

[Shri Narayanankutty Menon]

implementation of the scheme. Rightly or wrongly, there is a feeling in the States—I say this from actual experience—about the Employees' State Insurance Scheme that this has got nothing directly to do with them; it is implemented by some corporation and the Central Government. Therefore, the proper co-operation which ought to be there is not there. I wanted to impress on the Minister that there should be such a realisation on the part of the States also that it is equally their responsibility—as it is of the Corporation and the Central Government—to implement the scheme and make it a success.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN MINES

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Sasaram): I gave notice of this for discussion due to the recent disaster at Chinakuri and the Central Bhowrah coal mines owing to explosion and inundation respectively. You know that about 180 miners were burnt alive in Chinakuri coal mine on the 19th February due to explosion.

Mr. Chairman: Before the hon. Member proceeds further, I would request those hon. Members who wish to take part in the discussion to send me their names so that I could allot time. Two hours are allotted for this discussion.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: So far it has not been possible for the inquiring officers to find out the cause of explosion in Chinakuri coal mine. It was perhaps due to that accident that the Central Bhowrah colliery also got inundated as a result of which 23 miners were drowned.

Work in the mining industry, particularly coal mining industry, is very hazardous and dangerous. It requires a lot of skill to do coal-cutting work. Though the coal miners are illiterate, it is necessary for them to understand the technique of working an underground coal mine.

The coal industry is in existence for the last 125 years and the coal output is gradually going up. During 1957,

the coal output went up by 4 million tons. Though the target is to increase coal output by 10 million tons during the Second Five Year Plan period, it is not impossible of achievement. It can be easily achieved. But though there has been progress in our achievement in this direction, it has not been possible for Government to make proportionate progress in the promotion of safety in coal mines. It may be due to various reasons. It is primarily because of the lack of scientific skill among our workers. This is indicated by the fact that the number of violent explosions is increasing in our coal mines, as is evident from the recent explosions in Amlabad and inundation in Newton Chikli and Bara Dhemo. In Bara Dhemo, about 24 miners were drowned in 1956 and in Newton Chikli about 63 were drowned in 1955. In Amlabad, 52 persons were burnt alive due to explosion.

All these explosions present a challenging problem before the Government, the coal miners as well as the coal mine owners. It is high time that every section, the coal miners, the coal mine owners and Government, arranged to meet this challenge. This challenge can be met only when effective steps are devised for minimising the number of mine accidents in the country.

It may be said that the number of mine accidents in India, compared to other countries, is much less. In India, the number is 0.96 per thousand coal miners employed in the industry. In the UK, it is 0.61 per thousand men years of 300 days. In USA, it is 2.48 per thousand men years of 2400 hours. In France, it is 0.88. So far as statistics go, the number is less in India, but when we take into account the number of violent explosions, it is much more and the number of deaths also is much more, particularly in the Bengal and Bihar sections where about 80 per cent of coal mine work is done. The number of deaths in 1954 was 93 per thousand; it increased to 138 in 1955.

In Raniganj, it was about 77 and it increased to 97 in 1955.

In this way, I daresay that though the number of coal mine accidents in India is much smaller as compared to UK, USA and France, the number of accidents in Jharia and Raniganj coal fields is much more and the number of deaths also has increased in a very rapid way.

So it is high time that we evolved some ways and means for fighting this challenge. This can be done only in this way; that is, by not only educating the workers but also increasing our apparatus and strengthening our apparatus. We are having the Mine Inspectorate and they carry on inspection work etc. But, I am not sure whether all the mines are properly inspected every year. I had learnt that there are several mines in Raniganj and Jharia areas which have not been inspected, though it is necessary that they should be inspected at least twice a year and should be inspected very thoroughly by the Inspectors. The Inspectors who go there should meet all the workers, at least such of the workers as are anxious to tell them how safety measures can be promoted in the mines. They should also encourage other persons who are interested in mining work to tell them how the safety measures can be promoted. But this has not been done so far. Therefore, this is also a cause of mine accidents because the miners do not know which mine is a gassy mine. They also do not know what sort of water is there; what layer of iron or stone is there. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that they should be trained.

It is not possible to train all the miners; but they can surely be made to attend refresher courses and somebody who is an expert in the line can explain in simple language how the miners should work in the mines. Besides, they can be shown films and slides etc. to understand the safety measures. All these things are not done at present. Therefore, most of the miners who work in the coal mines get involved and they are unable to come out.

As you know, in Bara Dherno about 17 miners came out after about a fortnight and some of them were saved. People thought that they might not be alive. So, the rescue work was not going on properly. I do not mean to say that there was any lack of enthusiasm on the part of the organisation to save their lives. But, there was a feeling that the persons who got drowned might not be alive and, therefore, they did not think it proper; or, it was not possible to bring them out.

Besides, our scientific apparatus and sections should also be developed because miners generally do not know how depillaring work can be done or how showing operations have to be carried out. In all these things, they should be given at least some general training. It is not possible for a miner to understand the techniques of everything but efforts should be made to make him understand something of all these methods. Due to coal dust also gas accumulates and explosions occur. These can be saved if they are explained in a scientific way to these miners.

Our coal mines are not operated on a scientific basis. This is also due to our inspection work. Our Inspectorate staff go to inspect the coal mines; and I am not sure how they fail to report that a certain mine is not workable. A sort of impression is created and it so happens that after some time the mine collapses and some people are killed there. If there is proper and thorough inspection and everything is explained to the workers and the management, then there may not be much room left for such accidents. Whatever report they make should be published. It may be published in a few paragraphs; and it should be given to the unions and to the management; or, it may be put on the notice board, so that the miners may understand what is going to be their fate in that particular mine.

Besides this, the scientific section should also study the causes of past accidents. They should know what were the causes of the Newton Chikil

[Dr. Ram Subhag Singh]

accident or the Chinakuri accident or the Central Bhowra colliery accident. If those causes can be analysed properly and explained to other miners, then, they will be able to understand the fate of the mines which are in operation at present.

Our tendency is that whenever an accident occurs, we appoint a court of enquiry and they make a report. Until and unless another accident takes place we virtually become complacent. This sort of spirit should not prevail amongst us. Whatever report is given by any court of enquiry which is set up by Government, should be properly implemented. I find that there are many reports and they have made very good recommendations. But, all those recommendations have not been given effect to. That is a serious thing. After having incurred so much of expenditure in setting up the court of enquiry and publishing its report, if those recommendations are not implemented, then, it becomes virtually useless to appoint any court of enquiry.

The workers also should take some interest in understanding all the processes. They should go and learn from their supervisors or from the Inspectorate or whoever may be—other experts—how they can save themselves when they get involved in accidents.

Sometimes I find that there is not adequate staff in our Inspectorate. The staff is not sufficiently large and it is not possible for them to inspect all the mines properly. Government should see that their number is increased if they feel that the number is not adequate. The Government should see that the Inspectorate is increased not only in number but also that their quality is improved, their quality of work and inspection.

Sometimes serious complaints are made against them. Those complaints should also be properly enquired into by Government.

If the Government embarks upon any programme of promoting safety

measures, they should also meet the workers' demand that there should be some sort of Safety Promotion Committee—on a national scale or on a colliery scale—in which all sides are represented, the Government Inspectorate, the mine owners and the workers. If we encourage such committees, then, the workers and unions will start taking interest in mine safety work and they will see that no worker goes underground unless and until he gets some training in safety measures. Government should impress upon the owners that they should provide good equipment to the workers such as hats and boots.

So far, all the workers are not having proper uniform. I admit that it is quite expensive. But, they should be provided with proper uniform and given proper protection if they are made to work in the coal mines.

If the Government promotes the formation of the Safety Committee and giving proper training to the workers and impress upon the owners the necessity to give uniform etc. and to open a number of scientific research sections also, the number of accidents will decrease.

Shri Nath Pal (Rajapur): Sir, in reply to a question in this House, it was once said that the total number of accidents in the mines from the 1st of January to 20th February, 1958 was 6,175, in coal mines and out of these 662 were deaths and 548 were seriously injured. Dr. Ram Subhag Singh has drawn the attention of the House to the serious accidents at Chinakuri. It is only when such a national tragedy befalls that we are reminded that there is such a section of national life as the coal industry which makes it possible for many other sectors of our life to function. There is hardly any industry in which there is so much of peril attached to ordinary life. Work in the mines is very unpleasant and very hard and often is charged with imminent danger to life. I do not know if in our country everything is being done to

make the work as little unpleasant as possible and to reduce the risk and peril to life to the irreducible minimum. I have with me the report of the Inspector of Mines for 1955. Unfortunately the more recent reports are not yet available to this House. The Inspector informs us that in 1955 the fatal accidents in coal mines in India were 215, serious 2,780, the number of miners killed 309 and seriously injured 2,880. That means that for every working day in the mines in India there is at least one less. That means that on every working day there are six fatal injuries. This is on every single day we operate our mines.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh has been generous enough in telling this House that the number of accidents in this country is comparatively smaller than other countries. This is one of the few matters in which we can dare compare ourselves with other countries. But if we go a bit deeper beyond the facade of these figures, we find there is no reason for satisfaction or self-complacency. Accidents take place in such highly industrialised countries as Germany—Ruhr—, Britain or Belgium. It has been established that they are due to what is called something that is beyond human control. All that man can do has been done and there is a factor in all these operations which is beyond the provisions of reasonable foresight. But in our country—it is where the comparisons become fallacious—it is failure to do what could have been done that results in accidents and brings about the tragedy. I will substantiate my point by quoting the report of the Inspector of Mines himself. After giving us a little information about the accident in Kalimati colliery, on page 33, this is what he says:

“It may, however, be noted that no artificial supports in the shape of props, cogs or packwalls were built to hold the roof weight during the reduction of stooks and pillars, in the underground workings. In contravention of the Indian Coal Mines Regulation 67,

the roof and sides of the working places had not been made and kept secure and in contravention of the Indian Coal Mines Regulation 146, the owner, the manager and the underground sirdar omitted to set artificial supports for the safety of the mine and the persons employed therein.”

This is what he says on page 33 of his report. This is the story repeated in every accident. In India it was failure to do what ought to have been done and what could have been done and what they were enjoined upon to do that caused the accident. Then there is another accident. Burradhemo colliery.

“On 8th September, 1955 Birbal Manjhi, the sirdar, inspected this place and found it insecure. He did not take any step to secure the roof nor erected any fences to prevent entrance into this place. The manager and the overman Bhola Kahar did not inspect this place from 6th September, 1953 to 8th September, 1953. At about 9 A.M. on 9th September 1955, six stone cutters belonging to the gang of Nanku Mahato entered No. 20 raise gallery. Four of them started keeping their working tools a little inbye of the junction in No. 20 rise gallery.... Four of them who were keeping their tools were buried under the fall. One was slightly injured and the sixth escaped unhurt.”

I do not want to take the time of the House by quoting this report. They are available for everybody. What we have to submit is that it was mainly the failure to observe the law of the country—the law is there—that caused the tragedy. When shall we succeed in convincing the management of collieries in this country that human life is far more precious? We need coal and it is needed for the development of the country. It is costly. I thought that we could also believe that human life was more precious. Should not such precautions be taken as have been provided which science has made available? How many mine-owners

[Shri Nath Pai]

and managers of mines in this country have ensured this? So far as law is concerned, we have statutes bristling with law that can be models for every other country. There is nothing lacking with the law of the country. It is the failure to enforce this law which is the cause of the tragedy. When the tragedy comes, they are reminded that there was the law to prevent it. It was there. But the mine-owners did not do anything. How can they then escape? I would like to point out what is happening in this regard.

Prosecutions are instituted but they come a bit too late after the tragedy has occurred. During the year 301 prosecutions were instituted as compared to 275 prosecutions in 1954. That is the statement made. There is an element of glee that we are instituting more proceedings in the year following than the previous year. I would have liked to have been in a position to congratulate on being told that the number of prosecutions are falling because the law is being enforced and mines are regularly being inspected and whichever defects are noticed are immediately removed. That does not happen.

I have cited a few cases here in substantiation of my main point. I will now be telling how great is the part and how vitally important is the role of mines and how these accidents in the coal mines affect the life of the country. What has it to do with the industry, the family of the miner and the community of the miners. It is not my practice normally to go on quoting *in extenso* but this is a subject in which we are often accused of taking a partisan view or talking from emotion and that is why I would quote cold facts. In anticipation of any such possible charge I will be relying on some good material. The report I am using for the benefit of the two Ministers who happen to be present is the Sixth Report of the International Labour Organisation Special Safety Committee on Coal Mines which met at Istanbul.

On page 18, it says:

"With regard to non-material injuries, it should be remembered that human life and the health are priceless. The pain and sorrow which the members of a miner's family suffer when he dies as the result of an accident need no emphasis. The same may be said of the sufferings endured by the miner himself as the result of a more or less severe accident which often leaves him disfigured. Everyone knows the difficulty of regarding a mine worker who has been the victim of a severe accident and who often loses all his enjoyment of life by losing all confidence in his usefulness. It is not surprising therefore that he sometimes suffers from temperamental troubles which the members of his family are the first to suffer from also."

A variety of factors are introduced in the life of the community.

"Experience shows, further, that fatal and severe accidents have a demoralising effect on the victim's fellow workers."

One single accident in a mine—what happens? The miner will feel that he does not know what will happen to him when he enters the dark womb of the earth in the service of society. Every moment the element of danger is present in the mine. He expects it. We all owe it to him that we reduce this to the irreducible minimum. It is here that the approach of the Indian mining comes. I have already knocked out the bottom of the argument that statistical percentages which I also know by heart in India are less. I say that those accidents which occur in India can be prevented by the adoption of the necessary measures which again are not going to entail very heavy expenditure. Some of the measures are very easy to adopt in the cases which I have referred to. It says further:

"Finally the high number of accidents in coal mines which,

owing to the atmosphere of drama which sometimes surrounds them, make a specially strong impression on the mind, tends to increase the dislike for the mining profession, which is already disagreeable enough in itself... It will be recognised that the difficulties which certain countries meet with in recruiting young mineworkers are closely bound up with the accident risks to which mine-workers are still exposed."

We do not encounter these difficulties in our country because of the vast unemployment in this country. A man will be prepared to take any work. But as the country progresses, unless we improve the conditions and remove these dangers; we may also be confronted with a similar problem which other developed countries are facing today. Today there is no dearth of miners for the simple reason that people will take any job in this country rather than die of starvation but that is no justification for continuing these conditions; we cannot do so because we get as many recruits as we want.

This is, Sir, what happens to productivity. It is said here:

"But the price paid in pain and non-material injuries is not all. The result of the accident is a lowering, sometimes permanently, of the standard of living of the worker and his family. This is not only true in regard to the widows and orphans of miners who have died as a result of an accident, but also in cases of non-fatal accidents causing permanent or temporary total or partial disability. Even the best compensation....."

And, in India, we know how poor is the compensation.

"...when there is an appropriate compulsory or voluntary accident compensation scheme—can do no more than reduce the loss of earnings; it cannot replace the remuneration."

Further, Sir, it is pointed out how the society suffers if these accidents go on recurring in a given district, as has been happening in Bihar and West Bengal. It is said:

"With regard to the last point, the assertion that accidents involve a decrease in productivity is proved by the facts: an enquiry carried out between October 1946 and September 1949 in a coal mine in the United Kingdom which employs 2,000 mine-workers, established the fact that an increase in the frequency of accidents was followed by a decrease in productivity."

This happens in India too. So, from every point of view it is necessary that all that human care, human ingenuity, human skill can do is done, all precautions taken to reduce the number of accidents in this country.

The hon. Labour Minister who takes, I think, on a personal basis very keen interest, will be perhaps right in saying that we only criticise and have nothing concrete to offer. So in my concluding remarks I should like to make some concrete proposals for the prevention of such national tragedy. Here again, Sir, I will be basing my suggestions on knowledge which has been collated from the experience of other countries and, in the collation of this knowledge it was not the work of a few professors, the labour of some high-brows sitting in an ivory tower; this knowledge has been culled together by paying the highest price that man can pay—human tragedy and suffering. After paying this price some experience has been culled to prevent such tragedies befalling other miners in other countries. It is said here:

"With the growing volume and increasing complexity of mining, it has been considered necessary to appoint to the management or supervisory staff in every mine, a qualified person who is employed exclusively and full time on accident prevention questions."

[Shri Nath Pai]

How many mines in India can boast of having an officer exclusively devoted to the task of seeing that all that can be done to prevent accidents from taking place has been done? Of course, every mine in India can boast that they have a security officer. For what? For preventing agitators from coming to the mines. And, what do these agitators do? These agitators often awaken the miners of their rights. To prevent them we have enough officers, but an officer who can prevent a tragedy from taking place not many mines in India can. I think, boast of. This is another suggestion.

If we can take this step, there is one concrete proposal which we can make, which Dr. Ram Subhag Singh in an embryo form submitted to the House. Why not make the labour themselves responsible for the safety in the mines? We have an expert who will give advice in regard to the security of mines. Will they do it? We always hear of labour participation. I should like to know from the hon. Minister's reply in how many mines, in how many districts in this country labour representation has been given in the adoption of measures for the prevention of accidents in the mines. It is said here:

"If the active co-operation of the mineworkers in this work of prevention is considered to be one of the fundamental factors for progress in this field, it should then logically be agreed that workers should take part in the organisation of industrial safety at the mine. This has been done in various coal-producing countries, though by very different methods."

How happy I would have been to know that India is one of those countries. Then it goes on to say:

"We are not thinking of the workmen's inspectors mentioned in Chapter III, for the principal object of their appointment is that

they should assist the mine service—obviously in the interest of the miners—in supervising the enforcement of the statutory safety prescriptions."

Let us have this system. Let us have these experts exclusively charged with the task of seeing that the security measures, the security laws of the country are strictly enforced in the mines. Then, let us see that the unions are adequately represented in a body of security in which the management, Government and the miners are adequately represented. I think, Sir, if we do this we will be having a new chapter.

Already we are claiming that the statistics show that the percentage per man-hour-work for accidents in India is smaller than in some other countries. Let not an impression be given to the House that it is the smallest in the world; it is comparatively smaller than a few other countries. There are a few countries in which the percentage is higher. But if we take these steps always remembering that a miner is more important, more precious than coal and the mine, then we can reduce this.

I, therefore, suggest another method—this is, of course, the word not of mine but of some experts:

"The pit safety committee includes the spokesmen for auto-protection, the official in charge of safety, the safety deputy, one or two members of the works council and the representatives of the management who are responsible for accident prevention."

I hope he will give due consideration to this proposal.

Then there is another method that is proposed:

"Another method is to glean all possible knowledge from those which occur in order to avoid their recurrence."

As Dr. Ram Subhag Singh said,—I would like to quote him—we institute an enquiry committee, the committee is appointed, the report is prepared, and that report goes on collecting dust in some pigeon-hole in some office. We want to see that the experience culled from this enquiry, the experience for which some lives were lost, is applied so that there is no recurrence of these tragedies. This knowledge should be made available to the miners, to the mine union so that they may spread it.

Sir, there are a variety of suggestions. I do not want to take more time in this. It is said: "Every mine should have available for this purpose a first aid and rescue organisation". This is a practical suggestion. I have already said about the safety lamps. It think it can be increased in future. I do not want to refer to it in *extenso*, because their number has been increasing gradually. But, wherever safety lamps can be used, they should be used.

There are some other minor suggestions. I am making these suggestions today, because the stock argument of the Treasury Benches has been that we are negative in our criticism and that we have nothing concrete to propose. In order to meet this charge, I want to show that we can make concrete proposals, but the question is whether you are prepared to act upon them.

Mr. Chairman: Are those suggestions in the report itself?

Shri Nath Pal: They are not in the report of this Government. This is the collective word of international bodies. As I have already said, one suggestion is that every mine should have available for this purpose a first aid and rescue organisation. I do not know if the Mine Inspector is having this. How many of our mines can say that at every mine head we have this; and if it is there, whether it is adequately equipped. We do not want those bogus things. In India we have many things which

exist in paper. You may say that first aid organisations do exist, but they simply do not have the elementary things which they are supposed to have. I do not want a reply that 93 per cent of the mines in India have got safety facilities. I want a satisfactory answer that they do have the basic first aid material and equipment which alone can be of use in an emergency. It is said here:

"The importance of such an organisation is often a deciding factor in the fate of the victims. It is only possible to mention this question in passing..."

That is what the report also does.

Sir, there are a variety of other things which can be suggested. I will be concluding by saying that the hon. Shri Nanda, perhaps, could have all these proposals. Apart from the provisions of the special bodies in which miners also are adequately represented, apart from the appointments, there are such things as training, as propaganda, in which again the miners can play a vital role. Nothing by way of training is done in India. A mine worker knows only one thing. He goes blindly saying: "I am doing something which I must do even though it is risky". Sir, if only we take precautions for training him, if only good propaganda is carried on among the miners about all the elementary precautions which he can adopt—he is illiterate, we know that; but he can know one thing which does not require literacy and that is the necessary precaution for the prevention of accident to one's life—then we can improve the situation. And the Indian miner is likely to be co-operative as the miner in any other country. Vocational training could be given, propaganda can be carried on. I have proposed some. I want to say in conclusion, though it may look, like repetition, that the accidents that take place in India cast a serious doubt as to the seriousness with which life is taken in this country. I do not want to be given any statistics in reply to my basic suggestion.

[Shri Nath Pal]

We will be satisfied only when the number of such accidents which are preventable by the minimum of human care and precautions, is reduced in India.

Shri Nanda: The maximum care.

Shri Nath Pal: I am thankful. The number of accidents, with the maximum of human care, is to be reduced to the irreducible minimum. I think we will be advancing from today's position. The number of accidents in India statistically, today, is smaller than in any other country, but human suffering also, in terms of numbers, should be reduced.

Shri Panigrahi (Puri): Next to railways the biggest public employment sector is the mines. According to the report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India for the year 1955—the latest report available is the one for 1955—it is learnt that in the mining industry more than half a million workers were employed in 1955, and it includes coalmines also. The number of men employed in the coal mines is more than three lakhs. So, naturally, two-thirds of the total employment in the mining sector belongs to the coal mining industry.

In the report of the Chief Inspector of Mines, they have analysed the causes of the accidents in the different mines. According to this analysis, among the major coal fields, the Jharia coal field recorded an increase in the number of accidental deaths, from 93 in 1954 to 138 in 1955. So far as other mines are concerned, it is said that the copper mines normally have a high accident rate reported an increase in the number of fatal as well as non-fatal serious accidents. They have also analysed the accidents and have fixed responsibilities for them. They have said that the number of accidents due to misadventure is 50.9 per cent. and the number of accidents due to fault of management is 13.6 per cent. The number of accidents due to the fault of subordinates and due to the fault of super-

visory staff is 19.4 per cent. The number of accidents due to the fault of co-workers and the fault of others comes to a total of 15.11 per cent. It shows that due to misadventure the number of accidents is greater. With the fault of management taken together, the number of accidents comes to more than 70 per cent of the total number of accidents in the mining industry.

Then the causes of accidents have been analysed, in another category. After fixing the responsibility, they have analysed the causes of accidents. The number of accidents due to falls in the roof is 87; due to falls of sites, 43; electricity, 9; explosives, 12; explosion, 1.

If we analyse the causes of these accidents, I think we can come to the conclusion that most of these accidents are preventable or are avoidable. It is because sufficient precautions have not been taken or sufficient inspection has not been made in those mines that those preventable accidents have occurred. I do not want to compare the statistics of accidents here with those prevailing in foreign countries. It is because the conditions in the mines in India, are really the worst. They need improvement. So, there is no point in comparing the accidents that occur in foreign countries with those occurring in India. During the last half a century, two-thirds of the mining industry has been engaged in coal, and during these long years, most of the coal mine-owners have been working their mines without taking recourse to any scientific method of working or without introducing any improved method of working in their mines. Therefore, I do not want to keep my eye on the foreign countries. I would like to confine myself to the causes of accidents and suggestions, if possible, to avoid these accidents in India, because the conditions in the Indian mines are quite peculiar to India and they need a lot of improvement.

Sir, during recent years, a number of suggestions and recommendations have been made on this subject of avoidance of accidents in mines, mostly in coal mines. One need not go to seek the reason for accidents in the mines. The different committees appointed by the Government of India have enquired into the conditions of coal mines, particularly in the West Bengal and Bihar coal fields and have made sufficient recommendations. I think there is nothing new to add to those recommendations. They are very clear in their observations that the conditions in the mines today are really most primitive. According to the report of the Chief Inspector of Mines for the year 1955, the number of coal mines coming under the Mines Act was 853. Out of this 853 coal mines, 369 coal mines were being worked by using the most primitive methods of working. They have never introduced any scientific method of working in those coal mines. In the majority of cases in those coal mines the sole object of the mine-owners has remained all these years to get as greater a profit as possible with as little expenditure as possible. Therefore, the conditions in the mines remain really pitiable, and most of the accidents occur in these mines due to the bad working conditions.

Sand-stowing is being recognised as an essential feature of the improved technique in mining today. I am glad to find that according to the recommendations of the different committees appointed by the Government of India to enquire into conditions of the coal mines, recently the Government of India have decided to allow more money to these coal mine-owners for undertaking sand-stowing in those mines. According to the report, the sand-stowing work increased from 61 mines to 67 mines in the year 1956-57. But there is one difficulty, the difficulty of supplying sand to the required quantity of the coal mine-owners. So that difficulty is there. I think the Government and the Coal

Board are also proposing to take up some measures for supplying the required quantity of sand to the coal mine-owners for carrying out the sand-stowing measure. But in fact, some hon. Members have in recent days expressed some doubts with regard to the efficacy of the sand-stowing measure, so far as it helps in avoiding accidents in mines. Some say that after sand-stowing is done, shrinkage of sand occurs and as a result of the shrinkage of sand the roof sometimes falls. When we are undertaking more and more sand-stowing works in the coal mines to prevent accidents, it is very necessary that this allegation must be enquired and closely looked into.

16 hrs.

The inspection of electric apparatus in many of the mines is not properly done by the Electrical Inspector. It is quite obvious that all parts of an electric apparatus need to be covered, so that there cannot be any open sparks underneath the coalmines. So far as the different enquiries into the accidents in the coalmines are concerned, they say that in many of the mines the mine-owners have not complied with this provision, which is in the Act itself. Again, sometimes due to break-down in the aerial ropeways in the coalmines, sand-stowing lags behind extraction of coal. So, the coal mine owners extract coal without thinking of undertaking the sand-stowing measure, as a result of which sometimes the roof falls.

So far as supervision by the management is concerned, in many of the mines no proper supervision is made and the supervision is lax in many of the mines. There is also lack of supervision on the part of the supervisory staff of the Department of Mines working in the Inspectorate of Mines. Particularly in the case of gassy mines, inspection ought to be more frequent, more effective and more rigid. In some of the mines there are electric haulage machines which are non-flame proof. According to the provisions of the Mines Act the electric haulage engines

[Shri Panigrahi]

should be flame-proof and if they are to be flame-proof, they must be properly covered and maintained. But in many of the mines the electric haulage engines are kept non-flame proof. This also causes accidents in many of the mines today.

The Chief Inspector of Mines maintains a list of those mines which are gassy and it is required that those mines which are gassy in nature should be inspected very frequently. But in spite of the maintenance of this list with the Chief Mining Inspector, there is laxity in the inspection of gassy mines frequently.

Then, in many of the mines ventilation is completely lacking and timbering, which is required for roofing is not systematic in a majority of the mines. Then, in mines attempts are being made to get coal as easily as possible. Therefore, the coal mine owners undertake extraction of coal from those dangerous parts of the coalmines by employing cheap labour. Attempts should be made to resist this activity on the part of the coal mine owners for increasing their profits by employing cheap labour in extracting coal from dangerous parts of the coal mines.

If you go through the different provisions in the Indian Coal Mines Regulation of 1926, you will find that sufficient attempts have been made to provide checks for preventing accidents in mines. I will specially refer to rules 72, 73, 70(b) (1), 77(4), 11(a) (c), 121, 122(2), 126, 127(e) and 134. All these rules are being violated with a vengeance by the coal mining interests in many mines. And this is happening because of lack of proper and rigid supervision by the Mining Inspector.

Mr. Chairman: At this stage I want to ascertain from the hon. Minister how much time he would like to take.

Shri Nanda: I suppose we will adjourn at 5 o'clock.

Mr. Chairman: We are sitting up to 5.15.

Shri Nanda: I will take the last half an hour or so.

Shri Panigrahi: In this connection, I would refer to three or four of these rules, which need modification. Rule 121 provides that an adequate amount of ventilation shall be constantly produced for avoiding accidents and for providing ventilation. I think this rule 121 needs modification. What is "adequate amount" of ventilation in the mines? I would like to know what is the amount of cubic feet of intake air that is required for providing adequate ventilation in a mine which is gasy.

16-08 hrs. ..

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

It differs. It requires periodical measurement of the air. So, proper checking must be undertaken. But such periodical measurement and such periodical check, as provided for in rule 121, is not implemented.

Then I refer to rule 116(a) (c) which provides for shot-firing for extraction of coal in the mines under certain conditions. But in a number of cases these conditions are violated. Violating these conditions, the mine owners take recourse to solid blasting in place of the recommended process of blasting under rule 116(a) (c).

Rule 134 provides that every person, after passing through a door in the coal mine, shall at once close it. But in many of the enquiries made into the accidents in the coal mines attempts were made to fix the responsibility on the man who did not close the door. But nobody could be found out, because the provision is very broad in nature. It says that every person, after passing through a door in a coal, mine, shall close it at once. I think this needs modification. A specific provision should be made for the appointment of door attendants to attend to opening and closing of doors, because failure to do this may lead to derangement of ventilation in the mines. So, this thing should be taken into consideration.

Daily personal supervision of mines by the managers is lacking in many of the mines. When accidents take place in a certain mine, the manager is not in a position to say whether the mine was visited the same morning or two hours before the accident occurred. So, a specific provision should be made that records should be maintained in proper places and in the records should be noted the time when the mine was visited by the manager himself so that responsibility can be fixed as to whether the mine was really visited before the accident occurred.

In order to strengthen further the provisions of rule 25, I would suggest that a certain further provision may also be added to make the provision more binding and more effective. It can be added, as I suggest that no mine shall be worked unless daily personal supervision in respect of the working is exercised by the manager and during the period of his absence by somebody who is authorised by the manager to do that work. Unless that is done if the manager is absent and nobody is responsible and the mine is not inspected, nobody can say what was the condition previous to the accident.

Specific provision should also be made—it is not there in the regulations—for fixing the minimum qualifications for a person to be appointed as an under-ground sardar, an in-charge man, an overman or a munshi. Anybody can be appointed as a munshi or an under-ground sardar if he could pay some baksheesh or some tips to the manager of the mine. Many of the responsibilities rest with the underground sardar, so naturally minimum qualifications that he should be a matriculate or something like that should be fixed for such a person who really holds an important place in the mines so far as accident or prevention of accidents are concerned.

I would also suggest that a labour representative should be given power or responsibility to inspect the mine with the labourers so that he will be

in a position to give advice to the manager of the mine or to the Chief Mining Inspector with regard to the conditions prevailing in the mines. That will be helping the labour to participate in efficient management of the mines and also in preventing the accidents in mines. That way they will also feel confident that their opinion is being taken into consideration.

So far as inspection of the mines is concerned, many of the enquiry reports suggest that they are mostly irregular. There is no co-ordination between the Electrical Inspector, who inspects the electrical apparatus fitted in the mines, and the Chief Mining Inspector, who inspects other aspects of the mine. There must be co-ordination between the Chief Mining Inspector and the Electrical Inspector, who is in charge of inspecting the electrical apparatus equipped in the mines.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member has been speaking for 25 minutes now.

Shri Panigrahi: I will take another five minutes.

Shri Nanda: He is right. There are many more leaves to be turned over.

Shri Panigrahi: The hon. Minister wants only 30 minutes.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I do not know if any other hon. Member wants to speak.

Shri Panigrahi: Only two hon. Members stood up initially. I will conclude within five minutes.

I would also suggest that provision may be made in the Mines Act making it obligatory upon the Mines Inspectorate to inspect every mine at frequent intervals. The intervals may be fixed. It may be within a month or it may be within two months. In the case of mines which are gassy the interval may be more frequent. That should be decided in consultation with the Chief Mining Inspector. That will help in avoiding accidents which are really preventable in many cases.

[Shri Panigrahi]

I would just like to add three or four suggestions. One of them is that it is our part to educate the miners so far as safety in mines is concerned. Many of our mine workers are really not educated so far as safety measures in mines are concerned. So, it will be a duty on our part, on the part of the Government to make sufficient publicity and also to enlighten the workers with regard to the methods of working and with regard to the introduction of safety measures in the mines. The use of flameproof apparatus in the mines, particularly in gassy mines, should be made compulsory and obligatory on the part of the mine owner.

So far as the system of ventilation in mines is concerned, I would suggest that whenever any mine owner wants to make any change in the system of ventilation, if it is really of an important nature, i.e., removal of a fan or introduction or fitting in of any other apparatus, previous permission of the Chief Mining Inspector should, I think, be necessary, so that the Chief Mining Inspector should get an opportunity of visiting that mine and advising the mine owner as to the possibility and efficacy of the introduction of the measure and how far it will help in providing ventilation in the mine.

These are the few suggestions which I venture to make because I feel that the hon. Minister, Shri Nanda, is always in favour of suggestions and he always thinks of improving conditions in the mines. I too feel that mining in India is going to occupy the most important position in our economic life in many more years to come and in our Second Five-Year Plan and in the subsequent Plans that we have proposed to undertake, we are going to give much more prominent place to the mines. Employment in the mining industry is going to increase. Today it is more than half a million and it is possible that by the end of

the Second Plan period it may go up to eight lakhs. In the subsequent Plan periods it may increase by leaps and bounds, because we are undertaking to include many more coal mining areas in the public sector to increase the target of production so that we can get 60 million tons of coal by the year 1960-61. In view of this, I suggest that it is time that a national commission may be set up to go into the detailed working of the mining conditions in the country as a whole. Not only coal, but mica, manganese, iron and all these mines must be visited and the commission should suggest whether any improvement can be made so that efficiency of the workers as well as better health and safety measures can be provided in the mines in view of the latest developments in the country so far as mining is concerned.

Shri B. Das Gupta (Purulia): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I will confine my remarks only to the coal mines. I have some direct knowledge about the coal mines and their working. To begin with, there are three categories of coal mines—one incline, another quarry and the other pit. I find that most of the accidents occur in the pit mines. About the reasons, my hon. friend Shri Panigrahi has spoken in detail. But, I think that some of the points which I am going to put forward may be seriously considered by the hon. Minister.

As regards the safety of mines, three parties are responsible: (i) the owner (ii) the manager and (iii) the Inspector of Mines. Practically speaking in my experience I have found in Jharia and Dhanbad coal fields, in most of the collieries, the mine owners do not observe the rules for the safety of the mines. As regards the Acts and Rules prescribed by the Government for the safety of mines, I have not much to say. If they are followed strictly and observed strictly, I think these accidents which are happening often, will not occur in the magnitude they are occurring now.

In my experience I have found that the managers are eager to introduce adequate measures for the safety of mines. In many cases, they are not able to do so, because to implement them, it requires money. If a mine owner wants to introduce all the safety measures which are required by the law, by the Acts and the Rules, it involves great expenditure. In most of the cases, the owners do not want to spend so much money for the safety of the mines. If the managers insist, they just say, see that any major accident does not happen. When the Inspector of mines goes to inspect the mines, if I may be permitted to say so without casting any aspersion on the Boiler Inspectors and the Inspectors of Mines, I may say that for obvious reasons, they also do not give their proper consideration and attention to the safety measures which a mine requires. That is why we find that accidents happen so often and so seriously.

I may just request the hon. Minister to have a Committee in order to inspect the working conditions of mines. If a committee is set up with proper persons, if an overall inspection of all the mines is made, it will be found that 90 per cent of the mines do not comply with the provisions regarding safety of mines. Except in some cases,—I may just mention particularly the mines managed by Tata Collieries and some of the European collieries—most of the mines are lacking in proper provisions. That is due to the negligence of the Inspector of Mines and the negligence of the owners in general.

As regards the managers, in most cases they are very keen regarding safety of mines. But, the difficulty for them is that the owners do not want to spend much for the safety of mines. That is the difficulty and the defect in the system. Regarding the law as it is, I may say that some trifling things may be taken into consideration. In some of the collieries naked lamps are not allowed, but in

most of the collieries you will find that naked kerosene lamps are allowed. Even in the pit mines they are taken. I think there should be a strict law and strict regulation that no naked lamps should be taken within a colliery, whether it is an incline or a pit mine. I think this should be strictly observed and enforced so that no mine-owner will allow any naked lamp within the mines, because we cannot say when and where there is gas. We may find that there is no gas in a mine, but within a few hours we may find that there is gas and that is inflamed. The peculiarity of the coal mines is this that materials are inflammable, and if proper care is not taken, there is every chance, there is every likelihood of their catching fire any moment.

There is another point regarding depillaring. When a mine is being exhausted, naturally depillaring is resorted to, but before that sand-stowing is necessary. Without sand-stowing, depillaring is very dangerous in a mine because it may subside any moment. But, if proper inspection takes place, it will be found that in many cases sand-stowing is not before depillaring. That should be inspected. A committee or an instrument should be set up so that it is inspected very strictly and properly, because if a mine subsides, is destroyed, it means not only loss of human lives but also loss of national property.

So, in order to inspect these things, in order to do all these things in the right direction and in a proper manner, there should be set up a committee of experts, and representatives of labour should also be taken into the committee to inspect the mines, because the experts cannot always be vigilant regarding the mines. They will go sometimes and inspect the mines, but it requires constant vigilance and constant inspection by persons who really know what a mine is and what a safety measure should be.

[Shri B. Das Gupta]

I think if the hon. Minister takes into consideration at least these points and tries to implement them strictly, most of the accidents which we now find occurring now and then will end.

Shri Nanda: I think it is common ground so far as all sections of the House are concerned that we should devote the maximum care towards this problem of safety in mines. Every possible precaution should be taken. Rules should be made which are fully capable of meeting the situation, and arrangements should be made for inspection and check, which will leave no room for any avoidable accident. That is where we are all agreed. The question is whether in the conditions that obtain today these tests are being satisfied.

It has been acknowledged by the hon. Members who have spoken that in this country the accident rate, as compared with the figures for other countries, is considerably or appreciably lower. It is not that we can claim that our rates of fatal accidents are the lowest in the world, as has been pointed out already. I have got information before me that barring the United Kingdom, our rates are very substantially lower than the rate or the frequency of fatal accidents in other countries. I have got before me here statistical data over a period of years for a number of countries. And I find the figure of 0.51 in 1957 for India, while the corresponding figure for USA is 2.8, and even in UK, for this year, the rate is higher than in India. That is a good thing for the whole year of 1957, the information which has been compiled yields this conclusion that India today stands lowest in the matter of the frequency or the rate of frequency or the rate of fatal accidents.

Shri Naushir Bharucha (East Khandesh): What is the comparative coal production in those countries?

Shri Nanda: I shall come to that presently.

In the United States of America, for the same year, it is 2.8. I need not cite the figures for the other countries, but they are higher. That is a gratifying feature of the situation in this country. But I do not lay too much store by that for two reasons.

One of them is that we have in this country, still, conditions where we have not yet reached bigger depths in the mines. As our production will increase—and it is going to increase by leaps and bounds even in the course of the First and Second Plans and later on, very big targets have been fixed for ourselves—the conditions will become more hazardous. Therefore, although at present there is a satisfactory situation in that way, yet I cannot draw from this the solace that all is well with us. The degree of care which sufficed in the past will not at all be adequate in the future, considering the new conditions that are developing. But let us, at any rate, keep in view the facts as they are, and let us give some credit to those who are concerned with the administration of the safety measures in the mines. Of course, there may be things against them, and we may not feel happy about certain things which have occurred, and we would like to avoid them and prevent them, but, still, this is a position which has favourable features.

The other thing I want to say is that it is not only that the rate is very low, considerably lower than the rate for other countries, but, what is more significant, it has been steadily declining. In 1929 it was 1.17, in 1939, it was 1.23. Then it declined; later in 1954, it was 0.91, in 1955, 0.89, in 1956, 0.73 and in 1957, 0.51 I would like to convey to the administration that this is something which we appreciate, that the rate has been declining.

Now, we have to take into account the other factors. There have recently been two major disasters. There were also in the course of the last five years three such disasters. They have an impact of their own and we react to the situation then in a different way. Not that we were complacent before; I will not concede that. In every case of accident of that kind, inquiry is held. Now the rule is that inquiry is held in every case which involves death—loss of life. The report of the inquiry is very carefully examined. Lessons are drawn from it and effort is made to apply these lessons in order to reduce the hazards and risks of accident to the minimum for the future.

One proof of this is that a year ago a fresh set of mining regulations has been brought into force. It takes into account not only the experience gathered over the years in this country but makes use of the experience of other countries and also such documents as the hon. Member, Shri Nath Pai, referred to. Not that we were unaware of that, not that we had not known of that, but we are still grateful to him for his having reminded us about those things. As long as there is any number of accidents, however small, in our mines, we have to keep ourselves reminded of all the ways and possibilities, of all the measures that could be employed to reduce the incidence of those accidents. I thank him again for bringing to our notice some of the important things which have been taken notice of by such organisations as committees of the International Labour Office. I am particularly thankful to the hon. Member, Shri Panigrahi. He covered a very wide ground. He went into great detail and reminded us of a number of things which could be done. These are small things, matters of details regulations; all the same, they are very important. We are not unaware of those things. As a matter of fact, the mining regulations which are now in force do embody most of these things. If actually all the rules and regulations and

safety measures that have been embodied in the regulations that have now been brought into force are applied, the rate of accidents would go down. I am absolutely sure it would fall below the level at which it stands now, because I know also that these regulations are not being fully adhered to. Various reports of Enquiry Committees bring to light that fact. We should have a proper, adequate, and effective inspection organisation. We have been improving that organisation. We found at some time that the number of inspections that could be made by our organisation was not sufficient and the number of inspectors has been increased. Therefore, the number of inspectors also has gone up. But, how many times can an inspector go and visit a mine? How often could that be done? There cannot be an inspector there every day in the mine. Therefore, the major responsibility is that of the employer. He has to carry out these rules.

It has been revealed in these enquiries that unfortunately there is a proportion of employers who do not take their obligations as seriously as they should. The latest enquiry report is that of the Central Bamra mine, which the hon. Members have not received. I just happened to see that report. The observations therein very prominently bring out this fact. It is said that in the ultimate analysis, it is really the employer whose duty it is to take the greatest care and to see that every possible measures is adopted for avoidance of these accidents. But, it is found also that in a number of cases, the precautions which have been laid down or enjoined on the employer are not being observed and the latest case, as I said, is a very illuminating illustration of its kind, that this accident was preventable. The causes that led to that, accident were very well understood. The mine owner was being asked to observe certain precautions and not to violate some of the instructions which had been given to them. And yet, it is very unfortunate that the

[Shri Nanda]

calamity occurred because these precautions were not followed. Therefore, what has to be done?

The next step for the Administration is to launch prosecutions. The hon. Member is not satisfied with the fact that the number of prosecutions has increased. He says, it is no consolation to us that the number of prosecutions has increased. The number of accidents should not increase; but the number of prosecutions may increase as long as the number of accidents is going down. That means very effective administration. We would be happier still—and I agree with the hon. Member—if no prosecution has to be made. That means that we are able to persuade the employers or bring them to that frame of mind that they will fully carry out their obligations; and no prosecution has to be launched. Well and good. But, since these things occur, we should have prosecutions. I feel not only should we have quicker prosecutions but also the penalties may have to be made more drastic. I do not say anything immediately on this point for the reason that we are very soon going to have a conference of all concerned.

I may go back to the steps that we have taken recently and announced that we are contemplating. As soon as those two big disasters occurred, I rushed to those places. I immediately thought that a commission or committee—the kind of suggestion that has come from the hon. Member there—may be formed. But we know what happens in these committees and commissions. They take time. I thought that we should not allow any time to pass and we should immediately assume the responsibility for collecting all the advice that is available in this country from various sources: experts, workers, engineers and others and start applying whatever useful information and knowledge is available. We shall start making use of

it and applying it immediately without waiting for the results which might come from a bigger enquiry in course of time, after several months. What we did was this. We had a steering group or committee. It met sometime back where a few persons, representatives of the various sections came together. We discussed at length. I do not know whether any hon. Member was present at that meeting. I think the hon. Member of this motion was present at that time. It was a very useful discussion. It was a preliminary discussion. We settled our lines of further enquiry, collected all the information from all quarters, from those who happened to be conversant with the various aspects of this problem and then met and discussed these things with a view to arrive at practical conclusions and then to take action on those conclusions as soon as possible. I have left it open. If, in that conference, after we have examined all aspects of the question, all the proposals of the Ministry regarding the future course of action and so on, the hon. Member who participated still feel that a commission would be necessary, I personally would be quite willing to go ahead and to make arrangements for that and I would specially request the hon. Members who have made suggestions to attend that conference.

Shri Panigrahi: We should know the time.

Shri Nanda: I will let all the hon. Members know, particularly those who have taken part in these discussions, the date and shall also send the agenda and all the material on the subject so that we can go into those details there. I will not take up all those detailed points now.

Regarding some of the things which arose in the course of the discussion, some specific points, I shall briefly say this. I had given some information about the rate of fatal accidents. I had furnished very clearly the facts;

the rate of fatal accidents was declining in this country and it was very much lower than other countries. Dr. Ram Subhag Singh made a point. Although the rate of accidents generally might have fallen down, the number of deaths is very much larger. I have given the information regarding the rate of fatal accidents. Therefore, it covers that point. He went further and made a special point that in Jharia and Raniganj the rate was excessive. I requested for the information that the hon. Member had and then I had a comparison made. I find that even for these two areas the rate is not so very high.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: In 1954, the number of deaths that took place in Dhanbad was 97. In 1955, it went up to 138. In Raniganj also it has increased.

Shri Nanda: There may possibly be some inaccuracy in that information.

Shri Panigrahi: It is in the same report.

Shri Nanda: May I first give the information that I have? In Jharia, it was 0.75 in 1954, it rose to 1.11 in 1955 and in 1956 it came down to 0.64—these figures are per thousand. In Raniganj it was 0.85 in 1955 and it was 0.79 in 1956. Therefore, though in one year it had risen at Jharia it again came down. This is the information that I have. If there is any kind of disparity in these figures, we will check it up.

Shri Nath Pai: I hope you do not seriously hold the view that the percentage is really the lowest in India. Twice that remark passed you—I was very cautious—and you gave us an impression that the percentage of fatal accidents in India is the lowest. We have conceded that it is among the lowest; but it is not the lowest, there are other countries which have a better record.

Shri Nanda: I did not say that it is the lowest.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Minister only said that 1957 happened to be an year when we were the lowest; not always.

Shri Nanda: He is right. There are one or two countries which have lower figures than in India in some earlier years. In the latest figures some countries have been cited and among them India is the lowest. There may be some countries which have not been cited and the figures of which may be still lower. As I said, this is not a point which we are stressing in a manner as if we are absolved of all further responsibilities because we have the lowest figure. I do not take that stand at all.

It has been said that certain precautions, certain uniforms, helmets etc. may cost something and the cost may be found to be burdensome. I do not think such things could at all be considered in any sense so burdensome that any employer or any mine owner who undertakes these operations should consider it as something outside his reach. If he can incur other costs, I believe, personally, that this should be the first charge on the operations—safety precautions of this kind. It may be that there may be some new devices, some new modernisation or mechanisation which may or may not be available to them, but nobody can say that he cannot afford the costs of these small things.

It was urged by many hon. Members, particularly Dr. Ram Subhag Singh—and I entirely agree with them—that it is a part of the worker himself in bringing about a steady diminution in the rate of accidents. This has not been done sufficiently so far—I concede that. But I find from the various proposals that we have before us that a film is being produced now and posters and other literature are being got ready. An instructional film in regard to safety in mines is under preparation. It will illustrate what should be done by the workers and owners to avoid accidents. Safety posters are also

[Shri Nanda]

under preparation for distribution among mine owners. This is good enough, as far as it goes. But even this is not sufficient. I would like to have safety committees in every mine—not nominal committees as we have got works committees which won't function....

An Hon. Member: Which do not function at all.

Shri Nanda: How can they function if there is not adequate training arrangements preceding the appointment of a committee? They must know what they are expected to do. I think a very large programme of training will have to be undertaken where workers are made conscious of their own risks. Nobody wants to die, but an ordinary worker does not understand. Sometimes, since they do not have a very clear idea of the risks that they are incurring, they take risks. If the workers are properly educated and instructed in these matters, I know they will be more careful.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): Who will educate them?

Shri Nanda: Education will partly be undertaken by the employers. But we would not wait for them. We will do that. We will undertake that. As I said, I hope that next time when I talk to the hon. Members on this subject I will be able to show some substantial advance in this direction, because they attach a very great deal of importance to this educational work and the setting up of safety committees. I may wait only till the time when this conference takes place so that it could give us practical directions as to the lines on which this work should be taken up, because the workers' representatives will be there, along with others. Very soon after that, this will be taken up.

Then the question of inspection was raised. The Mines Inspectorate has been strengthened, as I pointed out. The strength has been raised from 37

to 73. Efforts are being made to fill all the vacancies. It is difficult to get some technical personnel and some of the places have not been filled. We asked the Public Service Commission again and again that we should have more personnel to fill the vacancies. I hope the position is improving, but more will have to be done in order that all these places are filled.

In 1945 the number of inspections made was 3,485. In 1957, the number of inspections was 7,667. More stress is now being laid on inspections during afternoon and night shifts when supervision is likely to be less.

Then, specially two posts of regional inspectors for dealing with special problems such as dust hazards, gas, strata control, etc., have been created and the posts have been filled up. I am just giving this information to indicate that there is a realisation of the grave risks that are inherent in this kind of operations. The risks will not be totally eliminated, even when all the rules have been carried out, because there is an element of great uncertainty about these things. But still, a very substantial reduction can take place if all these things are done.

Regarding frequency of inspection, hon. Members have made some suggestions. The following frequency of inspection has been laid down. The inspections per year in non-coal mines and third class mines. Four inspections per year in first and second class coal mines and six inspections per year in gassy mines. These provisions will be fully enforced as soon as the full complement of staff is recruited.

Shri Nath Pal: What about making it obligatory on every mine to appoint its own security officers for safety? I am not referring to the other forms of security.

Shri Nanda: Every mine should have an arrangement of some kind where a person is responsible particularly for this work. Maybe,

a small mine may not be able to have a special officer for that purpose, but there should be one or two persons who are expected to take special care of this aspect of their responsibilities. The manager is responsible, but the manager cannot do everything. He will have to assign certain other responsibilities to other people.

Mention was made about rescue organisation by Shri Nath Pai. I personally have seen those rescue stations. I saw them at work. I saw a demonstration also. I can inform the hon. Members and the House that it is a fine organisation. It has rendered very, very good work, excellent work, creditable work, in the various emergencies which arose. I would like to pay my tribute to them. It is not on paper. It is there. I request the hon. Members to go and see. They run grave risks, and they are doing their job very well.

17 hrs.

As I stated before, since in a very short time we are going to have a very close look into the whole subject and as every aspect of this problem is going to be examined carefully with the help of all those who can make any useful contribution, and as it is not going to be very far away—I mean this process—I would not take the time of the House in dealing with all the detailed suggestions. But I may repeat the request that if any hon. Member, who may or may not have spoken now, has anything else to urge or suggest, he may join those discussions or write to us his views, ideas and suggestions, because the matter is so vital and we would like to draw upon the experience not only of the country throughout, but of foreign experts also, whom we are going to invite, either at the time of the discussions or later on, for devising remedial measures for the future. I want to say to the hon. Members who have spoken today that there is no kind of difference, either in outlook or approach or appreciation of the requirements of the situation and

its urgency. It is our duty to do our best to see that every single life is saved and there is the maximum of safety available in all the coal mines.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: I can appreciate the reply of the hon. Minister. But I want to say something about two or three points which he made in his reply. He said that it is not possible for the Inspector of Mines to remain in the mines every day. When I said about the inspector, I did not mean that the Government Inspector should remain in the mines every day. What I meant was that no inspection is made and that the quality of the inspection should be such that it may encourage the people there. It should not be in the nature of a bogus enquiry. That is what I said.

Shri Nanda: That is right.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Sometimes inspections are made on paper and the Inspectors do not even go inside the mines. Without going they just submit their reports to their superior officers.

Reference was made to the UPSC and it was stated that it is difficult to recruit proper personnel in the required time. I do not know whether the suggestion will be acceptable. But I think a very useful service will be rendered to the miners if the hon. Minister takes some interest in appointing such of the miners as are interested in rescue work for rescuing the miners, because the miners who are working in the mines are interested in the rescue work. They will be very useful, if they are taken in the rescue organisation.

I quite agree that in demonstration the rescue organisation presents a very wonderful view. But we are interested in rescuing the miners who are trapped in the inundated mines or who are being burnt. They should be saved in time; their lives should

[Dr. Ram Subhag Singh]

be saved. I have noticed several instances where the personnel of the rescue organisation did not reach the place in time. For instance, if the accident occurs at 5 P.M. and if they reach there at 6 P.M. by the latest, many of the lives could be saved. But that happens very seldom. I hope the hon. Minister will look into it and see that even in minor points the rules are observed.

Shri Nanda: Has the hon. Member any specific instance in mind? If so, I would like to go into it.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member may convey it to the Minister.

17.05 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, the 9th May, 1958.