

16 hrs.

MOTION RE: RECENT RAILWAY
ACCIDENTS—Contd.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Now we take up further consideration of the following motion moved by Dr. L. M. Singhvi on the 12th August, 1966, namely:

“That this House takes note of the statement on recent railway accidents laid on the Table of the House on the 25th July, 1966.”

Mr. A. P. Sharma.

Shri A. P. Sharma (Buxar): Most of the railway accidents are either due to human failures or due to the failure of technical or mechanical instruments and devices. So far as technical and mechanical devices are concerned, I will speak later on. First of all, I will deal with human failures.

When numerous accidents took place, the Railway Ministry was very much worried and they set up a Committee known as the Kunzru Committee to find out the causes of these accidents and to recommend remedial measures. The Kunzru Committee recommended so many remedial measures and I understand, to the extent I know that some of these recommendations have been implemented and some of them have not been implemented so far or have been partially implemented.

First of all I will deal with the recommendations of the Kunzru Committee about the shortage of staff and leave reserve on the Railways. In this connection I wish to point out that the Kunzru Committee has clearly recommended that the present leave reserve on the Indian Railways is not adequate and I also know that the Railway Board has passed orders to increase the present strength of leave reserve in the various categories. But I am sorry to say that in certain categories—as a matter of fact, in many categories—the orders of the Railway Board have not so far been implemented.

An. hon. Member: Why?

16.02 hrs.

[**SHRI P. VENKATASUBBALAH** in the
Chair]

Shri A. P. Sharma: That is what I am pointing out. So far as the leave reserve is concerned, if the recommendation of the Committee and the decision of the Railway Board have not been implemented, the Railway Board should see that these recommendations are implemented, so that the Railway administration is not held responsible for these lapses.

The next recommendation to which I want to draw the attention of the Railway Minister is about the defective planning in regard to recruitment of railway staff. According to the Kunzru Committee, the planning of recruitment on the various railways has not been found to be okay. In many railways, it has been found defective and today also I know that in certain railways, the recruitments are defective; on some railways, more number of people have been appointed while on others the people in the panels have not been provided jobs as yet. If you look at the recruitments made on the various railways, you will find that at some places they appoint less number of people and don't find adequate number of posts, and at some other places unduly large number of people have been recruited and have not been provided with work. I will particularly refer to Eastern and South-Eastern Railways. Recently I have come to know that there are panels there, but the difficulty is that the life of these panels are limited for a year or for a certain period. So, whereas on one side they are creating new posts and making new recruitments, on the other side, the old panels are not made operative. If the life of those panels are not extended, then those who had appeared in the examinations and qualified and recruited for various purposes, will be rendered jobless. I, therefore, request the hon. Minister to see that, the life of those panels is extended and those who have already been recruited in those railways are provided against the new vacancies.

Regarding the Service Commissions on the various railways, the Kunzru Committee has pointed out that most of these Commissions are not adequately staffed; the number of staff in these Commissions is not adequate and most of the people who are in charge of recruitment in the Service Commissions, as a matter of fact, are either not acquainted with the working of the railways or have got no knowledge about the working of the railways. If such people are made Chairmen and Members of these Service Commissions, you can understand what will be the fate of those people who are recruited through these Service Commissions and the fate of the railways after the recruitment of these people. Therefore, my request to the Railway Minister is that care should be taken to see that only those who have got adequate knowledge about the working of the railway system are made as Chairmen and Members of the Service Commissions; whether they should be serving railway officials or retired officials, I do not want to say anything; I do not want to make any concrete suggestion regarding that.

In this connection I would draw the special attention of hon. Shri Patil to the newly set up Commission at Danapur. I am very sorry, and most of the members from this part of Bihar and U.P. are also not happy, about it. During the debate on the budget, the Railway Minister made an announcement that this Commission would have the advantage of both the Commissions—Calcutta Commission and Allahabad Commission. For the Danapur Commission; only an Assistant Secretary and four clerks have been posted; it is like a post-office, like a post-box; it is an application-receiving office; applications are received there and sent either to Allahabad or Calcutta Service Commission. No Member is in charge of this Commission; not even a senior officer has been appointed as Secretary. Therefore, what is the good of having such a Commission at Danapur? When

it was decided to have a Commission here, we were definitely given the understanding, and the Minister also assured us so, that it would have the advantage of both the Commissions—Calcutta and Allahabad—and this is how we are having the advantage of these Commissions?

The Minister of Railways (Shri S. K. Patil): Have they got to go to Calcutta or are they examined there? That is the relevant point and not the number of clerks or officers.

Shri A. P. Sharma: For his information I may say that even when the Calcutta and Allahabad Commissions were there, the examinations used to be held in Arrah, Patna, etc. That was not the advantage that we wanted. We wanted at least a Commission, just like a High Court Bench. If there is any difficulty in having a full-fledged Commission, we can have at least an one-member Commission.

Shri Alvares (Panjim): What is the relation between Railway Service Commission and Railway accidents?

Shri A. P. Sharma: If he reads the Kunzru Committee's report, then he will understand.

I am referring to Kunzru Committee's recommendation. I will again request our hon. Minister that there should be some arrangement by which the people should have the facilities of being examined there itself; and their copies be examined they should be made to appear there; they should have the advantage which was intended. I know what was the intention of the Minister and I hope he will look into it.

The Kunzru Committee made another recommendation about keeping 25 per cent of the existing vacancies in the railways for the children of the railway employees. Mr. Kunzru has written an article also. This recommendation has been brushed aside only on the ground that it requires an amendment of the Constitution.

[Shri A. P. Sharma]

I need hardly say that in public undertakings and private undertakings like the TISCO and others, the employees' children are given preference in the matter of recruitment. The reason why I am saying this is this. In the railways also, there is a tradition which is passed on to the children of the railwaymen, as the children of the legislature also know what an amendment is and what a Bill and so on. I know that they know these things, because everyday in the house also these things are discussed. The children of the railway employees have got very little opportunity to go outside the railway world; they are mostly confined to the railway area only. First of all, they do not get adequate education and they are all the time in the environment of the railways. So, they know more about the working of the railways than anybody else. As a matter of fact, the children of the railway employees are half railwaymen. They know about the working of the railways. In the past if there was any efficiency in the working of the railways it was only because of the children of the railway employees, who were given preference in the matter of recruitment; by the time recruited as railwaymen, they became full-fledged railwaymen and they used to discharge their duties and responsibilities very efficiently.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member should try to conclude now.

Shri A. P. Sharma: I would like to have a few more minutes.

Mr. Chairman: This motion relates to railway accidents. So, it would be better if the hon. Member would confine himself to that.

Shri A. P. Sharma: These are the causes of accidents due to human failure, which have been mentioned by the Kunzru Committee on railway accidents, and they have made these recommendations.

An hon. Member: He is an expert, and so he may be allowed some more time.

Shri A. P. Sharma: Now, I shall deal with only two or three points.

My next point is about the recommendation of the operating committees. Recently, there was a meeting of the Chief Operating Superintendents, and they had recommended that more than 10 hours of working should not be resorted to at one stretch. I would request the Railway Minister also to see that this recommendation is implemented.

Then, there is the question of frequent transfer of people from one place to another. In this very House the hon. Minister of State had assured us that this matter was being looked into and examined. I hope that this examination will be expedited, because at present what is happening is that people are transferred from one place to another and they are not made acquainted with the local working rules of the station, and, therefore, they do not easily pick up the things. It is not like transferring one clerk from one table to another table. There are different local working rules in different stations. Therefore, the people who are transferred to a new station must have adequate knowledge of the working rules of the new station. This recommendation has been made by the Kunzru Committee already that frequent transfers should not be resorted to.

Since I have very little time, I shall touch only two more points. The first is about the zones. The other day, Dr. L. M. Singhvi had raised a question about a metre gauge zone. The Railway Minister had said that he was no doubt thinking about one more zone and it was his thinking, but he had not thought about a metre gauge zone. If I remember aright, while making an announcement about the ninth zone, he said that he himself felt that the picture of the railways would not be completed till such time as one more zone was created. The Kunzru Committee also has recommended on these lines. The Southern Railway, the Central Railway and the Northern Railway are too unwieldy. Therefore,

I would request the hon. Minister to consider the question of creation of one more zone in the interests of the efficient working of the railways.

These are all the points regarding the causes of accidents due to human failure that I would like to mention. I shall not deal with the causes of mechanical failure because there is no time.

But finally I would just mention one thing more and then conclude.

Both the Shanawaz Committee and also the Kunzru Committee have recommended that the railway workers should be made safety-conscious, and for that purpose, joint committees should be formed consisting of the labour representatives and the Railway Administration at the various levels. This very important recommendation to educate the people and to make the people safety-conscience has not so far been implemented by the railway Administration. I would request the hon. Minister to examine the matter and see that this recommendation is also implemented.

Since I do not have time, I shall deal with the technical points now, but I hope I shall be able to do so at some future stage.

Shri Sheo Narain (Bansi): Mr. Chairman, I am very thankful to you for giving me a chance to speak on the subject of railway accidents.

I am very sorry that Shri Sharma was afraid of the Kunzru Committee on railway accidents. I hope the Railway Minister will remove this Kunzru Committee from the railway department.

Shri S. K. Patil: It is removed.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): He should not say 'Shri Sharma', but 'Shri A. P. Sharma'.

Shri Sheo Narain: Shri A. P. Sharma—excuse me.

Speaking about the incidents of accidents, I have before me a chart. I divide it into four portions. From 1948-49 to 1950-51, the figures were 24,000, 20,000 and 21,000; in the second category the figures are 16,000, 12,000, 11,000, and 10,000; in the third category, the figures vary between 9,000 and 8,000; in the last category, that is, from 1963-64 to 1964-65, the number of accidents annually are 7,000 and 6,000. You will see that from the day Shri S. K. Patil and Dr. Ram Subhag Singh took charge, the incidents of accidents came down to 6,466. It was 24,120 in 1942-49. And what about the mileage? While the total number of train kilometres (in millions) was 263.0 in 1948-49, it was 433.17 in 1964-65.

Shri Nambiar (Tiruchirapalli): Practically no accidents now!

Shri Sheo Narain: What is the real cause for these accidents? My hon. friend knows well. They are playing the game today with the railways. I would request the Railway Minister to take keen interest in these communist fellows. They are responsible for the accidents taking place in the country. It is their act of sabotage. If they give up these tactics, there will be no accidents.

Now I would request the Railway Minister to give us a free Zone...

Shri S. K. Patil: Not free Zone.

Shri Sheo Narain: I mean New Zone. You may kindly double the line from Lucknow to Siliguri.

Shri Vasudevan Nair (Ambalapuruzha): On a point of order. This is a discussion on railway accidents.

Shri Sheo Narain: We have a small single line there now.

Mr. Chairman: He probably means that because of small lines, accidents take place. So if there was a double line, accidents would not take place.

Shri Sheo Narain: I can say that these accidents are not due to these

[Shri Sheo Narain]

Ministers. It is due to the department. Behind me is my friend, Shri Sharma. He is a labour leader of the railway workers. He should first try to control his workers and maintain discipline among them.

Yesterday I requested the Prime Minister in our party meeting to try and create discipline in this country. I am making the same request to my friend. If discipline goes, the country cannot survive. The great leader and commander, Napoleon, had said that those who obey can give order, those who do not obey cannot give orders.

We are deeply obliged to our railway officers. They are trying their level best. But you see the orders are not carried out by those who are serving in the railways. I have my own experience in this regard. When we used to make complaints, in Lucknow the babu used to say, 'I am not traveling by first class. I do not know'. But when Dr. Ram Subhag Singh took over, he changed the staff. Now they say, '*maaf karna, Saheb*'. Now they ask for *sifarish*.

I would request my hon. friend Shri Sharma that he should create discipline in the country, and then there would be no accidents. At least Government should be cautious about this.

Shri A. P. Sharma: You should also know how to take work from them.

Shri Sheo Narain: I know. The very day you give me charge, I will show you how to take work.

I have been an old disciplinarian and I know what is called discipline. I will obey my elders and I follow them. I will support the Government right and left and support the party also. I advise my friend he should do this. And I say to the friends sitting there: be loyal to your country and try to make the railways perfect and correct. We are in great danger today and we should protect the railway and save the railway from accidents and the people who in this department. There are communist people working in the railway department, and they are responsible for

sabotage. The big officers in the railway department should find out these people. The police working in the railway should be more helpful, and they should be increased. They should get some more daily allowance and allowances for children. I have sympathy for railway workers' children, and medical aid should be provided for their parents. I hope Mr. Patil will help them. With these words I hope that in future there will be no accident.

Shri Alvares: We are grateful to Dr. Singhvi for having introduced the debate on railway accidents.

Few catastrophies in any country cause so much concern and raise the sense of responsibility as railway accidents, and the spate of railway accidents that we had within the last three months has caused such a lot of concern among the people generally that it will be worth while if Government paid a little attention to the question of rail safety in the country.

The cause of railway accidents are many and varied; some of them are of a cumulative character like monotony of work, fatigue, wear and tear of the machinery, while some others can be pinpointed and identified as a direct cause of any one accident. It is with a view to examine this position and to eradicate the cause of accidents that I have suggested to the Railway Minister after the accident in Bombay at Matunga that a judicial enquiry should be instituted in every case of accident, so that the blanket charge that the Commissioner of Railway Safety makes may not in the first instance put the blame upon the unfortunate worker and secondly give us a false sense of security that something is being done in order to eradicate accidents.

The second point I would like to say is this. I deprecate the satisfaction over accident statistics. It is the practice of the Railway Board and the Ministry to tell us how few accidents we have compared to other countries. This sort of complacency brings about a situation where we are

not aware of the danger of high speed travel and density of travel and therefore when we feel that we are better off than other countries, accidents will occur more than they should. Therefore, statistics need not be quoted. We have to approach the problem from the angle that we shall do our best to see that not a single accident occurs in this country. It is only when there is such a mentality to do our best to see that no accident occurs, that we can bring accidents down to the minimum. I do not say no accidents will ever occur, that is not humanly possible, but surely I say we are not doing everything in this country to see that accidents do not occur, and therefore to quote statistics that we are better off than other countries is doing a disservice to railway personnel and also evading the responsibility to the general public.

I am no apologist of those people whose neglect has caused accidents. Even with my association with the All India Railwaymen's Federation, I can never be guilty of sheltering any railwaymen whose neglect causes an accident, but having said that, I must say that the administration's blanket assessment of accidents being all due to human failures is an equally irresponsible assessment of the things as they obtain today. What is human failure? It can be attributed to so many things in the modern world. We must understand that we are trying to move not merely heavy traffic but increasingly high speed traffic without modern methods of communication and safety devices. If the Railway Minister has put up some small device at Kurla or intends to track circuit in another 100 stations in this country, it may be good enough but the fact remains that accidents occur at the most unlikely places and therefore, merely track circuit will not do. Therefore the word human failure should not be used by the administration in order to throw the blame upon the railway worker. Because of the use of this blanket phrase, in one or two accidents the

public assaulted the railway staff without trying to find out what actually happened. I can say with a sense of information, experience and authority that not all accidents can be ascribed to human failure. Just as Ministers make mistakes, Parliament Members make mistakes, so also railwaymen make mistakes. Mistakes have to be taken into account in the gamut of human affairs. We must see if human failure could be eliminated. Let us take a station master who occupies one of the most responsible positions in the movement of traffic day in and day for about thirty long years in his service; he has every day practically to do about 100 to 200 mechanical movements. Some of these movements are not protected against contradictory moves. All stations, for instance, are not interlocked. Therefore, it is possible that in the course of millions of operations within the course of a life time, at one crucial fateful moment, he makes a mistake and there is an accident.

There is another issue of the running staff being made to work overtime or also wanting to work overtime because of the incentive of increased wages. The running staff have special responsibility towards safety. Take the question of fatigue. The running staff is called to sign on and are asked to wait for three hours or two hours before the train starts from the starting point. It is well known that idle time also to ascertain extent causes fatigue. By the time the driver is able to take the engine out, he is already taken up by the fatigue of waiting; he is already tired by the time he starts. All these things have a great contributory effect in the cause of accidents and it would be in the interest of the safety if they were to give attention not merely to the immediate causes of accidents but also to those causes which have their cumulative effect because of the method of working in the country. Let there be a judicial enquiry into every major accident. I had issued a statement after the

[Shri Alvares]

Matunga accident and also written to the Minister. I had pleaded that a judicial enquiry should be instituted. Why? I have gone through the proceedings of many accidents enquiry conducted by the commissioner of rail safety. Some of these are retired railway officers; there is a fraternity between them and the officers at present responsible for the running of the railway system in India and it is unlikely that these persons would be entirely impartial in their assessment of the cases. I had drawn the attention of the Railway Minister to two instances where the commissioner in a particular enquiry had said: I have ascertained from the divisional superintendent that everything was in order. "I have ascertained from the railway officers that the track was in order." If the Commissioner of Railway Safety is going to take his evidence secondhand and say that everything was in order, obviously the railway officer will say that everything is in order because they want to shift the blame for any large-scale catastrophe upon the poor workmen. If that is so, then obviously one can assess in advance what will be the nature of the enquiry and the findings of the enquiry.

Then there is the question of supervision. In many of these operations, particularly in the cities of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, etc., many trains run. Particularly on the Central Railway, they run about 385--locals during the course of a day. In this particular accident at Matunga, according to my information, the relay box signals failed and the ESM, that is, the Electrical Signal Maintainer, was asked to do something to bypass the usual safety rule and test the track in order. He did set the track and again the track went out of order and that is why one train crashed into another and the accident took place.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member's time is up.

Shri Alvares: I shall conclude now. So, in such an important operation, when the automatic relay system gets out of order, why is, the responsibility

being fixed on the Class III employee who is drawing pay just on a scale of Rs. 110—180, a minimum scale? When an ordinary signal maintainer is asked to by-pass the safety rules with a view to moving the maximum amount of traffic in that area, why is it that a supervisor is not asked to look after that work and do the things aright? Because of all these irregularities that are done at the behest and at the command of the administration, the safety rules are not being observed, and the ultimate responsibility for any mishap is thrown upon the poor workman under the term "human failure." We do not accept human failure as it is interpreted by the administration. I do not say that mistakes should not occur. I am only pleading both in the interests of the working class in the railways and of greater safety, when accidents occur, in every case they must be investigated.

In a minute I shall wind up, but before that, I should like to tell the House that the All-India Railwaymen's Federation and its affiliated unions took up 10 cases during the course of the last five years where the Commissioner of Railway Safety had said that due to human failure and identical case of failure and neglect by a railway worker two accidents occurred; there were two famous cases in Bombay—the famous Wadala accident. The Federation went up to the Supreme Court and proved that signal machinery was faulty and in eight out of the 10 cases that went to the Supreme Court, we got an acquittal to show that the workers on the railways were not guilty of negligence either of a specific type or of a cumulative type and that the fault lay on the signal system.

In the 40,000 miles of railways and 12 lakh of railwaymen, it is necessary that we should approach this problem with more objectivity rather than trying to throw the blame on somebody who cannot defend himself. In the end, I say that railway safety will not be ensured by throwing up their responsibility by just a mechani-

cal or automatic approach by the Commissioner of Railway Safety. It can only be established by a judicial enquiry. Therefore, I do plead that in all such serious cases of railway accidents, a judicial enquiry will have to be set up to assess the guilt and also to provide for safety for the future.

Shri Nambiar (Tiruchirapalli): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the report submitted by the hon. Minister deals with five accidents. He says that two of them are due to sabotage and three are due to human failure. Out of the sabotage cases one, is in respect of the Bangalore Express and the other is in respect of the North-eastern Railway. Leaving aside the question of the North-eastern Railway where there was an explosion, the accident to the Bangalore Express can never be classified as that of sabotage, because the report of the Commissioner of Railway Safety cannot be taken for granted as the track warranted through scrutiny. I strongly urge that the track should have been properly examined to find out whether it was a failure of the track or a failure of the locomotive. When the public had got some reasonable suspicion about the reasons for the accident, Government should have allowed an inquiry under the Commission of Inquiries Act, so that the public would get an opportunity to participate. Simply by saying that it was because of sabotage, responsibility could not be shifted from the proper quarters to the wrong quarters. In this case that is what the Minister did. In the Bangalore Express accident, 23 died according to the figures submitted by the Railways. You know, Sir, in such cases the actual deaths are more than what is officially given. In Matunga 68 people died. In the Ahmedabad-Delhi Express accident, 15 died. The injured are several hundreds. At least in such major accidents where large number die, an inquiry under the Commission of Inquiries Act should be held so that the truth would come out and proper remedies could be found out. That is why all of us including

Mr. Alvares and Mr. Sharma from that side, demand that there must be such an inquiry in such cases.

I participated in the public inquiry into the Ariyalur accident for 1½ months. I appeared before the learned Judge, Mr. Justice Basu of the Calcutta High Court. It should be said to the credit of the then Railway Minister, who subsequently became the Prime Minister and who is no more, that he resigned and allowed a public inquiry. What came out of the inquiry was different from what was said before. First they said that it was an act of God; there was heavy rain and floods and the bridge was washed away and so an unexpected railway accident happened. But the finding of the inquiry subsequently was different. It showed there was neglect on the part of the Railway Engineer in charge of the area. He did not inspect the catchment area periodically and did not know what had been happening behind the railway line. When the rain came, water rushed into the small area and there was a breach. The night patrol system was wrong. Even a light was not given to the night patrolman. He did not even have a whistle to inform the other party. All these things came out and were rectified. Now when you travel in the night, you will hear the whistle of the night patrolman on the bridges. It was not there before. So, all these things were done after that inquiry.

In the Dumraon accident case, an enquiry was granted and Mr. Thirumala Rao was appointed Chairman. But on the plea that there was a case pending in the court, the enquiry was shelved. Subsequently another accident, which is unique in the world, took place—the entire train got into the sea. It was the notorious Danushkodi accident. After the accident took place, I immediately went there. I was there on the night of 29th December. I finished my enquiries and by crossing to the other side into the Rameshwaram island. When I returned on 30th morning, I was

[Shri Nambiar]

arrested under the DIR and taken to jail. Otherwise, I would have impressed on this House the need for a public inquiry into that. Again it was stated that it was an act of God; but it was not that. There were heavy storm and heavy tides. Advance warning reports came. Every railwayman was finding difficulties. They were telling the Controller, who was seated in Madurai, 100 miles away, that trains could not be sent. Certain trains had to be stopped, because trees had fallen on the railwaylines. There is a mechanism on the Pamban bridge by which, when the wind is blowing at 50 miles an hour or more, automatically the bridge is put under danger signal and no train is allowed to pass. When the wind was blowing at such a high speed, this fact was informed by the watchman on the bridge saying that the train should not be sent. The train which was proceeding towards Pamban was stopped, from the Mandapam side, whereas, unfortunately, the train which started from Pamban, within the island itself, which was to go to Dhanushkodi, which should not go after 21 hours, according to the working system on the Pamban-Dhanushkodi line, was allowed to go. I can quote from the railway time-tables of those days which I have here with me. I challenge the Railway Administration to contradict me. No train was allowed to run in this area after 22 hours in the night and no train was allowed to run before 5 hours in the morning. This was the normal working system. But on that fateful day, this particular passenger train, which was heading towards Dhanushkodi, which ought to have gone at eight o'clock, was sent after 23 hours in the night. I know that the driver and the guard of the train, before leaving Pamban, said that they could not take the train. But the Controller from Madurai instructed and goaded the driver and the guard to take the train. They took the train after so much of protest.

What happened? They took the train to the next stop. That was the last stop before Dhanushkodi—i.e. Rameshwaram Road. It was on the control line. Then the driver, the fireman, the guard including the police constable on duty went and begged of the Controller not to send the train. They told him that the wind was blowing at a great speed, even stone pieces were flying and nothing could be seen. The driver definitely said that he could not take the train. But they were forced to take the train. We know what happened. The driver died, the fireman died, the guard died and all others died. But the Station Master, Rameshwaram Road, is still alive and the records are with him. I met some of them during my enquiry. The Controller told the driver that he must take the train otherwise he would be suspended. He was loaded to take the train. What happened? I cannot describe what happened to the train further after leaving Rameshwaram Road but I can describe what happened at the Dhanushkodi end. Two patrol men were asked by the Sub-Inspector. Permanent Way, to go on night patrol from Dhanushkodi. They started with hurricane lamps. One was washed away and he is no more. The second man who went but could not move further returned and he told me the story as to how it happened. When that patrol man was peeping through from the hole, he found a big light of an engine coming from the other side. The driver whistled twice, then the light faded away, the noise of the train also vanished, the entire train was washed away. The whole train was washed away. Not even an ant, not even a rat or even a bug in the train survived. Even then the Railway Administration did not allow a public inquiry into this. Who died? 50 students from North India who went to see Rameshwaram, young students, boys and girls, died, so many railwaymen died, their children died. The entire train was washed away. Even in such cases an inquiry is not

granted. They say it is an act of God. I can never agree to that. It was never an act of God.

Shri Sheo Narain: You have no faith in God.

Shri Nambiar: Sir, this is a very serious subject. This is a case of which there is no precedent in the world. If this is the way that the Railway Administration looks at these accidents, then there will be no end to accidents.

Coming to my last point, on the question of human element, I have to make a submission. That human element is not an abstract subject. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister can challenge my information that the drivers and foremen are asked to work even 36 hours continuously? If I can prove it what will be the position?

Will he tell the House and give a guarantee that the running staff—driver, fireman or the guard—will not be asked to work for more than 12 hours a day? Will he grant them rest after 12 hours? That was the rule previously. Now the rule has been changed. Shri Peter A'vares said that the working hours are calculated from the time the engine wheel moves. The engine wheel moves after it waits for six or eight hours in the yard. That period is not counted for the purpose of rest. That period used to be counted in the days of the British. I know the railway system. In the British company-managed period they were allowed 45 minutes prior to the starting of the engine in the loco shed, which was known as engine attendance time. Time is calculated from that minute and two've hours are calculated continuously, whether the engine was stopped or delayed in the yard or not. That was the position.

Now, will the Minister give a guarantee? I am not thinking only about the railwaymen in this case. I am speaking for railway safety, not only in the interest of railwaymen but for the poor people who travel. You and I are travellers in trains.

It is a case of the people. I request him humbly, not as a question of staff matter, let him say that no driver or fireman will be allowed to work for more than 12 hours continuously. I shall be satisfied.

Coming to the question of other operating men, 12 hours duty is a normal, ordinary thing in the railways. You know, what happens? There is what is known as intermittent duty. They make them work all the 12 hours when there should be 8 hours work at places such as railway crossings where the gatekeepers may be given eight hours duty. Wherever it was eight hours previously, now they have increased it to 12 hours working.

Coming to the point of railwaymen's shortage, in the name of economy they have reduced men at every station. I do not want to take your time in reading out from this railway accidents report. I shall only indicate the pages. Please see pages 135 and 138 of this volume where it is said that railway operating staff are far less in number and this is a serious threat to safety. Then on pages 141 and 142 you will find that no adequate leave reserve is granted with the result that men are made to work overtime, to the extent of fatigue and exhaustion. Therefore they are unable to do the work. Human material is available in this country. It is not a scarce material; no foreign exchange is required. Keep adequate number of men.

As regards the question of maintenance of locomotives and carriages much is to be done. After all, what is a train? A train is a locomotive and the carriage or a locomotive and the goods wagons. Unless and until the whole thing is properly maintained, any flaw in any of the wagons or carriages is enough to make it derail. So also the track. When the question of track came, the hon. Minister said the other day, "My railway track is just like an unprotected cow", as if the whole people, this country, are going to attack his

[Shri Nambiar]

cow, the railway line. Who is such a foolish fellow who will attack the railway line? He had the audacity to say that and refer indirectly to certain political parties. That is not only an insinuation, that is a diversion of his inability to maintain the railway line. Many, many paragraphs have been written in the Accident Report that the railway track is in a dangerous situation.

If it is a political matter between his party and my party, we are here to fight it out. We will fight it out; he can fight me. But let him not kill the passengers who purchase tickets. A ticket is purchased to go home, not to go to hell. He should protect them first and should not bring in politics and divert the attention of the people to Communism or anti-Communism. I am not making it a political issue against him but my humble request is, let him politically fight us but let him as Railway Minister look to the railway track and railway maintenance and see that the passenger goes safely.

I have got the confidence of thousands of railwaymen and I can assure on their behalf that in that he will get the best co-operation of the railwaymen. But he should see that the railwaymen are not harassed and their cases are heard sympathetically. As Shri Sharma said they are being transferred from place to place and they are being ill-treated. He may not be at fault but certain officers—I am not condemning all the railway officers—of their own weaknesses and complexes are against the Class IV employees. So, let them not behave like that.

Let us save the country and the railway passengers from the danger of accidents. Whenever serious accidents happen, let them be inquired into so that the truth may come out and further accidents may not be repeated.

Mr. Chairman: There are still one hour and seven minutes left for this discussion. If the House wishes to

“ till the whole time is over, then we can continue the discussion. What is the wish of the House? Because there is not much time left....

Dr. L. M. Singhvi (Jodhpur): The time was allotted for this discussion as a regular discussion; this is not out-of-turn. So regular time of the House must be given to it.

Mr. Chairman: I am just putting it before the House whether they are prepared to sit till six O' Clock, in which case the discussion could be finished.

Some hon. Members: Tomorrow.

Shri S. K. Patil: The time of three hours is also an extended time. It was only two hours originally.

Mr. Chairman: Even with the extended time, there are still one hour and seven minutes left.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: It should be resumed tomorrow.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways (Dr. Ram Subhag Singh): By prolonging the House for half an hour more, we can finish the debate. Tomorrow the Minister can reply.

Mr. Chairman: Shall we sit till 5.30 P.M.? There is no half-an-hour discussion today. Tomorrow the Minister will reply.

Shri S. K. Patil: I am told that, according to the order paper, there are other things and this will not come up tomorrow. It may be carried on to Monday. Tomorrow, I think, Mr. Shastri's motion is there.

Mr. Chairman: We shall sit upto 5.30 P.M.

Mr. K. N. Tiwari

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: That does not solve the problem, unless the Minister replies today.

श्री क० ना० तिवारी (बगहा) :
चेयरमैन साहब, अभी नम्बियार साहब बोलते हुए कह गए कि लोग टिकट इसलिए खरीदते हैं कि घर जायें, रास्ते में मरने के लिये नहीं। यह ठीक उसी तरह की बात है, कि

कोई बाप अपने लड़के के लिए कार खरीद कर दे दे और लड़का कार लेकर चले, रास्ते में ऐक्सीडेंट कर ले और मर जाय तो कहा जाये कि बाप ने इसीलिए मोटर खरीद दी लड़का मर जाये। यह कोई नहीं चाहता है, न रेलवे मिनिस्टर चाहते हैं, न ट्रेजरी बँच चाहता है, न रेलवे स्टाफ चाहता है, न हिन्दुस्तान के या किसी भी देश के लोग चाहते हैं कि रेलवे का या कोई भी ऐक्सीडेंट हो। एक कहावत है कि ऐक्सीडेंट इज ऐक्सीडेंट। लोग बायरूम में जाते हैं, ऐक्सीडेंट हो जाता है। मोटर में चलते हैं, ऐक्सीडेंट हो जाता है, साइकिल से चलते हैं, ऐक्सीडेंट हो जाता है, सब जगह ऐक्सीडेंट होता है। इसलिए यह कह देना कि रेलवे के मिनिस्टर या रेलवे का स्टाफ या रेलवे के और लोग जो हैं वह जान बूझ कर के कोई ऐक्सीडेंट कर देते हैं, मैं इस बात को नहीं मानता। जहाँ 433.7 मिलियन कि नोमीटर, इतने बड़े देश में, रेलवे दौड़ती है, उस में ऐक्सीडेंट का हो जाना अगर कम्पेयर किया जा। दूस देशों से जो हम से बहुत छोटे देश हैं तो यह मानना पड़ेगा कि हमारे यह ऐक्सीडेंट और जगह से कम होते हैं। लेकिन इस का हम तलब नहीं कि जो कम होता है तो उस पर ध्यान नहीं रखा जाये। बराबर हम ने देखा है कि पाकिस्तान से लड़ाई हुई और उस में कितनी हमारी फौज इधर से उधर गई, चाइना के साथ लड़ाई हुई, फौज इधर से उधर गई, इतने प्रकाशंश लिए गए उस वक्त कि कोई ऐक्सीडेंट नहीं हुआ। इसलिए साल में दो, चार, दस ऐक्सीडेंट हो जाये, वह चहे ह्युमन फेयोर सं हों, या मेकैनिकल फेयोर से हों यह अ बाभाविक नहीं है। लेकिन हर साल में रेलवे को इस बात को देखना चाहिए। अभी बम्बई में ऐक्सीडेंट हुआ था और हम ने पाटिल साहब का स्टैटमेंट देखा था कि उन्होंने कितनी कड़ी कार्यवाही की और उस के ऊपर कितना

ध्यान दिया, कितना उनको दुःख हुआ। उसी तरह से जहाँ ऐक्सीडेंट होता है, स्टेट मिनिस्टर राम सुभग सिंह जी वहाँ पहुंच जाते हैं और उसकी देख रेख करते हैं। इसलिए यह चार्ज अपोजीशन का ले आना कि मिनिरट्री केयरलेस है और वह उस को पसन्द करती है यह बात कम से कम नहीं होनी चाहिए। ऐसी बातों में उन लोगों को ऐसा तोहमत नहीं लाना चाहिए। हम ने देखा है कि ऐक्सीडेंट्स हो जाते हैं तो रेलवे का सारा स्टाफ परेशान हो जाता है। जिस तरह परेशानी हमारी होती है, वैसी ही उन की होती है। जैसे मेम्बर पार्लियामेंट की होती है। जैसे ही मिनिस्टर की होती है और उसी तरह उन की भी होती है।

लेकिन इन बातों के कहने के साथ साथ और उन को जितनी वह सावधानी बरतते हैं उस के लिए धन्यवाद देने के साथ साथ मैं उनका ध्यान दो तीन बातों की ओर ले जाना चाहता हूँ। ऐक्सीडेंट्स के तीन चार कारण लोग बताते हैं। आजकल रेल का दौड़ना कंट्रोल के जरिये होता है। जो कंट्रोल में आफिसर्स बैठते हैं वह ओवर वर्क होते हैं और लोगों का स्थान है कि अगर कंट्रोल का जो आफिसर है उसको थोड़ी राहत दी जाय, उनकी संख्या बढ़ा दी जाय, और उन की तन्हावाह और ऐमेनिटीज जो कम हैं उस को बढ़ाया जाय तो ज्यादा सावधानी से वह काम करेंगे और ज्यादा दिलचस्पी से काम करेंगे। इसलिए मेरा निवेदन है कि जो आफिसर्स कंट्रोल करते हैं उनकी ऐमेनिटीज और उन की जो दूसरी सुविधाएँ हैं उन की तरफ ध्यान दिया जाय।

दूसरी बात, ऐक्सीडेंट का एक कारण मेकैनिकल है। अभी शिवनाशायण जी ने लेबर लीडर शर्मा जी के बारे में कहा। मैं भी मंत्री जी का ध्यान इस तरफ दिला चाहता हूँ। लेबर लीडर अपोजीशन में भी हैं, और इस साइड में भी लोग बैठे हैं। जितनी ऐमेनिटीज

[श्री क० ना० तिवारी]

लोगों को मिलनी चाहिए और लोग मांगते हैं, हम उन के साथ में हैं लेकिन इस बात को देख कर तकलीफ होती है कि एमेनिटीज तो मांगते हैं लेकिन जहां तक डिसिप्लिन का सवाल है, मुस्तैदी से काम करने का सवाल है, उस के लिए वह लेबर को नहीं कहते। अब किस लिए नहीं कहते, यह तो वही समझ सकते हैं। हम लोगों के ख्याल में तो यही आता है कि उन की लीडरी बनी रहे इसके लिए वह यही जरूरी समझते हैं कि उन की प्रीवांसेज को वह फोकस करते रहें। हम ने देखा है इस बात को कि लोकोमोटिव से कोई इंजिन निकलता है उन के शेड से और रास्ते में जा कर इंजिन खड़ा हो जाता है, इस तरफ इंजीनियरिंग डिपार्टमेंट को और ध्यान देना चाहिये ताकि और मुस्तैदी के साथ में काम हो।

तीसरा कारण अनमैन्ड नेवल क्रासिंग्स का है। उसके बारे में बहुत मर्तबा सवाल उठाया गया। इस दिशा में रेलवे मंत्रालय ने कुछ काम किया है। फाइनेंस की डिफिकल्टी है। लेकिन मेरा निवेदन है कि जहां-जहां जितना जरूरी है, उसके ऊपर ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए।

चौथी बात सैबोटेज की है। सैबोटेज के संबंध में बहुत से, चाहे पार्टी की वजह से हो या दुश्मन की वजह से हो, लेकिन सैबोटेज भी एक कारण है जिसकी वजह से रेलवे एक्सीडेंट्स होते हैं और लोग ह्यूमन लाइफ का ख्याल नहीं करते हैं। इसलिए मेरा निवेदन है कि जितनी पार्टियां हैं, जितने दल हैं, उनका भी इस तरफ ध्यान जाना चाहिए और रेलवे का भी वह विभाग जो सैबोटेज की खास तौर से देख-रेख करता है उसको और जरा सतर्क हो जाना चाहिए।

एक बात और है। ह्यूमन फेल्योर की बात जो है, लेबर लीडरी ने जो कहा मैं उनके साथ में सहमत हूँ कि अगर वह ओवर

वर्क हो जाते हैं और ओवर वर्क हो जाने की वजह से यह बात होती है कि एक्सीडेंट का नम्बर बढ़ता है तो मैं निवेदन करूंगा कि इस की तरफ रेलवे विभाग का ध्यान जाना चाहिए।

अभी जो शर्मा जी ने कहा कि 25 परसेंट रेलवे के जो कर्मचारी हैं उनकी जो संतान है उनको जगह मिलनी चाहिए क्योंकि उनको एक्सपीरियेंस हो जाता है, मैं उनके साथ में सहमत नहीं हूँ। फेल्योर का और एक्सीडेंट्स का एक कारण सब से जबर्दस्त हमको यह मालूम होता है कि उनकी ट्रेनिंग कम्पलीट होने के पहले ही वह चाहे स्टाफ की कमी की वजह से या दूसरी वजह से हो उनको काम पर लगा दिया जाता है और इस वजह से उनको पूरा ज्ञान नहीं होता। इसलिए मेरा निवेदन है कि, मुझे मालूम नहीं कि यह चीज है या नहीं, रिफ्रेशर कोर्स इस विभाग में शुरू करना चाहिए। समय-समय पर जो नये आविष्कार होते हैं या दूसरे जो कार्य होते हैं उनको समझाने के लिए, बतलाने के लिए मौका मिले और वह जा कर उसकी ट्रेनिंग ले लें।

इन बातों की तरफ ध्यान दिया जायेगा तो मेरा ख्याल है कि रेलवे में एक्सीडेंट्स में कमी होगी और इसमें कोई सन्देह नहीं है कि इसकी तरफ रेलवे मिनिस्ट्री और स्टाफ का और सब का ध्यान है जैसा कि हम लोगों का है। आखिर यह बात आ गई प्रसंगवश और इसको दाजी साहब ने उठाया तो एक मौका मिला कि हम लोग फिर उनको सतर्क कर दें। इसलिए फिर हम उनको धन्यवाद देते हैं।

Shri Sonavane (Pandharpur): I propose that the discussion on this motion may be extended upto 6 P.M. and that we conclude it today.

Some hon. Members: We support it.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: I suggest that the entire time available may be utilised today and that I may be permitted to exercise my right of reply tomorrow for 10 minutes or so. This may be inscribed on tomorrow's agenda. At that time, the Minister would not have to reply. Therefore, there should be no difficulty. I have already sent some of my notes away.

Mr. Chairman: Tomorrow there is some other motion. So this will not come before the House tomorrow. Let us conclude it by 6 P.M. today.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: Only 10 minutes. I do not have some of my notes with me just now. There must be some accommodation made for me. I do not want to speak offhand.

Shri Sonavane: Such a diligent Member like Dr. Singhvi should be able to reply to it today itself.

Shri S. K. Patil: That should come within the three hour period, not outside it.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: It will be finished. Only I am exercising my right of reply.

Mr. Chairman: Shri D. C. Sharma.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): Mr. Chairman, all accidents are unfortunate and distressing; the more they are publicised in the press or mentioned on the floor of the Lok Sabha or of the State Assemblies, the more distressing they become. In fact, they become distressing in a sense which does not correspond to reality. But nobody can deny that accidents are very very unfortunate occurrences in any human endeavour.

About 12 days ago, I motored from Delhi to Chandigarh and on the way I found four disastrous accidents. I saw that two trucks had collided with each other, I saw that one truck had collided with a motor car and so on. If they had been published in the press, I can assure you that I would have been afraid of travelling by car to Chandigarh. Luckily, they were

not publicised; they were not advertised. Therefore, I think they do not get on my nerves.

Shri Tyagi (Dehradun): Now that he has seen them, he will not travel by road.

Shri D. C. Sharma: There are only two kinds of accidents. One is accident which occurs as a result of sabotage. I have some first-hand knowledge of that. In my own constituency, there is a small station called Jhakoladi. There a bomb used to explode once or twice a year. Ultimately Government had to get hold of an anti-bomb squad to go into this kind of explosions.

I want to ask one question. My friends have said that the Railway Ministry is taking these accidents complacently. I do not know what they mean by the word "complacency". If I say to you that during the last 18 years there has been a decreasing number of accidents per mile in this country, am I trying to be complacent? No, I am giving a fact which will hearten the public and the railway authorities, which will put heart into those persons who run these engines or who are in charge of the railway track or who are doing something else.

Shri Tyagi: Also the Minister.

Shri D. C. Sharma: If I say that when we compare the mileage of our railway track with that of the railway track of other countries we find that the accidents which take place in this country are something to be grateful to God for, because they are insignificant when compared with the figures in other countries. Does it mean that I am making out a case for having more accidents as compared with other countries? Certainly not. I only pay a compliment direct or indirect to the working of the Indian Railways and I say that so far as the operation of these railways is concerned, they are showing

[Shri D. C. Sharma]

a tendency to grow more and more safety-minded, to grow less and less accident-prone, to grow more and more public spirited in the sense that they value human life.

A friend of mine said here: does it mean that if you buy railway ticket, you buy a ticket to hell? I say democracy stands for human dignity, democracy means sanctity of life, democracy means that every human life must be preserved. In the USA the greatest hospital is that which is meant for the curing of the incurable. Why do they do that? Why are they spending so much money on that hospital? Because they believe that not a single human life, even though it is suffering from an incurable disease, should be lost. Therefore I say that if a man says to me that the buying of a ticket means a journey to hell, I say to myself that this gentleman is expressing cynicism of the worst kind, this gentleman is saying something which is not in conformity with that sanctity of human life which I have been taught to respect, and therefore I believe that such things should not be said on the floor of the House.

As I said to you, there are accidents as a result of sabotage. Who does that sabotage? I think some sabotage is done by external powers. In my constituency, the sabotage was done by Pakistani agents. In other places sabotage may be done by those persons who are in league with some external powers. I would ask the Railway Minister to see to it that the element of sabotage is ruled out altogether in this country. Most of the accidents that have taken place in this country, and the worst accidents that have taken place in this country have been the result of sabotage, and I want to warn the Railway Minister that he should see to it that no kind of sabotage takes place in this country.

Secondly, I would say that every railwaymen should have pride in his work. I am one of those unfortunate persons who is fond of reading novels.

Sometimes I while away my time by reading books of fiction. I read a book, *Bhawani Junction*. do not know how many of my friends have read this book. I would ask these railway labour leaders to read that book. How many of them have gone through that book? There is a film also about that. That book shows that the engine driver at one time was proud of the railway engine he was asked to drive; he used to look after it as I would look after any one who is near and dear to me... (*Interruptions.*) The difficulty is with the labour leaders, not labour leaders like Mr. A. P. Sharma but the so called labour leaders who have destroyed the pride of the railwaymen.

Shri Warior (Trichur): It casts slur on our national movement; he wants us to read that book.

Shri D. C. Sharma: I was referring only to one aspect of it. I was saying that the railwaymen whether they belong to the Congress Party, Communist Party, right or left, PSP or any other party, our workman should have pride in his work. Unless it is there, any number of benefits would not help them. Therefore, I would request him to look into this.

Mr. Chirman: The hon. Member's time is up.

Shri D. C. Sharma: My second point is this. There are many mistakes. But I can say without the fear of contradiction that so far as efficiency goes, so far as good work goes, so far as the care for the passenger goes, so far as public relations go, the graph of the railways had been showing an upward tendency during all these years and if these unfortunate things have happened we are sorry for them. But two things should be done. One is what Mr. Shiv Narain Sharma referred to and it is this. There should be discipline maintained, not only by minister or station master or the Railway Board but by those persons who work....

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member should conclude now.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Discipline is the key note. Wherever discipline is disrupted, there can occur all kinds of accidents.

Shri Nambiar: You can make this same speech after twenty years.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Mr. Nambiar also should learn discipline. Anyhow, the second thing is that the railway authorities should pay a little more attention to the railway track to the signals system and also to those unmanned crossings. All these require money and I request the hon. Minister that he should find money for these things. The spirit of efficiency which we are having in the railways and which has given our nation some dividend should be found in every national undertaking that we have in this country. I also want that there should be no accidents on account of sabotage and that there should be no accident of any kind and that the railways should have a cleaner record than they have at present.

Shri Warrior: Mr. Chairman, Sir, much ground has already been covered and we are thankful to Dr. Singhvi for initiating this debate and giving us an opportunity to speak on a very vital subject which has agitated the minds of our people. I am relying upon the statement of the Minister for certain observations. In his statement on 25th July, 1966, there are a few accidents mentioned and a report of these accidents is given in a summary way. I have read through all of them.

The first accident is, according to the provisional finding, due to tampering with the track by some unknown person or persons. The second accident was enquired into by a committee of railway officers which came to the conclusion that the explosion was due to ignition of a quantity of gunpowder kept in the steel trunk in the carriage by some unknown person. This is in respect of the Kanpur-

Barauni Express. About the third one, the Commissioner of Railway Safety enquired into this accident, and according to his provisional finding, the collision was due to failure of railway staff. About the fourth accident also, he has concluded provisionally that the accident was due to failure of railway staff. The reason for the fifth also, I think, is a repetition of the previous one; failure of railway staff. The Railway Accidents Committee pointed out that most of the accidents that took place on the Indian railways were on account of the failure of railway staff. So, no harping on sabotage or political questions will solve the matter. That is the first conclusion.

Neither the Kunzru Committee nor the report which is now given in the form of the statement to this Parliament shows that there are ever so many sabotage cases. There are cases which can be enquired into. I am told that some of the accidents were very serious, like the three explosions which we had in the Brahmaputra valley. There were some political reasons and background for them. But actually, what the Kunzru Committee report and what the railway administration admit are one and the same thing; that it is human failure. That is correct. But which human has failed? That is the primary and essential question to be tackled and how is to be tackled? After all, the railways are run by human beings, and the failure cannot be by anybody else unless we can prove that it is some mechanical failure which failure can also be shifted to somebody else and indicated as a human failure.

I shall give a small instance. There was a bogie somewhere in the Patna line which caught fire. It was said that it was a human failure. Somebody put in some incendiary substance. But I ask this crucial technical question: whether it is not enough that a small spark coming out of the

[Shri Warior]

friction in the axle wheel can ignite a small portion of the oil-soaked gunny there, and the whole thing can be inflamed.

Shri Nambiar: Short-circuit of wires.

Shri Warior: That can be there. But that is what has happened. A mill was gutted in Trichur, in my own constituency, owing to the same reason. The friction in the spindle emanated a spark; it set fire to the waste cotton and the whole mill was gutted. It is a human failure because the workers are not given sufficient time to clean the thing. Here also, the maintenance is so poor. That is why these small things can actually cause much damage and harm.

What about the tracks? Shri Nambiar mentioned them. Have we come to the stage where we can be sure of the sleepers. I do not know. We are taken by the Southern Express at 60 miles per hour. Dr. Ram Subhag Singh said so. I had the experience of going in that train. Of course life is in the hands; not in the heart, because we do not know whether on 120" rail this speed can be allowed or not.

What is the position of sleepers? A small difference in the gauge is enough to derail a train. Actually a train went out of the track once but somehow or other it came back. I do not know why and how. The whole question can be brought to the denomination of human failure. But the entire responsibility cannot be shifted like that to those who are actually running our railways day in and day out. To say the least, that is a cruel joke on them.

Whether you believe it or not, we are all nationalists to the core. I am sorry to say that many workers feel that the British company administration was much more advantageous for the safe running of the railways. People's reaction often comes out like that and it must be noted by the administration. I say this in all earnest-

ness, not to spite anybody or for political propaganda. If this reaction gains ground in the country, that would be the worst day for all of us.

After all is said and done, if the employees are not looked after with more sympathy and consideration, if they are not given more material benefits and incentives, we might have all the modern apparatus for safety, but it would not work well. The workers are completely dissatisfied. If the Minister is not looking after these things, he should bear the entire blame and nobody else. Formerly there was a modicum of show of democracy where the Minister when an accident occurs, can resign saying "I am bowing down to democracy". But nowadays we are more thick-skinned; and we stick to the duty and see whether it can be done or not. It is good in a way. But if these things are not looked into, things would not improve very much.

I fully support the demand made by Mr. Nambiar, Mr. Alvares and Mr. Sharma, who are in the know of things, though I may not be. Why not Government come forward boldly and have an impartial inquiry under the Commission of Inquiries Act when major accidents happen. Why should they entrust it to their own people?

Secondly, the track condition must be looked into. Here is this voluminous report of the Railway Accidents Committee. How much money and energy have we spent on it! If it is only to be shelved, what is the use? It must be looked into.

I again come to the workers. The drivers, conductors and guards have to take their food along with them, because they do not get food anywhere on the way. Where is the ration for them? They do not get their rations properly. It is not only a question of working long hours, but they do not get even the primary necessity, viz., food. When everything

is put on a war-footing, why not do something for the workers also? In 1942-43 when everything was put on a war-footing, the railwaymen had cheap grain shops. In all other sections, on all other aspects, we think of war footing. When the question of workers getting some advantage comes, we do not think of it on a war footing. Why should not cheap grain shops be opened for them as long as there is the food muddle in the country, as long as the workers do not get their essentials at prices they can pay? That must be attended to. Why should not the railway workers have a Wage Board to satisfy their demands. When every other section including the agricultural labourers have a minimum wage board, why should not the railway workers have one? Why should they alone be deprived of it? Why not give a Wage Board to them? They are giving Rs. 36 crores to Rs. 50 crores surplus to the country.

Sir, we welcome this electrification and other things. I would suggest that a beginning must be made to renew the tracks so that more safety will be there. We must begin that some day or the other. Unless the Railway Administration, the Railway Ministry, finds some way out for that, I do not think, simply to boost up prestige, prestige trains and prestige speed must be adhered to. I hope the Ministry will look into these matters.

Shri S. K. Patil: Sir, I would not take much time of the House. I will leave enough time to my hon. friend, Dr. Singhvi, who wants to make some observations after me.

I would begin with the speakers who have spoken today. We are considering the statement that I have made. It does not refer to all accidents, ancient and feature. It only refers to those accidents which occurred between two sessions. I say this because Shri Nambiar has referred to an accident which has nothing to 1502(A1) LSD—10.

do with the statement that I made. On that there was discussion time and again. There may be some relevancy, but so far as this particular debate is concerned it has nothing to do with it and I am not taking the time of the House on that because whatever happened there, at Dhanushukodi and Pamban, has gone under so many discussions in this House.

Shri A. P. Sharma talked about the Railway Commission. Apart from other observations that I made—I do not want to refer to every one of them—I have never promised that I will have a special Commission set up, but I said that some kind of a thing which is not a full-fledged commission but something near to it will be there so that it can have the advantage of both the public service commissions. I have done that. If there is anything lacking in that, I shall look into it. It was not as to which officers should be appointed there. It is for the convenience of the candidates. They have not to go to Calcutta or anywhere. If he would be satisfied if some higher officer is appointed there, surely that is not the question that goes in the efficiency of that and, therefore, on that he should have no grudge.

Many hon. Members have made this suggestion. But when the question of sabotage is mentioned, I do not know why the Communist Party at once jumps to it. I do not think I have ever said and associated that party with it. I may have my differences of opinion with the Communist Party, but I am fair to the point that I would never say a thing unless I am convinced about it. I do not see any reason, therefore, why they should take all the privilege and monopoly even of a thought of sabotage and really have a blow out of trumpet to the world that the cap is so eminently fitting their heads. I never said that (*Interruptions*). I would advise them in their own interest, for God's sake do not try to wear the caps which do not fit you. I never said of any sabotage. There are cases of sabotage . . .

Shri Vasudevan Nair: You only insinuate by the way you speak.

Shri S. K. Patil: I do not insinuate also. I have never done that (*Interruption*). That is a lie. If anybody says that I have insinuated, if he is capable of doing that let him have that. But I have never said that.

Of the five accidents, I think one is an established sabotage. It is not a question of fish-plates having been removed. The men have been arrested, the railway property looted has been found and it is a *sub judice* case to which I do not want to refer. It is in the court of law, and these gentlemen come and say that as if some relatives of theirs have done something. I never meant it; I never said it. On the contrary, I have been telling some of the labour people—Alvares group—not to say that. That lady, Maniben Kara has openly suggested that all these accidents—she is not sure of it—may be due to sabotage. But I am not taking that view, unless a sabotage has been established as in one case it is bound to be established because every evidence that we find leads us to that particular conclusion; otherwise not.

Then there is this cracker business where some people died. It was an unfortunate thing but does anybody expect that we examine everybody's trunk? Last year we carried about 2,000 million passengers, four times the total population of this country because many of them travel hundreds of times and therefore it may come to 2,000 million passengers. Now, should we go on examining everybody's luggage to find out that there may be some kind of explosive material in that? It can never be done. We may take enough precautions and we have been taking them. We have been taking extra precautions in the Assam area near Nagaland and that side. That is a different story. There we

spend money. We do not get anything out of it. For the sake of security it has got to be done. But surely my friends would not advise me that everything should be taken as a case of security. Then, instead of giving Rs. 130 crores to the exchequer, I have to ask for Rs. 130 crores besides causing inconvenience to people.

I am not suggesting any sabotage at all and my hon. friends should rest content that it is not a question of any party or anybody being blamed. There are many people and sometimes out of disappointment or infuriation and so on things may be done. There is no political ideology about sabotage and if sabotage is one of the weapons of anybody's armoury, surely, they have got to examine themselves. My conscience is quite clean on that subject.

Then it was said that sufficient safety measures are not taken. I can quite grant that. Whatever measures we might take, ultimately nobody could say that it is 100 per cent tight, a kind of waterproof business, that nothing has escaped. To that extent I can understand. There ought to be our anxiety continuously. It is not that for some time it has got to be done. I shall come to that later.

I have reserved to the last Dr. Singhvi's questions. Some of the very important suggestions that he has made as to what we are doing, I shall in a nutshell put them before you and when this subject is again under discussion, something about the railways, I shall go deep into it.

So far as the staff is concerned, something has got to be done about them. They should not work at a stretch for more than 12 hours. They are making that reasonable suggestion. I would immediately accept such things. I would discuss them with the Railway Board and the technical people. I can quite understand that. A man may be mad. Sometimes he sees two instead of one because he has worked hard. That has come in

aviation also. Sometimes there is a black-out but in aeroplanes there is sometimes even a white-out. The man gets mad about it and does not know what he is doing. Such things may happen and one can understand that. To the extent that it is possible that precautions should be taken, precautions have to be taken. This has taught us a lesson.

But immediately to get up and say that because accidents happen the Railway Minister should resign or that in aviation accidents happen therefore that minister must resign or that devaluation comes and therefore the Finance Minister must resign or that the Opposition motion fails and therefore they must resign—I cannot understand this type of a mentality because this is carrying things too far. I can understand if a policy fails.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned.

Shri S. K. Patil: It was a wrong thing to have done . . . (*Interruption*) but Lal Bahadurji had done a thousand good things none of which you have taken; only his resignation is important to you, nothing else as hell or death is important to you not life or the sustenance of it. Let us not introduce politics into this business. Let us talk something which is eminently reasonable and which has got to be done. If Shri Nambiar, Shri Warrior or anybody says that these workers are to be locked after, I agree. That is a reasonable suggestion just as what Shri Warrior suggested just now. It has been suggested time and again that if we give grains and other things to our workers rather than they buy them at excessive rates, it will be the best thing. I agree with that hundred per cent.

Very often I have told this House that even if we, Railways, lose a few crores of rupees in order to subsidise that, I am ready, as the Minister, to do that. But I must get the grains. I

promise I will do that, but let the kharif crop come, let the situation improve, let the Food Minister find out something for me to spare. If I open a shop and put up a board that no grain is available, what is the good of that? I would not give any other material.

Shri Warrior: Two crops are over since you said that.

Shri S. K. Patil: Therefore, it cannot be done just now, unless the situation improves. There is a system of rationing; in that you cannot have different things inside. Therefore, let the situation improve and then we can open the shops.

I then come to these two or three accidents where we say that there was a human failure. It was a human failure not because somebody has said it. The Railway Safety Commission is not part of the Railways. Retired railway man might be there. He is there because it is a technical job and he knows exactly how to do it. It is not in Railways, it is in another Ministry; it used to be in Communications, but now it has been joined to Transport, Tourism and Aviation. The officer there has nothing to do with the Railways; he does not return to the Railways after that. He is a technician; he knows how to do it; he has spent the whole of his life time in the Railways and that is why he is there. If he has to be changed or if any constructive suggestions are made for that, I can understand. But a judicial inquiry is demanded for anything that happens. I am not opposed to any judicial inquiry, but . . .

Shri Nambiar: I request that in respect of major accidents where danger to life is involved, there should be a judicial inquiry.

Shri S. K. Patil: I can tell him that where I have got a doubt that innocent person or persons are likely to be taken in, then surely that is a matter where judicial inquiry should be necessary—if I am convinced about it.

[Shri S. K. Patil]

I can tell you that this discussion would not have come here but for those two or three major accidents which took place where 63, 15 and 23 people died. The Bangalore Express accident will be proved to be a sabotage accident. Therefore, only two major accidents remain, namely those which happened at Matunga and near Ajmer.

In one of those accidents, it is proved that it is not because of failure of the machine. The failure of the machine was there; it was indicated—the automatic system; the man goes and mucks with it; he handled it manually those things, set it right and gave the signal; when the train started, I do not know what happened to him; then he thought that he had not done enough. That is his own confession. It is not something that human failure has been charged on him; ultimately it may be proved otherwise, I do not know; even now I would consider that matter because the final report has yet to come. He goes and mucks with it. When he finds that the train is coming, in order to save himself, he goes away; when his life is in danger and at that moment, he does that, I think you must excuse him. He did something in order to protect himself, but in exchange what we got was the death of about 68 people. If you say that it is a failure, that could be a failure. Nobody is accusing him because he is a railway man. Anybody in his place would have committed the mistake; I would have made that mistake in such conditions. Nobody is saying that he had any motive; there is a competent court which will look after that, which will decide whether that part of the failure was a human failure or whatever else you may call it. Nobody calls it a sabotage because it has been established on his own admission.

What happened near Ajmer was really a ridiculous accident. The Station has only four lines—two on the sides and two inside. The Assistant Station Master sees the train standing on the platform within perhaps a few feet

away from him and in spite of that, he gives the signal for the train to come. I do not know what to call it.

These accidents do happen; they happen everywhere in the world. I remember, 42 years ago when I used to be a student in England, not a week passed without there being at least one accident in the French Railways. All the papers used to come out with big banner lines saying that France should scrap its railway system because there was an accident everywhere. Compare that position with what is obtaining now after forty-two years. If you go and see the French railways today you will find that although they may not be the first, second or third among the world's railway systems, yet they will be within the first three or four most efficient railway systems in the world. So, that happens everywhere, and it has happened. It has happened in England and it has happened in Japan also. I do not say this as an excuse that because it happens elsewhere, therefore, it should happen here also.

Here, the point is that these accidents have happened in a chain, a chain of misfortune, I may call it, in a space of nearly fifteen days to three weeks. That is why they have assumed all this importance. If they had happened after some time, as they happen every time, then practically nobody would have taken notice of it.

My hon. friend Dr. L. M. Singhvi had made some very useful suggestions. I shall not be doing justice to him by giving replies to him now within this short space of time, but I would mention that all his suggestions are worth considering.

He said that the incidence of accidents was higher on the metre gauge, indicating thereby that the metre gauge railway system was neglected. That is not so. If he looks into the figures, he will find that there also the percentage of accidents has gone down. But there is one thing which

is certain. I do not say that it should not be looked after well, but the trouble about the metre gauge is this. We have nearly an equal extent of the broad gauge and the metre gauge systems. Broad gauge is somewhere about 27,000 k.m. while the metre gauge is somewhere about 24,000 k.m. But so far as the profits and the earning are concerned,—I am saying this not because I want that the metre gauge should be neglected—nearly 80 per cent is from the broad gauge and hardly 20 per cent is from the metre gauge. But that is no reason why it should be neglected.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: Therefore, let us scrap it.

Shri S. K. Patil: Of course, there may be reasons for complaint. But what I am saying is that that is no reason why it should be neglected. The fact that I have quoted these figures should not be taken to mean that more attention should not be paid to it. Surely, more attention could be paid to it.

My hon. friend suggested 'why not have a separate zone for the metre gauge?'. I would submit that a separate zone is now necessary for it. What is necessary for it is more safety, and if anything is lacking in that respect it has got to be improved.

If these accidents have done anything, than I may tell you that they have made all our staff, including the Minister to sit up and to find out or devise means as to what can be done to prevent such accidents in the future. Other countries have done certain things. But those things are not easily available in this country. Hon. Members are talking of track circuiting but track circuiting on such a vast track is not a simple matter. Then, there was reference to signalling, modernizing of the system, microwave system and so on. They have resorted to these things in other countries, and although they will not completely eliminate the incidence of accidents, yet to a

large degree they will help in diminishing the incidence of accidents and there is no doubt about it. We are beginning to do those things here also, in fact, much faster than in any other railway system in the world. But, surely even with those things, these one or two accidents that I have referred to would not have been prevented. If the man sees the train and yet gives the signal what machine can prevent that accident? When the man sees the train next to him and yet he gives orders for the other train to come on the same line, then what machine can prevent it? Fortunately, the driver saw that the train was there and, therefore, the impact of that accident was minimised; otherwise, instead of fifteen persons, possibly more persons might have died in that accident.

Then, my hon. friend Dr. L. M. Singhvi mentioned that even according to the published figures of the Railway Administration, the figures were 3.4 persons and 75 persons and so on. That is correct, but if he would go through the statistics—I am not going into the details now, but I shall give these things to him afterwards—he will find that all over the world it happens, but it is getting less and less here as in the world also it is getting less and less. Here also, we shall do our best to see that it should be less.

So far as the maintenance of the track is concerned, that has been mentioned by everybody. That is a correct thing to be done. But if I may say so, personally, sometimes I get doubtful whether that is done properly or not. Some of our tracks are very old. They are periodically changed and so on, but there is something that has got to be done with a little more care. Simply because the thing has not resulted in accidents and it looks well one should not conclude that it is all right; just as in aviation also, after an engine has run for so many hours, it is con-

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demned, likewise here also something like that should be done; although it may be good enough for one year or two years to come, yet it should be condemned because otherwise, the safety of the passengers and the people would be in danger. To that extent, I feel that the energies and the attention of the Railway Board and our technicians will have to be directed on this matter.

Then, it was stated that the passenger train collisions were on the increase. But here there is something which has got to be remembered. It is not always the case of a train colliding with another train; that is a big accident; but sometimes, quite a few of these accidents have only statistical relevance in impinging upon the safety aspect. For instance, take the case of a collision of a light push trolley with a passenger train. It is not a big accident in that sense, although that is also called an accident in our railway system. Surely like that there are hundreds and thousands of such accidents; they are also called accidents; they are not as bad as the big ones, but even they should not take place, but they do happen.

Then, it was stated that the quality of implementation of Kunzru Committee's recommendations was perfunctory and ineffective. The Kunzru Committee's suggestions or recommendations were not really new. That a man of the eminence of Dr. Kunzru did it, of course, gave them an additional importance. I think action has been taken on most of those recommendations. There may be one or two cases where we have not done so, but we have not done so for a good cause.

For instance, there was the suggestion that the sons of the railwaymen should get preference in railway jobs etc. If we had done so, then the Law Ministry tells us that possibly the matter might be taken to the Supreme Court and the verdict may

not be on our side, because that would amount to making distinctions or discriminations.

Shri Nambiar: That can be done even without the Supreme Court's verdict. 25 per cent can be reserved for them.

Shri S. K. Patil: We do it; I may tell my hon. friend Shri Nambiar that we do it but we shall never condemn because otherwise, the ledge it because we do not want to give cause to anybody to go to a court of law and say that we are making this distinction between citizen and citizen.

Shri Nambiar: Their applications can be considered if they are qualified otherwise.

Shri S. K. Patil: This is no remedy. But I quite understand that. Then, it was suggested that the charges of corruption and nepotism leveled in the press should be gone into. That is a general thing. But I am merely talking of the accidents now. It is not that I do not agree with the conclusions of my hon. Dr. L. M. Singhvi, but surely that is a thing which has no direct relevance to these accidents.

Then, there was reference to the shortage of staff in the A.M.S. grades. I may tell you one thing that somehow or other I do not believe in going on increasing the staff. The whole misery of this country is that you require ten men to do a job, which in a highly progressive and industrial country perhaps one or two persons would do. That is why you find everything becoming costly in this country. I am not talking merely of the railways. Take anything that we export. Why does it cost so much? While our labour is cheap, why does it cost so much? That costs more because the number of people that are required to man the labour is sometimes twice or thrice or four times the number in other countries. If it is suggested that the few men that we have got should be looked after well—in fact, we have not got

a few only, because if we take the whole of it; it would come to about a million and a quarter—then I could understand that. But if it is suggested that if we could add another person where there is one person at present things will be better, then that is a different matter. Whether it is necessary to do that is a point to be considered, but that is a different matter. Otherwise, it is not by merely adding to the numbers that things can be improved.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi also referred to training. The railways have a comprehensive set-up for training; there are 50 railway training centres for class III staff in addition to a large number of basic training centres attached to the workshops; training arrangements for class IV staff are set up on divisional basis. Therefore, to say that there are no training facilities is not true. So far as technical training is concerned, and so far as even psychiatric training etc. is concerned, we shall see that necessary precautions are taken so that we would be as self-sufficient as we possibly can.

Then, there was some reference to the Kunzru Committee's recommendation for reservation of 25 per cent of the vacancies. This recommendation runs counter to the provisions of the Constitution, and it was only after giving deep consideration that this recommendation was not adopted.

Then, some mention was made of the difficulties that the running staff had got. Some of them appear to be very genuine, and, therefore, we must give our attention to the matter and relieve as many of their difficulties as we possibly can. Those are constructive suggestions. I do not say that because the suggestions have been made on this occasion they are not relevant to the main issue, but I would say that they are relevant all the time and they should be considered.

I have tried to answer most of the points that Dr. L. M. Singhvi has made. Then, it was stated that relief to gangmen had not been given. Then, there was also reference to transfers. I am not talking of the transfer of the office people. That does not make much difference. So far as the gangmen and others are concerned, it is not so much a question of transfer due to which this is happening. But I may tell the House that these things are under constant supervision and it is not as if it is reviewed only for some time.

If we go on analyzing in this process, then I may tell you that the railways have given an excellent account of themselves but for these three or four accidents. While I am saying this, I hope that some other accidents would not have taken place somewhere. I am not a sort of Minister who believes in a sort of fate and praying to God that no accidents should happen etc. No doubt, I am a prayerful man, but that does not absolve me of my responsibility. So, I am doing something better than that. Therefore, it is my constant endeavour to see that things are improved, whether it is a question of resigning or not. Simply by somebody resigning and going out, the railway system does not get improved. What difference does it make to my hon. friend Shri Nambiar if from the railways I go out, because I shall be going somewhere else and earning by bread so long as I do not disappear from this world?

Shri Nambiar: Why not have an inquiry?

Shri S. K. Patil: Before the inquiry, the Minister never appears. Perhaps, my hon. friend does not know also that the inquiry is carried on first, then the report comes after five or six months, because it is an independent inquiry and then only the Minister comes to know of it. On the earlier occasion, it was done for other reasons into which we need not go

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now. Therefore, to suggest that one should always do such a thing is not proper. I quite appreciate the reference to that earlier case, because we can make a reference to our dear friend who is no more with us. But I am saying this because this argument should not be brought forward again and again in context or out of context simply because that helps one with an argument; if something is good and if a man so feels it, he does it, and I do not find fault with him. But I do not feel it. I feel it is my responsibility to stick on to my job and do it. If I go after doing it, that is a different matter. But I will not funk away simply because some people want me to do so. That is precisely the reason why I am where I am.

If I have not answered any particular enquiry of any member, it is not because of a desire not to do so but for want of time. Thank you.

Shri Vasudev Nair: Shri Sheo Narain wanted a railway line. What about that?

Shri S. K. Patil: Shri Sheo Narain made a very excellent speech today in a language which he has acquired in the last five or six years; he has done it with a proficiency on which we should compliment him. In the process of acquiring more of it, he will some day become unbeatable.

Shri Nambiar: I have a submission to make. The charge of sabotage was levelled against the communists. This was mentioned by Shri Sheo Narain when he spoke about railway accidents. He said that it was the communists who were responsible for the accidents. The Railway Minister must clarify....

Shri S. K. Patil: Shri Sheo Narain is not yet Railway Minister.

Shri Nambiar: Who gave the clue to him?

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: I hope you have agreed to my request that I may be

permitted to reply to the debate on a later occasion.

Mr. Chairman: He may put any questions he has now. Then after the reply, I will adjourn the House and he can exercise the right of reply on the next convenient day that this matter is taken up.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: Most of the points have been touched upon by Shri Patil. He has acknowledged that he could not do full justice to the various suggestions made on the floor of the House. I would not touch on them, I would however, like to ask him to say something about the conditions of work for officers, particularly at the middle level of responsibility; secondly, what has he to say about the suggestion for a separate Member for Railway Safety? Thirdly what about insurance of railway passengers which I particularly suggested?

Shri S. K. Patil: So far as insurance of rail passengers is concerned, it is not as easy as insurance of air passengers because in the case of the latter the number is small. Here we are transporting something like 2,000 million people. This can come about only slowly. But we are very much thinking about it to see if something could be done. Compared to other modes of transport, I think railway is the safest mode of transport; by that I mean a risk of one in a million. But as I said, it is under consideration. That is number one.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: Separate Member for Railway Safety. It was suggested by the Kunzru Committee also.

Shri S. K. Patil: I can understand a Director of Railway Safety being there. There are five members, each one with a very important responsibility. They are technicians, there is a mechanical engineer, civil engineer, personnel man, transport man and so on. But whether to have a person for looking after railway safety elevated to full-fledged membership is something which I am prepared to consider

in the sponse that I do not underestimate the importance of that, but it has to be considered.

Take vigilance. We have got a vigilance division. But should we have a full fledged Member merely to look after vigilance? Would it be proper for us to have a full-fledged Member for Vigilance on the Board? The next is...

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: Improvement of the conditions of service and prospects of promotion of officers at the middle level.

Shri S. K. Patil: I can understand that. When any constructive suggestion from Dr. Singhvi or any other Member comes, you will never find a more sympathetic man myself.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Singhvi will reply on another day when the motion is taken up.

17.55 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the clock on Friday, August 26, 1966/Bhadra 4, 1888 (Saka).