

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I beg to move:

"That the Bill, as amended' be passed"

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed"

The motion was adopted.

MADRAS—TUTICORIN TRAIN
DISASTER

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We have got two hours for this. I have already received about half a dozen chits, and I am sure as many more would be anxious to speak. So, we shall have to place a limit on the speeches. I hope 15 minutes for the leader and ten for others will do.

Shri Frank Anthony (Nominated—Anglo-Indian): It depends on the contribution they make.

Shri Vallatharas (Pudukkottai): Yesterday it was stated.....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: If the House agrees to sit, I have no objection.

Shri Veeraswamy (Mayuram—Reserved—Schedule Castes): The House has already consumed 15 minutes.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Is the House agreeable to sit longer?

Some Hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The sense of the House is that it is not prepared to sit longer.

Some Hon. Members: We are prepared to sit longer.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Let the hon. Member proceed and we will see. I hope he will be able to finish his speech within 15 minutes.

Shri Vallatharas: I solicit your permission to initiate the discussion on this topic, namely the situation arising out of the accident to the Tuticorin Express on the morning of the 23rd November, 1956.

First of all, I express my heartfelt feelings of gratitude and indebtedness to the leader of the House for agreeing to a discussion on this matter, and also to the Hon. Speaker who was so kind to have it at the earliest opportunity possible. I am also indebted to this House in the sense that this House was able to appreciate with the greatest sympathy and with due regard the feelings of the people in the South who are immediately affected by this accident.

At the end of four years of our parliamentary life we have reached a very critical stage in which departmental integrity and efficiency have come to be gauged. Difference of opinion in the Cabinet and with the Prime Minister may lead to resignation of Ministers. Political issues of grave importance may also lead to resignation of Ministers, but in this case an incident in which certain lives were lost through an accident to the railway carriages has been the cause for the resignation of a Minister and the creation of an atmosphere in which this House has begun to feel already how to get things repaired and maintained in full utilitarian service to the public in future.

Personally I am not endowed with such efficiency as would suit the situation. In this country everywhere we hear of serious floods in which several villages and masses of people have been swept away over night. In other cases there are incidents and incidents—in the air, for example, and in factories in which lives were lost. There were cases in which the vagaries of Nature which could not be controlled by human agencies were responsible for the havoc done. But I must emphasize the fact that under no circumstances can we ever tolerate the vagaries of human beings or human institutions in which human species are employed as servants to render service to humanity. That is why feelings run high. Our feelings, though great in respect of the devastations on the

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bank areas of the Ganges, the Jumna and Brahmaputra, were not so high as in this case. This is a challenge not to the Government, because it is our Government—there can be no challenge to our Government—but to the departmental activities carried on by the Government as put into the responsibility of a particular Minister which is called the Ministry and the Minister's immediate subordinates as well as the subordinate in the locality. I would very well have appreciated the grace and dignity of the constitutional propriety in the resignation of the Railway Minister if the particular Deputy Minister had also tendered his resignation. I do not want any Minister to resign. Whatever may be the number of Ministers that resign, it is no consolation for us. It is only a propriety.

I am so glad that the Deputy Minister was able to be present on the spot at the earliest possible time, on the same evening, and to stay there for two or three days and study the situation. He must have been able to give some consolation to the people there

As I had already stated here, the Railway administration has been subjected to a bitter humiliation by the events which have happened in the last four years—collisions, derailments, capsizing and collapse of engines on railways and loss of lives in rain-water and floods. The inspectorate have submitted reports in the last four years of the various accidents that have taken place. Of course, accidents will take place. It is neither a geographical nor a historical truth that accidents will not take place, but we being endowed with a sense of responsibility should see that the subordinates who are the limbs of our functioning institutions do carry out the instructions of the authorities at the top or those embodied in the statutes and rules. If they do not do that, there cannot be any scope for any leniency. I have not heard in these four years that an engineer has been punished for corruption, for

incorrect estimating or for mishandling of the situation, or that any District Traffic Superintendent has been administered some sort of censure at least.

There is the regional officer. The country is divided into six regions, and over each is placed a Nawab of the old type called the Manager, a wonderful specimen sitting there who does not know what is taking place. Recently I had a talk with a Manager and I thought he was totally unfit for the job. He did not even have the courtesy did not know his responsibility for the intimate connection that he should establish with a Member of Parliament. If he has not got that capacity and grit, how is he going to traverse one-sixth of this country and see to things? So, I have no hesitation in saying that the present regional officers must be replaced. Each region is too big for them. An officer of the Deputy Minister's grade must be put in charge of that and those Deputy-Ministers must be men known very well for their discipline as well as efficiency. It may be equipped with people in departmental services who may be upgraded to the zonal managers' posts. We want more imagination and mass thinking. We do not want mechanical adherents to these rules and laziness in the chambers. Our Ministers are not highly equipped administrative people, but once they are put in charge, their contact with the masses and their concern for mass welfare vouchsafe for their efficiency not only here, but in foreign affairs of a very extraordinary type. So, I have got confidence in the elected Members of Parliament being placed as Deputy Ministers in charge of various regions. This is a suggestion which the Government may be pleased to consider.

Secondly the Railway Ministry must be divided into two. The Railway Ministry and the Transport Ministry should be two independent institutions. I understand that the Estimates Committee had also been

used to make a recommendation of this type. I do not know how far the Government have considered that aspect. We want more Deputy Ministers under the Railway Ministry (*Interruption*). I am able to see that some Members feel that the Cabinet is going to be swollen. Whether it swells for its own ends or for the betterment of the country is a thing to be experienced. One Deputy Minister cannot travel throughout the country. I have seen the tour programmes of our Deputy Minister. Can he go to all places and get into touch with important places? I think that in fairness there should be an increment in the number of Deputy Ministers in the Railway Ministry, particularly.

I will emphasise this fact that it is not the chief man at the top who is responsible for everything that is done at lower levels. An institution well built and constructed, grade by grade, by responsible, conscientious and intelligent and disciplined staff is the best thing and it can never be substituted by any man of high intelligence at the top. I quite understand the difficulty of the Railway Minister. I am very sorry for his resignation. We will not be able to find a better man than him under the present circumstances unless there is somebody in the hiding. On the other hand, we are losing a man of great integrity and mass concern. To lose him, of course, is a great tragedy. I would even tolerate this accident with some lenience but I was not able to bear the strain when I heard the news that our Shastri has resigned. Whether he will be reinstated or not is a different thing. A decision once taken is never to be retraced. That is the position of political and administrative efficiency. Anyway, that is left to the Prime Minister and it is his task.

Under the present circumstances, the entire Railway Administration has to be transformed. We thought that the railway system, which had been in existence for some decades under British rule, when it was left to us

after independence, deserved only maintenance, expansion and improvement. There is no originality in laying out the railway system in this country for the present Government. It is only a question of taking over what already existed as a very big institution in this country, with all its scientific and material equipment and our duty had been to run it efficiently and in a fashion peculiarly suited to better the needs and conveniences of our people. In that way there was an integration. But the integration necessarily led to disintegration of discipline at various levels in the entire administration.

The Railway Board seems to assert that it is an autonomous body not responsible to anybody. Is it so? The Railway Board has to be dissolved forth with without any hesitation.

Shri U. M. Trivedi (Chittor): It must be done.

Shri Vallatharas: It is a great and cumbersome burden and a lethargic institution, of no use to anybody in this country. It is not useful even for the black-market contractors in various parts of the railways.

In the Public Accounts Committee I have got some experience of the Members of the Railway Board and their chief. I have no kind word for them, not personally but as an institution. This Board deserves to be abolished. What does this Board do? One Member is in charge of traffic, another in charge of staff, another in charge of something and so on. May I ask if any one of these Members, during the last 4 years, has ever gone and inspected any appreciably big bridge in any part of this country, at least regionally, and taken notes of the existing defects and passed orders that such defects should be removed? I go to the extent of asking even the Regional Managers whether they have taken any trouble to go and inspect any big bridge during the last two months.

Yesterday the hon. Railway Minister was pleased to tell us that the

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General Manager of the Southern Zone is preparing something about the conditions existing in the present winter season. There is a Tamil proverb which says:—

'Amma theralu munne Ayya sudu-kadu poyiduvavar'.

It means that before the girl matures, the husband will go to the grave. Before the Manager's report comes, I do not know what catastrophes we would have to face in South India. Certainly, this is not the way in which we have to deal with these things. Has any Member of the Railway Board taken care to go to the South or any part of any State during these 2 months and seen to the conditions existing there? I am happy that the Deputy Minister has exerted a bit and I feel that his powers are limited or his leisure is limited that he could not bestow much consideration on these matters even in important places.

Another suggestion is this. The labour staff in the Railways is well paid. When an ordinary worker gets only about Rs. 15 to Rs. 30 a month in other departments, an ordinary labourer in the Railways is able to get from Rs. 60 to Rs. 80. In spite of that, the higher pay has never induced these people to feel contented. Many grievances, hundreds in number, have been submitted in various parts of the country. These grievances had not been redressed in time and have not even been considered. The improvement in the pay-scales has gone to the background and in the forefront is the complaint that their grievances have not been considered and redressed by Government, in proper time. I would consider that this sort of reaction on the part of railway workers is also responsible for all this. Whenever an officer has to take some interest he refrains from taking that interest. I have seen many people in many railway stations not taking any care about anything. They do not care because they feel that

their grievances have not been redressed.

I would finish in five minutes. I will come to the details of this particular case. I think our Deputy Minister should be able to enlighten us in a better manner because he had been there and I am here 1600 miles away from the scene of occurrence. In yesterday's paper, *Indian Express* I saw a report that there were still about 200 or more lying buried below, and they have yet to be lifted. I seek some clarification about this. Whether the number is 200 or 300 or more is not the question now. The local Divisional Engineer or the Sub-Divisional Engineer or the Assistant Engineer or the Traffic Superintendent, all of them, in my humble opinion, should be placed under suspension. There is no question of any reconciliation or anything.

I know the bridge to some extent to speak authoritatively as to what the situation is. In 1920 or 1925—I do not exactly remember the year—on the southern side of Trichinopoly, between Trichinopoly and Manapparai on the Madura route, there was an accident at Ayyalur. Now, we have got an accident at Ariyalur—only with a difference of one 'R'. One night, during the rainy season, the train capsized over a certain bridge. It was a full train that capsized and got destroyed and not a case of 3 or 4 coaches left behind. Almost all the passengers died. That shocked the whole of South India. There was then no national contiguous feeling in the country just as we have now. The north Indian never knew about the south and the Southern never knew about the north. Now we are able to feel in all directions, whether in the North, South or the East or the centre. We have now been trained to have a common fellow-feeling. I have heard stories about that disaster, of passengers lying dead and scattered; their jewels being looted because the police *bandobust* was not so adequate at that time. It was the same Railway Department some 20 or 30 years before and it has not changed except

that it has now changed from British hands to Indian hands. This Railway Department has all this sad and melancholy past. That was 15 or 20 miles south of Trichinopoly and this is 15 or 20 miles north of Trichinopoly. That Ayyalur has now become Ariyalur. What is the responsibility of the District Traffic Superintendent? What is the responsibility of Sub-Divisional Engineer or Assistant Engineer? Here the 500-foot bridge is intact. Of course, I should admire the capacity and efficiency of those engineers who constructed this. For 28 or 30 years there was no repair to the bridge and that was borne out by the statement made by the hon. Railway Minister yesterday. There was no bridge accident. It was not a collapse of the bridge, but it was some other thing. All of you know that the length of the bridge is about 480 feet and it is supported by eight piers and on either side of the abutment—the breadth of the bridge may be about 20 feet—there is no flank embankment. The river is flowing in a southward direction, and on the western bund of the river it is loose soil—I am referring to the right side. There is a breach of the bund in the place of the connection of the abutment and the bund. The river is a very deep river. Under the circumstances, there is a depth of 15 feet below the girder. The greatest flood in history had been only up to about 7 feet of water there. It is supplied by a hill stream. The velocity of the flow of water is very great. All these are naked facts, naked truth. If any railway officer having charge of that place pleads ignorance, he does not stand to deserve to occupy any place in this world. These are bare facts, day to day facts, and everybody knows them. The flood has risen to 15 feet and there was an increase of 9 feet., according to the statement of Shri Nambiar, who was there on the spot, there was flood for three days continuously before that. I also know, with my imperfect knowledge of weather charts in the newspapers, that the chances of the flood to continue were there. Rains in that parti-

cular area also could be seen. There was constant rain there for the last 2½ months. For all the loss or scarcity of rains for the past 15 years, nature has got a vengeance in pouring down rain in that area for a continuous period of 2½ months.

When the water rose up to 15 feet, it is common experience that the velocity of the undercurrent at the lowest depth of 6 feet, cannot control itself. All scientists know and we also know that the ocean under current in Bay of Bengal which was going in the direction of Australia, when it diverted its line in a south-western direction made an attack injuring the southern part of this peninsula, and baking inroads into the Rameshwaram area. It appeared in the newspapers also. So, current has got a great force, and because the abutment is a concrete and stone building, it could not force its way through it, it could not sack the bridge and it found its way into the alluvial soil by the side. Just as a thief makes a hole in a convenient place, this under-current began to knock against the loose soil and then the earth corroded and in that way the water was able to find its way just immediately after the right side of the abutment.

I believe that this work of corrosion had taken place some hours earlier. It is not as if this whole earth had been upset in a moment. The gap inside has been enlarged and developed by the flood-tide of water and the velocity of the current for the last three days, and all in a sudden the earth above, which was apparently intact settled by sinking down. That was the position at about 5 A. M. or 5-15 A. M. The Assistant Engineer had gone on the track on the 9th November, and carried on the performance of a great adventurous spirit. The linemen, who are servants, had also gone with him. There is a proverb in the South—*potti avvade, thakkol ivvade*—which means that the box is with somebody and the key is with me; what will be the position of the contents?

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The attacking force is outside the bridge and not inside the bridge. An ordinary man of common sense will say that in order to protect the main building, the surrounding elements should be kept safe either by prevention or by check. Had ever the engineer on the spot inspected the river during those days and seen whether the water would find its way over the abutment corroding the earth, which is loose earth? This was not done. If imagination and experience had been shown by the engineer in an intelligent manner, he would have suspected some danger towards the earth and he would have made some preparations. I also understand, subject to correction, of course, by our Deputy Minister who visited the spot, that there is no embankment with either, concrete, cement slabs or stones spiked on the flank in order to save the bridge. The embankments on the flank should be provided for a distance of 10 or 50 or 100 feet as the case may be. Even ordinary culverts are provided with these safeguards all round. But when a bridge of this size is there, if it is not provided with flank embankments, it is deplorable thing. Whenever a bridge is constructed on a river or a rivulet or canal, it should be a part of the estimate of the work that flank embankments must be provided so that for at least 50 or 100 feet the soil would be kept intact and the adjoining soil might not suffer damage.

Cauvery river, I submitted yesterday, stands the same chance of being disrupted. There the soil is more alluvial and loose. But that some people exist in that part has to be exemplified by the fact that the Coleroon and Cauvery bridges stand intact. It is no credit to the Railway Administration that no breaches have occurred in that area. During last November or December, I travelled from Mayavaram to Negapatam when the cyclone had shown its ravage and I saw that all the tunnels and bridges were bad. I was keeping awake for about a distance of 30 miles, the rains

were pouring, the water was very heavy, and the entire area was at a very low level and the train was moving at a snail's pace, at 5 miles per hour. All these were not looked into. What is the net result?

I would not have brought an adjournment motion yesterday but for the fact that I have got a reasonable apprehension, not that all the bridges are going to collapse and people are going to die, but on the other hand the futility of the Railway Administration, as can be demonstrably seen in the area of which I have got some personal idea.

I pleaded that the railway communication might be stopped for a week there so that some engineers, etc., might be rushed to the spot to verify the position at least in three or four days. Under these circumstances there is, of course, a great insecurity in the public in this area particularly, covering about three districts.

Recently in Hyderabad there were two accidents. One was in September 1954 and another was in this September. The first was of a more tragic occurrence. Flood in the river was the cause and 136 dead bodies were recovered. We had no idea of the number of bodies that had gone away with the flood in the river. So also here I have got a great suspicion about the figure 144. Naturally there is a tendency on the part of the official mind to minimise the extent of the damage. There is no good in minimising it. Whatever is actually the position must be stated. About 600 people travelled in the first six or seven carriages and were sleeping at 5 A.M. quietly, and without opening their eyes and making a noise, all of them were immediately buried deep into the bowels of the earth, all of them silently died. There was no attempt at least to calculate the number of passengers that travelled in the carriages. Some bodies had been washed away; they were found four miles away. We do not know how many bodies have gone further. In this

season there is water and water everywhere in that place. It is difficult even to identify the bodies. The House is aware of the seriousness of the incident. There has been victimisation of a particular Ministry.

The hon. Railway Minister has said after the Hyderabad disaster, that he would appoint a committee of experts to enquire into certain things. A judicial enquiry has not been possible. But the experts committee was appointed very late and we do not know what progress has been made.

Lastly, I would submit one thing to the Government. A judicial enquiry has been instituted. I welcome it. I have seen the reports and decisions of the judicial committees and I feel that we would benefit more if they consist of more than one single judge. A judge can be assisted by two Members of Parliament, who will have some local experience there. I would have appreciated it more if a judge of the Madras High Court had been posted. The Judge from the Calcutta High Court does not know Tamil; he cannot understand the ways of life, behaviour, psychology etc. of the people there. They are timid and they would not come forward openly to give evidence. It is better that a man who knows the language and the environments in that particular locality goes into the matter. I would press the Government to associate two Members of Parliament, of whom at least one should know the locality and conditions there, with the Judge, whoever he might be, so that the matter can be thrashed out and all the existing foibles and difficulties can be brought forward and a better understanding of the situation can be had.

Shri A. K. Gopalan (Cannanore): We are meeting today under the shadow of a grim tragedy. It is a tragedy all the more painful on account of the fact that, if care and vigilance had been taken, we would have, in my opinion, been able to avoid it. This gives a kind of seriousness to the question that we are discussing today.

Last Friday, when the Railway Minister reported the news of this accident to this House, my friend, Shri Vittal Rao, gravely disturbed, called on the Minister to resign. I am glad to understand that the reaction of my colleague was unpremeditated. His reaction had been found to be correct. I am glad that the Prime Minister and the Railway Minister had realised it. The responsibility for such happenings and the failures have also got to be pinned down to individuals. It is only right and proper that, in such a situation, the Railway Minister tendered his resignation.

But, I must say that the resignation of the Railway Minister is not enough. I do not want to say anything personally about the qualities of the Railway Minister. In spite of his devotion to duty, he was not directly and immediately responsible for the happenings during the last so many months. In recent years also, there have been happenings of such magnitude and the Railway Minister was not immediately concerned with it. So, the resignation of the Railway Minister is not enough, though technically it is correct.

The symbolic resignation of the Minister should be followed by some action against those who are responsible for this thing. I shall read out later to the House some of the editorials that have been written in the newspapers about this tragedy. They show how deep was the feeling of the people in the country about this and similar accidents. I say that the symbolic resignation of the Minister is not enough and that the Railway Administration must be given a real and good shake-up. The members of the Railway Board and the Transportation Member and also the engineers who are directly responsible for the safety of the railway operations should be found out and they have to be suspended. The mood of the country is such—and that of Parliament too—that some top-ranking members of the Railway

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Administration should be sacked. I do not say that they must be sacked. But, I say that those officers who are more or less concerned with this event should be suspended.

I am not making this suggestion light heartedly. How will the country tolerate these things and for how long? I have not got the necessary time but I have got a record of the accidents from February 1954 to September 1956. About 350 people died.

On February 8th, 1954, 22 persons were killed near Benares, in the same year, on March 31st, 31 were killed near New Delhi. 137 were killed on September 20 near Kazipet. Three persons were killed on July 6th, 1955 at Bhairongarh near Bombay and on August 5, four persons were killed between Naupada and Pundi in Andhra. Again, take the events of this year. On August 2nd, at Fatehbad station, two persons were killed; on the 7th January, near Sempur (Bihar) twelve persons were injured. On the 24th of January, near Makapur of Nagpur, one person was killed and on May 19, the Rajkot mail derailed killing twelve persons. On June 18, between Bhilai and Durg, seven persons were killed. On the 1st of September, 121 were killed near Annampalli in Hyderabad. After all these, this tragic incident has happened. My friend who spoke before me has said that besides the number already reported, it is said that as huge a number as 200 are still buried under the debris. Now, we cannot say how many have died.

I am glad that the Minister announced the appointment of a judicial tribunal yesterday to enquire into this accident. It is good that a High Court Judge investigates into this matter. But, I want to know whether real opportunity will be given to the workers and others if they want to give some good suggestions or if they can throw some light on this incident. That is the crux of the matter. It should be an enquiry where not only the railway officers but also others

from the public should be given an opportunity to give their opinion. Then only the enquiry will be fruitful. I want to say this because it is necessary for us to find out certain things. For instance, we should find out not only whether a gangman has covered the track or not. According to the information with me, a patrol man has to cover sixteen miles per day. If that is correct, it may be that he gives a false report sometimes or he does not cover the whole area. We have also to see whether those who are responsible for patrolling the track are able to do their duty, whether there are enough men to do it, whether the gangmen are inadequate comparing the job that is given to them. We should also see whether the technical officers of the railways, whose duty it is to make the track safe for traffic, were negligent or have performed their duty. The Railway Board with its inflated membership is more and more concerned with the administrative and economic aspect than with the tasks of safe and efficient operation. We have our engineers but, if they had been vigilant, this kind of tragedy would not have happened.

We had a tragedy some months ago. It was a great tragedy. A warning was given but it was not cared for. It was said that there were unprecedented rains. As far as the south is concerned, I want to ask whether there was any time in Tamil Nad or Andhra when there was no flood. Rain is always there in some parts of the country. There are unprecedented rains every year. It was not the first warning about rains in the south. Unprecedented rains were there in many places even before. So why was it that this warning was not taken?

I also want to point out another thing. In September, the busiest rail section in India near Moghal Sarai was suspended for as many as four days. Trains running from Calcutta to Delhi were stopped for some days

when there were rains. Why is it that that precedent was not followed when there were rains in the south? Why is it that a section of the rail there was not suspended as it was done in Moghal Sarai? Not only that. We are also told that a trolley was going back and forth and testing the rails. I want to ask why those who are responsible did not send a pilot train before this thing happened. If a pilot train was sent to see whether the track was in order, this tragedy would not have happened. When the danger is clear and the lives of our people were in jeopardy, there was enough reason to send this pilot train. I do not know why this elementary precaution was not taken.

The people in the Railway Board must certainly be identified and those responsible for this must be severely punished.

After the Mehaboobnagar incident we pointed out how the rank and file workers had anticipated the danger and suggested steps. It is also necessary that there is the co-operation of people. It may not always be possible, but if the railway officers take some precautions and do their work carefully the co-operation of the public also must be there for success. What happened at the Mehaboobnagar incident? One man who found the danger stopped the train. It may be a technical offence, but he averted an accident. Even then he was suspended and we are told that efforts will be made to withdraw the suspension. In this case, as the previous speaker said, it is not an accident. The thing was happening for some days. There was erosion. If the people were enthusiastic, they would have gone and repored. But here everybody is afraid to report because they know what happened before. They do not know whether they will get some present or some punishment. In that way you cannot get the co-operation of the people. It is always necessary that there is the enthusiastic co-operation of the people. The people also must understand that it is their duty to report, if there is anything

wrong. If they do report such things, they must be given some rewards and such things must be encouraged.

Then again, even after the Kazipet accident in September, 1954 when 139 passengers were killed, nothing has been done. Then it was said that a survey would be made of the permanent out. But what happened after that? It was done only as far as Hyderabad was concerned. No action was taken as far as the whole south was concerned. Even the action taken was only in regard to bridges. If that action was taken in the whole of the south and not only in Hyderabad, the Ariyalur disaster would not have happened.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member must conclude now.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: Please allow me to quote one or two passages from the editorials of some newspapers.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have absolutely no objection to allow hon. Members the time they require. But my difficulty is that I shall have to call the hon. Minister for reply at five o'clock. There are as many as twelve names already with me. Therefore, I hope hon. Members will excuse me if I am not able to accommodate everybody.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: I only want to quote from two papers. They have written very strongly about this disaster. In one paper it is said— I won't say this because it is very harsh—

"Let the railway authorities take note of the number of the killed. Luckily, however, no Railway Minister or Railway Board member has yet died on a river bed, on account of the collapse of a railway bridge— perhaps if that had happened, it would have done good to the average passenger. In the pride of independence our Ministers spotting their Gandhi caps and their sycophant officers are happy enough, but in a country where

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people die like cattle on the railways how do these people show their face in public?"

Such things are written. I do not want to read the other things.

An Hon. Member: It is a Congress paper.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: This was given in *Jugantar*, a paper from Calcutta. I do not know whether it is a Congress paper or not.

Sir, I have got certain suggestions to make before I conclude. I demand that persons, whether in the Railway Board or elsewhere, against whom there is a presumption of responsibility for the disaster should forthwith be suspended. I demand the setting up of a High Power Committee to examine the whole matter. I demand that safe conduct is promised to workers who can tell the facts of the disaster to the investigating judge. I demand that immediate attention is paid to safety measures in our railway for the greatest capital a country possesses is the people.

These are the suggestions I have to make. I also want to say that these frequent happenings have made bitter feelings among the people. Those who are directly responsible—it is not only the question of the resignation of the Minister—must be punished. All things that are required must be done immediately to see that such things do not happen in future. The people must be made to understand that necessary precautions are taken so that such things do not happen in future. You will have to create such a confidence in the people. That is all I have to say.

Shri Frank Anthony: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, there have been many occasions in this House when I have had serious differences of opinion with Shastriji. But today I am not only sorry but I am sad at his resignation. He is one of those extraordinarily good people whom we very rarely come across. I can understand, Sir, his motives for

resigning, probably, his high sense of duty, which has set, in one sense, a fine example to ministerial conscience.

An hon. Member: For other Ministers to follow.

Shri Frank Anthony: I say this with a great deal of respect. I think in the present context his resignation has been misconceived.

Everyone of us must deplore a disaster of this kind. But I feel that, to trace, from such an accident by some dubious process of concatenation, the responsibility to the Minister is to reduce railway working to an absolute absurdity. I know that the Minister has acted under emotional stress. But we are dealing here with a vast concern, with a million or more workers. I feel that, every time a points man sets his points wrongly and precipitates a collision of trains, every time a gang man does not do his work and does not report a sagging track resulting in an accident like this, is that any justification for a Minister to resign? Nobody is suggesting that we should condone negligence. If I was convinced that a general condition of negligence has supervened on the Railways, I would be the first to ask for the Minister's head and for the heads of several other Members.

Now, my friend on my right has indulged in a certain amount of witch-hunting. But I say here, we do not know what the facts are, and I say this with respect to the Minister that he has prejudged the issue, that he has been unfair not only to himself but to his administration. Sir, I would have asked him, if he had not resigned, to use this disaster as an occasion for introspection, because it is here that I always join issue with the Minister for the definite recasting of the approach of the Administration to this human problem which, in the final analysis, is the most important problem in the Railways Administration.

Today, this discussion has necessarily to be of a general character.

16 hrs.

We do not know the reasons which have led to the circumstances that led to the accident. I am very glad that there is to be a judicial enquiry. I think we have set a salutary example in this matter. A judicial enquiry may arrive at certain conclusions or it may not. It may be able to pin-point this accident to negligence. Even then, in the final analysis, all that this judicial enquiry will do will be, as I said, to pin-point sometimes.

I want to use this accident as an occasion for introspection by the railway administration. I say this today, and I have always said that there is a malaise that we must probe into. This is all due to the malaise in the railway administration. When I say this, the Minister may not agree with me. That is my first premise. The efficiency in the railways has fallen; railway efficiency in many sections of the administration has fallen disastrously and it continues to fall. That is my premise. I am not prepared to be guided by any statistics of the railway administration. Statistics can be manipulated to suit not only different but conflicting points of view.

I have toured this very area recently, and I did tour for more than a month all the railway centres in the South. Wherever I have gone, I received a complaint consistently from the officers themselves that efficiency in the railway administration has fallen and continues to fall. No one can presume to give any readymade analysis of the situation. It is there and I very respectfully venture to give my analysis.

I have been a champion of railwaymen and particularly of the railway subordinate class for 20 years. But today I am convinced,—it is my conviction which makes me sad—that the main cause for this decline in efficiency is to be found among the Class IV staff. Many of them are members of a union of which I have the honour to be the President. But there has been this progressive deterioration not

only in the sense of responsibility but in the elementary sense of discipline particularly among the Class IV staff.

In this accident, what has happened? I do not know. Somebody said the bridge had collapsed. I was under the impression that only the track had collapsed. I say this too. The Minister may not agree with me when I say this. Everywhere practically, in India, the track has deteriorated. Recently, I was travelling from Howrah to Bezwada. I think it was just a few minutes before Ellore when I experienced this. I was in an air-conditioned compartment which is supposed to be the least exposed to jolting. Literally, without any qualification, I can say that for 20 to 30 minutes, on one could stand in that air-conditioned compartment. The track was so terribly bad and the track on the Southern Railway is notoriously bad. What is the reason? Why is the track throughout the country bad and going from bad to worse? It is because of the bad and increasingly bad maintenance of track.

Here, we are concerned with the track, and the collapse of the track. How is the track maintained? I am not an expert in this matter. But I am talking of the officers who are immediately concerned. There is the Divisional Engineer; there are the Assistant Engineers. A Divisional Engineer—I was living with him recently—told me that with a tremendous amount of file work that he has on hand, he cannot expect to do much inspection work. I should imagine that a Divisional Engineer inspects his division once a month. It is an inspection of a flying character. He is not expected to do any detailed check. The Assistant Engineer also does this kind of flying inspection. But the kingpin is your Permanent Way Inspector. What does the P.W.I. do? Talking in terms of gangmen, he has 200 gangmen under him. In the Northern Railway, I think his beat is 50 to 60 miles. When I was in the South, a P.W.I. said that on the Southern Railway, they have a beat of

[Shri Frank Anthony]

100 miles. But what happens? Who is the person finally responsible for the track? There is one section, say, 50 to 60 miles, and the gangmen work at one end of this track for one week, and in the next week, they work at the other end of the track, right away from the scene of the accident. As far as I know, there is also a patrolman responsible for five miles or so. I do not know. With my knowledge of railway working, I know that there are about two gangmen for one mile of track. I would like to be corrected if I am wrong. The ratio works out to the percentage of 2.5. But then, the question is, who is finally responsible for the track? It is the gangman. He is responsible for the detailed, meticulous, on the spot, everyday inspection of the track. He is augmented, to some extent, if the conditions are abnormal. In this particular case, I presume patrolling was done. That is the normal thing. The gangmen are put on the track for patrolling day and night. They are supposed to be there day and night, but they are not.

In this case, what has happened? I do not know. If an engineer was to blame, you will not only suspend him but sack him; if an Assistant Engineer was to blame, you will not only suspend him but sack him. But I am not trying to make out such a case. In the final analysis, the whole railway administration depends on its Class IV staff. What happens? What did the gangmen do in this particular case? I do not know whether there were two or three gangmen for every mile. If the gangmen are on the spot, as they should be, they should have known the position. But, if they go to sleep, as it often happens today, or he is not there and has gone somewhere in order to avoid the rains, who is the person who is going to report the fact that the track is sagging? You come down and see the gangman is not there. I say with a great deal of regret. I have met a lot of P.W.Is. They all tell me without exception that the average gangman today is not only irresponsible but lazy.

They tell me that the average gangman today is getting three times more than he was getting a few years ago and does only one-third of the amount of work that he did formerly.

Shri U. M. Trivedi: Four and a half times.

Shri Frank Anthony: This is the general complaint. I am saying it with a great deal of regret, but let us face it. What is the reason? I am not exonerating the railway administration. I say that the railway administration is responsible for this thing. It is a fact that if you put an irresponsible points man, he sets the point wrongly. You get a collision. If you put an irresponsible gangman, he sets the track wrongly. If you put an irresponsible fitter, the engine fails. What is the reason? I say that the railway administration is on a basically misconceived policy towards the Class IV staff. You have entirely pampered the Class IV staff. You are pampering them. But I do join issue on this point. You are afraid of the Class IV staff. This nondescript, petty-fogging Class IV organisation—if it begins to abuse, everyone dithers; the General Manager dithers; the engineer dithers. Your officers dither. I do not want to be misunderstood. I have been a champion of the rights of railwaymen. I have been the bitterest critic of the railway administration with regard to the handling of staff problems, and I will continue to do that. I say that you must handle your staff problems with sympathy, with understanding. If you can avoid transferring a man, then do not transfer him. If a man has got leave and applies for it, give it within a week. Do not make him wait for months as is happening at present. If a man has been wrongly punished and if he appeals, do it within a week, and do not keep it in the wastepaper basket for three years as at present. Having done that, having adopted such a policy of understanding and sympathy, which the Railway Administration has not done, then, you can be firm.

With regard to the Class IV staff, today, you must give a clear-cut policy. Where negligence is concerned, where indiscipline is concerned, you cannot tolerate. You have to be firm. I would go further and say that you have got to be ruthless.

There is another vital factor in this connection. First of all, I would say that the Railway Board and the railway administration is frightened with the Class IV staff. Another vital and contributory factor is this. People come and complain, "We cannot get the work done. Nobody is working." I blame the railway administration for that. The Class IV staff were emasculating the supervisory staff. They are the linchpin of the railway administration. They have got to work and they have to maintain the discipline. Today, do they maintain discipline? A P.W.I. came and told me, "This is what is happening. Formerly, I could dismiss the gangmen; not only the gangmen, but their mate, the head of the gangmen. But today, I cannot even warn them. They all laugh at my face". The position is the same on the loco side. You blame your drivers. What can the drivers do? They say, nobody bothers to carry out the maintenance properly. Why are your locomotives falling to pieces prematurely? It is because your maintenance of locomotives is not being done. When I ask any person in charge, he says, "I have been emasculated; I do not have the powers to punish the Class IV staff; I cannot even warn them. The Class IV staff; laugh in my face." That is the condition of your supervisory cadre, with the result that today with all your emasculation of the supervisory staff, with your being afraid of your Class IV staff, there is a complete absence of a sense of responsibility among people on whom in the final analysis, the responsibility for the railway administration rests. You have got this peculiar imbalance. I am not wanting to give a single encouragement to the railway administration. There is a dormant colonial complex in the railway administration

and I do not want to give the slightest encouragement.

I have been dubbed as a critic of the railway administration for the last so many years. As far as the supervisory staff is concerned, they are people with a sense of responsibility. They are educated and very largely they do not join unions; but they are too terrorised. You give them no justice. A man is suspended without any charge and if he puts in an appeal, nobody listens. I think you practise terrorism against your responsible staff and for some unaccountable reason, you allow the Class IV staff to practise terrorism against you.

Now I come to the question of track. I do not know whether the Minister will agree with me, but his most senior officers have told me privately, of course, that they do not inspect the track half as much as they did a few years ago. I was with a senior engineer and he told me, "I am buried under the files; I cannot inspect the track. My P.W.Is. cannot inspect the track." The whole administration has been babu-ised; they are snarled. Men who are intended to inspect the track spend all their time at the desk. One of the reasons is you do not recruit the correct type of people for these posts which require physical capacity and love of out-door work. You will insist on graduates, spectacled, round-shouldered people, who are just wedded to their desks, with the result that they do not go out and do the inspection work.

I am not minimising the part played by Class I officers and the sort of responsibility they bear. This is something which you cannot avoid. Today you promote to the post of a Divisional Engineer—a Class I officer—a man with just four years service. Formerly to reach that rank, one must have 20 years experience as a Class I officer. Naturally, they do not have the necessary experience of the work.

[Shri Frank Anthony]

Coming again to the terrible menace and the lack of a sense of responsibility among your Class IV staff, here again it is the result of a basically misconceived policy on the part of the railway administration. I have said this repeatedly—in the past you had a corps of hard workers in the railways. That was because a certain proportion of the railwaymen were recruited from the children who were reared in traditions of loyalty to the railway service and love of railway work. Now you do not do it. Railwaymen come and tell me, "I have a son; but, they refuse to take him in the railways." You do not bother to take men who have been reared in the atmosphere of traditional loyalty to railway service; you go to the tagrag and bobtail. You say, the Constitution does not allow it. I am a lawyer and I know it. The Constitution does allow it. I do not mind your giving money to the refugees. But here is a basic problem. You should come down to this problem and tackle it. Unless you tackle it, you will never solve it and you will continue to have points men setting the points wrongly; you will continue to have irresponsible gangmen and your tracks will continue to sag.

Shri B. S. Murthy (Eluru): I rise to speak with a deep sense of sorrow for the tragedy that has taken place on the 23rd of this month in Ariyalur and for the resignation of the Minister-in-charge, which, I feel, is a great calamity. When the Mehboobnagar accident took place, there was some justification for the railway administration to say that they did not know the history of the bridge, the strength and the utility of the bridge, because it was under the Nizam's railway administration. But about this accident near Trichinopoly, I do not think any excuse could be given by any officer concerned. I consider that there is a lot of lethargy, indifference and a sort of "do nothing" spirit amongst the officers.

I am sorry Mr. Frank Anthony has taken a bureaucratic attitude towards the Class IV staff. It has been said

that Shakespeare's Anthony was not frank; but, even Frank Anthony is not frank, because the boot is on the other leg. It is my experience that the administration as a whole is not regularly co-ordinated. As has been said by Mr. Vallatharas, from the General Manager down to the gangmen, there is no co-ordination. Each does not feel that he is a shaft in the wheel and if one shaft goes, the wheel will be destroyed. Taking the analogy of Mr. Frank Anthony, supposing the gangman has reported the matter to the P.W.I., whom Mr. Frank Anthony is anxious to protect, what will happen if the P.W.I. does not take any cognizance of the report? Therefore, it is a matter for the Railway Board as a whole to see that there is a sense of responsibility inculcated in every employee of the railway administration. It does not matter whether it is a Railway Board member or a gangman; each man should be responsible. I must say that responsibility is not found today because of the manner in which the higher officers behave towards their juniors. This is the crux of the problem.

Abraham Lincoln has stated, "Wisdom is born out of mortal wounds". This tragedy is a mortal wound not only to the railway administration, but also to the nation. It is out of this mortal wound that wisdom must dawn on the Railway Board, who are mainly responsible for the administration.

I have a few suggestions to make.

Shri V. P. Nayar (Chirayinkil): Songs.

Shri B. S. Murthy: It is not a song. It must be a dirge or an elegy.

Shri V. P. Nayar: The same thing.

Shri B. S. Murthy: If my hon. Communist friend does not understand the difference between a dirge and a song, he must wait. Let him come to the lobby; I shall tell him.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Let not the hon. Member prolong; he may come to his suggestions.

Shri B. S. Murthy: Usually, all these accidents take a heavy toll of lives. Either in Mehboobnagar or in Ariyalur, it is heavy downpour and continuous flood that must be the cause of this tragedy. Therefore, I want to ask what special precautionary steps have been taken by the officers concerned on the particular spot to see that no untoward accidents take place. No doubt, we may not have any control over the elements. We cannot stop rains and floods. But, man is trying to see that he has control over even elements. Here is a case where if more intelligent effort and a more sympathetic effort had been made by the officers concerned, this great tragedy could have been averted. I suggest that during the rainy season, there must be round the clock patrol, efficient patrol. This work should not be left only to the gangmen and inferior officers. There must be responsible highly placed officers who must really take cognisance of the situation. If such a thing is done, I am sure many accidents could be averted.

Another suggestion is, every bridge in India should have its history recorded, as to when it was constructed, how long it could stand, when was it repaired and what is the present strength, and when again it should be attended to. All these things must be available in a moment's notice. I do not know whether such a history of these bridges is available. It does not matter whether it is over a river or a canal.

An hon. Member: It is available.

Shri B. S. Murthy: It is not available. A record like this is essential. If a history like this is maintained and regularly used, I do not think that many of these accidents would have taken place. I am glad that the Minister has said that a high power technical Expert Committee has been appointed to go into the question of the bridges. What I am anxious is that this report should be in the hands of the Government at an early date. If a single committee has to tour all over the country and see some of the

major bridges and take evidence regarding them both from the public and the officers, it will take a long time. Therefore, I would like Zonal Committees to be appointed and the work speeded up so as to make the information available to the Government early and so that they can take early action and see that no more of these unhappy accidents take place.

There are certain rules that during the monsoon, and during times of heavy floods when the Railway department considers necessary that the trains should not go in full speed. I am sure most of these rules are not being enforced. The driver may be thinking of going slow. As has been said, it may be 5 miles an hour. He may speed up half a mile more which may result in an accident. Therefore, all the rules as regards slow running of trains during the monsoons, whenever they suspect some accident, or if the track be not safe for a high speed, should be put into force strictly and any one who does not act in conformity with these rules must be made to suffer for that.

In respect of bus transport, there is a sort of a third party insurance by means of which a man travelling in a public transport, if he is injured or if his life is lost, is paid to the tune of Rs. 2000 by the Transport authority. My suggestion is hereafter, the Ministry should consider whether or not a similar insurance fee, should be introduced so that it may cover the loss that the Government may sustain. It should not be optional. It must be collected by the Railway department.

As I have already said, there must be a spirit of camaraderie between all the cadres of officials in the Railway department. That is lacking. If public co-operation also is sought, I am sure we can avoid all these accidents and our railways will be the safest to travel.

Shri Thanu Pillai (Tirunelveli): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, We are meeting under the shadow of a great distress, grave and unprecedented, not only an account of loss of life, but also that

[Shri Thanu Pillai]

we have lost the services of a very able Minister: not only an able Minister, but an amiable Minister who is free from the stiff neck which often goes with people in high positions.

This is an accident which has taken about 150 lives. The final figure is not yet known. Also the reasons are not yet known. It is anybody's conjecture as to why and how this accident occurred. The hon. Member Shri A. K. Gopalan said that the responsibility should be pinned on some individual whosoever is responsible. Three or four trains had gone a couple of hours before the accident and the Engineer or the Inspector, whosoever it may be, is not expected to sleep there. A sudden onrush of flood could have devastated the embankment of the strongest newly built concrete structures. Therefore, it is not that we can here and now, till the enquiry is over, attribute this responsibility to any individual. If it is to be understood that the track was bad and so it gave way, it has not been deteriorating, it has been something sudden. Who is responsible? The gangman, or Inspector or the patrol man, whoever it is, he has got a general responsibility and immediate pinning down of responsibility cannot be done now. The patrol man may have slept somewhere and he might have given the report that he was there at 4 o'clock and nothing had happened. There was no machinery to check whether he was there or not.

If we analyse the speeches, we see that my hon. friend Shri Frank Anthony and Shri B. S. Murthy have crossed each other. But, both the opinions are not correct in my view. There has been a system of Nawab Darbar of the P.W.I. dismissing the gangmen at will. That was once upon a time, it is true, but today the gangmen are the dismissing authority of the inspectors through the trade unions. People who talk of class war and class hatred, who taught them to go slow and become irresponsible are the people most responsible in this connection. May I pin down the responsibility to these people that

teach hatred, violence and irresponsibility to the workers of this country? Have we not heard here that six annas work is to be done for one rupee worth of wages? Have we not heard of the Kharagpur incident? Why should it be on Shastriji or anybody? I am pained because the hon. Minister has resigned at a very inappropriate time where you cannot trace and pin down the person who is responsible for it immediately. If he had done it after the enquiry is over, if he found his department to be bad and therefore resigned, I would endorse it. He resigned in the case of Mehubnagar also and the Prime Minister did not accept it. I am sorry to say that the hon. Minister acted on sentimental reasons, in emotion. A man who is the embodiment of humility that he is, he wanted to quit, but the hon. Prime Minister should not have accepted it now because it is most inappropriate. Perhaps he was too sad and too emotional and accepted it. I do not know whether it can be retraced or not, but I am sorry to say that it has been accepted in a very inappropriate way and at an inappropriate time. So much has been said against the railway administration, that there is deterioration etc. A considerable part of it is true. If now it is proved that it is not the responsibility of anybody, if the railway administration say that it is Nature's vagary and that it is not responsible, the objective of our Minister's resignation and the force of it will be lost on the administration and they will not understand it. If after proving that there was negligence the Minister had to take this extreme step of laying down his office and his services to the nation, I can understand that position. Therefore, I would only plead that those that are responsible and talk in the name of the nation should have an introspection—not on the Government side, but on the other side, those that go about telling the labourers what to do and what not to do.

The other day there was some discussion about the pay commission and all that, and when I objected to it

there was some abuse let off by some railwaymen who were workers. But relatively the railwaymen are better paid. Relatively the gangman is a better paid man than a graduate of our university. With all that, even if there is grievance, the method of redress is.....

Shri Veeraswamy: So, the hon. Member recommends to the Government reduction in the pay of the gangmen?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That is not the inference.

Shri Thanu Pillai: I know the arguments of communalists and communists go hand in glove in attacking us, but it is not that I am suggesting reduction. Only, the relative merit of the responsibility is lost in spite of relatively better pay. The hon. Member himself is a trade unionist and secretary. What has he done? Let him have an introspection himself. Let him say whether at any time he has reprimanded a worker for wrong doing. I ask the trade unionists whether there is a trade unionist among them who in his life—Shri Veeraswamy was a secretary, I do not know whether he is now—knowing that the worker was in the wrong has ever reprimanded him, or even in a discussion or at a conference table has ever accepted that the worker is in the wrong. I am yet to see such a trade unionist. You want simply to instigate people to wrong doing and then go and be safe in the chairs of these organisations and not be responsible to anybody; you then come here and for the press and for the public say things which are most irresponsibility and immediate pinning down of sible and incite many to wrong action. Therefore, if anybody is to be pinned down, it is these people who are responsible.

Shri Veeraswamy: This does not help the discussion.

Shri Thanu Pillai: It will help.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Order, order. The hon. Member might continue.

Shri Thanu Pillai: The hon. Member feels disturbed because I believe he has a conscience. His guilty conscience is pricking.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member should be conscious that his time is running out.

Shri Thanu Pillai: My time is yet to come. Though old, I am yet young.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Order, order.

Shri Thanu Pillai: One hon. Member, Shri Vallatharas said, and some other hon. Members of the Corruption Enquiry Committee also said that the Railway Board had said that they are an autonomous body and that the Ministry has nothing to do with it. If that is the attitude of the highest placed officials of the Railway Board, we are sorry to say that that requires enquiry and correction immediately. This Administration, which is the most important administration of our public sector should not be left in the hands of few such people who are not responsible to the nation or to anybody. If the Minister goes wrong, we can question him. But, if an autonomous body goes wrong—and we have too many of them, these autonomous Rajas, who are responsible to nobody—it is time now, not only in the Railway Administration but in the general administration also, that these autonomous bodies and their authorities have to be controlled and co-ordinated and a new atmosphere and a new spirit created. A national awakening should be given to the people and the workers. I appeal to those in Opposition to cooperate with us in this and see that we are able to do better than what we have been doing before.

Shri Karni Singhji (Bikaner-Churu): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, it is not very easy or very pleasant to speak on such a distressing subject as Railway accidents. In such a short space of time we have had so many tragic accidents; and, combined with this, we feel the loss by the resignation of our dear Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri.

[Shri Karni Singhji]

I have had personal experience of railway accidents. There was one four years ago very near Bikaner. I can assure you that it is a very messy terrible and gruesome sight. It is up to the Administration to see that these accidents are somehow or other put an end to. Of course, accidents will happen but we have to cut down the rate of accidents.

It is a matter of great happiness and gratification to us that the Prime Minister has been pleased to institute a judicial enquiry. But what is going to come out of this enquiry? If it is found to be a mistake, as Shri Anthony said, perhaps, a couple of people would be punished. But, what next? The main thing that we have got to do now is this. Our brother Indian citizens have got to realise their responsibility to the country and to their work. We cannot all the time blame the Government. It is our fault; the fault of the people of India. We the people of India, must be prepared to put our 8 hours of honest work, to put the interests of the country before everything else and the interests of our brother citizens first and foremost.

The Government must also arm itself with slightly more powers whereby, in cases of bad discipline and disobedience, they can deal with the situation more ruthlessly as Shri Anthony has pointed out.

Shri M. K. Moitra (Calcutta North-West): They have sufficient powers.

An Hon. Member: Not sufficient powers.

Shri Karni Singhji: A large number of suggestions have been made by hon. Members. But, as time is running short, I shall not go into them. But I do feel having had a certain amount of experience that there is a good deal of regional feelings that has come into the Railways and other government services. I find that people, particularly officers—I shall speak of my own State of Rajasthan—

are all the time dominated by the feeling of their States, from which they come. Some of them have a pro-Punjab feeling, some have a pro-South feeling and so on and so forth (interruption).

It is imperative that appointments are so made that we should begin to feel that India is one country and not in terms of regions because this cancer of regionalism is going to destroy the essence of democracy.

Another thing is the rapid transfers that take place in the Railways. An officer is hardly a year or two in one place before he is shifted to another place. He hardly gets the opportunity to know his place and his work. You should realise that one officer may have several hundreds of miles of permanent way and what not to look after. He must get to know the people and the place properly before he can do his job. I hope that the Government will also take into consideration the slowing down of the transfers a bit.

Perhaps a possible way of inculcating responsibilities in the minds of the citizens of our country and among the young men, in particular, is to take films of these gruesome tragedies and show them to the school boys so that an impression is made upon their minds.

Some Hon. Members: Horror comics.

Shri Karni Singhji:... pointing out how our mistakes caused these tragedies. You cannot blame the Administration or the hon. Minister for this. A great deal of these mistakes are our own because we fail to look after and teach our children the right things and the right responsibilities.

Shastriji's resignation came as a great blow to his friends, and I feel that a large section of the House feels the loss of so dear a friend. Shastriji

has been, in his quite and unassuming way, one of the most hard-working members of the cabinet. I have had the pleasure of knowing him, and in my short association with him, I found him a man of action. He was no doubt quite, but as far as integrity and honesty were concerned, he was giant.

May I point out, as you know, that India is a newly freed country? We are a new democracy and in such a short time as 9 years India has been able to make a name throughout the world, and that has only been possible because we have got some of our top men of the country at the helm of affairs. Now is it advisable that we should be prepared to lose one of our best Cabinet Ministers?

I have no doubt that most of us here will be agreed on this point that we should request Shastriji to withdraw his resignation in the interest of the Indian Railways and in the interest of the nation, and also persuade our Prime Minister to see that he prevents this double tragedy, firstly the tragic accident and secondly the resignation of Shastriji.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi (Nellore): A discussion on this very sad incident has given opportunity to the House to deal with several other points which amount to a discussion on the Railway Budget. No doubt very good suggestions have been made how such accidents could have been avoided.

Everybody knows that the Railway Administration is the biggest nationalised industry in the country. In a big country like this, there are likely to be some faults here and there. To accuse the hon. Minister or the Deputy Ministers or the Railway Board for accidents of this type is very unfortunate. It has to be observed that the fault lies elsewhere, not in the staff itself, especially of the lower staff. If there are any defects in the supervision by the lower grade people naturally it has to be bucked up.

501 LSD—5.

I join the chorus of opinion that has been expressed on the floor of the House this afternoon about Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri's resignation. We all in this House feel that it will be a great loss to the Administration, and perhaps in the minds of certain people like myself, that will be a major disaster, more than the disaster that we have witnessed recently. It is the unanimous, I hope, request of the entire House that he should not resign and the hon. Prime Minister must be in a position to persuade him to withdraw his resignation.

Shri M. K. Moltra: Sorry, it is a grand strategy to cover up all past sins of commission and omission.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: I am not concerned with strategy....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: But tragedy.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi:...I am only concerned with facts and actualities. If, at the end of this discussion, a vote of confidence is taken, a confidence or no-confidence vote in the Ministry or the Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, I am sure will win with a thumping majority a vote of confidence.

It had been announced by the Ministry the other day that committees are being appointed from time to time. When the last accident took place in Hyderabad State, a committee was appointed. But, the committees do seem to be a bit slow and I do think, as suggested by Shri Murthy, that for immediate and quick action more committees than one should be appointed with a view to look into the conditions of the permanent way as well as the bridges.

In fact, this particular accident seems to have been caused by the vagaries of nature. Certain divine actions are so peculiar that we cannot comprehend them in advance and if all the accidents that have taken place on the railways are of the same type, I should think that we have to blame the divine power.

[Shri Ramachandra Reddi]

rather than our own capacity to work this administration. We cannot easily forget the fact that the divine vagaries are so much that we are often put to this trouble, especially in the East Coast of India, which is subject to the periodical North-East monsoon ravages. More care has to be taken and I am sure that sufficient care is being taken from time to time. I would not, for a single moment, think that by removing a Minister and putting another, or by reconstituting the Railway Board, divine actions can be thwarted. At any rate sufficient precautions have to be taken to safeguard the interest of the railway passengers. Especially during the North-East monsoon on the East Coast, special precautions must be taken to see that the permanent way is properly watched and guarded.

The equipment that is given to the gangmen or the people who patrol is so bad that they cannot be asked to discharge their duties better than what they are doing today. I do not know whether the hon. Ministers or the members of the Railway Board have ever seen the equipment that is given to them. In very heavy rainy seasons, they are not given a proper cover and in such seasons, it is much better if they are provided with rain-coats. Again, I am sure that, if they had seen the lights or lanterns that they are given to go over the track in the night, they would have condemned it long ago. They could not see their way with the aid of light for more than a couple of yards. If they have to see whether the track or the bridge is in good condition or whether there is very swift current, they must have better lighting facilities in their hands so that they may discover where the trouble arises.

It would be very good if in such a rainy season like the North-East monsoon season before every passenger train a pilot engine is sent so that the strength of the bridges and the track is properly assessed and

there will be greater safety for the following passenger trains to go through the track.

It is often said that the destinies of a nation are dependent upon the fortunes of the ruler. If the destiny of India should be blamed, probably the fortunes of the rulers also will have to be blamed. If accidents do occur like this, and if they are actually dependent upon the vagaries of nature, nobody can account for them. But in a case like this one would like to say that the hon. Prime Minister of India and his destiny would be responsible for all such accidents in the country. At the same time, we are in a democratic country and the destinies of a particular ruler of the country cannot be accountable for any disasters. Even if it should be that the hon. Prime Minister has to be displaced, I am sure that the country will be a loser than a gainer.

There are a few more suggestions that I would like to make. But as there is no time left I will close my speech. I only want to suggest to the hon. Prime Minister, as well as to the President of India, that the resignation should not be accepted and the hon. Minister for Railways should be persuaded to withdraw the resignation. I am sure the Congress Party would like to have his services elsewhere, because for a proper organisation of the Congress Party his services would be more needed. But I am sure that his services to the country in this particular aspect are more useful and more urgent than the services to the Congress Party.

Shri G. H. Deshpande (Nasik Central): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, it is really our ill luck that we are required to face the repetition of such a big tragedy in such a short time. The feeling amongst the people was not about the resignation of the Minister because every responsible man in the public knows that most

of the execution is left to the Railway Board. I do not want to indulge myself in wholesome condemnation of the good work that is being done by the present Railway Board. But, at the same time, this very fact, a repetition of this tragedy in such a short time, goes to show that there is something wrong somewhere in the working of the present Railway Board. That is the general feeling in the minds of the public outside and it requires to be examined.

Sir, the entire House should take into consideration whether it is necessary in the interest of the Railway Administration to have some change in the present set-up of its Administration. That also the House must take into consideration. It is no use treating this as an accident. We must see whether everything that was possible to avoid this accident was done or not. We cannot blame anybody, that I know. But even in the case of ordinary bridges, at present when there are floods much care is being taken in respect of them. Often an ordinary policeman goes and prevents traffic over a bridge under which water is flowing with full swing. And, if the Railway engineers had not taken adequate care—I cannot say they did not, because I do not know the facts—then they have to be blamed. In view of the heavy floods this season the engineers had to be more dutiful.

Sir, I was pained to listen to a remark that passed through the lips of an hon. Member from the Communist benches. He said: "this resignation is a strategy to shield the sins of commission and omission". I would like to tell my hon. friend, the Communist, that this is not the Congress way. Nobody in India would say that that is the way by which Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri can be inspired to act. Sir the Communist mind is never appreciative of anything good being done by those who differ from them. At the same time, everybody in India must take care to see that the present attempt at spreading dissatisfaction amongst

our services and especially among the workers is checked. It must be realised that it is a very dangerous game to be played. For the development of the country, everybody must take this factor into consideration.

What I have to suggest is, we must see whether some change in the railway administration is necessary or not. I would like to say that the Minister should have more control over the railway administration than what he has at present. The House also should be in a position to see that, through the hon. Minister, they are also in a better position to control the railway administration. Many improvements are necessary; there is no doubt about it. A thorough enquiry is going to be made, and that is a good thing. But unless and until the public is convinced that everything humanly possible was done to avoid this accident—accidents are there in spite of human efforts—and if this accident falls under that category, nobody will blame anybody in this country. But the people are eager to know what steps were taken after the first tragedy and before the happening of this tragedy so that we may take care to see that such accidents do not recur in the future. With these words, I resume my seat.

The Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, this latest accident has indeed been very unfortunate. I do not want to deal with it just at present as I have already made a statement yesterday, giving the details to which I have very little to add. I should only like to inform the House on some points, especially regarding the deaths as Shri Vallatharas had some doubts. In fact, he said yesterday that there were still 200 people somewhere in the debris and that their bodies have not been extricated so far. I would like to inform him as well as the House that there are no more dead bodies to be extricated. To make this doubly sure, an intensive search of the area has been arranged in conjunction with the civil and police authorities

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I might also inform him that the removal of the debris is not the sole responsibility of the railways. He is under the misapprehension that as we are perhaps doing that work, and that therefore we might try to hide the true facts. But that work is also the responsibility of the civil authorities. The District Magistrate and the police are also there and he will perhaps accept the fact that they are not interested in anyway in suppressing facts.

Shri Vallatharas also said—I was surprised to hear it from him—that there should have been a judge of the Madras High Court appointed for this enquiry. I do not understand the logic of it. Recently, in Hyderabad, when that accident occurred, we got into touch with the Bombay Government, and they were good enough to give us Justice Desai for holding that enquiry. He will be starting his enquiry very soon. We have not been able to start it earlier and I am very sorry for it. But the reason is that the Government Inspector of Railways carried on his enquiry for a little more than a month. I had to inform this House last time that the judicial enquiry would start immediately after the Government Inspector of Railways submitted his report.

17 hrs.

I remember that the House agreed with that. I made it also quite plain that it would perhaps be not desirable to hold a simultaneous enquiry. Now we have very recently received the draft report of the Government Inspector of Railways regarding the Mehboobnagar accident and when final report is received it will be handed over to Justice Desai of the Bombay High Court who will go into that matter as quickly as possible. But as regards the judge, it is perhaps better in some respects to have a High Court Judge from another State. It is not absolutely essential, but it is not wrong and I think in some respects it is better to have a Judge from outside the province. I did not

hesitate for a single moment to decide about this matter. I got into touch with the Chief Minister of Bengal. He immediately got into touch with the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and he was good enough to telephone to me that the Chief Justice had agreed to his holding this enquiry. The next day, of course, I made the statement and announced it in the House.

As regards the language problem, Mr. Vallatharas said that because the Judge does not come from the South, he may not know the language. I have informed the House the other day that there will be two technical assessors with the Judge, of whom one will be a non-railway engineer. We are in touch with the General Manager of the Southern Railway and also with the State Government. I am just now informed by the Deputy Minister that one of the retired Madras Chief Engineer has agreed to serve on that committee. Therefore, the question of the language difficulty does not arise.

It is an old story and I do not want to go into that. Two points have always been pressed very often in this House. About that young gentleman who pulled the chain, I have made the position clear before and I am surprised that it was raised again. The chain-pulling did not take place on the same day on which the Mehboobnagar accident occurred. This is always confused and I do not know why. The chain-pulling took place the day before the accident took place. As normally the police takes up such cases, the police chattered that gentleman. As I have said, I was very much unwilling to agree to the prosecution of this young man, but it was done in the normal course by the police. I have already submitted to the Andhra Government my view; it is for that Government or the magistracy there to take the necessary steps.

Shri C. K. Nair (Outer Delhi): Then something happened the next day. What he had to say....

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I do not want to go into that matter again. The hon. Member was absent when I explained everything about that in the House.

Dr. Rama Rao (Kakinada): When that gentleman was prosecuted, he said that the bridge was unsafe. He gave a warning to the railway authorities.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: He never said that the bridge was damaged or was in a bad condition. He has made some other statement and that statement is recorded. But as I said before, I cannot go into that matter just now. The same gentleman will charge me of having given out what he has said, because he has to appear before a High Court Judge. I do not want to go into those matters. As I said, he never said that the bridge was unsafe. That was the information I got there. As a matter of fact, he had some vague doubts as it was heavily raining. But, there was nothing positive, nothing definite.

About the Expert committee also, Shri Vallatharas said that the Expert Committee is not working or that it has not been appointed. That also is not correct. That Expert committee has been appointed—I mean the Expert committee of Engineers—and it has already started its work.

Shri Vallatharas: What is the date on which it began its work?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I cannot tell you the exact date. But, I have received a report in the last week that it had started its work.

As regards the track to which Shri Frank Anthony referred, I am not prepared to say that the track throughout the country is in a safe condition. But, in a general way, we are trying to keep it as safe as possible. No one is more aware of our difficulties than Shri Frank Anthony and the enormous rehabilitation work that the Railways have to do. Side by side, they have to carry on new developmental work. Our problem

today is not only to put up new projects or construct new lines. Our problem, side by side, is to rehabilitate the old railways which were in a very very bad condition when we took over in 1947. I do not deny that we have to do a lot. May I inform the House that we have provided about Rs. 100 crores for re-laying of the track in the Second Five Year Plan period? They are laying the utmost emphasis on that work. We do want that this work should be done as quickly as possible. But, Shri Frank Anthony is aware that these things take time.

Not only that. It means the slowing down the speed of the trains. That is, restrictions on movement are to be imposed. On the one hand, there are various Ministries who have to carry their goods from one place to another. The Railway Ministry has to carry the imported goods from one place to another. They want speed. They want things to be carried to the destination as quickly as possible. We have, on the other hand, to re-lay the track or replace the track and we have to do so many things which means more restrictions and slowing down the speed of the trains. These things have to borne in mind. I entirely agree that we must pay special attention to this. We will be doing things very quickly and in a very prompt manner. But, it would not all be finalised in a day or finish in a very short period.

I agree with my hon. friend Shri Frank Anthony to some extent that discipline is lacking amongst the railwaymen. I have tried to handle them in a different way. I have tried, as far as possible, to ask the Railway officers to deal with them with a different attitude altogether. I wanted to introduce a new approach amongst the officers. I wanted the railway workers to realise their own responsibility, not merely to work under threat of punishment. That is the only way possible today. But, even Shri Frank Anthony knows that if there is a slight punishment given,

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there is some kind of agitation and if any other action is taken by the Railway against them, Members of the Opposition will stand up in the House and condemn the Railway administration. It has happened. I entirely agree that it has become difficult to take action against any railwaymen because—if the recognised unions come forward, we can understand—all kinds of unions are there and they will approach the highest authority and try to bring about pressure. It has become very difficult to take any action. I am sorry, I may be wrong. But I am not prepared to admit that the discipline is in any way worse in the Railways than what it is in other departments, either in the Government of India or in the States. Because, that is the general problem. The problem of indiscipline is a general problem today—for the country, not only for the Government. I would like to say that the responsibility of the Opposition is much bigger than that of the Government. And if the Opposition is not going to help the Government in that matter, there is no hope. It is not possible; we cannot go on using the police always. Are we going to inflict lathi charges always; are we going always to order firing against demonstrators; are we going to put everybody in jail? Is that possible? We are working under a democratic system.

It has been said that the Railway Board should be dismissed. Why should they be dismissed, and how? Are they not government servants? Have they not got certain rights? Are not certain procedures fixed for them? How can you take action against a Member of the Railway Board for the accident which took place at Mehboobnagar or Jalgaon? The High Court Judge is sitting, let him decide. If he apportions the responsibility, if he says the Chairman of the Railway Board was responsible, then the Chairman of the Railway Board will have to go. But we have to function with certain

rules and regulations, certain traditions. They have also their feelings. I am not going to defend the Members of the Railway Board in and out, but we should not be unfair and unjust to them.

It is true the indiscipline is there. But we have to tackle it. And I would like to tell the House that if the Members of the Opposition co-operated with us even to a very small extent, that would help. I say, they may carry on their propaganda. Of course, they have also to fight their elections, and they would like to take advantage of things. I do not mind. But there should be some co-operation at least forthcoming from them. And if it does not come, it becomes very difficult.

Shri Vallatharas: What kind of co-operation do you want?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: The co-operation is, let the administration function; at least let them not come and interfere in the day-to-day administration, in the working of the administration. It is very important. Suppose a particular person is punished; suppose a class IV, class III or class II employee is punished. Why should another gentleman who has nothing to do with that, why should he but in and interfere? (*Shri V. P. Nayar:* To do justice). Let him pass it to the proper channel. If the officer does an injustice to the employee and does not deal with the case in a fair manner, the person has got the opportunity, he can approach the highest authority in the land. And if he also is not able to give him a fair deal, well, it is for the people to turn him out, it is for the people not to vote for him. But so long as he—whether it is the Railway Minister or the Defence Minister, whosoever it is—is here, he is responsible to the people; he is the representative of the people; he has certain responsibilities to discharge. And, therefore, if a person working in the government departments is entitled to

approach the highest authority, there is an end of the matter. There are unions, federations of recognised unions; I entirely agree; they can take up certain cases if they feel that victimisation has been done. That is not denied. In fact, I welcome that. But, as I said, that is the general position.

And the House knows the attitude I have taken, except for a few months when I had kept quiet, in so far as these lightning strikes were concerned. I kept quiet because I thought they would realise their mistakes. And whenever there was a lightning strike, even such an able and sound gentleman like Shri Mukerjee—he generally does not put many questions—but on every such occasion he always came up with questions and supplementaries and he went on putting them; and the result, of course, of this was—they (the workers) thought that they were getting the support of Parliament or a member of the Opposition or the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—it went on and ultimately it resulted in the Kharagpur tragedy.

Dr. Rama Rao: What has this to do with that?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: The hon. Member must remember what Mr. Anthony said.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Discipline has deteriorated.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: Since then, since the Kharagpur incident, the House knows the attitude that I adopted and it was, as far as I know, greatly appreciated by a large number of workers. They themselves felt that they have committed a mistake and since then this kind of lightning strike has stopped. Of course, it has recently happened in Howrah because the workers themselves were assaulted by the public. So, we had been managing things. Of course, at times we have to be firm and at times we must be kind and also good as we have to deal with human beings. It

is not an easy matter to handle one million people spread over the whole country. Just only the use of the *danda* is not going to solve the problem. Therefore, when we are kind or good, you will say, well, the administration is lax. When we are a bit hard, you will say, there are tyrannical and all kinds of things. So, that is the difficulty in which the Government finds itself sometimes. But while agreeing that the discipline should improve, I am not prepared to accept that the discipline in the railways is very bad. The workers may have made mistakes. But they have done pretty good work during this period. I can say with an amount of confidence that during the First Five Year Plan period they have done very good work indeed. It would not have been possible to spend all the money or to complete all the plans of the First Five Year Plan if we had not received enough co-operation from the workers. They have exceeded all past targets. I know the position in Moghalsarai. There you can see the number for loading and unloading for the present as also for the last 3, 4 or 5 years. In fact I decided that they should be rewarded with Rs. 5,000. I also said that they should be given a set of additional passes. But I do not want to go further into that. I simply wanted to give this House my mind as to how I wanted, or we wanted, to handle the labour problem and I personally think that, in spite of various defects, here and there, on the whole the position has not been so bad.

I shall not go into other details and I will finish in five or ten minutes. One hon. Member, perhaps, said that the Board should be abolished. Well, I am not very much enamoured of this present set-up. But I don't think the House has ever said or ever agreed that the present set-up of the Board or the railway administration at the top should be changed. If the House so desires, well, they have to decide about it and I am no body to stand in the way of the wishes of the House because it will be incumbent upon me to accept the decision of the House.

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But it is not only here in this country but even in the United Kingdom, as far as I know, they have got a transport executive with one Chairman and about 5 members; and recently when some of our officers went to the United Kingdom, the railway authorities there discussed about the organisational set up of the railways and they compared notes between their country and this country and, well, I do not know if they said so only in order to please us, they expressed the opinion categorically that they may have to go over to the set-up or pattern which India has got. That is, having a Board of this kind with these powers. They have got more or less a similar organisation, but the powers etc., that our Board has got were in fact liked by them. So, that kind of organisation is there. In other countries there are different organisations according to their conditions. But if the House so desires, of course any change can be brought about.

As regards the accidents in general, I should merely like to say a few words. I entirely agree that we should do the maximum in the matter of making travel safe and the responsibility of the railways is very heavy in this regard. Therefore, every effort should be made to prevent accidents, but if the House will excuse me, I might point out a few facts which I hope the Members would like to consider and weigh carefully. Railway accidents are nothing uncommon in our country. In fact, when I took over this portfolio, I was myself amazed to note the number of accidents occurring here. I must say that constant efforts have been made to reduce or stop them. We have achieved some success also in this regard. It was very easy for Shri Gopalan to have read out a number of accidents which took place during the last two months. I can give him a larger figure. It does not look good to me or I do not feel quite happy over comparing figures of accidents with other countries, because I do not

want to defend the Railway Board or myself on that account, but if you see the figures of other countries like the U.S.A. or the U.K. you will be simply surprised. I should not like to quote those figures here, but the figures are enormous. In the efforts that we have made since 1951-52 you will find that sufficient progress has been made in so far as reduction in the number of accidents is concerned.

I might tell the House that the statistics since 1951-52 are being compiled in line with international practice and it would appear that during the period 1951-54 on the U.S. railways there has been a decrease of 32 per cent in the number of accidents; on the British railways over the same period there has been a decrease of 22 per cent, while on the Indian railways there has been a decrease of 39 per cent. I have got figures about the men killed and injured, but I shall not go into that. I have given these figures only to show that.....

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): Are these figures of serious accidents or minor accidents?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I can only say that these are comparable figures. I cannot say whether they are major or minor. It is not major, minor or in between. When statistics of accidents are collected, all the accidents are included in them.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: According to the report of the Government Inspector, the serious accidents coming under section 83 are increasing.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I am comparing it with other countries, and between major accidents and minor accidents I am not making a distinction just at present. But the effort made has produced results. I do not say I am quite satisfied with it. I do not deny that there should be a full enquiry but in other countries

they perhaps see things in another perspective. There was an instance in which 250 people were killed. The enquiry was held by an Inspector of Railways and not a word was to be heard here or there. But, I do not say that the House should not say anything. In fact, the House should speak about these things and speak vehemently and criticise us. We learn by it. But things should be seen in their correct perspective. That is my request to the House.

Shri M. K. Moktra: What is the mileage of railways in the United States?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I say the figures are comparable and when I say that it means that we have taken consideration of the mileage and other things.

I would like to say that the hon. Members have to keep another factor in mind that we are far behind these countries in the matter of providing safety equipment. Though we are at present going ahead with our schemes of interlocking etc. we are still very far from our targets and we have to do a good lot.

Recently, the pressure on the railway lines has increased considerably. Everyone of us is aware of that. As I said just now, I do not want you to soften the severity of your criticism or railway accidents. But, I hope that the House will take into consideration the other side of the picture also.

I shall not mention one fact but I think it would be desirable to do so. There are two very important elements in these accidents. If there is a mistake on the part of any officer it should be condemned. But, what can we do if a human being is there? He makes a mistake; the driver makes a mistake; the station master makes a mistake; or the guard makes a mistake. The rules and regulations are there. The

warning is there, and yet the driver passes through a signal which is against the warning. What can anybody do? Of course, if that poor man is killed, there is an end of the matter. If not, he suffers; he is punished. He is removed; he is prosecuted. In many of these cases, the human element is very important. Sometimes I feel pity for them. After 5 or 6 years the driver comes and says that he is starving and something should be done for him. I have told him in a harsh way that it is a very bad case and I cannot take a lenient view of the matter. But, it does not satisfy me; it does not please me. Anyhow serious action is taken. But the human element cannot be ignored in all these matters.

Sometimes the calamity is such that we have to face such accidents. I am not mentioning anything about the recent accident because it will be for the judicial body to give its verdict. But, I know of cases where it was impossible to prevent the accident because Nature was much against us and nobody could help to prevent that accident.

The House should not understand that I mean to say that Railwaymen should not be alert and watchful. In fact, I entirely agree with some of the remarks which hon. Members have just now made that we have to be alert and careful. I should also think that the possibility of improvement is there. It is wrong to think that the Railways are functioning for over a hundred years and almost everything has been thought of and provided for. We can think of and take new steps which might prove useful and effective and I am sure the Railways would always be giving full consideration to this aspect. Some steps are already being taken and others are being examined by the Railway Board.

Suggestions would also be forthcoming from the two enquiry committees of judges and the expert committee of engineers. I can assure the House that both the Board and the

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Railways would not be found lacking in implementing them promptly.

If you will permit me, I shall say a word in connection with my resignation before I sit down. It is really unfortunate that my resignation has created an adverse impression against the Railway Board. They are no doubt top administrators on the Railways. These accidents have greatly disturbed them, and my resignation has put them further in a very difficult situation. They do not want to shirk their responsibility in this regard. I cannot mention in the House, but I was deeply touched when I got a letter from the Railway Board about two hours before in which they had said something in regard to my resignation (*Interruption*) and as to what they are expected to do. I did not want even to mention that, but I have mentioned it only to tell the House that after all, they are responsible people, and they are very responsible officers and they are Indians; they have also some feelings for the country and it is not that they are just hard-hearted machines sitting there. It is true, whether he is a doctor or a lawyer or a railwayman or any other officer, that wherever you put him in his own sphere, he becomes somewhat rigid. But as I said, I was deeply touched with their communication and I must say that I shall be playing false to myself if I do not unreservedly pay compliments to the Railway Board. I know the House might not agree with me, but as I said, I am speaking for the last time in connection with Railways and it will not be fair or just on my part not to express my feelings about the Railway Board. It is wrong to suggest, as some Members suggested, that they have been there for quite a long time. This Board was reconstituted only two years before in 1954, and the amount of work done during the last two years by the Board, you will permit me to say this, is something significant. The problem of transportation of goods which had assumed

serious proportions has been tackled very successfully during this short period. The civil engineering works of either new construction or doubling, extension and expansion of marshalling yards are in full swing. The improvement and expansion of railway workshops and the setting up of new ones in the big programme is being implemented. The self-sufficiency achieved in the matter of rolling stock has been a great success. The financial position has also become much more stable and sound. I need not refer to the amenities provided in different shapes and forms. But I shall be very sorry indeed if instead of blaming me, any blame is thrown on them.

I hope the House will expect that I can afford to speak objectively at the present moment—I am not out of office altogether yet—and I must say that the present Board is the best that I could have.

Perhaps due to my being small in size and soft in tongue people are apt to believe that I am not able to be very firm with them. Though not physically strong, I think I am internally not so weak. There are different ways of doing things. As I said before, I have often seen some officers considered to be very hard, strong and all that, but they have proved on occasions miserable failures. What is required, if I may say so, is a happy synthesis. I did not want to frighten them but I did try to evoke in them a new confidence and self-reliance. I developed an affinity with them and they have responded to it very well indeed. I claim—it is not usual with me and I greatly hesitate to do so—that the railways have achievements to their credit in every branch which are by no means insignificant. My resignation is due to the intense distress that I felt over the recent accident. As a non-official representative of the people and as one responsible to this House, I thought it fit to take this step. The

permanent service cannot act in this way. There are procedures laid and stringent regulations devised for inflicting penalties on them for their failings; it should not be done in an arbitrary manner.

It is in this context that I would like the House to consider the resignation I have offered and if my resignation is found to be good and useful in any other respect to the adminis-

tration, I shall surely feel very happy. I would in the end sincerely thank the hon. Members for the kind sentiments they have expressed. May I once again express my gratefulness to all of them?

17-38 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, the 28th November, 1956.