

Date: 09.12.2014

LOK SABHA DEBATES
(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

2441

LOK SABHA

Friday, 18th March, 1955

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
(See Part I)

12—08 P.M.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MAT-
TER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPOR-
TANCE**

STRIKE IN PONDICHERY

Shri K. K. Basu (Diamond Har-
bour): Under Rule 216, I beg to call
the attention of the Minister of Ex-
ternal Affairs to the following matter
of urgent public importance and I
request that he may make a state-
ment thereon:

“The situation arising out of
the Government using Malabar
Special Police to beat up and in-
jure workers of Bharathi Textile
Mills, who recently went on a
stay-in-strike in Pondicherry.”

**The Deputy Minister of External
Affairs (Shri Anil K. Chanda):** My
statement is rather long. May I lay
it on the Table of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I think it should be
read. It is better that it is read.
Otherwise the object of calling atten-
tion is defeated.

Shri Anil K. Chanda: On the 15th
February, 1955, the management of
Bharathi Textile Mills in Pondicher-
ry agreed to the request of one Pa-
lani, a mill worker, to employ him on
a lower post rather than leave him

2442

unemployed on that date. The Pre-
sident of the Labour Union also ag-
reed to this employment. However,
one Alwar, a fanatical communist
who had no place in the labour union,
interfered in the matter, quarrelled
with the other workers for agreeing
to this arrangement, and threatened
the management with strike unless
Palani was given the same job as be-
fore. Alwar was told that the ar-
rangement had been accepted by
Palani and the Labour Union and
that he was unnecessarily creating
agitation and disharmony in the mills
when he had no place in the Labour
Union. Alwar was adamant and ad-
opted an insulting and threatening at-
titude towards the mill management.
Previously too, Alwar had been warn-
ed three times by the management for
negligence of duty, misbehaviour, un-
punctuality, and interference with
other workers. In view of his indis-
cipline and threatening attitude, the
management gave him notice of dis-
missal unless he was prepared to ten-
der an apology. As Alwar refused to
tender an apology, he was dismissed
on the evening of 24th February, 1955.

The above incident provided the
Communists with the pretext to start
a strike in these mills. Under their
directions, the workers stage a stay-
in strike on the evening of 26th Feb-
ruary protesting against the dismis-
sal of Alwar. The Labour Inspector
of the Pondicherry Administration
enquired into the matter and advised
the workers not to resort to strike but
to prefer an appeal to the Labour
Tribunal as provided by law. Des-
pite this advice, the Labour Union
smuggled Alwar inside the mill pre-
mises and continued the stay-in-strike
by preventing the day shift workers
from going out, and inciting the night

[Shri Anil K. Chanda]

shift workers to remain inside the mill premises without doing any work. The police officers and the Labour Inspector did their best to advise the workers against the strike. A number of workers desired to resume work, but were prevented by the Communist workers. According to French Laws, which are still applicable, seven days' notice is required before a strike is declared. As no such notice was given, the strike was declared illegal by the Pondicherry Administration.

The number of workers willing to resume work continued to increase. Nearly, 300 non-Communist workers pressed the mill management and Government to permit them to start work and protect them against Communist strikers. The Communist workers discovering that large sections of workers were clamouring to resume work barricaded all entrances to the Mill with large drums, carts, etc. and posted men on roof tops with brick-bats and missiles.

On the night of March 1, willing workers of the Mill demonstrated before the Mill asking for resumption of work. The management opened the mill on the 2nd March, and requested the Pondicherry Administration to give protection to workers who had the right to enter the Mill. Since strikers threw stones and threatened the willing workers with assault, the latter withdrew from the main gate and tried to enter from the rear gate to avoid clash with strikers. Here again the strikers had barricaded the gates and prevented these workers from getting in. As the management tried to open these gates to admit labourers and remove the barricades, the strikers obstructed them and called for reinforcements of strikers and started throwing missiles. As a serious situation had developed, the police entered with the workers desirous of working and warned aggressive strikers against obstruction and assault. Over a

dozen Communist workers assaulted the policemen but the latter did not resort to use of any arms except small canes against the assailants and pushed back the recalcitrant strikers who had assumed a threatening attitude. Seven workers received minor bruises in this process including one who had a superficial half an inch cut on the scalp. All of them were treated at the hospital. Two of them were discharged after first aid and the remaining five retained for further observation. On the police side, five policemen and two officers received minor injuries. One mill watchman who tried to open the gate was also injured by the strikers. Eleven mill workers who assaulted the police were arrested. The Communists eventually vacated the Mill and about 300 willing workers joined work and started operating the Mill from the 2nd March.

The allegation made by Shri Nambiar in the Notice that the police beat up and injured workers, including hundreds of women, and that the injured persons were denied medical treatment, is absolutely baseless. Mr. Subbiah, the Communist Party leader in Pondicherry, had made similar unfounded allegations against the Administration. The Chief Secretary and the Inspector-General of police, Pondicherry, had offered to accompany him to see the injured. He was not prepared to go with them and stated that his information that over hundred workers were injured was based on what his workers had told him. He was also asked to produce anybody who was prepared to deny that not more than fifteen people were injured and that the police had used any other weapon. Subbiah admitted that according to his information also police had used only sticks.

The Chief Secretary told him that their purpose in meeting him was to make it clear that while the Administration will not interfere in a strike, they will not tolerate any resort to violence against other workers or the

management. Subbiah promised co-operation and after some further demonstration before the Mill, the Communist workers resumed work on the morning of 3rd March.

Despite Subbiah's assurance, on the 3rd morning, the Communists organised another incident when the police had to take prompt action. At about 11.30 a.m. on that date, some leaders from amongst the Communist strikers accompanied by about 150 other Communists formed themselves into an unlawful assembly with the object of intimidating and assaulting Nandagopal, the Mayor of Madaliarpeta, the reason for this aggressive plan being that other workers from Nandagopal's village had gone to work to the Bharathi Mill against the wishes of the Communist leaders. Nandagopal had also permitted non-Communist workers to make use of his garden for cooking food and taking rest after work. When this crowd of about 150 Communists led by Kathavarayan and Arumugham proceeded towards Nandagopal's house shouting threats and abusive slogans against him, Molava Ariputhiri of Nandagopal's party gathered together fifty men of his own group and started shouting slogans against Subbiah. Fortunately, the nearest police station got the news immediately and the Police Inspector with a posse of constables arrived just in time when the rival groups were hurling abuses and throwing stones at each other. The police dispersed the unlawful assemblies and arrested seven leading rowdies from the Communist group and four rowdies from the other group. The police investigation has been completed and the case will be put before the court.

GENERAL BUDGET FOR 1955-56

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Speaker: We shall now proceed with the further discussion of the General Budget. I might invite the attention of hon. Members to the

fact that, as a number of Members are desirous of speaking, it will be better if hon. Members try to curtail the time they take. I do not wish just today to fix the time-limit, though I would request them not to take more than about ten minutes or so; otherwise, it will be impossible to meet the desire of a large number of Members. This is only general discussion, and hon. Members will get further opportunities for discussing specific points, when the Demands for Grants and the Finance Bill come up. I would leave it to hon. Members. Otherwise, the only course for the Chair is to shut out those who do not get a chance.

Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava (Gurgaon): May I make a submission? If the time-limit is reduced to ten minutes, hon. Members will be in great difficulties in expressing their views on various subjects. At least fifteen minutes should be allowed to each hon. Member. If it is less than fifteen minutes, there can be no discussion, and there can be no well argued speech made.

Mr. Speaker: The point is that it is a general discussion, which does not go into all details, but touches only the general aspects. Of course, I am leaving it to the Members. But my point is that there need be no repetition of the same aspect of the same point made by the previous speakers, and thus time could be saved. It should be assumed that the House is now in possession of the general background of the entire Budget, and therefore, one need not go into that. That is how I feel about it. But if they want fifteen minutes, I have no objection. I said, therefore, that I would not place any time-limit. I only invite their co-operation for the convenience of other Members who are equally anxious, and perhaps entitled to have their say in this House. It is left to Members themselves as to how they should act.