

LOK SABHA DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

621

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, 24th July, 1956

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

12 NOON.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

STRIKE NOTICE BY VISAKHAPATNAM HARBOUR AND PORT WORKERS UNION

The Deputy Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Alagesan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other day I informed the House that I would make a statement today about the threatened strike at Visakhapatnam Port. In the period since the receipt of the strike notice from the Union on the 17th instant, talks have taken place between the Conciliation Officer of the Labour Ministry and the Union representatives, as well as between the latter and the Deputy General Manager and other officials of the South Eastern Railway. The result of these talks is that the general strike has been postponed. The South Eastern Railway Administration has reported that further meetings between the General Manager and representatives of the Union will take place after a few days to continue the discussion on the various points raised by the Union. Two of these points relate to the giving of certain assurances in the event of the Port being transferred to the admini-

356 L. S. D.

622

strative control of the Transport Ministry. This transfer is under examination and the points that have been raised will be given due consideration before decisions are taken.

While the general strike has been postponed, a strike of 13 signal men employed at the Port, which was commenced on 16-7-56, and which led to the Union passing a Resolution in favour of a general strike, is still continuing. The three demands made by the strikers have been considered fully and the correct position in respect of them explained to the workers. Further discussions are being held with them with a view to reach an agreement and bring the strike to an end.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram (Visakhapatnam): In view of the fact just mentioned by the Deputy Minister, that the signallers' strike is continuing and negotiations are proceeding, may I request you to direct him to make a further statement here when the negotiations are completed with reference to this particular portion of the strike?

Shri A. K. Gopalan (Cannanore): The other day I said that in other ports also the workers had given notice of strike or were going to give notice of strike. May I request the hon. Deputy Minister to see that as far as port workers are concerned, some kind of an inquiry into their conditions is made so that the Government may understand what the difficulties of the workers are? As far as the Cochin Port is concerned, similar disputes are there. Conciliation was arranged by the labour officers. They may also be instructed to see that some kind of a settlement is reached immediately on the pending

[Shri A. K. Gopalan]

disputes. They had also given notice of strike, but we persuaded them not to strike.

Shri Asoka Mehta (Bhandara): There is already a strike in the Bombay Port. I do not know whether the Minister is aware of it. The crane drivers, who constitute one of the most important sections of workers in Bombay—or for that matter, in any port—have been on strike, I believe, since Sunday. I do not know if the Minister has looked into the matter. I would very much like him to make a statement on that.

Shri Frank Anthony (Nominated—Anglo-Indians): May I request the Minister to look into this matter with a view not to transferring the Port workers to the Transport Ministry? That is their main grievance. I do not know what the immediate occasion is, but several official committees and commissions have gone into this matter. I think the Cambridge Committee categorically recommended that the Port workers should not be transferred away from the railways. If they are transferred, all manner of complications are going to arise with regard to their prospects, with regard to their amenities and with regard to their privileges, and it would be a gratuitous step. I would ask the Ministry to bear this in view, that according to the recommendations of various committees, there is a categorical statement that the Port workers should continue to be under the Railway Administration.

Shri Alagesan: I thought the adjournment motion confined itself to the threatened strike at Visakhapatnam. So you will permit me not to deal with the other points raised by hon. Members.

As far as the strike of the signal men goes, if you so direct, after the negotiations have been completed and a satisfactory agreement has been reached, I have no objection to come here and make a statement in that behalf.

As far as what Shri Frank Anthony said is concerned, namely, regarding the transfer of the Port workers from the control of the Railway Administration to that of the Transport Ministry, a portion of the statement that I read deals with that. "Certain demands, in the event of the transfer of the Port workers to the Transport Ministry, were made by the workers, and suitable assurances have been given that the points they raised in that connection will be borne in mind.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram: May I just have a clarification? Do I take it that when eventually the Port is transferred to the Transport Ministry, the working conditions and rights and privileges of the then existing staff under the Railway Administration will not be lowered down or whittled down? Is that the implication of the Deputy Minister's statement?

Shri Alagesan: All those things will be duly examined.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: I had said something about the Cochin Port workers to which a reply has not been given. Because there was no strike in one place is no ground for not examining their grievances. As I said, they had given notice of a strike but action was suspended at our instance. So I want to know whether similar action in regard to settlement of the disputes so far as the Cochin Port workers are concerned will be taken.

Mr. Speaker: So far as the adjournment motion is concerned, the statement clarifies the position. In view of the statement, I do not think that consent need be given to the motion. Therefore, consent is not given.

So far as the other matters are concerned, both the hon. Ministers in charge of the Railways and Transport have heard every suggestion that has been made, and I am sure all proper steps will be taken. No further action is called for here now.