

Shri K. D. Malaviya: I shall deal with some of the most basic questions that concern us today in this economic turmoil which the country is facing. It is true that most of us on this side as well as that side are very unhappy at the growing complexities and complications and deterioration in the economic situation of the country. Yet, we should not get lost in the count of the trees and miss the wood. We must try to see what is what. I believe that the present disturbances or the economic and administrative indiscipline which we are noticing today is inherent in the birth pangs of a new society which we are forming today. We have to recognise this fact that as we grow and march forward from the decadent stage of a feudal society to a new modern socialist society, the more we are earnest in transforming this society from a backward one to a forward one, our agonies will be more and more intense; and the more we are in it, the more we have to prepare ourselves to face this. What we have been noticing for the last 10 or 15 years are pieces of evidence of that truth, that we are passing through a very, very critical stage in the life of the nation and we cannot take too lightly the several aspects that are before us.

The Indian National Congress which is wedded to socialism cannot now go back on it. On the contrary, if we notice the various stages of resolutions and decisions taken from the Avadi session up to the last Congress session, we will find that we have committed ourselves more and more progressively towards building a socialist society and in lesser time than what we conceived at the time of the Avadi resolution. Therefore, the Congress is committed to socialism. The Government that rules this country, which administers the affairs of this country on behalf of the Indian National Congress, is more committed to implement those decisions and to do it as quickly as possible.

Such is the inherent situation in which we are now inextricably in-

involved, and this economic situation that confronts us is necessarily linked up with the economic policies to which we are wedded.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member will continue his speech tomorrow. We will take up other business now.

17 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: SITUATION AT
DURGAPUR

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Iron and Steel wants to make a statement.

Shri Daji (Indore): Sir, I rise to a point of order. Certain hon. Members tried to raise this question through Calling Attention Notices. My hon. friend, Shri Banerjee also tried to raise it this morning, but the Speaker in his wisdom disallowed it—I have no quarrel on that. I am told, Sir, that the Government, on its own, made a statement on Durgapur in the other House. I want to ask, why should this House be treated as a second-class House, a House of second class, citizens when this House is the premier House, sovereign House?

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy (Kendrapara): The Minister belongs to that House.

Shri Daji: The Minister may belong to this House or that House. This House demands that this House should get the courtesy of prior consultation and prior information. We have raised it in this House again and again and the Speaker has given a ruling. The Government not only do not make the statement here but kept the House in complete darkness at 1200 hours when this question was raised, with the result that many hon. Members interested in this have gone away. Why should the Government not make the statement in both the Houses simultaneously when there are two Ministers? Why should this House be put to the indignity of

listening to the statement at 5.00 when the statement has been made in the other House and they have discussed it. This House is treated too lightly by this Government. We would not allow that.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur):

Sir, at 12.00 today I raised a point of order on this issue, but the Speaker in his wisdom disallowed my Calling Attention Notice. But he agreed that if I could possibly convince him, either by writing to him or by discussing it with him, that this matter of Durgapur firing or whatever that happened in Durgapur, is a matter of vital importance, he would reconsider his decision. I happy the Minister is making a statement. Fortunately I am present in the House, but many hon. friends from West Bengal, whose minds were agitated about this—Shri Prabhat Kar and others—have gone away. They do not know what is happening. My submission is this. This House has always been treated as a House of post mortem. After everything has been done, either in that House or outside, after all the decisions have been taken right from the question of devaluation to Durgapur, the matter is brought before this House. This House is treated with contempt. I would, therefore, request you to treat this statement as coming in reply to a Calling Attention Notice and we may be allowed to put questions after the Minister makes his statement so that we are in a position to elicit more facts about it. Then, some explanation is necessary from the Minister as to why his Deputy made that statement first in the other House, before making it here.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur):

Sir, I also believe that the sovereignty of this House should be kept intact and that any statement of importance that is to be made should be made first in this House first. If there are some Ministers from that House, it does not

mean that they should not come to this House. They can address both the Houses. I agree with Shri Daji and Shri Banerjee that such policy statements should be made first in this House and then only they should be made elsewhere. If such important statements are made outside the House, it detracts from the importance of this House....

Mr. Chairman: It is not necessary to go on with this discussion. I think the complaint of the hon. Members is genuine. I think the hon. Minister should have given previous intimation or made the statement first in this House. I will allow some hon. Members to put questions after the hon. Minister has made his statement. Let the hon. Minister make his statement first.

The Minister of Iron and Steel (Shri T. N. Singh):

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Members of the House would have seen in the papers in the last two days and learnt from radio news broadcasts about the unhappy events which have happened in regard to the Durgapur Steel Works. Two workers have died as a result of a 'lathi' charge and firing by the Police. Severe injury and loss of life are always a matter for regret. And when workers, especially of public sector undertaking are hurt or die, the matter is one for special regret.

We have had information for some days that a group of workers belonging to unrecognised Union, viz., the H.S.L. Employee' Union, were contemplating a 'gherao' of the General Manager, Durgapur Steel Works, on 5th August, 1966. On that day some of the workers submitted a memorandum containing a list of new demands. About 900 demonstrators led by the unrecognised Union surrounded the General Manager's office at 4.30 P.M. and insisted on meeting him. The General Manager expressed his inability to meet them, but said that he would take appropriate action on the memorandum. But, the demonstrators would not

[Shri T. N. Singh]

allow the General Manager to leave his room and board his car. This obstruction continued for a considerable time and the Police who were present took charge of the situation and warned the demonstrators to disperse peacefully. When the demonstrators ignored this appeal, the Police fired tear gas shells and made a 'lathi' charge. Twelve workers were injured, one of them died on 6 August in hospital. The demonstrators broke up but assembled on the Grand Trunk Road and threw brickbats on the Police and tried to obstruct traffic. They also tried to burn a jeep belonging to the Steel Plant. The Police succeeded in clearing the Grand Trunk Road. Thereupon, the demonstrators proceeded to the township garage and prevented buses coming out for the C shift by erecting barricades and deflating the wheels of two State buses by puncturing them. The Police arranged escorts for the movement of the buses to take in workers to the C shift. But the barricades and other obstructions delayed their departure and only a few workers could be taken to the plant as the workers had left the shed. On the morning of August 6, the barricading and obstruction continued and only about 30 buses (out of 53) could reach the plant. A convoy of buses was attacked by a mob, injuring the Police, the driver and the security staff. Miscreants set fire to 13 buses and one private jeep resulting in complete damage to 9 buses and partial damage to 3 buses and a jeep. The Police had to open fire to save a driver who had been dragged down and to disperse the violent mob. As a result of the firing, one employee died.

The Chairman of Hindustan Steel proceeded to Durgapur from Ranchi early on 7 August, 1966 and spent several hours there, conferring with plant authorities, local Government authorities and representatives of the recognised trade union. The situation is reported to be generally quiet.

There was, however a large procession going through the streets of the township carrying the ashes of the victim of the Police firing. The bodies of the two casualties of these incidents had been handed over to relatives and disposed of according to their respective religious rites.

Adequate arrangements for the safety of the plant had already been made, and continue. Inevitably, however, except for essential services and partial working of one Coke Oven battery out of three and one Blast Furnace out of three, the rest of the plant is out of production. It is expected that in two or three days time near-normal working may be restored.

In the course of these incidents a number of policemen and a police inspector were injured by mob violence.

In regard to the obstruction on 5 August, 1966 and hooliganism and arson on 5 and 6 August, 1966 cases have been registered. These are *sub judice* and it would not be proper to make any further comments on the incidents at the moment.

Living conditions are difficult and one has the greatest sympathy with workers of all kinds all over the country. But in our present situation, interference with production and the wanton destruction of property, especially buses etc. cannot be too strongly deprecated.

I have asked for the material circumstances of the two worker victims of these incidents to be ascertained by the management. If they call for sympathetic intervention, I shall consider recommending to the management the making of some *ex-gratia* grant to the families on humanitarian grounds.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय (देवास) : माननीय मंत्री जी ने बतलाया कि 900 श्रादमियों ने घेरा। उस से पहले उन लोगों ने ज्ञापन दिया। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि उस ज्ञापन में कौन कौन सी शर्तें थीं जिन्हें मानने में मैनेजमेंट असमर्थ था। क्या यह बात सही है कि जब उन लोगों ने मिलने के लिये कहा तो मैनेजमेंट ने साफ इनकार कर दिया और बहुत बुरा व्यवहार करते हुए कड़े शब्दों में कह दिया कि वह मिलना नहीं चाहते हैं।

श्री त्रि० ना० सिंह : माननीय सदस्य ने कड़े शब्दों की जो बात कही उस के सम्बन्ध में मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि मेरे पास ऐसी कोई रिपोर्ट नहीं आई है। लेकिन मिलने की जो आप बात कहते हैं, उसका कारण यह था कि लेबर ला यह कहता है कि जो शिकायतें सारे मजदूरों से सम्बन्ध रखती हों उन के सम्बन्ध में हमें रिकग्नाइज्ड यूनियन के साथ बातचीत करनी चाहिये। इंडिविजुअल केसेज के बजाय जो रिकग्नाइज्ड यूनियन होती है उनसे ही तमाम मजदूरों की ओर से बात हो सकती है। चूँकि यह कानूनी मजबूरी थी इस लिये ऐसा किया गया।

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : मैं ने पूछा था कि उन लोगों ने जो ज्ञापन दिया उस में कौन कौन सी बातें उन्होंने कही थीं, उन के बारे में मंत्री महोदय ने कुछ नहीं कहा। मैं उन को जानना चाहता हूँ।

श्री त्रि० ना० सिंह : अभी मेरे पास पूरी खबर नहीं पहुँची है। लेकिन जो मालूम है वह मैं बतला देता हूँ :
The demands included annual bonus for 1964-65, no retrenchment of construction workers, withdrawal of suspension orders on their followers in the steel melting shop and reinstatement of two discharged peons, increased wages and DA, common cadre for office staff, restoration of special disability leave, etc.

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Shri S. M. Banerjee: It is quite clear from the statement of the hon. Minister that there was a demonstration or a sort of *gherao* by nearly 900 workers led by unrecognised unions and the basis for the General Manager for not giving a patient hearing to the workers was that this union was not recognised. In all the steel plants the recognised unions belong to INTUC who are the stooges of the Government of India; so, naturally, people have no reliance on that. That is why they move their matters through honourable trade unions. In view of the fact that the demands of the workers were genuine and the General Manager deliberately and mischievously refused to meet them on the basis of non-recognition of union and since firing has been resorted to and two employees have been killed, will the Minister order a judicial inquiry into the whole affair including the conduct of the officials and why this firing had been resorted to? When I talk of a judicial inquiry, it is for two purposes, namely, for the affairs that have taken place in the steel plant itself and for considering the firing.

Shri T. N. Singh: So far as the recognised and unrecognised union aspect is concerned, I am not here to judge about the reliability or otherwise of this or that union. I would not enter into that question. As regards the suggestion that interview was mischievously denied by the General Manager, I think, that will be a wrong conclusion to come to. The point is that under the law, as it stands today, the management can only talk with the representatives of recognised unions.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: You are talking to everyone. Why should the General Manager not do so?

Shri T. N. Singh: The hon. Member is fully aware of the law. He is a very experienced trade unionist and he knows what the law is in respect of this.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: It is discretion; there is no law.

Shri T. N. Singh: As regards the question of judicial inquiry, so far as the law and order and police aspects are concerned, it is not within my purview; it is for the Bengal Government to take a decision on the subject. In regard to steel plant affairs, I cannot make a judgement unless things are settled down; then I can make up my mind.

Shri Vasudevan Nair (Ambalapur): The Minister is speaking about unrecognised and recognised unions. I should like to know whether in the past few years in all the elections to the shop committees, work committees etc. in the factory, the so-called recognised union, which is a prop of the Government and the management, representatives had been crushed, routed and defeated, and that they do not at all enjoy the confidence of the vast majority of the workers? Is he aware of this and, if so, may I know what concrete steps are being taken by his Ministry to see that representative unions are taken into confidence by them and that they do not stand on the basis of what is legal technicality and all that? Actually, the Government is responsible for all this trouble because you do not have the unions in which labour representatives have confidence.

Shri T. N. Singh: The Government do not have unions of their own as such. As regards the question raised by the hon. Member, I have also heard of such a version and I myself, personally, have asked the Labour Minister there to look into the matter. I am sure he will be looking into it.

Shri Daji: I am a lawyer of 20 years' standing and a trade union lawyer and I know of no law on the statute book which prevents the Manager from meeting a deputation of unions. Will the Minister, because he is misdirecting the House, tell us as to what law he is referring to which prevents the Manager from meeting his own employees? Since such incidents are occurring again and again in public sector undertakings, why does not the

Government accept the Dhebarbhai's Report and enforce recognition by ballot in all the public sector undertakings?

Shri T. N. Singh: Not being a lawyer of 20 years' standing, I do not wish to cross swords with the lawyer Member. What I have been informed by legal advisers is....

Shri Daji: What is the law? (Interruption).

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : आप से जो कह दिया जाता है, वही आप बतला देते हैं आप को कोई जानकारी नहीं है।

Shri T. N. Singh: I have stated the position as advised by my legal advisers. But I will put that question to them.

Shri K. N. Pande: Is it a fact that no union is recognised under a law and that the unions are recognised only under the code of discipline where they have to show by their work that they do not indulge in violence and all sorts of *bandhs* and *gheraos*. If this thing continues, will the Minister consider over this aspect whether those unions which do not believe in constructive work but believe in no work should ever be recognised? (Interruptions).

Shri T. N. Singh: I have noted it.

Shri Daji: If Managers don't speak to their employees, don't meet their employees, there will be more *gheraos*.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: There will be more *gheraos*.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : चोरों की जमात को मान्यता मिलती है।

Mr. Chairman: Order, order. We now take up the Half-an-Hour Discussion. Shri Madhu Limaye.