

Criticism by Indian Mining Federation, Calcutta Regarding Transport System of Coal

*490. SHRI P. GANGADEB : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a Press Report regarding the criticism by the Indian Mining Federation in Calcutta on the 22nd March, 1972 attacking the Railway Administration ;

(b) if so, the difficulties which have led the industry to the present state of affairs ;

(c) whether "whimsical system" of coal transport had caused a drop of over eight million tonnes of coal production during the past two years ; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to overhaul the industry ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) to (d). A statement giving the required information is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). The main difficulty which was faced by the coal industry was non-availability of Rail transport, particularly in Bengal-Bihar coal fields. As a result, production of coal came down from about 76 million tonnes in 1969-70 to about 70 million tonnes (estimated) in 1971-72. Rail transport was affected by the abnormal conditions prevailing in the Eastern Region. The supply of wagons for coal leading of dropped from September, 1970 due to the deterioration in law and order conditions in Bengal/Bihar areas resulting in theft of overhead traction wires, wagon parts, strikes bundhs and later on due to heavy rains, floods and breaches which disrupted rail communication. Supply of wagons to the coal industry was also affected greatly by Emergency movements preceding the Indo-Pak conflict during the actual hostilities and by emergent movements following the hostilities e. g. the withdrawal of our troops and armaments, transport of Prisoners of Wars and Refugees etc. etc.

Coal is transported by the Railways under

a Rationalisation Scheme for movement and in accordance with the system of sponsorship of demands and this has been in vogue for many years.

(d) The Government is aware of the difficulty experienced by the Coal Industry and is taking all possible steps to increase wagon supply. There is already an improved trend in wagon availability since about the middle of January, 1972 when the post-emergency movements were coming to an end.

SHRI P. GANGADEB : Since the coal shortage in the western region has affected power generation, leading to closure of factories including our Ahmedabad textile Units may I know what concrete steps are contemplated to ensure adequate availability of coal in areas located away from the Bengal-Bihar collieries on a permanent basis ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : So far as the difficulties caused to power generation by lack of adequate deliveries of coal are concerned, every effort is now being made to step up the availability of wagons and the position has substantially improved compared to last year. The average availability last year in the Bengal-Bihar area was 5,646 and in March 1972 it has risen to 6,060. I hope, it will rise further in view of the steps that have been taken to improve the situation.

SHRI P. GANGADEB : May I further know how soon the coal loadings will go up to 100 per cent so that accumulation of pit-head stocks of coal will disappear ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : I do not think I am in a position to give any definite date within which we will be able to reach the target by which we can really reduce the coal that has mounted up in the collieries, but steps are being taken to speed it up.

DR. RANEN SEN : In the statement the Minister has attributed the failure in supply of wagons to floods, emergency, war etc. May I know whether he is aware of the fact that actually there is a shortage in the production of wages in India for the last few years which is the cause of this failure in the wagon supply ; whether he also knows that the firms that were generally building wagons are more or less lying idle because of the failure in the production of wagons ; If that is so, in view of the total economy being affected by this

shortage of wagons, may I know what steps the Government propose to take ?

MR. SPEAKER : The questions which give information are not permissible as supplementaries. You are passing on the information to the Minister. Why don't you ask a direct question on it.

DR. RANEN SEN : This flows from the statement he has made.

MR. SPEAKER : Why don't you ask a direct question ?

DR. RANEN SEN : My direct question is this. There is a shortage of wagons which has affected the whole economy. Due to the fact that there is shortage of wagons, may I know what steps Government propose to take now ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : The view of the Government is that there is no actual shortage of wagons. It is more a question of proper availability which was not there owing to the circumstances that have been described in detail in answer to the main Question.

श्री लालजी भाई : कितने कायले की उद्योगों को आवश्यकता है और किन कारणों से कायले की सप्लाई नहीं हो पाती है ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : I think, the coal is being supplied to most industries, not all industries. But there is in certain places shortage for the reasons that have been given in answer to the main Question.

Labour Situation in Public Sector Undertakings

*492. SHRI P. M. MEHTA : Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the industrial relations and the labour situation in the air transport industry remained disturbed in 1972 ;

(b) the undertakings which were worst affected by labour trouble ; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken for improving the labour situation in the public sector undertakings ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA) :

(a) The labour situation in the air transport industry during 1972 has generally been peaceful, except for a dispute between the All India Aircraft Engineering Association and the management of the Indian Airlines.

(b) in the Central sphere, there have been strikes in the Andhra Bank Ltd., Reserve Bank of India, Hyderabad and the State Bank of India in Andhra Pradesh.

(c) The Industrial Disputes Act provides for machinery for settlement of Industrial disputes by conciliation, arbitration and adjudication. Apart from this, the good offices of the Labour Minister are used. Government are examining proposals for a revision of the scheme of the industrial relations machinery in the light of the recommendations of the National Commission on Labour and the discussions which have taken place thereafter among the various interests concerned.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA : May I know from the hon. Minister whether the management of the Indian Airlines and the All-India Aircraft Engineering Association have reached an agreement on 17th April, 1972 and, if so, the salient features thereof ? I would also like to know whether there is any item which is not agreed upon and whether the differences between the management of the Indian Airlines and the All India Aircraft Engineering Association will be resolved.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR) : Yes, Sir. If you so desire, I will either keep a copy of it on the Table or read it out. It is not a long document. The Agreement was finalised at 10 O'clock in the morning on 17th April, 1972.

However, there is one item on which agreement had not been reached and it is our hope that we will be able to reach an agreement on this also in the next few days. At the same time, in the end it says :

"Keeping in view the cordial manner in which these negotiations have been carried on and accommodation shown by both the parties in resolving various matters, the Association assures you—that is, myself—that will fully cooperate with the management in the smooth running of the Airlines."