

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS—
RAILWAYS.

Mr. Chairman: Will the hon. Minister take a long time to reply?

Shri Alagesan: I will take about 15 minutes.

Mr. Chairman: Then I call upon Shrimati Sushama Sen.

Shrimati Sushama Sen (Bhagalpur South): Sir, at the fag end of the debate I did not think I would be called upon to speak. So I do not want to take up much time. But, having regard to the criticisms which have been levelled against our Railway Minister, I just want to say a few words in defence of him, if I may, that it is not quite correct to say that the Railway Minister or the railway authorities do not take heed of the just requirements of each constituency. As far as I know, from my own experience, in my backward area South Bhagalpur when we were trying for the re-construction of the Bhagalpur-Mandarhill rail link which had been dismantled during the world War II for a number of years, and when it was properly put to the railway authorities of the urgent needs they at once took up the case and I must say that within a year it has been completed. So, it is not quite right to say that things are not done properly and in proper time. I would pay my tribute to the Railway Minister and I would like to congratulate the Railway Board on this. At the same time, I would like to point out one or two things for the consideration of the hon. Minister, and that is about the amenities of passengers. I feel that as yet attention has not been drawn to the great inconvenience which passengers suffer from. I do not feel that ladies' compartments are quite secure or that travel in them is safe. There have been some cases to which I have drawn the attention of the Railway Ministry. I must say that they try to do as much as they can. But, they have so far failed. I would draw the attention of our Minister specially that the travel of women passengers

should be made safe. There should not be such cases as the three women passengers who were thrown out of the railway compartment in a running train. They were poor women travelling in a third class compartment. Some compensation should be given to these women, who were only bangle sellers; and they were thrown out by a burglar. I believe, the burglar has been arrested but I have not heard what happened to these women and whether any compensation has been paid to these passengers. I have heard from several women passengers that they do not feel secure when travelling. This is the point which I would specially like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to.

There is another point about water supply and refreshments on the railways, that needs the attention of the Railway Board. I travelled from Patna to Bhagalpur and for miles together there was no refreshment available and even drinking water was not available. I was told that *gharas*, which used to be provided at all the stations before, were also done away with, and there was no supply of drinking water for passengers.

Another thing that I want is, that in large stations there should be some arrangement for conducting women passengers by providing women guides. Some of these passengers have absolutely no knowledge when they go to a place which is not quite familiar to them. If there are some women guides, it would be of immense help.

I do not want to take up the time of House any further, and with these few words I support the grant.

Shri Alagesan: Shri Sharma of Hoshiarpur was less than fair to us when he said that it is very difficult to get replies from the Railway Ministry to any representations that may be made to them. I was rather surprised at that statement, because we have made it a point to go personally into the representations that are made by hon. Members of this House as well as the other House.

Shri D. C. Sharma: The hon. Minister may know about the replies that he has sent, but I know about the replies that he has not sent.

Shri Alagesan: I am prepared to accept that there may have been delays, but even in the matter of delays we are trying to lessen the period and be prompt with our replies. In fact, such of the points as are not actually answered on the floor of the House, are reserved for written replies, and each hon. Member has been getting these replies since the last two years. I was a bit surprised when he made that statement, but if he tells me that he has been offended in any respect, I am prepared to apologise to him. We have made it a point, as I said, earlier, to go into everyone of the points. In fact, I have myself seen several of these points, and some of them have to be referred to the various Railways, and long replies covering several points have been sent, and we will continue to follow that practice.

I think it was Shri Trivedi who talked about demurrage charges having been increased. As far as the Railways are concerned, we do not want to consider it as a source of income. Wharfage and demurrage charges are levied to discourage the accumulation of traffic at stations, resulting in the detention of wagons and congestion to goods and parcel sheds, and thus preventing further traffic being handled, with consequent restrictions on bookings. The rates have to be high, as otherwise there is a tendency on the part of the merchants to use our sheds and wagons as temporary warehouses. In view of the large accumulation of goods and parcels on the Railway premises, instructions were issued in 1948, to introduce wharfage charges on a telescopic basis, so that the charges became higher with the increased detention as and the state of traffic so demanded. Justification for such penal measures lies in the fact that they are designed to secure quicker release of wagons and speedier clearance of traffic from goods and

parcel sheds. He also referred to the fitting of vacuum brakes in M. G. wagons. As far as the new stock are concerned, they are fitted with this equipment; as far as the old stock are concerned, that is being done on a programmed basis.

Sir, Shri Gupta referred to the National Security Rules and the employees that have been removed under these rules. It is not for the first time this subject has been mentioned on the floor of the House. Perhaps, the hon. Member mentioned it for the first time. But it has been mentioned times without number by other Members.

Shri Amjad Ali (Goalpara-Garo Hills): I have been speaking on it for the last three years.

Shri Alagesan: I was referring to Mr. Gupta, I was not referring to Shri Amjad Ali.

This matter was represented by some hon. Members of this House and it was gone into very carefully and also sympathetically. I may tell hon. Members that out of 178 or so cases it was possible to re-employ 22. In cases where final orders were not issued—in six cases—those orders were cancelled and they were continued in employment. I am sorry to say that it was not possible to do more than this.

Then, Sir, Shri Gupta referred to the Pakistan optees. It may be a little easy to talk on this at this distance of time. But these Rules had to be devised soon after those tragic days and Government now cannot be found fault with for insisting on security verification. It cannot be given up, Sir. But certain figures are here with me which show that they have been dealt with in a very generous way. The total number of provisional Pakistan optees was 21,494. Of these only 883 have not so far been taken back: the rest were taken back. 324 were discharged even at the time of Partition. So, barring these all the rest have been taken back. Out of these 883, 207 have applied for reinstatement and their

[Shri Alagesan]

cases are being reviewed. With reference to final optees they number about 64,000. About 285 have been re-employed. Out of these only 760 have been asking for re-employment and their cases are under consideration.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: How long has it been under consideration?

Shri Alagesan: That is a very common question in this House.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: And yet we are a secular State!

Shri Alagesan: Mention was made of two stations—Nasik Road Railway Station and Palni Railway Station. At both these stations passenger amenities are being undertaken. In fact, there was a very huge programme of remodelling for Nasik Road and provision for an overbridge was also there. But, as the House knows, the Bombay Government has to bear its share of the cost.

The hon. Member, Shri Deshpande, has informed us that the Bombay Government has decided to give high priority to this overbridge in which case we will be able to go ahead with this work. Mr. Sharma of Punjab—so as to distinguish him from Shri Sharma of Assam, I am saying Shri Sharma of Punjab—was saying that the corridor type of Swiss coaches are very inconvenient and that people are dissatisfied with it. We have ourselves gone into this question and decided that the corridor type should be retained only for air-conditioned coaches and the rest should be without corridor i.e., the ordinary compartment type. I think that will give satisfaction to the hon. Member.

Shri Sharma of Assam spoke about Dibrugarh and Bongaigaon workshops. They are not going to be abolished or done away with; they will continue to function. He need not entertain any such fear.

Something was said about Saurashtra staff also. I may inform the House that the Minister had just now

talks regarding Saurashtra staff with the Home Minister of Saurashtra Government and he was just coming from that talk and he has told the Home Minister of Saurashtra that he would consider the cases where the hardship can be proved. The number comes only to about 74.

Mr. Chairman: Now, I will put to the House cut motions relating to Demand No. 5.

The cut motions were negatived.

Shri S. S. More: May I make one submission? It appears that along with the Budget papers, Appropriation accounts for 1951-52 do not seem to have been circulated. I want to know why this has been left out because tomorrow is the last day.....

Mr. Chairman: Order, order. Let the Demands be put to vote. While the Demands are being put to vote, this question should not be raised. May I ask the hon. Member to kindly resume his seat: I shall allow him to speak after the Demands are put to vote.

The question is:

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 68,02,98,000 be granted to the President to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March 1955, in respect of 'Ordinary Working Expenses—Repairs and Maintenance'."

The motion was adopted.

Mr. Chairman: I will put to the House cut motions relating to Demand No. 6.

The cut motions were negatived.

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 44,02,01,000 be granted to the President to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March 1955, in respect of 'Ordinary Working Expenses—Operating Staff'."

The motion was adopted

Shri S. S. More: May I ask the Minister why that particular document has not been circulated? I must submit that without that document it will be very difficult for us to participate in the discussion on some of the Demands. If I can say so, the Public Accounts Committee has frequently commented on the delayed preparation and circulation of these documents.

Mr. Chairman: Which papers is the hon. Member referring to?

Shri S. S. More: I am referring to the Appropriation Accounts— the

actual amounts which have been appropriated with the remarks of the audit; the one for 1950-51 was circulated last year along with the Budget papers. This time it was not circulated.

Shri L. B. Shastri: I shall enquire but my information is that they are still under audit by the Auditor-General.

The House then adjourned till Two of the Clock on Tuesday, the 9th March, 1954.