towards this Department for their agency services it is actually not properly paid. So many other things are there. There is no time. There is a proper discussion over it,

we can say all this. It is a profitable concern. Now bifurcation of postal and telephone services are made. Telephones are also working in the post offices.

If, for that also a remuneration is given to the postal employees, then, it will become a profit making body. That we can do. So, they have to be paid. They have put forward very simple demands and it is also a very reasonable thing.

They should also have pension. Even the agricultural workers and other sections of workers in the country are getting pension. No statutory gratuity or nothing of that sort is given to them. So, this attitude should change.

About mechanisation, I can cite an example. Indiscriminate and unnecessary mechanisation is being done. A sorting machine is bought from Bombay; it costs Rs. 3 crores. The workers have to sort it first and then only the machine will sort.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are other hon. Member also to participate; so, please be brief.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN: If ten more employees are appointed, this three crores of rupees worth machine would have been avoided and a very good service could have been given.

The postal men have demanded a revision of pay scales. Now, the Government has to come forward and reasonably settle the strike.

They have got only a paltry sum of Rs. 35 as an interim relief and not more than that. So, they should be given all these things.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are other hon. Members to participate. So, the hon. Members may limit it to two or three minutes.

#### *Translation*

DR. LAL BAHADUR RAWAT (Hathras): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise to support fully the issue raised here by the hon. lady member regarding the strike of postal employees. I would like to request the hon. Minister of Communication who is present here that there are three lakh extra postal employees in this Department. Their demands are genuine and for pressing their demands. They are going on a full scale strike today. The Communication Ministry has declared their strike as illegal; I do not consider the Minister's action as a democratic step. I would like the hon. Minister to start negotiation immediately with the leaders of the striking employees and accept their genuine demands so that the communication network may run properly. All the extra Departmental employees of the Postal Department should get the pension facilities. With these words, I thank you for granting me an opportunity to speak.

#### *English*

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Sir, I would only like to submit that the condition of three lakhs and more of

extra-departmental staff is very pathetic. They are actually treated as slaves. I think, it is a legacy of the British rule. They are not even paid a salary of Rs. 20 per day. They get less than Rs. 500 a month. I do not know, how do they live with that. Yesterday, the hon. Minister said that they could do other jobs. I do not know, how can they do other jobs because they have to come in the morning and work upto noon. It is not possible for them to do any other work. The Government can deal with the strike in its own way; but the demands of the extra-departmental staff are very genuine. Therefore, I request the Government that a sympathetic attitude should be taken and some action should be taken so that their conditions are improved and the grievances are ameliorated.

**SHRI ANNA JOSHI (Pune):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, from today the postal employees have started an indefinite strike and it is the opinion of the House that the hon. Minister should make a *Suo motu* statement regarding the factual position of strike. This strike has put the people of the country in a very awkward situation. These employees had given a representation on 12th of April, before going on strike, but the Government did not pay any attention towards the representation and did not have any negotiation with them and did not take any appropriate action on their demands which were really feasible. In the same context, the employees had also given a

notice on 28th October. Despite this notice, the Ministry of Communication did not take any initiative in this regard and as a result of it, lakhs of employees have to go on strike to day. Through you, I would like to make an appeal to the hon. Minister that he should make a statement as soon as possible in the House and take initiative to end the strike.

**SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, six lakh postal employees are on strike from today; out of which more than half employees are extra-departmental agents working in remote rural areas. I represent villages. These Agents have to work for twenty four hours because any one may go to them at any time to enquire about postal services. Thus they have to render their services for twenty four hours. They work hard and even then they get only Rs. 465 p.m. which is very inhuman.

In such a condition, they gave a notice of strike and tried to make negotiations. The Department said that although their demands were legitimate yet it was unable to do anything, and the hon. Minister, Shri Sukhran had no time to look into these problems because he is always busy with his own state Himachal Pradesh so he did not pay the required attention to the demands of employees as was necessary. As a result of it, the employees had to go on strike and suddenly the Department declared the strike illegal. The Department did not

follow the required procedure to declare the strike illegal. In these circumstance, I would like to submit that the Government should withdraw the orders declaring the strike as illegal and their legitimate demands regarding change in nomenclature from extra departmental agents, to Rural Postal Employees should be accepted. Besides, they should get pension and their pay scale should be revised so that they can get proper remuneration in lieu of their hard work.

[English]

**SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA** (Bankura) : Sir, Government has declared a war against six lakh postal employees. Out of six lakh, more than three lakh are extra-departmental employees. In spite of the threat held out by the Minister yesterday, while giving his statement, a total strike has started from 6 o'clock this morning. There are three central federations, namely, the National Federation of Postal Employees, Federation of National Postal Organisation, affiliated to the ruling party and the Bharatiya Postal Employees, Federation also affiliated to the BMS. In addition to these three national federations, there are non-federated unions representing Inspectors, Assistant Superintendents of Post Offices and RMS. They have also filed the strike notices and have also joined. Today, the postal service is in deadlock. We have not received any letters since morning.

Yesterday, the Minister stated that they have suddenly given the strike notice. It is not a fact. The charter of demands was submitted long back in the month of April, 1993. During the period from April to October, no serious efforts were made by the Postal Department or by the Government to settle their pending demands.

What are the demands of these six lakh postal employees? Their main demand is the slavish treatment meted out to the extra-departmental employees. They are getting a paltry amount. Their total emoluments are Rs. 465 per month.

And there, they should get an adhoc increase of Rs. 100. Yesterday, the Minister said that the Government has offered only Rs. 35 whereas the minimum demand was Rs. 100. They also agreed to accept Rs. 60 if Government came forward with such a proposal. There are a number of commissions constituted by the Government of India.

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mrs. Suseela Gopalan has already mentioned it very clearly.

**SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIYA:** No Sir. She has not mentioned this point.

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is true but there are others also who want to participate.

**SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA:** Number of commissions were appointed by the Government of India



to examine the service conditions of the ED staff and all these committees and commissions constituted by the Government of India have recommended that their nomenclature should be changed, that they should be called as rural postal employees, that their remuneration should be revised and increased and that they should get it in proportion to the service rendered by the Extra Departmental employees. The Minister and the Government of India has declared that the strike is illegal although the strike notice was given much earlier. I demand that the Government should withdraw forthwith that the strike is illegal and should sit with the representatives of all the federations to settle their pending issues immediately and to end the slavish treatment given to the Extra Departmental staff. (*Interuptio* ).

**SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE (VIJAYAWADA):** Sir, while I support the views expressed by my friends from this side, I urge upon the hon. Minister to immediately consider the pathetic plight of the Extra Departmental employees. Very low honorarium is being given to them though they are already spending more than eight hours in the rural areas to go from one village to another to deliver the post. It is almost a full-time job. I also bring to the notice of the hon. Minister that when some postal employees die when they are in service, one of their family members will be selected on compassionate ground under a specific rule. But they are

not given jobs immediately. It takes years and years. Sometimes, they have to wait for more than five years also. In fact, the job is given on compassionate ground but they are not given the job immediately. When these people are already waiting, it is the responsibility of the Department to give jobs to these people. Instead of this, they select others afresh. When the matter of giving jobs to these people come, they say that there is no vacancy and that they have to wait. So, I request the hon. Minister to look into this matter immediately.

[*Translation*]

**SHRI RAM SAGAR (BARABANKI):** Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to draw your attention towards the irresponsible and discriminatory attitude of the Government and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. On 28 November when special Bulletins were being broadcasts. . . . (*Interruption*).

**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Speak on the issue of Postal Employees alone.

**SHRI A. CHARLES (TRIVANDRUM):** Sir, the whole House is unanimous in feeling that the conditions of the postal employees, especially the ED staff, are very pathetic.

Two years back, on the eve of a strikethreat by the postal employees, I raised the matter in the House. The then hon. Minister for Communications gave a categorical assurance that the conditions of the ED employees would be looked into.

Unfortunately, nothing has been done so far. They do not have a scale of pay and nor do they have any conditions of service. Even the women employees have no maternity leave. I may tell the hon. Minister that this is not a new thing. This problem is there for the last several years. I do know the difficulties of the Government. But I plead with the hon. Minister that he may kindly look into the matter and give an assurance specially to the ED employees so that the present strike can be called off. I once again request the hon. Minister to look into it and do whatever is possible to redress their grievances.

**SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG (SHILLONG):** As it is, in the North East, in postal deliveries there is a great deal of delay. We have students coming from North East and studying in every part of India. In 1991, when the postal employees of North East went on a strike demanding a special duty allowance, the then Minister responded and promised that he would take care of it. Then the employees called off the strike. But till now nothing has been done about the special duty allowance to the postal employees of North East. Therefore, I would request the Minister to please look into it.

**SHRI M.R. KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN (TIRUNNELLVELLI):** Postal communication is the one and only communication for the poor man in our country. So, in the interest of the poorest of the country, I request the Government

to withdraw the declaration making the strike illegal. The extra-departmental employees are also very poor and they do not enjoy any facilities. They have been suffering for centuries and they should not be harassed unnecessarily. Hence I request the Government to look into their grievances and redress them.

**SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (MIDNAPORE):** The whole system of maintaining lakhs of workers as extra-departmental employees is itself illegal. Let the Minister tell us as to which other Central Government Department maintains extra-departmental employees. Nobody does it. It is only the Postal Department which has ED employees running into three lakhs. Now, they are declaring the strike illegal which, I apprehend, means that they intend to later on, take punitive and victimising measures against those people on the ground that they have taken part in the illegal strike. I don't think that the Minister will argue that they are getting adequate emoluments which a human being requires at today's cost of living. But he is saying that they are not prepared to give them even the interim relief of Rs. 60 which they have been demanding.

**SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN :** It is only Rs. 35.

**SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA:** They demanded Rs. 60. But they have been offered Rs. 35.

I want to know whether it is a fact that a Committee of the Deputy Directors General of the Postal Services was constituted and that they

*talked to the employees and admitted that their demands were absolutely just and reasonable. But they stated that they did not have the money or the authority to sanction the money required and therefore, they could not do anything immediately. If that is a fact, then the Minister should tell us that everything depends on Shri Manmohan Singh. We will argue with him also. If you think that their demands are just and reasonable, but due to financial incapacity, you cannot meet those demands, then you have no business to declare the strike illegal, when this whole extra-departmental system itself is illegal and when it does not exist anywhere else. Therefore I request Sukh Ramji not to go by the advice of the bureaucrats in his Department. He should come forward and meet the employees and sit with them again and settle the matter the best way so that it can be resolved without any further threats and all that.*

*(Translation)*

SHRI B.L. SHARMA 'PREM' (East Delhi) : Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I have just visited 30 post offices of Delhi, about half-an-hour ago. There is a hundred per cent strike there. Six lakh employees are on strike all over the country. As for as their demands are concerned, I will not discuss that. They had presented their charter of demands in 1987, the number of demands being 25. Six years have passed. Hundreds of memoranda have been submitted to the Government. Strike is the last weapon for the employees. But, as of today the government has not

*paid any attention to it. Being a founder Secretary-General of the P & T Federation, I can well understand their problems. Perhaps, even the Members of Parliament do not know about the E D employees. The poor man delivers the letters in such places as mountains, hills, where there are only five houses, and rain, storms, or hurricanes, are the usual features. Today, they are being subjected to injustice. I want to make a few points regarding Extra-Departmental Employees. Notice has been given by their Association.*

*(English)*

Three committees in the past gave favourable recommendations but the Government rejected most of them.

*(Translation)*

And we fear that in future too, the suggestions would not be accepted.

*(English)*

The Union sought for an amicable settlement or a commitment from the Government that it will favourably consider the recommendations.

As far as cadre review is concerned, the revision of pay scales of postmen should be decided outside the Pay Commission, as done in the case of Telecom.

The retirement age should continue to remain as 60 years for Group (d) employees in the pay scale of Rs. 950-1400.

(Translation)

Lastly, I would like to submit that the Government should wake up; the demands of the six lakh employees should be accepted immediately and their representatives should be invited for talks (*interruptions*).

(English)

SHRI HANAN MOLLAH (UL-UBERIA) : Sir, I have just now got the information that 41 employees have been arrested in Madras and one in Haryana. Massive arrests of the postal employees are going on all over the country. I think the Government has declared a war against the postal employees.

(Translation)

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA (Mandsaur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, It is a serious matter that the Government has declared the strike as illegal. I would like to urge upon the Govt. that this unlawful decision should be withdrawn. They have gone on a strike, as it is their right. This is their constitutional right. They are very agitated. And the hon. Minister has not given a satisfactory reply.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Rosera) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think Mr. Sukhi Ram is reminding us of the emergency days. The entire House is unanimous—be it the Congress, the Left Front, the BJP or the Janata Dal, This is the question concerning the poor employees. Shri Kalapnath is present here, he knows that these are the

people who run from village to village, carrying a spear, with ghungroo, in Bihar and East Uttar Pradesh. They used to get, initially Rs. 10. On hearing the sound of ghungroo, we used to say the ghungruwala is coming. The people who were slaves during the British period are still slaves, even after 45 years of independence. When a person retires, after putting in 20—25 years of service, he has no means of sustenance. He has no facilities. When they, the poorest in the society, the weaker section of the society—demand their due rights, the entire might of the Government is directed against them. Nothing could be more shameful and anti-labour action than this.

Shri Shankaranand Ji, you all come from poor families. You should not apply all these laws against those to whom you cannot give even the minimum wages. You give them Rs. 400 per month. For them it is like daily wages. All these people are poor, backward and come from down-trodden families. Even when the entire House supports them, you are doing an illegal thing by resting them. We would ask Mr. Sukh Ram, under what law has he declared the strike illegal? Under what rule? Will the rule of law prevail here or the Jungle Law? When the Government rules by the Jungle Law, who will maintain the rule of law? Therefore, I have come to request you to realise that the entire House is on one side. The Minister and the Department have been isolated. Action should be taken against the

corrupt Government officials and they should be sent to jail. Who advised the hon. Minister to declare the strike illegal? Let the hon. Minister go to Himachal. He was to become the chief minister. He may go and become the Chief Minister there. Let other handle Delhi. He is so busy in his work that he wants to kill the poor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very angry and I want to request you that, the Chair should give a ruling on this. If this House cannot do a good piece of work, then the House has no right to make laws against the poor, the Government is using sword against the poor—*(Interruption)*—This order should be withdrawn. The Finance Minister is taking a lot of foreign loans. Give the poor their due. If more loans are needed to be taken for this, we are ready. They should get service guarantee. Arrange for their pension. the order under which the strike has been declared illegal, should be withdrawn. Otherwise, the House is not going to forgive the Minister. This is what I want to tell.

*(English)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : So far as the postal employees are concerned, we are all one with them. Many hon. Members have explained their grievances properly. Still many hon. Members are very anxious to ventilate their grievances. Now, I request the hon. Minister to say a few words.

*(Interruption)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : At this rate, if I allow the Zero Hour to continue, it will go beyond 1.30 p.m. Since this matter has been raised by many hon. Members, now, let the hon. Minister say a few words.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (Murathepuzha) : Our Postal Department is not only one of the best in the country but it has become one of the best in the world. The extra-departmental staff and other employees are craving for some justice for quite some time now.

*(Interruption)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Mr. Thomas, already the details have been given. The details have gone on record. The hon. Minister has also understood them. If you still continue to repeat the same points, it may not be even over by 6.00 p.m. Kindly excuse me. I request the hon. Minister to say a few words.

SHRI E. AHAMED : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I appreciate what you said. *(Interruption)*

*(Translation)*

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI (Jhansi) : Due to the stubbornness on the part of the Government, the postal employees had to go on strike. Make an unambiguous declaration that the Rural postal employees will be given a uniform scale of pay. This House is unanimous on this. The demands of the postal employees are just. The Government have given

them assurance. Make a declaration to this effect.....(*Interruptions*).. Assure us here that their strike will end.

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Whatever the hon. Members are speaking will not go on record. Only the Minister's speech will go on record.

(*Interruptions*)\*

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of regret, that, the postal employees, inspite of our efforts..... (*Interruption*).....

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The hon. Minister is on his legs. Now, nobody should interrupt him.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to inform the House....(*Interruption*).....

Let me know where you have any objection. First listen to me.

After getting the strike notice from the Federation, negotiations took place thrice between the Federation and the Postal Service Board. And on 2nd and 5th December, I myself talked to them. Some of their demands relate to revision of pay scale, which cannot be solved at the Board level or by myself.

Regarding ED employees, the first thing I would like to say about which the House is particularly concerned is that their number is three lakh and not six lakh, as said by several hon. members here.

Secondly, Ministers are also people's representatives but they have to share greater responsibilities.

Extra Departmental Employees are not Government employees and they function from their residences for which an allowance of Rs. 25 is paid to them and normally they have to work on an average for 2 hours daily.... (*Interruptions*)..

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : After the speech of the Minister is over, you can put questions.

[*Translation*]

SHRI SUKH RAM : When you people deliver speeches we listen to you patiently. Therefore, the same is expected of you too.

I was submitting that these are not the Government employees and can engage themselves in agriculture, trading or any other activities. E.D. Branch Post Masters in total get Rs. 992 as remuneration..(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

Please do not interrupt me. I have listened to you very patiently and carefully. If you find that I am wrong somewhere, you can point it out.

\*Not recorded.  
2560 LSS/94—32.

[*Translation*]

They are paid Rs. 992 and have to work normally for 3 hours, If workload is more than 3 hours, then I will find it out. EDSM is paid Rs. 1326 per month. . . . (*Interruptions*)

Probably they are designated as Sub-Post Masters.

E.D. agents, where the work is of 2 hours are paid Rs. 495 and where the work is of 3 hours, they are paid Rs. 849 per month. They are also being paid Rs. 35 as interim relief after talks although the Finance Department was insisting on Rs. 25.

SHRI RAM KAPSE (Thane) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am on a point of order. The hon. Minister just now stated that Post Masters for 3 hours duty are being paid Rs. 992 and the Sub-Post Master Rs. 1326. Therefore, how can the remuneration of Sub-Post Master be more than that of Post Master? For three hours work remuneration of Rs. 800 is being paid. The hon. Minister is not aware of the correct situation. His statements are at variance. Therefore, ask him to furnish correct information.

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : There is no point of order. The point of order is ruled out.

[*Translation*]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Initially the said Post Master and later on Sub-Post Master. His submission is wrong.

SHRI SUKH RAM : I have got every right to put forth my views

in the House and you can speak later on. Extra Departmental delivery agents for 2 hours work are being paid Rs. 495 and Rs. 35 as interim relief i.e. Rs. 530 in total. Similarly, for 3 hours work they are being paid Rs. 850. I also submitted that the Ministry of Finance was to be approached for revising the interim relief to Rs. 35 from Rs. 25. I also gave an assurance that if there is justification then I will ponder over it. Regarding the question of their pay scales, I would like to submit that they are not Government employees and that is why a commitment was made that a E.D. Committee would be constituted. Similar Committee was formed at the time of last Pay Commission too. There objection was to the appointment of a retired postal officer or anybody from this service as the Chairman. Therefore, I promised that an independent person will be appointed as the Chairman and every demand would be forwarded to the E.D. Committee and the Government would consider every demand. Fifth Pay Commission has already been appointed and it will examine their demands. Regarding all their demands I submitted that—

[*English*]

An E.D. Branch Post Master whose workload exceeds 80 points will be compensated by the graded scale of 200 points.

Group 'D' officials on promotion to BCR can have an option of selecting the scale of Rs. 950—1400 or Rs. 825—1200. In case they choose

the former, they will retire at the age of 58. If they choose the later pay scale they will retire at the age of 60 years. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

The Government promised to hold negotiations. Employees working on multi-purpose machines or computers will be paid an allowance of Rs. 100. Holiday allowance has been revised from Rs. 25 to Rs. 36.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Give them at least a sum equivalent to the number of seats won by you in Himachal Pradesh.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Please listen. I shall reply to that also. The Government promised to issue orders immediately before 31st December. Their demand was also that\*

[*English*]

EDAs who were recruited prior to 25-08-1987 will continue to be eligible to appear for the promotion examination even if they do not have matriculation qualification.

[*Translation*]

The Government promised to accept this demand also. Postal Service Board has also accepted Scheme for the placement of Staff Car Drivers in addition to their other demands.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : You please increase the interim relief for E.D. Employees to Rs. 60 from Rs. 35.

SHRI SUKH RAM : You made a mention of legal strike. You are a very eminent lawyer. This dispute has been referred to the Chief Labour Commissioner.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : When?

SHRI SUKH RAM : I will tell you the date. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

We have referred this case after negotiations were over. I am not aware about the exact date. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Only yesterday it was referred to the Chief Labour Commissioner. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SUKH RAM : This matter has already been referred to the Chief Labour Commissioner. He has to start conciliation proceedings. Only thereafter, they have the right to go on strike. But they did not wait for that. That is why this strike has been declared as illegal. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : It is only in the case a pending conciliation proceedings after proper reference. Can you do it simultaneously? How can you do it simultaneously? You make it illegal then and there. This is the attitude. Therefore, the Government does not have an open mind at all.

Tell us about arrest. (*Interruptions*)



SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : In Tamil Nadu 41 persons had been arrested. (*Interruptions*)

I want to know whether you are going to withdraw the illegal order or not. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SUKH RAM : Conciliation proceedings have not started and completed. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, what is the attitude of the Government? Have they got an open mind? These are the citizens of India. For months they have been waiting. Every section of the House says that they have very legitimate demands. Now, the Government immediately declares their strike as illegal and starts arresting the Government employees. Can anything proper be done in this atmosphere? Therefore, the Government has a closed mind.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SUKH RAM : Please listen to me now. Still there is time. Kindly persuade them to withdraw their strike. I have a solemn offer. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : How can we talk to them when they are being arrested and when their strike has been declared as illegal? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : You must withdraw you illegal strike order. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SUKH RAM : No vitimisation. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, it is very clear that the Government is not at all keen to bring about peace in this public utility service. They have forced the workers to go on strike. This is the attitude they have taken. Now, we cannot continue. In protest we are walking out. (*Interruptions*)

13.20 hrs.

AT THIS STAGE, SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE AND OTHER HON. MEMBERS LEFT THE HOUSE.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Some of the hon. Members sitting here may persuade them to withdraw the strike. (*Interruptions*)

I give an assurance to this House that I will consider all their demands. I will do whatever is possible. (*Interruptions*)

13.21 hrs.

AT THIS STAGE, SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN AND SOME OTHER HON. MEMBERS LEFT THE HOUSE. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Hon. Minister, kindly yield for a minute.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Chittorgarh) : Mt. Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are just two simple assurances that I request the hon. Minister of State to give. One relates to not declaring this as an illegal strike and second relates to immediate consideration of the issue of the extra departmental employees. On both these issues instead of addressing

himself directly to the demands that have been raised from all sections of the House including his own party what the hon. Minister of State is indulging in is a kind of politicking, asking us to take executive action and speak to the employees. If it was the function of the Opposition to deal with the Postal Department then why are they sitting on the treasury benches? We are totally dissatisfied. Even now there is an opportunity for the Minister of State to answer in two sentences what we are asking. If he fails to answer this, I am afraid, with respect to you, we shall have to withdraw from the House.

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** May I know what you want me to say?

**SHRI JASWANT SINGH :** For the sake of edification of the Minister of State I shall repeat what I have said. My first requirement is that the strike cannot be declared as illegal. My second requirement is that in respect of the extra departmental employees of the Postal Department, the Minister of State shall now categorically say that he will not arrest any one and he will address themselves very meaningfully to their difficulties. These are the two simple things. If he gives an assurance now, the whole matter ends. Instead of doing that what he is doing, in a most incomprehensible manner, is to advise us to intercede on his behalf with the Postal Department. It is a very efficient organisation. It is one of the few remaining efficiency centres

in the country. A post card addressed in any language, illegible hand writing or whatever still manages to reach. I appeal to the Government not to destroy this Department in this fashion. It is in the hands of the Minister. Regrettably, I fail to find any response from the treasury benches. Even now he says so. He can reconsider. Otherwise, regrettably we shall have to withdraw from the House.

**SHRI PETER G. MARBANI-ANG :** The special duty allowance to the postal employees of the North-Eastern Region, as promised by the previous hon. Minister, Shri Rajesh Pilot in the House, should be considered very sympathetically. So far, no action has been taken on this issue. It is very unfortunate.

**SHRI SUKH RAM :** No arrest has been made so far.

**SHRI E. AHAMED :** Please do not treat this matter as a prestige issue and hold discussions with the concerned employees. You have to make others to believe that you have not treated their demands in a cavalier fashion but on the other hand with a sympathetic consideration. It is easy for the Government to declare something illegal. But the Government should understand how much people are affected by this. The Postal Department is a principal utility service. The Government cannot shirk its responsibility to the people. Therefore, as my hon. friend Shri Jaswant Singh has said, I urge upon the Minister to consider their demands very sympathetically.

**KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE** (Calcutta South) : My appeal is also to the hon. Minister. This is very important department of our country. Its staff are working very hard. We have total sympathy for them. We should not be rigid; we should not be vindictive for them because what we have seen in our country is that the working class, that is, the workers are suffering a lot everywhere. That is why my appeal to the hon. Minister would be that instead of declaring the strike illegal and arresting the employees, he should give them a sympathetic consideration. Whatever the Government is able to do, they should do it.

I know some people are making it political. But instead of making it political, call those people who can do the needful for these employees. We totally support these demands because we have sympathy for the working class. That is why I think that it is not a political matter. We are passing through a very crucial time from the industrial demolition point of view, from the working class point of view and that is why my appeal to the Minister is that he should not depend on the brokers but should personally look into the matter.

**SHRI P.C. THOMAS** : Sir, I would also suggest that a sympathetic view may be taken in this regard. This matter is not to be politicised. We know the Opposition parties have also ruled this country. BJP has also been supporting the ruling

party at that time. Even at time the E.D. staff had been facing all these troubles and difficulties. They were craving for justice even at that time. But justice was given to them neither under that rule nor under any other rule. So, I humbly suggest that the grievances of the E.D. staff may be considered very sympathetically. Of course, it need not be politically taken up by the Opposition or by any other party. It may be sympathetically considered and some kind of immediate solution be brought about in this regard. (*Interruptions*).

**SHRI SUKH RAM** : Sir, I have got all sympathy for the E.D. employees and I shall do whatever is possible regarding their demands. A number of demands have already been conceded and the rest of the demands which are not within my purview or within the purview of the Board, are being referred to the E.D. Committee. I have already made it clear that some independent person will be appointed as the Chairman of this Committee and all their demands will be referred to that Committee.

As far as the question of declaring this strike illegal is concerned, I shall just examine it. In case adequate time is not given to the Chief Labour Commissioner for starting the conciliation proceedings, I shall re-examine this issue of declaring this strike illegal. But I am not aware of it because I do not have the date when this issue was referred to the Chief Labour Commissioner.

After all, there should be some reasonable time for the Chief Labour Commissioner to start the conciliation proceedings (*Interruptions*). Please now allow me to clarify the point which you have raised.

**SHRI JASWANT SINGH** (Chittor-garh): It is not justified that on one hand the matter has been referred to the Chief Labour Commissioner while on the other hand the Government declares it illegal. The Government should either refer the matter to the Chief Labour Commissioner or declare it illegal. We are emphasising this to persuade the Government for not declaring it illegal. Rather it should be re-examined. The House is the only place for the declaration of Government policies where else can this be done? The Session of the House is going on, therefore the Government should announce its policy, so that the matter be finalised.

**SHRI SUKH RAM** : My submission with regard to the point raised by hon. Member is that adequate time must have been allotted in this regard. If it is not so. . . (*Interruptions*)

**SHRI JASWANT SINGH** : We regretfully withdraw from the House.

13.28 hrs.

At this stage Shri Jaswant Singh and some other hon. Members left the House.

(*Translation*)

**DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA** : You are not paying any attention to the interests of the employees

(*Interruptions*)

**SHRI SUKH RAM** : First I would examine whether adequate time has been allotted in this regard

(*Interruptions*)

**SHRI RAM NAIK** : (Bombay North) one hand you say that the matter has been

referred to for conciliation and on the other hand you propose to announce the strike illegal. Are you not aware when it was referred to for conciliation?

(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

**SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG** : What about giving Special Duty Allowance to the postal employees of the North-Eastern region? . . .

(*Interruptions*).

**KUMARI MAMTA BANERJEE** :

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Mukul Wasnik is sitting here. I request him to report this matter to the Prime Minister so that he can intervene in this matter and settle it.

**SHRI SUKH RAM** : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will again give time to the leaders of the organisations to meet me. Most of their demands have already been conceded and in respect of rest of the demands if they can be conceded I will do that also provided they meet me, start the discussion and withdraw the strike.

13.31 hrs.

#### PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

**Memorandum of Understanding between the Food Corporation of India and the Ministry of Food for 1993-94.**

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD (SHRI KALP NATH RAI) : I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Memorandum (Hindi and English versions) of Understanding between the Food Corporation of India and the Ministry of Food for the year 1993-94. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-4621/93]

**Annual Report and Review on the Working of the Annual Welfare Board of India for 1991-92 and Statement for delay in laying these papers.**

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR) : On behalf