

श्री बागरी (हिसार): ग्रान ए प्वाइंट ग्राफ इन्फार्मेशन।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Order, order. We now take up the Call Attention Notice. Shri Warrior.

Shri Bagri: On a point of information, राक मन्ना के चारों तरफ पुलिस के बजाय फो। लगी हुई है। क्या।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He is going on without being called. This is not to be recorded.

Shri Bagri**

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We now take up the Call Attention Notice.

12.06 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

PROPOSED STRIKE OF EXECUTIVE EMPLOYEES OF THE KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD.

Shri Warrior (Trichur): I call the attention of the Minister of Irrigation and Power to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request him that he may make a statement thereon:

"The proposed strike of Executive employees of the Kerala State Electricity Board from 7-12-1966.

The Minister of Irrigation and Power (Dr. K. L. Rao): The Kerala State Electricity Board Executive Employees Union covering 76 categories of employees from Line Helper to Junior Engineer, gave notice on 18th November, 1966, to the Chairman, Kerala State Electricity Board, of their intention to go on strike from the midnight of 6-7th December, 1966 to get their demands conceded. The major demands relate to pay revision, grant of dearness allowance linked with cost-of-living index, grant of bonus and

grant of various allowances and concessions. A conciliation meeting was called by the Labour Commissioner, Kerala on 30th November, 1966. The conciliation efforts did not succeed in bringing about a settlement. The Executive Employees of the Board went on mass casual leave on 3rd December, 1966.

2. According to a report received from the State Government on 4th December, 1966, some electric connections were tampered. The State Government have reported that power connection to water supply works was cut off in several places like Trivendrum, Quilon, Kottayam, Alwaye and Chowara.

3. Conciliation meetings held on 3rd December, 1966 and 4th December, 1966, have failed to bring about any settlement. Further details from the State Government are awaited.

4. It is unfortunate that the Kerala State which has suffered considerably due to power shortage during the past few years and which has just recovered from this chronic shortage, should suffer a setback again due to the precipitate action taken by the executive employees of the Board. I would take this opportunity of appealing to the executive employees to call off the proposed strike from 7th December, 1966 in the interest of the country. Given the goodwill and co-operation on both the sides, it should be possible for the executive employees union and the Kerala State Electricity Board to reach a settlement. The Central Government will keep in close touch with further developments in the matter.

Shri Warrior: It is reported in the Press that yesterday and the day before yesterday—two days consecutively—there was absolutely no light in Kerala and not a single bulb was burning in the Kerala State. May I know whether this is a fact and also whether it is a fact that

**Not recorded.

these Executive Employees Union had asked the Government three months ahead for conciliation of their demands and that the Board failed to implement the conciliation proceedings and apart from that, the Board failed to give even the interim relief and it is on that point that the employees have to go on strike and put the whole State in darkness?

Dr. K. L. Rao: It is true that the talks failed on account of interim relief demands. This is a matter which has got to be discussed more and I would request the hon. members, especially those from Kerala, to see that the Executive Employees' strike is called off because, after all, it is not a very big affair and we can always settle these matters. Electricity especially is the very source and basic need of the country and I would appeal to the hon. members to use their good offices to see that this unfortunate strike, which will result in a great suffering to the public and a great suffering to the strikers themselves and to the prosperity of the country is called off. I would appeal very earnestly that they should interfere and see that this strike does not come off. I can assure the hon. members that the Ministry of Irrigation and Power will do its best to see how far it can, within the possibilities, try to assist them in the settlement of this dispute.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Apart from making an appeal from this House to the employees not to go on strike from the 7th December, 1966, may I know what other steps have been taken? May I know whether the hon. Minister or his deputy or even the Secretary of the Department is going to Kerala to have a negotiated settlement with them?

Dr. K. L. Rao: I was trying the whole day today to get in touch with the Kerala State Government, but unfortunately the telephones were out of order and I could not get at them. It is a good suggestion that hon. Mr. Banerjee has made and I will definitely

see that we also try to assist them in the matter. The main thing is that the State Government should first move in the matter. Anyway, I will keep this suggestion in mind and I will see that some officer is sent from here to assist them.

Shri Vasudevan Nair (Ambalapuzha): It is regrettable that the Chairman of the Kerala State Electricity Board has chosen to allege that the employees have committed a deliberate sabotage. The General Secretary of the Union has promptly contradicted that statement by saying that this is a calculated lie to hoodwink the people. Now in this particular situation when the Board Chairman has taken up this kind of a rigid position and even gone to the extent of alleging the employees of committing a sabotage and the workers have denied it, I should like to know whether the Union Government, especially the Minister who knows the problems of Kerala much more than anybody else, will take the initiative to start fresh talks on the only disputed question that remains now, i.e., the question of interim relief—because all the other issues have been referred for arbitration one or two days back. Only two more days are left for the strike to materialise and I should like to know what the Minister himself is going to do in the matter, so that this dispute is amicably settled.

Dr. K. L. Rao: It is not proper that I should interfere here. But I would say that the suggestion of the previous member, namely, Mr. Banerjee, is a good one and I will try to send one officer and see how far we can assist in the matter.

Shri Nambiar (Tiruchirappalli): While welcoming the good wishes of the hon. Minister and the appeal given to the Opposition members to use their good offices to call off the strike or rather to see that the strike does not materialise, may I know whether the Central Government would advise the Kerala State Government and the

[Shri Nambiar]

Chairman of the Electricity Board to withdraw his allegation of sabotage foisted on the workers and say that electricity can fail by the withdrawal of labour by thousands of workers and that there need not necessarily be any sabotage for the failure of electricity? This being a simple proposition, will the Government consider the question and ask them to withdraw their allegation and negotiate on the question of grant of interim relief here and now before the strike materialises?

Dr. K. L. Rao: I have been very careful in my statement. I have only stated that the electric connections were tampered with. I have not said who has done it and so on. I was very careful in my statement.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: The newspaper reports contain observations by the chairman to that effect:

Dr. K. L. Rao: I have seen reports in the papers about what both the parties have stated. So far as we are concerned, I have no information and it is not proper for me to say anything except this that some connections were tampered with; that is a fact. That is the only thing that I can say. Who has done it or who is responsible is very difficult for us to say from her.

Shri Imbichibava (Ponnani):**

Shri Nambiar: I shall translate his question in English. In view of the seriousness of the situation, may I request the hon. Minister himself to fly to Kerala and intervene in the matter and persuade the employees not to go on strike, and set matters right so as to satisfy both sides?

Dr. K. L. Rao: I think my hon. friends opposite have got more influence and they can be more effective than I. I would suggest that my hon. friends may go there and try to assist in this regard.

Shri Bade (Khargone): While congratulating Government for taking a sympathetic view of the whole situation, may I know whether Government are not responsible for this? A notice had been served three months back and no action was taken on that, and that is the reason why this deplorable situation has come about there. Will Government inquire into the matter and find out why no relief had been given by this time? Who is responsible for bringing about this situation in Kerala?

Dr. K. L. Rao: I shall make inquiries.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय (देवास) : मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि लगातार पिछले पांच महिने से सरकारी कर्मचारियों की तन्ख्वाह बढ़ाने का यह जो झगड़ा चला आ रहा है, सरकार ने अब तक उसको ग़ौर ध्यान क्यों नहीं दिया है। मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है कि छेड़छाड़ की गई है। मैं ये जानना चाहता हूँ कि इससे कितनी हानि हुई है और क्या सरकार इन बातों की निष्पक्ष जांच कराने के लिए तैयार है।

Dr. K. L. Rao: I have already answered this question. I shall be making inquiries about the delay in taking up the conciliation proceedings. Regarding the amount we do not exactly know what has happened there. But I do not think that so far anything much has happened except that there is interruption to the water supply and a few lines are off.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : मैंने पूछा है कि छेड़-छाड़ से कितनी हानि हुई है। इसका उत्तर नहीं दिया गया है