

14.39 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

TWENTY-THIRD REPORT

Sardar A. S. Saigal (Janjgir): Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House agrees with the Twenty-third Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 14th August, 1958."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That this House agrees with the Twenty-third Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 14th August, 1958."

The motion was adopted.

14.40 hrs

RESOLUTION RE WOMEN LABOUR IN CERTAIN INDUSTRIES—Contd

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The House will now resume further discussion of the following Resolution moved by Shrimati Renu Chakravarty on the 9th May, 1958—

"This House is of opinion that a Committee consisting of Members of Lok Sabha be constituted to enquire into the rapid decrease in the number of women labour employed in coal, jute, textile and other industries, to ascertain the causes thereof and to suggest the remedial measures therefor."

Out of two hours allotted for the discussion of the Resolution, 36 minutes have already been taken, and one hour and 24 minutes are left for further discussion today:

Shri Narayanankutty Menon (Mukandapuram): Sir, the other day, supporting the Resolution, I was

pointing out the alarming tendency, especially in the industrial sector, to cut the number of women employed in each category of job. I also submitted that the basic reason for this downfall in the employment of women, especially in the industrial sector, is the growing number of beneficial labour legislation. You will find, especially, after the Maternity Benefits Act was passed, in the plantations and many other industrial sectors, deliberately there is an avoidance of the employment of women. The resolution has been tabled in order to bring to the attention of the Government the immediate necessity of taking some sort of urgent action to see that this sort of discrimination in the employment of women does not continue

As far as the actual employment position is concerned, from 1950 onwards, it has not been possible to collect information—neither the Government has done it—how far exactly the number of women employed in the industrial sector has gone up or, how far, in the new employment potential, to keep up the proportion of the past, women have been employed. I will be able to point out only certain glaring instances where both in the commercial employment side and also in the industrial side, there has been a deliberate refusal on the part of employers to employ women or a desire to get rid of the women already employed

I would call the attention of the hon Labour Minister to the speech made by the West Bengal Labour Minister on 19th June, 1958 taking note of the alarming situation of the number of women employed especially in the jute industry rapidly coming down. The Labour Minister of West Bengal at that time promised the legislature to take immediate and swift action as far as this cutting of the employment potential of women in the jute sector was concerned. But, even after that assurance was given

by the Labour Minister of West Bengal, we find that a large number of women who were employed in the various sectors of the jute industry are being retrenched just because they are women labourers. When we analyse the question whether the retrenchment of this labour in the jute industry is just because there is need for any retrenchment of labour, we find that it is not a question of retrenchment pure and simple. After retrenching a large number of women workers in a particular department of the jute mills, what happens is, a large number of casual labourers are employed there instead of these women workers. Therefore we find that in the jute industry where from the very beginning women were employed to do particular categories of jobs, now women are being sent away and instead of them men are employed.

Then, coming to textiles, especially in the Coimbatore area, where women are employed in the reeling department, what the employer does is, he recruits casual men labour, and asks the women labour trained in reeling work, to train the men workers and immediately they are trained, under some excuse or other, these women workers are retrenched. In the case of the new textile mills that are opening, what they are doing is, because in the textile industry, they are able to get a large number of trained women workers, they employ women casual labour and also employ men workers simultaneously and get these men workers trained by the women workers who are already trained and who are already retrenched. Immediately the men are trained by the already trained women workers, the women workers are sent away just because they are casual labour and the men workers are made permanent. This is the situation in the textile mills.

In the plantations too, from time immemorial when the plantations

started, you find a large number of women workers are employed in them. In every plantation, women used to do particular categories of work all the time. It is noteworthy that in the plantations when men workers are recruited their wives also work in the plantations. The family does the work in the plantations. What happens is, even for certain types of work in which women used to be employed, the employers are refusing to employ women. These are things directly done by the employers to see that the number of women workers who are at present employed is reduced and not to employ more women workers at all. As a consequence, you find a very steep reduction in the ratio of women workers employed already in the industry and non-recruitment of women workers in the new units that are coming up especially in the textile sector.

There is another way in which the employer tries to put a new check in the way of employment of women labour in the commercial establishments and certain semi-governmental institutions. A condition is added to the conditions of service that women who are already employed in commercial establishments, when they are married, they automatically lose their job. What happens is, as a matter of fact, women after working for some time, even though they come for work, they automatically get married. They do get married.

The Minister of Labour and Employment and Planning (Shri Nanda): Not automatically.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: What is the meaning of this automatically?

Shri Narayanankutty Menon: It is a slip. Not automatically. They do get married. Immediately after marriage, as per condition, they are to go

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away. This also takes place automatically because after marriage, automatically they will have to go out of employment. This is a fact.

Shri Thirumala Rao (Kakinada):
There is too much of automation.

Shri Narayanankutty Menon:
Either in the industry or so far as the women workers are concerned?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: So far as the present day speech is concerned.

Shri Narayanankutty Menon: This is also another check to the employment of women in the commercial sector.

I wish to draw the attention of the hon Labour Minister to a very interesting case that happened in Bombay. A woman packer was employed by a very famous English Drug house, Boots Pure Drug Co. After that packer got herself married, she was dismissed. The dismissal question was raised as an industrial dispute before one of the Industrial courts in Bombay. The result was, the Industrial court found that if this woman worker had the right to get married and continue in employment, the employer has got an equal right to get more profit by avoiding employment of this woman. That judgment gives an indication and a pointer as to why the employers are refusing to employ women and why they want to get rid of women. The only basis is the beneficial labour legislation as far as women are concerned. The Maternity Benefits Act has come into force in almost all the areas of the country. As I said, when women get married, they do beget children. It is not a fault of either the women or even of marriage. When these women have to be paid maternity benefits, for these two months, the employer will have to employ somebody else simultaneously. Therefore, on marriage, if this

woman worker is dismissed, the employer can save both the maternity benefit and also the payment that has to be made to the new labour employed there. The reason is obvious. The employer wants to make profit by avoiding women labour. That is exactly why there is reduction in the employment of women.

Another example in Bombay is the case of the old Lever Brothers, now Hindustan Lever. You will find that in the old Lever Brothers who manufactured soaps, cosmetics and perfumes, about 90 per cent of the labour in respect of the manufacturing plant was women labour. Quite recently, during the last three years, the company has followed a deliberate policy of retrenching the women workers from the cosmetics and soap manufacturing plant of the company and substituting the women workers by men labour. The reason is obvious. In the delicate process of the manufacture of cosmetics and soaps, it should be seen that the tender hands of women are better to do that job. Still, the company feels that because of this legislation, in order to make profit, it should try deliberately to retrench the women workers there. As a result, in Hindustan Lever you find a very small number of women workers employed today and this number is being cut down every day under some pretext or other. Therefore, the employer knows very well how to avoid this labour legislation.

Even though it has been said that the place of the Indian woman is in the kitchen, because of sheer necessity, not because of the joy of work, she has to go out and work in the factories. When the husband gets only Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 a month, she cannot maintain her home and children, and therefore she also goes to work. Rightly the Government has passed good beneficial legislation for women workers, but the employer has found a ready-made answer: if you want maternity

benefit, we will see you are not employed at all. So, instead of getting maternity benefit and prevention of work during night time etc., even the employment is going away.

Then, you find a very interesting thing with this Hindustan Lever. Every hon. Member has seen the very big advertisements they give to the papers. This is the one company in India today which capitalises on the beauty and grace of women, because in their advertisements you find some cinema star's graceful face is put, and upon that money is made. Just because they could make money with the face of women in big advertisements, they do that, but at the same time just because they have to pay retrenchment benefit and compensation, they do not want the women workers at all.

I have pointed out certain isolated examples that have come to our notice, where the growing tendency is to do away with women workers. Therefore, Government will have to take some immediate measures to find out the actual data especially in traditional industries where for a long time women used to be employed, which were a source of employment for women. Government should find out how far there has been retrenchment and avoidance of women labour and what steps should be taken to see that the employment pattern as it existed prior to the coming in of labour legislation is continued.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member should conclude now. He has taken 15 minutes already. The office thought he had concluded that very day.

Shri Narayanankutty Menon: I will just conclude, Sir. In cases where normally women used to be employed and could do the work, you find a large number of educated women applying today. For instance, in Calcutta when there were 16 vacancies

for the posts of school teachers in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, more than 1,000 educated girls applied for the posts. This is an indication that the educated women of this country are coming out more and more for employment, not for the grace of employment, but because of sheer necessity. Unless they get some employment and some additional income to the family, they cannot pull on.

In certain States where education is the highest, marriage is also out of the question. This is what the latest census discloses. Unless the avenues are open for even a small number of women to get employment where they used to get employment, it will be a miserable state of affairs. As far as our State is concerned, the latest census says that 47.8 per cent of the eligible women are unmarried, and they will have to continue unmarried for a long time to come. That is the matrimonial market position there. Secondly, the average income of the industrial worker or agricultural labourer is the minimum possible. Therefore, unless some avenue of employment is open for these women who cannot get married and who have not got married, who represent such a large percentage, it will be a miserable case. Therefore, I make an earnest appeal to the hon. Labour Minister first of all to conduct an enquiry into the state of affairs of the falling employment of women as soon as possible and to find out remedial measures to see that the status quo which existed prior to the bringing in of labour legislation is maintained, and if necessary to bring in fresh legislation to see that this sort of retrenchment and also avoidance of employment of women does not take place. I have read in the newspapers that he is bringing forward another good legislation, that he is going to extend the system of employment exchanges and compulsory registration even in the private sector. When that legislation is brought forward I hope he will make suitable provisions to cover the problem I have mentioned. I do hope he will take note of the

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seriousness of the situation and that some remedial measures will be brought as soon as possible before the House.

Shri Ghosal (Uluberia): If we analyse the statistics for some years we shall be able to gauge the problem of elimination of women from the sphere of industries.

In 1951 we find the number of women workers in factories in India was about 2,81,000 forming about 11·4 per cent of the total labour force. In 1958, though no authentic statistics are available, we understand from different sources that it has come down by about 50 per cent.

Mining is an important industry for the women workers where they used to be employed in large numbers. In 1952 we find the number of women workers in mining was about 1,11,000—that is about 20·4 per cent of the total number of workers in the mines. But in 1957 we find it has come down to 50,000.

Plantation was another important industry in which women used to be employed to the extent of about 50 per cent of the total labour force. In 1950 in plantations there were about 2,27,000 female workers forming about 47·2 per cent of the total labour force, but in 1954 June it has come down to about 1,23,400. Of course, the reasons are given by the employers that this is due to mechanisation of the different sections of this industry, but the real reason is that due to the initiation of different protective laws for improving the conditions and giving special concessions to women workers, the employers are unwilling to employ them.

In jute mills, several departments like the sewing department, used to be set apart for women workers and male workers used to refuse to enter them. But now-a-days when the problem of unemployment has become severe, male workers are infiltrating

into these departments and ousting the female workers whose preservers they were a few years ago. Now, we find that several protective laws have been enacted for protecting these female workers. The employers used to employ them so long as they had the opportunity to exploit them. Previously, women labour was found to be very cheap in comparison with male labour. Even after the introduction of maternity benefit Acts or the amendments of the Factories Act in the different years for improving the working conditions of the women workers, still the employers used to employ them, but as soon as the slogan of equal pay for equal service came into existence, and the difference was removed in all the industries, the employers were no longer willing to employ the women workers, and they started shirking their responsibilities for taking the liabilities of the female workers for whom they are bound to grant some concessions under the different Acts.

15 hrs.

We find that in many of the industries the employers have unlifted the purpose of the different protective laws because with the introduction of the protective laws the women workers have had to lose their employment. From an ILO survey in 1953 of women's employment in Asian countries in the cotton, silk, jute, and coal mining industries, municipal services, paper, chemical products, and in skilled workers' levels, the preponderance was that of married female workers. And what is the composition of these female workers. About 50 per cent were married women, and 20 per cent were widows. I completely agree with Shri Narayanankutty Menon that these married women come to take service not for the sake of fun but for supplementing the earnings of the male workers; and so far as the widows are concerned, they

come because they have got the liability of maintaining their families. So, out of the total women labour force 70 per cent were in need of service, but in order to nullify the protective laws, the employers now-a-days are not employing the women workers. As a result of that, a crisis has been created not only in the families of these women workers but also in the families of the male workers whose incomes were being supplemented by those of the female workers.

With these words, I support this resolution and I hope that it would be passed.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Does any other Member want to speak? I find there is none. So, the hon. Minister.

Shri Nanda: It appears that the interest in this subject has waned very rapidly. It appears also that the hon. Members who have spoken on this subject are earnest about it certainly, because this problem is one of urgency and seriousness, yet they feel—it appears to them too—that the solution which has been suggested through this resolution may not really be a fitting solution for this problem.

The Mover of the resolution built her case largely on some figures which were culled from a publication of the Ministry of Labour entitled *The Economic and Social Status of Women Workers in India*. It happens that the statistics in this publication close with the year 1950. Recently, we had devoted a good deal of attention to this problem, and a study has been undertaken; and we have the results of that study now in the form of the document which was placed on the Table of the House this morning. I wish I could have done it earlier, but this study was completed only a few days ago, and it was not found possible to place this material in the hands of the hon. Members earlier than this. The title of this publication is *Women in employment—1901-1956*. The hon. Members who spoke before pointed to the fact that there were not adequate

data on the subject. Shri Narayanankutty Menon particularly referred to that. But that deficiency has been made up now through this study. The material which is available has been compiled and analysed not only regarding the particular industries to which the Mover of the resolution has referred, but also regarding various other industrial occupations, and also referring to the economy of the country in general. If hon. Members will refer to this document later on, they will find that many of the questions which were raised the other day and also today have been answered in this document. ✓

The resolution seeks to draw the attention of the House to the rapid decline in employment of women in certain industries. It is now possible with the help of the material which has been brought together in this document to have a clear picture of the situation in all its important bearings. We can now judge the nature and size of the problem, and we can thus make up our minds about the appropriate approach towards the solution of these problems.

The main conclusions which have emerged from this study have been stated at the end of this document. So far as the place of the working women in the entire economy of the nation is concerned, it has been stated that during the years 1901-51, participation of women in absolute numbers in the cultivation of land has increased, with the exception of the year 1931. But it has also been pointed out that the proportion of women workers in non-agricultural activities has been going down more or less steadily. A general decrease has taken in absolute numbers as well as relatively in the number of women engaged in production other than cultivation, commerce and other services. Transport has recorded a rise in women's employment. During this period, increases have taken place in women's employment in the following industries, namely, coal mining, tobacco, iron and steel,

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and non-ferrous metal industries, transport equipment, bricks, tiles and other structural clay-products, furniture and fixtures, paper and paper products, printing and allied industries, educational services and research, municipalities, local boards, hotels, restaurants and tea-houses, and legal business services. Women's employment has recorded a decrease in miscellaneous food industries, grains and pulses, non-metallic mineral products, retail trade in fuel, sanitary works and services, laundry and laundry services. These conclusions refer to the period of fifty years from 1901 to 1950. We have, however, fuller and more precise data which have been presented in this document regarding the employment position of women in some of the organised sectors of the economy for recent years, that is, from 1950 to 1956.

1950, the number of women employed in factories was 2.82 lakhs as against 2.64 lakhs in 1947.

There was some increase during this period. The corresponding figure for 1956 is 3.01 lakhs. This shows an upward trend in employment of women in factories during this period. It is true there were fluctuations in the course of this period and also that there has been a slight decline in the proportion which women employees bear to the total number of employees in these factories. But when we examine the different industrial groups composing these aggregate figures, we find that the trends are not uniform. While employment in the tobacco industry and chemical and chemical products industries has been on the increase, that in wood and furniture industries, paper and paper products, textiles and basic metal industries has been going down. In other industrial groups, namely, processes allied to agriculture, food (except beverages), non-metallic and mineral products industries, women's employment has been more or less stationary. These are based on the study made in this book

It is particularly noticeable that the employment position in bidi and match industries has been good. In the bidi industry, the number has risen from nearly 15,000 to over 24,000 during these seven years and the percentage of the labour force has risen from 22.6 to 34.1. In the case of the match industry, the figures are 3,175 in 1951 as compared to 9,447 in 1956—percentages of 22.1 and 44.7 respectively.

On the other hand, there has been a steady and substantial deterioration in the employment position of women in textiles. This is the field to which the Resolution particularly refers. This is specially so in cotton and jute industries. In cotton, the number of women employees declined from 54,000 to 50,000, that is, 37.5 per cent. to 21.4 per cent. It has to be borne in mind, however, that in the case of the jute industry, the aggregate of employment of both male and female workers also suffered a setback, the total figure of employment having gone down from 3.03 lakhs in 1950 to 2.73 lakhs in 1956.

In the mining sector, the number of women employed has considerably increased. In manganese and iron ore mines and there is a fall in coal and mica mines. In the case of manganese, there has been an increase in the figure of employment from 16,000 to 44,000. In the case of iron ore, it has increased from 13,300 to 22,000. In coal, however, there has been a decrease of 11,000 compared to the total figure of employment—57,400 in 1950. In mining quarries as a whole, there has been a net increase of 29,000 during this period.

In plantations, there is a decrease in women employed from 2.48 lakhs in 1950-51 to 1.86 lakhs in 1956-57, but this decline is almost proportionate to the total of adult workers, both male and female, which was 5.20 lakhs in 1950-51 as against 3.49 lakhs in 1956-57. The percentage of women workers in this sector of the economy has varied between 46 and 43.

These figures, which I have presented to the House, are taken out of this document. It is obvious that they do not present a uniform picture. There are some satisfactory features of the situation and there are others which would necessarily cause deep concern to all of us. For example, the decline of number of employees of women in the textile industry is a matter of concern. The information I have given does not contradict that furnished to the House by the Mover of the Resolution.

The problem of the unemployment of women is of varying degrees of intensity in different occupations. It will require different means of dealing with the problem also. There is visible some kind of a trend in certain industries which is adverse to the employment interests of women as a whole.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): What is the trend in other countries of the world?

Shri Nanda: In other advanced industrial countries, there is a shortage of manpower and therefore, that problem does not present itself in that form at all. In certain countries, there is a possibility of increasing the number of women in employment because more and more women are required for employment.

The question next is, what is to be done about the situation? Before dealing with that, we might have to go a little further into the causes responsible for this state of affairs. This study has given indications, after investigation into various sectors, of the factors at work in different industries regarding the downward trend of employment. The experience of all these various industries is capable of some kind of a generalisation. That is, it is possible to point to some common factors at work. Among these, two would stand out prominently.

There is, in the first place, legislation which is of a restrictive character so far as women are concerned. Women are prohibited from working in certain places and at certain times. These restrictions are in the interests of women themselves. As the number of our shifts increases, as there is more night work done in industry, proportionately the number of women employed is bound to decline. That is inevitable if we want to safeguard the health of women as has been provided for in the case of factories and mines. Employment of women in underground work has been prohibited under section 45 of the Mines Act of 1952. Similarly, women are prohibited from working between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. in factories under the Indian Factories Act. That is one part of it, where there is no immediate remedy so far as that particular factor is concerned.

There is connected with it another feature which may be considered to have some bearing on this problem. It is the progress of mechanisation and rationalisation in industry. Even though women workers continue to be employed in those occupations, with mechanisation and rationalisation their number is bound to be less, even under the various arrangements which have been made to protect the interests of the workers in rationalised occupations. Sometimes it happens that a new process is introduced or new devices and mechanisms applied which have the effect of curtailing the chances of women workers in those occupations. The nature of the mechanical appliances is such. If industry were growing, then a reduction of workers, whether men or women, in mechanised processes will not affect the total volume of employment in those industries, but not so in the case of industries where either the industry is not growing or it is not growing in a corresponding ratio. So the employment is bound to suffer.

Then there is another cause which has been brought out prominently in

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this study. It is the effect of our social legislation, that is, provisions in various laws intended to safeguard the health and welfare of the workers; legislation about maternity benefits, the provisions regarding creches and similar amenities which society, Parliament and law seek to provide for women workers. They make the employment of women a little more costly on that account, and, as was pointed out by the hon. Member who spoke before the consideration of profit comes in.

I am not referring to the adjudication and pronouncement of Tribunals at this stage which might justify the squeezing out of women if a little more profit can be made by the employer. But the effect is, it becomes more accentuated when the industry is passing through a phase where profits decline and it becomes a hard struggle to maintain the working of the industry. I am talking of facts—what is happening. Whether it is, justified or not is a different matter. But, this is the normal operation of market forces which leads to certain consequences. We have to balance these considerations and we have to be sure of the consequences in advance—that the effect of certain measures which we adopt for protecting and safeguarding a certain class of workers increases the cost of employment. Then there is a tendency in a certain direction. We may try to guard against it and provide against that—but we must take that tendency into account.

These statutory obligations which are placed on the employers create this kind of tendency which leads to the results with which we are dealing now in this discussion.

There is a wider aspect of the problem also. We are dealing with not only the question of employment of women but the employment of women

is a part of the general problem of the volume and opportunities for employment in this country. And, when we tackle that part of the problem effectively, we furnish an answer to the demand for additional employment both from men and women. We have been trying to do that through our plans for development. And if the situation is still not satisfactory, it is an occasion for us to pause and reflect about it.

We were told that we have undertaken an exceedingly ambitious Second Five Year Plan and it was known very well even at the start that with all its ambitious size the employment potential of the Plan was not going to be sufficient to absorb the new entrants into the working forces in occupations other than agriculture. That is, a considerable part had to be taken up in rural agricultural operations in spite of the fact that the burden on land has been very heavy already. With a certain amount of curtailment of the Plan—which I need not discuss at this stage and which will be a matter to be taken into consideration by this House, if it has to come—it may bring down down further the employment content of the Plan. The effect of it has to be borne both by men and women.

The important part of the question is what is the solution. The mover and ourselves are agreed about the situation except that I have tried to place it in a wider perspective and shown where employment has increased both in factories and in mines. I have also pointed out in very unambiguous terms that there has been a very substantial decline in certain occupations; and even where it has increased it has not in any case increased sufficiently in proportion to the increase in the total number of employees in these occupations. But what is to be done about it?

The approach that I have in mind does not really concern itself with certain problems which were posed here with regard the place of women—whether it is in the house and in the kitchen and with children or whether she is entitled to have opportunities for employment in wider spheres.

The other question which has been incidentally raised by hon. Members who have spoken is the question of a conflict between the interests of men and women, men infiltrating—that was the word used—into certain occupations. That was good and gallant on the part of the hon. Member to have spoken about that. But I do not want to raise this issue, as to whether it is more important that the breadwinner of a whole family—the wife and children—should have preference or priority or a woman who wants to add to the income of the family. I am dealing with the matter in its concrete aspects.

There is a problem in the textile industry, in jute, in cotton and in certain other industries. How do we deal with that? I may inform hon. Members that recently I had an opportunity to deal with one aspect, at any rate, of this matter, that is the jute industry which is troubling the minds of all of us, the mover and ourselves—the very large decline that has occurred in the number of workers in the jute industry.

Only very recently I was in Calcutta in connection with the meeting of the Industrial Committee on Jute and one of the items on the agenda was this—the decline of women employed in the jute industry. We had to deal with the circumstances and causes which brought this state of affairs about. There was some difference of opinion. The employers said that this decline has not occurred because of the fact that there is the legislation about maternity benefits etc. Thereby they did not accept the

charge that they were greedy so as to oust women from employment for the sake of a few rupees. They have challenged that; they defend themselves against that charge. They pointed out—and others also pointed out—the effect of various technological and other changes in the jute industry as being responsible for this downward trend of employment of women in that industry. We went into the subject and here before me is a record of the conclusions of that committee. These are the recommendations of the committee. The West Bengal Government should immediately set up a committee of enquiry to go into the causes of reduction in the number of women workers in the jute industry and suggest measures for safeguarding the interests of such women workers. And that in the meanwhile there should not be any reduction in the strength of women workers employed at present in the jute industry.

These are concrete substantial steps taken, in dealing with a particular industry where the problem was most acute compared to other cases that we have before us. So, I have said that we do not take any kind of abstract stand about it when we are dealing with these matters. The way really lies in the extension of the methods adopted in the jute industry. We have to do something similar in the case of the other industries also.

We have been told that women are thrown out by unjust and unfair means. They train men and then men oust them. It is very ungrateful of men that they receive training at the hands of women and then they take away their employment! But the hon. Member said that these were isolated cases. There may be a few ungrateful men but the problem is of a different kind.

There are technological changes taking place and the pattern of industrial employment is modified. There

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will possibly be shrinkage of employment opportunities in certain directions. We have got to take certain steps. We have got legislation about lay off and retrenchment. They all apply equally to men and women. There are other safeguards also; they lie in the hands of the workers themselves. If there are unfair dealings, where are the trade unions? They should fight it out. As I have said in the case of the jute industry, Government is with them in that. It is only in that detailed approach, taking up each case and each industry and its special circumstances that the particular issues can be dealt with. That is the proper and effective way of tackling this problem. The pattern is changing in other directions also—a direction very favourable to women. The number of women workers employed in the Central Government, for instance, is possibly 20,000 as against a very small number before. Their number is increasing in the various social welfare organisations, community projects, etc. For teachers and health visitors, there is a great demand. In the Second and Third Plans, their number is going to increase enormously as compared to what has been before. These are the new opportunities opening up as industrial development advances. As a result of economic development, the tertiary sector will increase to a very much larger extent. Women will find increasing scope for employment in the services.

Just let us take one part of the health sector. At the beginning of the Second Plan, there were 22,000 nurses and the requirements at the end of the Plan period is 1,67,000. At the end of the Third Plan, there will similarly be a jump in their numbers. At the beginning of the First Plan, there was 1,17,000 teachers which increased to 1,80,000 at the beginning of the Second Plan. The percentage increase is 53·8. There will be a

further increase of 44·96 per cent at the end of the Third Plan and the number will be about 2,78,000. I am only illustrating my point. These are the directions in which the employment for women is going to grow at a rapid stride.

Regarding facts we are practically agreed. Now, what are the causes responsible for this state of affairs. Having investigated the circumstances which have led to these tendencies, here also there is no great cleavage of opinion. The question is about the remedies. I have indicated them.

It is not that a Committee can do very much about it. I have great respect for Committees but it is not that any Committee can do everything. The facts are known; the circumstances are also understood. I have illustrated the method by which we can bring about some kind of relief and extend help to those who need this help and also the direction in which we have to move. It is through our tripartite organisations just as we did in the case of jute. Generally, we may have the Indian Labour Conference and its standing committee take interest in this subject. This can be referred to the standing Committee for its next meeting. There is also the responsibility of the trade union organisations. Given, certain laws and certain attitudes, towards this problem, it is for them to see that the women do not suffer unnecessarily. So, I do not think that we need give trouble to the hon. Members of Parliament to sit in a Committee where possibly they may not be as helpful as the other ways which I have indicated for solving this problem and that is my suggestion to the hon. Members. I have done.

Shri D. C. Sharma: The hon. Minister has said that the pattern of employment is changing and that technology is coming into play more and more in this country. May I know from him if the women workers in

this country are not keeping pace with the technological developments and if they are not doing so, is our educational system or someone else doing something to bring them up to the mark?

Shri Nanda: It is a very legitimate question. It is not necessary that technological advances should bring about a diminution in the employment of women. With technological advance, it should be possible in certain cases to have even larger numbers of women given employment and it is true that in this country education of women has suffered generally and on the technical side particularly and I think these problems are now receiving attention.

Shri Narayanankutty Menon: May I ask for one clarification?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have called Shrimati Renu Chakravarty.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty (Basirhat): Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Minister for his illuminating answer to my Resolution. If my Resolution has not been able to convince them inside this House, at least it has been able to rouse some effort and activity on the part of the Ministry of Labour. I am grateful that they have placed before us some material information regarding the position of employment of women at the moment.

We have had no opportunity of going into it, and on some other occasion we shall certainly discuss it. But, in his reply there were two points which were rather illuminating. The first point which he raised was that the total volume of women employed has increased, but that it has increased in new sectors. What are those sectors? One—I could not note down all the names which he read out—particular industry attracted my attention, and that is the bidi industry. This is exactly the point which we are trying to make, that the employers are only interested in employing women when

they can employ them cheap, when they can employ them without giving them the benefits of the protective laws which the trade unions in the country and the Government have enacted.

At the moment—I should like to give the other side of the picture made out by my friend Shri Ghosal—while in certain industries women are replaced by men, in the bidi industry, because women can be employed at a much cheaper cost than men, in many of our villages we find that the small bidi factories are giving places to women workers. They can get women workers for half the wages paid to men. Our main contention is that it is as a source of exploitation that women are being engaged in these factories.

The second interesting industry that he mentioned was the mining industry—manganese and iron ore. I know very well that in both the manganese and iron ore mines they employ women in large numbers, especially *adivasi* and backward women, because they can use them as a source of, I should say, unthinkable cheap labour. These women fill one-ton tubs at six pies a tub. That is the type of cheap source of labour power that these employers use. They use these women for such kind of work in the jungle areas of Singbhum and other interior parts, where there is no trade union movement and the workers are not enlightened enough or strong enough to enforce the protective laws. They are not provided with creches, they do not get good water, they are not at all properly looked after. Women are employed under such conditions and in such areas where the protective laws are not enforced. That is the reason why a larger number of women continue to be employed in the iron ore and manganese mines. The moment trade unions come up and start fighting for creches and for equal wages, we find that they start retrenching women labour.

{Shrimati Lenu Chakravartty}

That is the difficult position which we are made to face.

Shri Nanda: May I just point out that these and other like matters are discussed in the committees to which I have made reference? We have the Consultative Committee of Labour, and we can take up these things there also.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: What I want the hon. Minister to consider is this. We have to give the women workers a certain amount of protection for their health, for the health of their children and for the upbringing of their children. Again, because of the economic situation, because of the fact that there are very large numbers of women who are employed or who seek employment or who need employment belonging to the illiterate and uneducated masses of our women, who form the vast majority of the people of our country, it is becoming more and more difficult to get work. The new avenues of employment which the hon. Minister pointed out are largely for the educated women. But, as he knows very well and this House knows very well, the condition of education amongst women has not kept pace with even that which has been attained by men. Therefore, we are faced with the situation that large numbers of women who go to work are uneducated, and the question of their being taken into the profession of nursing or in the work of community development does not arise. It is for them that we have to think very seriously.

Therefore, on the one hand, we should consider how to implement the beneficial laws which have been passed by Parliament and the Government for protecting women workers and their children, and, on the other hand, we should consider ways of guaranteeing employment to them. This is one of the big questions which should engage us and the Government.

With regard to the point made by the employers, that it is not because of these protective laws that they do not want to keep women but it is only because of mechanisation, I have seen even in Europe that when mechanisation came about it has been easier for women to handle the machines, because physically they are much less competent to deal with heavy things or carrying heavy burdens as they do now. The amount of heavy load carried by women workers at the from ore or manganese mines is something which an ordinary person cannot dream of. Therefore, this idea, that mechanisation brings about restriction in the employment of women, is not very logical, and it cannot be accepted by us.

It is the question of restrictions which have been put by legislation, and the amenities which have been demanded by legislation which actually eat into the profits of employers. Therefore, this particular aspect has to be guarded against. I realise the difficulties of the situation. Not only that. I have got a note from the Bombay Council of Women saying that they were not in favour of an All-India Maternity Benefit Law. They have put forward all the arguments which the employers put forward—if that law is passed employers will not keep women, so on and so forth. It is the women themselves who have said that this is an inevitable thing. Therefore, if that is so, we can only expect much less from our men folk to realise that they have to protect both the children and the women, and also use them as participants in labour, participants in the production of wealth of the country.

That is why, Sir, while I would be very glad that this matter is discussed at the next Labour Conference and it should become a matter for tripartite discussions, as has been suggested by the hon. Minister, I would say that it

would require on the part of the Government a somewhat more deep and more specific dealing, especially with those particular industries where this matter has come up—that is, in the coal mines, in the textile industry and in the jute industry. Jute industry has been, to a certain extent, discussed, and I am surprised to learn from the hon. Minister that there is a small tendency even in the plantations. In such industries these matters must be taken up, so that at least this matter, which has been discussed and decided at the Jute Conference, that there should be no further retrenchment of women workers, is decided upon and the entire question gone into.

Since we have already had some sort of an enquiry into the situation of women labour undertaken by the Labour Ministry, and in view of what has been actually done in the Jute Tripartite Conference, and also in view of the suggestions made by the hon. Minister that the question may be taken up at the next Labour Conference, I would withdraw this resolution and wait and see how matters develop in the course of the next few months.

Shri Narayanankutty Menon: Sir, I want to have one clarification from the hon. Minister. Apart from the larger question, wherever middle-class women are employed, especially in commercial concerns, there is a clause in their service conditions to the effect that the moment they get married they will lose their jobs. I would like to know whether something could be done by the Government, whether some statutory protection could be given in regard to this.

Shri Nanda: We shall bear it in mind in the course of our discussions.

The resolution was, by leave, withdrawn

15.50 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE WORKING OF MONOPOLISTIC CONCERNS

Shri Kunhan (Palghat—Reserved—Sch. Castes): I beg to move:

“This House is of opinion that a Committee consisting of Members of Parliament be appointed with a view to examine the operations of the monopolistic concerns in the country and to suggest suitable measures to curb their powers and activities which are detrimental to the national economy.”

Sir, in moving this resolution, my intention is to give effect to one of the fundamental functions of the State as defined in the directive principles of State policy embodied in our Constitution. According to these principles, we are supposed to conduct the affairs of State. In article 39 of the Constitution, it is said:

“The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:

(b) That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;

(c) That the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;” etc.

This Parliament is the guardian angel of the people's rights, the upholder of the Constitution. It devolves on us to point out and bring pressure upon the executive to give effect to the wholesome provisions of the Constitution. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that we today discuss in this forum one of the crucial economic functions envisaged to be carried out by the State.