

Bus and Truck Terminal in Delhi

817. Shri Ram Krishan Gupta: Will the Minister of Transport and Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether the scheme to establish a modern bus and truck terminal in Delhi has been considered and finalised; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) and (b). The proposal is under consideration. Details of the scheme are being worked out and thereafter it will be discussed with the interests concerned.

Reservation Clerks on Southern Railway

818. Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan: Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) the number of reservation clerks on Southern Railway grade-wise and Station-wise;

(b) the number of passenger guides working on Southern Railway; and

(c) the number of passenger guides reverted in 1959-60 due to abolition of posts?

The Deputy Minister of Railways (Shri Shah Nawaz Khan): (a) A statement is laid on the Table. [See Appendix II, annexure No. 32.]

(b) 33.

(c) 9 posts were surrendered due to reduction of cadre but the incumbents of these posts who were in Gr. 100-185 have been absorbed as Ticket Collectors in Grade Rs. 60-130.

Minor Irrigation Schemes in Himachal Pradesh

819. Shri Daljit Singh: Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) the minor irrigation schemes adopted during 1958-59 and 1959-60 in Himachal Pradesh;

(b) the total acreage of land irrigated by these schemes; and

(c) the number of minor irrigation schemes which are under consideration for the remaining period of the Second Five Year Plan?

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): (a) to (c). Necessary information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the Lok Sabha as soon as available.

12.03 hrs.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

STRIKE BY CERTAIN STATE BANK EMPLOYEES

Shri Goray (Poona): Sir, I have asked for permission to move an adjournment motion regarding the strike of the employees of the State Bank of India.

For the last four days, about 10,000 employees of the State Bank of India have been on strike, and this has resulted in the crippling of work not only in one centre, but in four centres throughout the country and other branches, and I think that you should give permission for us to move this adjournment motion because, in my opinion the Government has not discharged its duty properly. The employees had submitted a charter of demands long back and every time they wanted to have negotiations, or, in the alternative, they suggested it should be referred to adjudication, but the Government did not take prompt action with the result that after a year or so, the bank employees had no alternative left but to go on strike.

Therefore, I submit that here the Government is not discharging its own duty, is not observing the rules that it has itself laid down for other private industries, and therefore it is jeopardising the banking business in this manner.

Some Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: I need not call upon every hon. Member. There are a number of hon. Members, Shri S. M. Banerjee, Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan, Shri Nagi Reddi, all of them have sent notices on the same matter:

"The situation arising out of the strike of State Bank employees which suddenly commenced from Friday the 4th March 1960, causing considerable hardship to the people all over the country."

In addition to what Shri Goray has said, is there anything more to be said?

Shri Prabhat Kar (Hooghly): The strike has taken place because of the bungling on the part of the Government. The charter of demands was submitted to the State Bank authorities on 1-1-1958. Thereafter, the State Bank Employees' Federation negotiated with the Chairman of the State Bank. After seven or eight negotiations, it was suggested by the Chairman that he would consult the Government. Now the Chairman sat over this whole matter for one year.

The President of the Federation met the hon. Prime Minister in the month of October, 1959 and insisted that because it was a public sector undertaking, the accepted policy of the Government for settling the matter through arbitration should be adhered to. The Prime Minister promised that he would talk to the Labour Minister.

Since, then, the State Bank authorities did not move. When the State Bank employees decided to go on strike, the Chairman of the State Bank again wrote to the Federation that he was going to consult the Government and thereafter he would reply to the Federation. The time was scheduled for the 2nd. On the 1st the Chairman of the State Bank came over here, he met the Finance Minister on the 2nd; there was a meeting at which the Finance Minister was present, and thereafter.....

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I am not going to allow a general discussion

of this matter. All that I am interested in is to find out whether it is a matter of public importance and whether there is any likelihood of the financial structure being paralysed by their going on strike. Then I will request the hon. Finance Minister to say what the particular situation is. I have given him sufficient time.

Shri Prabhat Kar: Only one minute. Let me explain how the Government is responsible. I got it from the President of the organisation.

Mr. Speaker: Therefore, the hon. Member ought not to speak about this.

Shri Prabhat Kar: Let me explain. (Interruptions).

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I am really wondering if hon. Members who are responsible for strikes outside can speak here.

Shri Prabhat Kar: No, Sir. (Interruptions) I am telling you that the charter of demands has been discussed for 1½ years, but after consulting the Finance Minister, the Chairman of the State Bank goes back and says it is fantastic and they will have no negotiations. That was the reason why today the strike has taken place.

The whole responsibility is that of the Finance Ministry because it did not allow the matter to be settled in spite of the fact that the Government have accepted the policy of settling disputes through arbitration. If anybody is responsible today, it is the Finance Minister because he instructed the State Bank authorities on the 2nd to reject this matter on the 3rd, as a result of which the strike has taken place on the 4th which has created such a situation. So, the Government is fully responsible for the strike which has taken place. Not only that, Sir,.....

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Shri Banerjee, if he has anything more to say.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Yes, Sir. I have something to say. The President of the All-India State Bank Employees' Federation Shri S. M. Joshi addressed a press conference on the strike recently. Shri Joshi is very well known for his extremely reasonable and objective attitude towards such problems. He said that the employees of the Bank had been forced to resort to strike because of the refusal of the management either to discuss the charter of demands or refer the dispute to voluntary arbitration. He used the expression "voluntary arbitration". The basis of the trouble is that the same people who discussed the charter of demands in 1959, namely the management of the State Bank, today have imposed a condition that the charter of demands should be withdrawn, and only then the discussion should take place. My submission is that the demand of Mr. Joshi is extremely reasonable, and I hope the Finance Minister and the Labour Minister will come together and see that this voluntary arbitration is actually agreed to. That is my submission. Otherwise, this strike.....

Mr. Speaker: Shri Khadilkar.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I am just concluding. At this time, the strike is confined to the State Bank; if it is not settled, then, I am afraid this may spread, and this may result in sympathetic strikes in other banks. That is my submission.

Shri Khadilkar (Ahmednagar): Unfortunately, it is a strange attitude on the part of the management to suggest at the eleventh hour, after carrying on negotiations on the basis of the charter of demands, which charter of demands was submitted at the instance of the management, that the charter should be withdrawn. So, the strike has been forced on the workers. From my personal knowledge, I know that though the Federation had served the notice of strike, yet they were eager to settle it on reasonable terms and in an amicable

manner as early as possible. The unfortunate part is, after carrying on negotiations on the terms contained in the charter of demands twice, at the last moment, they have said, unless you withdraw the charter, we are not going to talk to you. This is a strange attitude forcing the workers to go on strike.

Shri Goray: At that time, they had not met the Finance Minister. The Finance Minister had not advised them.

The Minister of Finance (Shri Morarji Desai): I am very sorry to find that the hon. Members who spoke on this did not choose to give facts as they were. It is absolutely false that I have asked the chairman not to negotiate. This is all wrong. I do not know how they knew about the talk between me and the chairman, unless it be that they were present there in spirit. I could not understand how they could have known that.

Shri Prabhat Kar: After meeting the hon. Minister, he changed his attitude.

Shri Morarji Desai: That is also entirely wrong. And I know it better than the hon. Member who is going on, and going about, misrepresenting this Ministry and the Bank.

An Hon. Member: That is their profession.

Shri Morarji Desai: The facts are as follows. As it is said here that the charter of demands was given at the instance of the Bank, I should like to go into a little history of it. Then, it will be realised what it means when it is said that it was done at the instance of the State Bank. (*Interruptions.*)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member had his own say.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): Can he talk on the merits of the issue?

Mr. Speaker: He can explain, since some matters have been raised here. I would like to know whether it is a recent matter, and what the effects of it are. If it is an old matter, I am not going to allow.

Shri Prabhat Kar: It is a recent matter, because the strike took place only on the 5th instant.

Mr. Speaker: I have always held that on a threat of strike, this House would not adjourn. I still stick on to that.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: That is our constitutional right. You cannot rule it out like that.

Mr. Speaker: Constitutional right there may be, but there is no constitutional right to have this House adjourned, if some strike is involved.

Shri Prabhat Kar: It is a matter of public importance.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members cannot force my hands to do this or that. I have got a right to hear. I have heard the hon. Members already. Let them be a little more patient and let us hear the other side now. If I find that a serious situation has arisen, and this House must give its opinion to the hon. Minister to take some particular action on that matter, I will certainly allow it. If, on the other hand, I find that everything has been done, and the fault does not lie with the Ministry but outside, I would not allow it. Let me come to a conclusion first regarding this matter.

Shri Morarji Desai: When the State Bank of India was formed, it inherited the Sastri Award as modified by the Labour Appellate Tribunal as also by the Bank Award Commission and confirmed by the Industrial Disputes Act. Even though the employees were governed by the terms of the

award, they brought up from time to time requests for liberalisation of some of these terms, and whenever it appeared to the bank that there were some hardships, the management suitably liberalised the terms, in spite of the terms of award which were binding on the employees. For example, additional increments were given to a number of employees, dearness allowance was adjusted quarterly for fluctuations in excess of five points in the cost of living index in the place of a half-yearly adjustments when the fluctuations exceeded ten points, higher rates of interest on provident fund and so on. On an approximate computation, these benefits cost the Bank Rs. 15 lakhs more. This is an additional recurring liability.

The management were satisfied that the conditions of service as prescribed by the Sastri Award and further liberalised by the management were very fair. In fact, the rates which are obtaining in the State Bank are among the best operating in the country, as compared with both those obtaining in the public and private sectors.

The Federation, however, persisted in making new demands both for revision of service conditions and for payment of additional bonus. The process of piece-meal dealing with demands gave rise to a psychology of increased demands and less concentration on work. The management, therefore, indicated a desire to know the terms and conditions which would assure suitable conditions of work over a period, so that these could be considered at the expiry of the period. This is what is being suggested as a charter of demands having been presented at the instance of the State Bank. The Federation submitted on the 5th October, 1958 a charter of demands demanding a radical revision of the pay scales, point-to-point adjustment in the revised scales, abolition of area-wise classification, increased provident fund and pension facilities,

and various other terms and conditions of service of the clerical and subordinate staff.

These demands, if granted, would involve an additional expenditure of Rs. 4 crores per annum. If this cannot be called fantastic, I do not know what else can be called fantastic.

In spite of this, the management had several discussions across the table with the President and other representatives of the Staff Federation, and the financial aspects of the various demands were examined threadbare. It was pointed out that the present conditions of service were very fair and they were among the best operating in the country, and yet, this had no effect on them.

During the negotiations, it was also pointed out that according to the existing incremental scales, the Bank has to find additional funds for increments and other consequential increases in allowances etc. to the extent of over Rs. 125 lakhs during the next five years. Therefore, it was impressed on the representatives that the demands put forward were unrealistic and beyond the capacity of the Bank, and the Federation was requested to arrange their various demands in order of priority, to enable the management to formulate their views on some of them. No communication was received from the Federation on this line, and yet the negotiations were continued. Then, there were certain other suggestions made also by the Chairman to the President, and yet these were not considered. Then, the President said that the negotiations had failed, and the General Council of the Staff Federation passed a resolution on 22nd November, 1959 expressing the view that the negotiations with the management had failed and that the management should agree to voluntary arbitration on the following items of dispute, and also demanded an interim relief which would cost Rs. 2½ crores per annum. When this was received, the management considered all this and said that in the matter of volun-

tary arbitration, it is not profitable for the State Bank of India alone to go to voluntary arbitration, when this charter of demands has been served on all commercial banks, practically the same charter of demands, and Government have been considering what machinery to set up in order to see that these can be considered in a proper manner. Therefore, the Bank said that it was not possible to go to voluntary arbitration in this matter, and it would not be profitable. And yet, it had also suggested to the President what it could do, and what would be done; if it is decided by another machinery in favour of the bank employees, then the Bank said that it will also consider this and will perhaps follow it. But this had no effect on them, and they served a notice. On 1st February, 1960, the Staff Federation served the Bank with a notice stating that the employees of the State Bank of India throughout India proposed to go on strike any day after the 16th February, 1960. The management told them that this was not right, this was not proper and they should not do so. In the meanwhile, Shri Joshi—I think—asked the Chairman whether he would not again reopen the negotiations.

Now, the negotiations were said to have been broken off, or said to have failed, by these very people themselves. The Bank never said that the negotiations had failed. But they said they had failed, and that was reported to Government. Under those circumstances, the Chairman thought that it might not be possible to start negotiations again without reference to Government. I was then consulted by the Chairman. I told the Chairman that we should never refuse to have negotiations, 'You can negotiate; but what is to be negotiated must first be determined. We can never negotiate a demand for Rs. 4 crores a year'. They were, therefore, asked to suggest some adjustments which could be negotiated. But they would not do so. Suddenly they go on strike.

[Shri Morarji Desai]

Shri Joshi was quoted. I am quite sure he does not approve of the strike. But he is helpless. He could not do anything.

Shri Khadilkar: You forced them to go on strike. The strike was provoked. You said 'Unless you withdraw the demands, no negotiations'.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I am surprised that even Shri Khadilkar should go on interrupting like this.

An Hon. Member: He must know his point of view.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, every hon. Member is entitled to know what is in an hon. Member's mind. (*Interruptions.*)

Shri Morarji Desai: My hon. friends who are making all this row think that we can be stampeded into doing what they want us to do.

Shri C. D. Pande (Naini Tal): That is their method and technique.

Shri Morarji Desai: We are always willing to do what is right and proper. We have never said 'no' to them, and we cannot say it howsoever unreasonable they may be. But we cannot accept any unreasonable things. That is all that we have said.

Suddenly these people go on strike on the 4th. Now they come here and think that by doing this sort of thing we should be forced into negotiations. There cannot be any negotiations as long as the strike is on.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: May I make a submission?

Mr. Speaker: I first heard the hon. Members who table adjournment motions. They must anticipate what all the other side is going to say. When once the Minister replies, there is an end to it. I must make up my mind one way or the other. I have heard both sides.

Shri Prabhat Kar: I want just one minute.

Mr. Speaker: Nothing more. The State Bank staff have gone on strike. I have also here a cutting from the *Hindustan Times* relating to that, which has been given to me. It is clear that this is not a matter which can be decided on an adjournment motion. This has been going on for some time.

Shri Prabhat Kar: No, Sir. . . .

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The hon. Member ought not to go on like this. When shall I give my ruling on this matter? I have already heard him. Even when I wanted to stop him, he said he had something more to say and he wanted two minutes. I gave him three minutes to say what he wanted to say. Now there must be an end to this discussion.

This matter has been going on for nearly a year. There seems to have been an award at an earlier stage. Of course, the award must naturally be binding on both sides. But the employees seem to have felt they should have some more favourable terms, some more concessions. From the hon. Minister's statement, it appears that they did not stick to the award.

Shri Prabhat Kar: The award has expired.

Shri Morarji Desai: It still continues.

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to decide in this House whether the award continues or has expired. When an award is given, it could not expire immediately.

Shri Prabhat Kar: For five years it was in force. It expired on the 31st March, 1959.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. He cannot go on interrupting like this. The award was to be implemented. The employees said that the terms of the award had to be changed and they should have some more amenities and some more ameliorating conditions had to be entered into. The hon. Minister says that the Bank was ready even to go beyond that and show some

more concessions. They were not satisfied. Therefore, they wanted to know—instead of dealing with this piecemeal—what exactly they wanted. On that, they wanted to have negotiations. The employees cannot have all that they want. After all, it is not as if there are only two parties in this, the hon. Minister and the Bank Chairman on the one side and the employees on the other; it is not as if the community at large has no interest in this matter. Evidently, there is a growing feeling that when the employees demand anything in any particular industry, there are only two parties to it, the employer and the employee, and the community at large has no stake in it. In fact, they are the persons who have to bear it.

Therefore, it is open to the hon. Minister and the Chairman of the State Bank to say that these demands are excessive. Am I to go into every one of these demands and find out whether it is excessive or reasonable? An adjournment motion is not the proper procedure for discussing such a matter. (*Interruptions.*) Even now, the hon. Minister says that he is willing to negotiate. But he wants to know, if the negotiations have failed at an earlier stage, what is the common ground on which the negotiations can go on. (*Interruptions.*)

Under the circumstances, I am sorry I am not able to accede to this request and give my consent to this adjournment motion. I do not say that there are not other methods. I do not want the strike to go on. Nobody wants a strike in this country.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy (Kendrapara): Let the hon. Minister invite the President to meet him.

Mr. Speaker: Certainly all possible methods will be explored to see that this strike is not continued. I would appeal to hon. Members to persuade those persons who have gone on strike to withdraw the strike as quickly as possible.

Shri Prabhat Kar: What about Government?

Mr. Speaker: I would urge upon Government also to look into this matter again.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: The Labour Minister is here. Why not he do something?

Shri Prabhat Kar: The Labour Minister did not talk on the subject.

Mr. Speaker: Next item. Shri Hathi.

CORRECTION OF ANSWER TO
STARRED QUESTION NO. 34

The Deputy Minister of Irrigation and Power (Shri Hathi): In a supplementary question arising out of Starred Question No. 34 answered in this House on the 10th February, 1960 regarding Upper Sileru Project, Shri T. Sanganna asked whether an agreement had been entered into between the Governments of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. In reply, I informed the House that "it was not actually an agreement, but there was general discussion with the two Governments". This, however, is not the correct position.

The details for working out the Upper Sileru Hydro-Electric Project during the Second Five Year Plan were discussed by the Chief Ministers of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh with Shri C. M. Trivedi, Member, Planning Commission on the 7th September, 1959, and an agreement was arrived at which was duly signed. A copy of the agreement was placed on the Table of the Lok Sabha in reply to Starred Question No. 272 on the 25th November, 1959.
