

12-08 hrs.

## MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

PROPOSED RETRENCHMENT OF WORKERS IN  
BHILAI STEEL PLANT

**Mr. Speaker:** I have received notice of an adjournment motion to discuss the following:

"The proposed retrenchment of nearly 16,000 workers from the Bhilai Steel Plant from the 6th December, 1960."

May I know from the hon. Minister what the position is?

**The Minister of Steel, Mines and Fuel (Sardar Swaran Singh):** The hon. Member is apparently referring to the workers who are engaged on construction work. This fact has to be faced that when construction comes to an end, they become surplus. Therefore, their retrenchment is not a retrenchment which can be avoided, but it is a part of the construction programme itself. Those workers who have been engaged on construction know that they are engaged for construction work, and when the construction comes to an end, they have to go. In spite of that, everything is, however, being done to give them whatever retrenchment benefits there may be. Efforts are also being made to suggest their names to other organisations, so that they might be utilised elsewhere. But I do not know what more we could discuss, because construction workers, are, after all, construction workers, and we cannot carry construction workers, after the work is finished, on our rolls, and we cannot take them to another State either because whenever any new project starts, the expectation is that people of that vicinity should find employment. We cannot carry thousands of workers from one project to another and thus deprive the workers of the new project area of the expectation of their being employed in the new project. That is the position.

**Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur):** The reason why I gave notice of this adjournment motion was this. I know that these are not contract labour. My information is that—I say this subject to correction— . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** Are they construction workers employed on construction work, or are they for the running of the machinery?

**Shri S. M. Banerjee:** My information is that, out of these 16,000 people, most of them, about 9,000 or so, are departmental labour; and they are not unskilled, but semi-skilled and skilled also. I want to know whether the hon. Minister has got any break-up of the contract labour who are going to be retrenched from 6th December, 1960 and the departmental labour who are going to be provided with alternative jobs. This is a serious matter.

**Mr. Speaker:** The main point is different. I ask the hon. Member, if he undertakes the construction of his house or puts up some machinery, even though the construction work is over, will he still continue those people he had engaged for the construction work?

**Shri S. M. Banerjee:** They are mostly departmental workers.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would like to know one thing from the hon. Minister. Out of these 16,000 workers, are there any who are skilled and can otherwise be employed in any of the other industries there? Or are they merely construction workers?

**Sardar Swaran Singh:** All the construction workers who are leaving now are engaged on construction. They were employed for construction. It is true that some of them are departmental employees; some are contractors' employees. A construction department was organised to undertake certain work departmentally and some work was given out to contractors. But the essential point, as you were pleased to mention a moment ago, is whether, irrespective of

[Sardar Swaran Singh]

whether they are departmental employees or contractors' employees, they were engaged for construction work as such. It is a fact that amongst these employees some of them are skilled, some semi-skilled and some absolutely unskilled. The expression 'skilled', for instance, would be a comparative expression. For instance, take a blacksmith or carpenter or welder. They are skilled workers in a sense, but they are essentially construction workers. Some of them will be picked up; some of them have already been picked up for maintenance or other work of a permanent nature which has to be continued there.

But I would like to inform this hon. House that many construction workers, because of the higher wages that they normally get for construction work, are not always interested in working on the operational side. They are not trained for that type of work, and with the huge construction activity that is going on in the country, they always find it suitable to shift from one project to another and thus continue to earn that higher wage, which is the privilege of construction workers. So there is absolutely nothing abnormal in this. It takes place in the normal course.

**Shri Braj Raj Singh (Firozabad):** May I make a suggestion to Government? The Government are going to have a Building Construction Corporation. Could these people, who are departmental people, not be employed there in that Corporation?

**Mr. Speaker:** All these suggestions can be made. The point is admitted and it is clear that all these 16,000 and odd workers, whether they are contract workers or departmental workers, were engaged for the purpose of construction. They would not be dispensed with unless and until the construction work is over. That is

in the interest of the Government themselves. There may be a surplus. They may be skilled in a particular job, e.g. brick-laying, masonry etc. But they may not be necessary for running the plant. Therefore, it is left to Government to keep them or not. Of course, a question was put. I only wanted to elicit some answer. I do not think this Hon. House can advise Government to go on maintaining 16,000 people without work or put up another 'Bhilai' plant for giving work to them tomorrow. There is no meaning in this.

In view of this, I withhold my consent to the adjournment motion.

12.14 hrs.

#### PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

##### RESOLUTION RE: CEMENT PRICES AND THE REPORTS OF TARIFF COMMISSION

**The Minister of Industry (Shri Manubhai Shah):** I beg to lay on the Table:

- (1) A copy of Government Resolution No. Cem-8(5)/60 dated the 20th October 1960, making a reference to the Tariff Commission to review the fair ex-works prices payable to the cement producers. [Placed in Library, See No. LT-2496/60].
- (2) A copy of each of the following papers under sub-section (2) of section 16 of the Tariff Commission Act, 1951:—
  - (i) Report (1960) of the Tariff Commission on the continuance of protection to the Sheet Glass Industry;
  - (ii) Government Resolution No. 14(1)-TR/60 dated the 23rd November 1960.