

graphs 4 and 20 of the report of the Banking Companies Liquidation Proceedings Committee, you will find there that the committee has recommended for more strictness placed on the management of these banking companies. The report says:

"This failure was due to bankers' bid to get the control of non-banking companies by acquiring their shares at inflated prices, the interlocking of shares between the banks and other companies, the grant of large loans to persons connected with the management of banks without adequate security, extensive window-dressing at the time of preparing balance-sheets and in general a tendency to utilise the bank's funds to the detriment of the interests of depositors."

This is the remark that that committee has made. And during that period 1947 to 1951, 180 banks which had gone into liquidation had caused no loss to their directors who were enjoying their booty and are now moving freely. This is how the interests of the depositors have been looked after by the directors of the banks.

If we look into the working of the banks, what do we find? These banks should encourage development of industry. Now we have taken up a programme under the Second Five Year Plan and it is necessary that development of industries should be encouraged. If you look into the publication of the Reserve Bank you will find that the percentage of banks' advance to industry is only 35, while banks' advance to commerce is 49 per cent. And what does this commerce include? This commerce includes speculation in shares creation of artificial scarcity by storing goods and such other things which will bring profit to the industrialists.

18 hrs.

We have also found that big industrialists have set up big banking corporations to help their own indus-

tries. The outside industries get very little help from them. These industries, in order to obtain sufficient capital for their own enterprises at cheaper rates of interest, run their own banks and each bank today represents more or less a particular group of interests. Public savings are collected through these banks and at a very low interest and are utilised for the particular group of industries at a low charge, thus enabling these industries to operate at a comparatively lesser cost.

It may be recalled here that the United Commercial Bank is linked with the Birla group.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member may continue his speech on the next occasion. Now, it is six o'clock, and we shall have to take up the motion by Shri T. B. Vittal Rao for discussion.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: Has it stopped with Birla? Is that all?

MOTION RE. APPOINTMENT OF
HIGH-POWER COMMISSION ON
SAFETY IN COAL MINES.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam):
I beg to move:

"That the question of appointing a High-Power Commission to examine the problem of safety in the coal mines be taken into consideration."

I feel that I owe an explanation to this House for raising this discussion and taking up the valuable time of this House when this House is hard pressed for time. I had raised this issue in the House on several occasions. After the Newton Chikli disaster, where 63 workers drowned owing to inundation in December 1954; we who were working in the trade union movement were very much worried about this. A court of enquiry was appointed. I filed a statement before that court. I gave evidence, and I was cross-examined also. In my statement, submitted

[Shri T. B. Vittal Rao]

to the court that a high-power commission or a tripartite committee be appointed to go into the question of safety in coal mines. I was happy when the court recommended the constitution of such a commission.

After the Newton Chikli disaster, we had the explosion in the Amlabad coal mines, in which nearly 54 workers were killed. That was in February, 1955. A court of enquiry was appointed to go into this accident also. It was presided over by an eminent judge of the Patna High Court. He also recommended the constitution of such a high-power commission to go into the question of the safety measures in the coal mines.

But Government did not accept this recommendation. So, there was no other alternative left for me except to bring up the matter before the forum of this House. In August last, when the Industrial Committee on Coal Mines met, I happened to represent the All India Trade Union Congress on that committee. This committee was meeting after a lapse of about four years. I raised this issue of the constitution of a high-power commission there also. But the Minister of Labour who presided over that committee did not think it necessary, because he thought that the new regulations that were going to be enforced would minimise the accidents.

I may add that this submission of mine to the Industrial Committee was supported by technical experts and was not all opposed by the employers. This was also supported by the Hind Mazdoor Sabha and the INTUC. Failing this, I wanted to raise this in the Indian Labour Conference which was scheduled to meet in November 1956. Unfortunately that conference, which is long overdue, has further been postponed.

Last session also this motion was admitted, but for want of time it could not be discussed. This time, in the month of September I sent the

notice as soon as summons were issued for the 14th session. We were thinking that 1956 would be a good year for mines, but two days after I sent in the notice, there was the Bhurra Dhemu accident in which nearly 38 people were drowned—of course 11 were saved later on. I had no other forum to raise this question. So finally I wanted to raise it here and ask for the decision of the House.

This is not a new thing. In all countries Commissions are appointed. In the UK, for instance, a Commission is appointed periodically and it is called the Royal Commission on Safety in Coal Mines. Its report is presented to Parliament. I thought that when we were copying many things from UK, our Government would at least think of appointing such a Commission. The Bhurra Dhemu accident occurred in similar circumstances as the disaster in Majri in 1953 when 13 workers were drowned.

Therefore, it is quite evident that the inspection that is made by the inspectorate of the Chief Inspector of Mines is not adequate, because accident of a similar nature occurred again. That means we have not drawn proper lessons from the previous accident.

Coming to the nature of accidents, there are various kinds of accidents in the mines due to roof fall, blasting, short circuit of electricity, explosion due to ignition in the gassy mines, snapping of haulage ropes and improper stowing arrangements. Any slight negligence, any slight precaution not taken would result in the death of hundreds. Had it not been for the demonstration that was there when the SRC visited the place, in the Amlabad explosion 400 people would have been killed, because all the workers joined the demonstration. Therefore, there were a few number of workers who went for work on that day.

A few days ago I was discussing about some accidents with the mana-

gers and the inspectorate's staff. We wanted to find out what were the actual causes of accidents and how best we could minimise those accidents, if not totally eliminate them. In that discussion, we came to the conclusion that the geological conditions in India were such that there need not be any accident due to roof fall, compared to other countries in the world. But in India accidents due to roof fall form the majority of the total accidents during a year. I shall not weary the House with figures and statistics because I have done so on many previous occasions. Suffice it for me to say that a little over 300 workers are killed and nearly 3,000 are either totally disabled or there is no return or restoration of working capacity. There are also 1.18 fatal cases for every 1,000 employees.

It is not only the question of accidents and inspection, but there is something deeper that we have to go into and some research has to be done into this problem. We have to find out whether the organisation of the Chief Inspector of Mines is quite in order to ensure safety measures. I may add in this connection how this department is organised. During a brief period of 2 years, the department was reorganised twice. Two years ago they said that an area could be in charge of an Assistant Chief Inspector of Mines. A few months ago again this procedure was taken away and a new procedure was adopted of calling them as Regional Inspectors of Mines. Various regions were earmarked for them. The whole nomenclature of Assistant Chief Inspector of Mines has undergone a metamorphosis.

It is said that proper attention should be given in the matter of inspection of coal mines. But what do you find? The Regional Inspector of Mines for the circle of Hyderabad has his headquarters located in Nellore where there are mica mines. Instead of locating his headquarters in the coal area of Kothagudam or Bellumpalli or even Hyderabad or in the district headquarters where these mines

are situated, it is located about 250 miles away in a region where there are mica mines. Therefore, prompt attention is not paid and the inspector cannot inspect the mines immediately an accident occurs. If he is located at a place near about, he can immediately arrive, say, within a day or so, but if he is located farther away, he cannot. This is the way some circles have been reorganised.

About the rescue work, of course, my organisation is not represented in any of these Rescue Committees. One thing has become very clear to us. When the eleven miners came back alive after staying in for 21 days in a flooded mine, it is clear that our rescue operations are such that there is something drastically needed to set right the position, because the safety measures have been found inadequate. Had there been prompt attention paid in the matter of rescue work, we might have endeavoured to save some more lives. We may or may not be able to save more, but at least the possibilities of saving more are there. So I wish to point out that at present rescue work also is not quite sufficient or adequate.

Another instance I wish to tell you is that in India the mines work in three shifts. Most of the mines work in three shifts. But an inspector goes to inspect only during the day, he does not go either in the second or third shift when accidents do occur. If you examine the accidents, say, for 1,000 employees, you will find that the accident rate is higher in the second and third shifts; not the absolute figure, but if you compare the statistics for 1,000 employees, it will be so, because the supervisory staff are not adequate. In the Industrial Committee when these regulations were being taken up, I insisted that a mine manager who was supposed to visit the mines at least four times in a week should go and visit the headings, where coal was actually raised, at least once in the night. I insisted that at least one of these four days, he should visit the night shift. The inspection or visit by the manager should

be in the second or third shift. Of course that was opposed by the managers as well as the employers.

Mr. Chairman: What are the grounds advanced for opposing this proposal?

An Hon. Member: Sleeping well in the night.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: They did not advance any argument. They simply said: no, not possible. Then, the same thing about the report of the Chief Inspector of Mines. Firstly, this report is published after two years or at least eighteen months after the period to which the report relates.

I put a question whether in these reports, any recommendations were made regarding the safety measures. I got a reply on 8th December, 1955. My question and the answer were as follows:

"(a) whether the Chief Inspector of Mines in India has since submitted his annual report for the year 1954; (b) if so, whether he has made any specific recommendations for the safety of workers in the mines; (c) the steps taken by Government to implement them; and (d) when the report is likely to be published?

Answers;

(a) Yes. (b) The report is factual and does not contain specific recommendations from the Chief Inspector of Mines. (c) Does not arise. (d) as soon as possible."

That is, on 8th December 1955, I am asking about the report for 1954. They say that the report has been submitted and that it does not contain specific recommendations but that it is factual. That is only statistical data; nothing is contained in it.

Then, what for statistics are compiled? Statistics are compiled to help us. By close examination of the statistics we can draw intelligent conclusions. For instance, you can find out whether the accident rate is high among the new recruits. If it is so, we should make provision for the training of the workers. That is clear.

I have read the reports of 1935 and 1936. I especially found in them that some recommendations were there; they wanted to amend certain bylaws. For instance, in the 1935 report, it was said that such and such bylaws should be amended these relating to the raising of coal at a particular water-logged area away, say, at a distance of about one hundred feet. The bylaws were amended and were brought into force. So, you can arrive at certain conclusions. All these things are discussed in the report of the Royal Commission and they have given certain suggestions. Therefore, I would very strongly urge that this question should be taken up very seriously. It does not entail any financial expenditure. Let the Commission go round the country, inspect the mines and let them make recommendations. If their recommendations are feasible, we will adopt them.

I have to quote an extract from the Prime Minister's speech in this House. When he was speaking in connection with the Ariyalur train accident on 26th of November, he said the following words. This is a lesson for every one of us. I am quoting what he said:

"There may be any number of explanations and possible excuses offered that all normal or abnormal care was taken. Nevertheless, this happened. And yet I do feel that in a matter of this kind, no excuse is good enough."

This is what he has said. Then, further, he said:

"There is no question of our, for lack of money, putting any limits to such an enquiry."

Those are the words from the Prime Minister. We have seen three disasters.

Mr. Chairman: I think the hon. Member has spoken sufficiently in putting this motion before the House. I would like to know whether any other Member wants to speak.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member may conclude soon.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: There have been three major disasters, in 1954, 1955 and 1956. And no searching enquiry has been made, no Commission has been appointed in India similar to the one appointed in the United Kingdom. We started mining coal since the year 1776. It is therefore high time that we appointed such a Commission. Let us not play any more with the lives of the workers. In the interests of the miners, for the development of this mining industry and the industry at large, and the interests of the country, I therefore, commend my motion for the appointment of a high-power commission to go into the safety measures in the mines.

Mr. Chairman: Motion moved:

"That the question of appointing a High Power Commission to examine the problem of safety in the coal mines be taken into consideration."

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chairman: I have to make an announcement. The Speaker has allotted the following time to the various stages of the Banking Companies (Amendment) Bill:—

General Discussion 3½ hours.

Clause-by-Clause Consideration
1 hour Third Reading ½ hour.

The Government Business will continue up to 4-30 p.m. tomorrow, the 21st December, 1956.

Private Members' Business will be taken up at 4-30 p.m. and continue up to 7 p.m.

MOTION RE. APPOINTMENT OF HIGH-POWER COMMISSION ON SAFETY IN COAL MINES—Contd.

Mr. Chairman: We shall now proceed further with the motion moved by Shri T. B. Vittal Rao.

Shri P. C. Bose (Manbhum North): It is a known fact that the problem

of safety in coal mines is a most difficult problem. As a matter of fact, the number of accidents in coal mines far outnumbers the accidents that take place in other industries. It is not only so in India, but it is so all over the world. From the statistics, however, it is known that the number of deaths per thousand is much less in India than in advanced countries like America, England and other European countries. But still I quite agree with my friend that all attempts should be made to minimise the number of accidents in the coal mines.

The recent happenings, to which reference has been made, are really deplorable. In several mines people were drowned to death, in several other mines explosion took place and people died. So this sort of accidents should, as far as possible, be minimised by taking precautionary measures from beforehand. At Newtonchikhli I understand there was an adjacent mine which was full of water. The people who were working on that side of the mine made a hole into the other mine which was full of water, with the result that water rushed in and drowned all the workers. This is very strange, because in the mining rules it is definitely stated that in any mine where work is carried on, test-holes must be continually made in order to keep away from the adjacent mine which may be full of water. That thing was not probably done in this case. On further enquiry, I understood that the manager did not know of the existence of the mine full of water. In this way, negligence and lack of knowledge of mining account for some of the accidents that are taking place.

I do not agree with my friend that Indian geology is easy. I have some idea of Indian geology and I can say it is not easy. It is very difficult. I have myself seen some mines in Orissa. From below you will see that it is quite all right. It will appear that there is no crack and it does not require any support. But suddenly, one day there will be a crack from