

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MAT-  
TER OF URGENT PUBLIC  
IMPORTANCE****REPORTED RETRENCHMENT OF ARTISTES IN  
A.I.R.**

**Shri Muhammed Elias (Howrah):** Under rule 197 I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Reported retrenchment of 600 'C' class artistes of the Calcutta Station of the All India Radio."

**The Minister of Information and Broadcasting (Dr. Keskar):** Sir, I beg to make the following statement in reply to the allegations of retrenchment. Casual artistes are not employees of A.I.R. Their names are maintained in a list and they are eligible for being booked only as and when called for broadcasts over the Radio. Most of them are employed regularly in some profession or other and the question of retrenchment from the A.I.R. does not arise at all.

All stations of A.I.R. maintain such lists. All those who are desirous of broadcasting over the Radio are screened by the Audition Committees and lists are prepared by them. The Committees grade them according to their quality. Casual calls for performances are given to the artistes included in such lists as and when the station needs them. It has always been made clear that keeping an artiste on the eligibility roll does not confer any right whatsoever. The artiste also is quite free to decline any offer made to him.

Artistes are graded according to their quality into A, B or C classes with an option for re-audition for upgrading them when demanded or when necessary. It was found by experience that the broadcasts of artistes in the lowest or C class led to such decline in standard that complaints from

quality of music became voluminous and persistent. The large volume of complaints received led to a thorough examination of the whole problem and it was decided, as an experimental measure, that independent programmes of longer duration might not be given to artistes who are in the C class as their performance bores and scares the public.

However, in order to utilise these artistes and to give them an incentive for bettering or improving their performance and thus getting into higher category, it was also decided, at the same time, that regular performances or concerts might be held periodically in which a number of such artistes will be called together and where they will give short performances, the idea being that any talented performance by any particular artiste should single him out for further consideration and upgrading.

It will, therefore, be clear that there is neither any question of retrenchment, nor even any question of elimination, of these artistes. The problem is of improving them so that performances are better and the quality of the music that the public gets does not suffer. I would like to draw attention to the fact that even ordinarily the artistes whose names are maintained in the C class cannot get a call generally in less than three months. It is possible that some of them might get a call in six months or even once in the year, their number being very large. They do not, and cannot, depend on this for their livelihood and, therefore, there can be no question of any hardship being caused.

All India Radio, as a broadcasting organisation, owes a duty to the public and has to maintain some minimum standard in the music programmes that it gives. When it finds that there is persistent criticism and protest against low quality of music performances, it has to take steps to improve its service. The practice of

[Dr. Keekar]

tion programmes to artistes in C class has been taken as a normal measure for improvement and is common to all A.I.R. stations and not to Calcutta alone. I would like also to call attention to the eligibility of any of these artistes, who continue to improve, of being upgraded and put in a better category at any time.

It would, therefore, be misleading to call any change in the list of C class artistes as retrenchment. On the contrary, A.I.R. has been extremely considerate to these artistes by allowing their group concert performances. If listeners' reactions were to be taken into consideration, they would have to be eliminated completely.

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STATEMENT RE: MURDER OF  
THREE R.M.S. EMPLOYEES IN A  
TRAIN

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): Before the hon. Minister makes a statement, may I make a submission on this point? There was an adjournment motion on the 14th, and you were pleased to direct the Minister to make a statement. In this connection, I would like to say that I have given notice of a Short Notice Question; I believe, Mr. Raghunath Singh has also tabled a S.N.Q. So, in the course of the statement, I would like the Minister to cover these points also. I would also like to know whether in this particular area there was some accident during last year.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister can only give whatever information he has got. If he has not got this information, I will ask him to get it. The enquiry may be going on.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): I would request that the S.N.Q. may also be replied to.

Mr. Speaker: Only if it is allowed. Unfortunately, hon. Members do not know how to utilize this opportunity, in spite of their experience in the matter. If the S.N.Q. has not been allowed yet, and if it contains mat-

ters which are not referred to now by the hon. Minister, I shall ask him to answer them later on.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: It is a question of delay.

Mr. Speaker: We are sitting here from day to day.

Shri Tangamani: The S.N.Q. relates to the other Ministry, the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The Deputy Minister of Railways (Shri Shah Nawas Khan): This relates to the murder of three R.M.S. employees in 3 A.T.F. passenger train between Agra and Tundla in the night of 12th March 1958.

The facts of the case, as ascertained from the Assistant Inspector-General, Government Railway Police, Allahabad, are furnished below.

The passenger train in question left Agra Cantt. at 10-30 p.m. on 12-3-1958. The R.M.S. van was placed 5th from the engine and 6th from the Guard's brake. The train stopped for 3 minutes at the outer signal of Raja-ki-Mandi and again for 32 minutes at the outer signal of Agra City station for crossing of a train. Other halts at stations were scheduled ones. The train reached Tundla at 12-30 p.m. where robbery and murder were detected for the first time. The R.M.S. clerk there went to deliver mail bags and found the mail van bolted from inside. There was no response to his knocking. The off side door of the mail van was also found locked with the railway keys. This door was got opened when it was discovered that mail guard Bhagwan Singh and porter Sheo Saran Singh had been murdered in the mail van with multiple stabbing wounds on their body. Another R.M.S. porter Mahi Lal, who belonged to Tundla R.M.S. and was to take duty in 11 Up train from Tundla to Delhi was also found similarly murdered in the adjoining compartment directly connected with the mail van. Porter Mahi Lal was not travelling on duty but was travelling along with