

LOK SABHA

*Tuesday, August 9, 1983/
Shravana 18, 1905 (Saka)*

*The Lok Sabha met at 3 minutes past
Eleven of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Proposal for Reduction in ESI Benefits

*222. SHRI SUSHIL BHATTACHARYA : Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to reduce Employees State Insurance benefits to check alleged misuse of cash benefits and to control the fast growing expenditure; and

(b) if so, the measures Government propose to take to extend medical care by bringing other areas under this scheme with the money released from plugging wasteful expenditure on cash benefits by reducing the maximum period of sickness from 91 days to 56 days?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI DHARMVIR) : (a) and (b) The estimated revenue expenditure of the Corporation including the cost of administration during the year 1983-84 is Rs. 233.78 crore, as against the estimated income of Rs. 229.50 crore. The gap between income and expenditure is likely to widen during the coming years. On the

other hand, there is a demand for raising the ceiling of expenditure on medical care. The Employees' State Insurance Corporation are, therefore, exploring various possibilities of effecting economy in expenditure. Meanwhile, the Corporation is making every effort to extend the scheme in a phased manner to new areas and new sectors of employment, which are not at present covered, in the light of resources available.

SHRI SUSHIL BHATTACHARYA : The ESI Act covers only a very small part of social security; and that too, in a most niggardly way. Surely, more could have been provided when the ESI Corporation has got Rs. 300 crores in fixed deposits in various banks. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether the Central trade unions, including the INTUC (I) are opposed to the proposal of curtailing the benefits now enjoyed by the workers.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL) : So far as this proposal regarding reducing the sickness period from 91 days to 56 days is concerned, this is being considered in the Corporation and also the Standing Committee. It is not correct to say that all trade unions are opposed to this. There are certain trade unions which are opposing. That is why the Corporation has not been able to take a final decision in this matter. They have referred it. I understand that the Corporation is going to meet shortly and they are again going to reconsider this proposal.

SHRI SUSHIL BHATTACHARYA : Is it a fact that some of the conditions imposed by the World Bank pertain to curtailing the benefits now enjoyed by the workers?

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL : I do not know how it is relevant. He is asking something about the World Bank. If he explains it, then I will be able to tell him if I have the information.

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI : Has the ESI corpoartion actually accumulated more than Rs 300 crores; if so, what steps the government are taking to extend the area of medical care of the work force in the country?

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL : The hon. member wants to know about the reserve fund. The total accumulated reserve fund as on 31.3.83 is Rs. 363.69 crores. Out of this reserve fund, every year more than Rs. 40-50 crores by way of interest the Corporation is getting. Otherwise, if you do not take the interest that is accrued on the reserve fund, the deficit could have been much more; because if you compare the expenditure to income, the deficit is mounting every year. In 1980-81, the deficit was Rs. 8.28 crores; in 1981-82 it was Rs. 19.57 crores, in 1982-83 the deficit was Rs. 33.64 crores and in 1983-84, the anticipatory deficit is Rs. 43.78 crores. Whatever reserve fund is there, by giving more concessions and more benefits, to the employees, if we spend this reserve fund and if it is eaten away, then there would not be any interest accrues to this reserve fund; and in course of time, the Corporation will be in deep red.

श्री कमल नाथ भा : अध्यक्ष महोदय, एम्प्लॉयज स्टेट इंशोरेंस स्कीम के तहत जो मजदूरों को मेडिकल बेंनिफिट दिया जाता है, इससे ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में काम करने वाले खेत मजदूरों को अभी तक अलग रखा गया है। इन खेत मजदूरों को एक पैसे की सुविधा एन्ट्री-क्वीनॉल और सल्फागोनायडीन आदि दवाइयों की नहीं मिलती है। इन लोगों के काम करने की स्थिति से आप सभी परिचित हैं। चिलचिलाती धूप,

बरसात और जाड़े में कंपा देने वाली सर्दियों में वह खेत में काम करता है। क्या उनके लिए भी सरकार के पास कोई योजना है ?

श्री धर्मवीर : अध्यक्ष जी, सुझाव तो माननीय सदस्य का बहुत अच्छा है, लेकिन यह योजना अभी खेतिहर मजदूरों के लिए ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में लागू नहीं है। इसलिए वहां पर इसकी व्यवस्था का प्रश्न नहीं है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : लागू करने के लिए विचार करिए।

Dependence on Foreign Organisations for Power Project

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*223. DR. SUBRAMANIAM
SWAMY :
SHRI BIJU PATNAIK :

Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether India will have to depend on foreign organisations for power projects;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) the reaction of Government thereto; and

(d) the total funds required in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR SINGH) : (a) to (d) The bulk of the demand for power generating equipment is met by indigenous manufacturers. Government, however, take decision to import equipment selectively in certain cases depending on the totality of circumstances. Import is permitted where projects receive World Bank bilateral assistance or where available credit facilities are intended to be utilised. Some specialised equipment, which is