

RELEASE OF A MEMBER

Mr. Chairman: I have to inform the House that the following telegram dated the 29th August, 1956, has been received from the Judicial Magistrate, Gorakhpur:

"I have the honour to inform you that Shri Shibbanlal Saksena, Member, Lok Sabha who was arrested on the 19th August, 1956 and admitted to District Jail, Gorakhpur, on the same day, has been released from the District Jail, Gorakhpur today on bail under orders of the District and Sessions Judge, Gorakhpur."

COAL MINES PROVIDENT FUND

6 P.M.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): Madam Chairman, I thank you for permitting me to raise this half-an-hour discussion arising out of the Deputy Minister's answer to Starred Question No. 229 on 25th July, 1956. To my supplementary question asking why the provisions of the Coal Mines Provident Fund should not be brought on a par with the provisions of the Employees' Provident Fund in the matter of computing length of service, the hon. Deputy Minister replied giving the qualifying period required for becoming a member of the Fund.

The rate of forfeiture of the employer's contribution depends upon the length of service a worker puts in. In the Employees Provident Fund Act, 1952, which came into force much later than the Coal Mines Provident Fund Act—this came 5 years before the Employees' Provident Act—the provisions relating to the computation of length of service is different. Under the Employees' Provident Fund Act, service is computed from the date a man joins service, whereas under the Coal Mines Provident Fund Act the service is computed from the date a worker becomes a member, with the result that he loses much of the employer's contribution.

In these days, when one is not getting even a fair wage, not to talk of a living wage, a worker cannot make any provision for rainy days or evil days. He has to depend on the provident fund amount that he gets. Even the provident fund amount that he gets is very meagre. I may just illustrate it with an example. During the year 1954-55, from the annual report of the working of the Coal Mines Provident Fund Act I see that as many as 8984 employees left the service and they got in all Rs. 7,50,000, that is, on an average Rs. 84 each. One can imagine how with Rs. 84 a worker can live in his old age or, if any calamity befalls, how his family can live. That is the position.

Today we have got 3,40,000 miners raising an output of 38 million tons of coal valued at Rs. 70 crores if computed at the present cost price, which has been enhanced since July. For raising or extracting this much coal, what is the treatment that these people are going to get? What is the social security provision that he is expecting? It is only this Provident Fund and nothing else. For a man having put in 30 years of service, when he comes out, he has only a few years of membership in the Provident Fund and that is calculated from 1947 when the Provident Fund Act was brought into force. The period of service that he has put in before enforcement of this Act is not at all computed whereby he is deprived to a very great extent the employer's contribution. If there is no forfeiture of the employer's contribution, he would get a little more; that is all. Therefore, I have been asking the Government for liberalising these rules. Why have they not considered this question? Not only is it an invidious discrimination, but you have not been paying the coal-miner his due. I would not have have troubled this House or taken the valuable time of this House whose programme is very crowded, but for the fact that I have no other forum.

In this connection, I might point out that on the Board of Trustees which administers this Fund, there is no