

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, 12th September, 1958

The Lok Sabha met at Half Past Ten of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

11.31 A.M.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

IMPENDING RETRENCHMENT OF DEFENCE EMPLOYEES

**Mr. Speaker:** I have received a notice of an adjournment motion from Shri Sadhan Gupta which reads:

"The impending retrenchment of thousands of civilian defence employees in the country and serving of retrenchment notices on 1800 civilian defence employees at Kirkee and the calling in of the police for that purpose."

This adjournment motion was received by me today. On the 10th Mr. Vallatharas gave notice of a Short Notice Question whether about 6,000 workers employed in the defence services have been recently discharged by Government as surplus staff, whether the Civilian Defence Employees' Federation has resorted to the issue of a strike notice on Union Government on this issue and what is the policy of the Government in the matter of retrenchment of civilian personnel from defence installations. Yesterday, the hon. Defence Minister laid on the Table of the House a statement. Is there anything more to be said in the matter?

**Shri Sadhan Gupta** (Calcutta South-East): The Secretary of the Federation of Defence Employees, Mr. Joshi, has stated that the retrenchment was contrary to assurances, and a strike of the employees is threatened in order to avoid that retrenchment and that Government must implement the assurance. That was Mr. Joshi's statement. Apparently, this is a very serious situation which involves 2½ lakhs of civilian defence employees and it is very important for the country. It is undoubtedly a fact that thousands of defence employees cannot be thrown out of employment in this way, particularly contrary to assurances, if that is a fact. Therefore, this matter needs to be discussed, and the opinion of the House has to be ascertained and it might be helpful for the Minister in considering the whole position.

**The Minister of Defence** (Dr. Katju): The position has been considered most carefully by the Government and has been explained very fully in the statement which I laid on the Table of the House yesterday. Before that, on the 30th of April, I had laid another statement in which the position had been explained. I had then stated that we had been carrying on a load of surplus staff for many months past out of consideration for their welfare. We discussed this matter with the Defence Employees' Federation at their request and we had employed a liaison officer and we had made the utmost endeavours to find employment for those people.

From April now nearly six months have elapsed. As I said in my statement yesterday, we are yet paying Rs. 72 lakhs a year or Rs. 6 lakhs a

[Dr. Katju]

month to these unemployed people. They do not enter the factories. They merely receive idle-time wages. They report twice a week at the gate and they receive the wages. This state of affairs cannot continue. We have tried our utmost and we have tried to expand the production of civilian goods in Ordnance Factories. We have tried to find them alternative employment and we have come to the end of our tethers so far as the Ordnance Factories are concerned. We are yet continuing our efforts to find employment for them with other Ministries and departments and we hope that there will be some results in a short time. So far as we are concerned, we must come to some decision some bow or other about these employees in Ordnance Factories. For the last many months idle time wages have been paid and the tax-payer has to shoulder this burden of many lakhs of rupees a month. It is not as if I am asking them to go home. We had decided to give them notices that they would be discharged some time in June. Then we extended it to July and August and then 15th September. On the 15th September they would be given one month's salary in lieu of notice. In addition to that, they will be paid gratuity at the rate of half the salary of a month for every year's service. If a man has served for six years, he will get three months' salary as gratuity. If he has served for four years, he will get two months' salary as gratuity. Then he will get the provident fund and the share of Government to that provident fund. Then if he lives at a distance of more than 10 miles, he will get railway fare to his home.

Now, I leave it to the House to decide what is to be done, unless you say: once a government servant always a government servant. They are all temporary employees. It is not a question about permanent employees.

I have to consider the case of the employees who work there. If we

continue this, there will be demoralisation in the staff of the Ordnance Factories. Here is the fact. A man who works for eight hours a day gets Rs. 100/- a month; another man who does not work at all, he continues to get Rs. 100/ a month. It has definitely got some repercussions on the persons employed.

Secondly, I have to consider the effect of the burden on the tax-payer. I have said in my statement yesterday that it is not as if I am parting with them for ever. I said yesterday deliberately:

"I should like to say that the special efforts to find alternative employment for the surplus workers will not cease even after these workers are retrenched. Arrangement will continue for the absorption of surplus workers on the special priority basis in all suitable vacancies arising in the future under the various Ministries and Government undertakings. As the development projects get under way, a steadily increasing number of vacancies will begin to be available. Having regard to all the schemes of development in hand, Government confidently expect that substantial percentage of the retrenched officers, if they accept alternative posts which will be offered to them, will be in employment again....."

Now, in the Ordnance Factories we have today this particular problem and we cannot possibly carry on this burden for months and months and continue to pay them idle-time wages.

In the notice of the adjournment motion my hon. friend has mentioned:

"The impending retrenchment of thousands of civilian defence employees in the country and serving of retrenchment notices on 1900 civilian defence employees at Kirkee...."

It so happens that in the Kirkee Ordnance factory we employ about 8000 to 9000 workers. It is an ammunition factory and orders on the ammunition factory have been very much reduced. So, there is no work there for a long period and the result is that about 1,800 workers in Kirkee have to be discharged.

There is some mention about police; there is nothing there; it is only a security measure. No police has been called and nothing has been done. We have just informed the police that security measures may have to be taken. I do not know what more can be done about this.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): May I supplement my colleague's statement? He has put very forcefully the reasons for the action that he has taken. In addition to that, on the other side, Government has been, naturally, very anxious to provide employment to every person who might be retrenched, in some other job. In fact, we have succeeded already in getting employment to a number of them. It is our effort—I cannot guarantee every case—practically to absorb everyone. I cannot guarantee every single case, obviously. I cannot guarantee the time. But in the course of the next two, three or four months we hope to absorb practically the whole lot.

Dr. Katju: May I add one other thing which I forgot to mention? We have already said that we will not declare surplus any unskilled and semiskilled worker who has been there for over ten years. We are not discharging any skilled worker or any semi-skilled worker who has passed trade test. Everybody remains. It is only the semi-skilled and unskilled workers with less than 10 years service who are going to be discharged.

Mr. Speaker: We have heard sufficiently about this matter. A matter must be urgent—of course, it is important—but this matter has been

pending for a number of months. From time to time, the time has been extended, and ultimately, if the Government found it necessary to retrench and give notices, attempts are also being made to reabsorb them in some office or other. In view of the statement and the circumstances resting upon it, I do not think anything special has arisen, although notice has been given. This has been before the employees for several months. I do not, therefore, give my consent to the motion for adjournment.

## PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

### STATEMENTS SHOWING ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON ASSURANCES ETC.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha): I beg to lay on the Table the following statements showing the action taken by the Government on various assurances, promises and undertakings given by Ministers during the various sessions shown against each:

- (1) Supplementary Statement No. II—Thirteenth Session, 1956 of Lok Sabha.  
[See Appendix XII, annexure No. 67.]
- (2) Supplementary Statement No. VII—Twelfth Session, 1956 of Lok Sabha.  
[See Appendix XII, annexure No. 68.]
- (3) Supplementary Statement No. X—Eleventh Session, 1955 of Lok Sabha.  
[See Appendix XII, annexure No. 69.]
- (4) Supplementary Statement No. XIV—Tenth Session, 1955 of Lok Sabha.  
[See Appendix XII, annexure No. 70.]
- (5) Supplementary Statement No. XX—Ninth Session, 1955 of Lok Sabha.  
[See Appendix XII, annexure No. 71.]