

14.22 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE
 MEMBERS' BILL AND
 RESOLUTIONS
 SEVENTY-SIXTH REPORT

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Shall we take up the Private Members' Business? Are the Members ready. There are six minutes more.

Shri Warior (Trichur): The first speaker is ready.

An Hon. Member: Is the Minister ready or not?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: There is a motion to be moved by Sardar A. S. Saigal.

Sardar A. S. Saigal (Janjgir): I beg to move:

"That this House agrees with the Seventy-sixth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 16th February, 1961."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That this House agrees with the Seventy-sixth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 16th February, 1961."

The motion was adopted.

14.24 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE: ENHANCEMENT
 OF RATE OF CONTRIBUTION
 UNDER THE COAL MINES PRO-
 VIDENT FUND SCHEME—Contd.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The House will now resume further discussion of the resolution moved by Shri Warior on the 16th December, 1960 regarding enhancement of rate of contribution under the coal mines provident fund scheme. Out of 1½ hours allotted for discussion of the resolution only one

minute had been taken up. Shri Warior may now continue his speech.

Shri Warior (Trichur): Sir, in order to refresh the memory of the House I may read the resolution once more as it stands.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: As well as his own.

Shri Warior: My resolution stands like this:

"This House is of opinion that the rate of contribution under the coal mines provident fund scheme should be enhanced from 6½ per cent to 8-1/3 per cent immediately".

It is a simple resolution and I do not think that the Government will find it very difficult to accept it even without any argument. Still, Sir, there are certain features.....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Then he need not say anything. Let us hear the hon. Minister.

Shri Warior: But usually we expect that in the end it will not be like that. That is why we have to advance certain arguments in favour of this resolution. The provident fund scheme will be affecting about 3,50,000 workers. The provident fund scheme is intended to provide for the workers in their old age when they retire from their employment. There being no provision at all for the majority of workers by way of any gratuity or any other fund on which they can fall back in their old age after retirement, this scheme must give sufficient provision for those workers so that they can at least make both ends meet in their old age after retirement.

Sir, they work under very hazardous conditions. These coal miners are always exposed to accidents. We hear reports about such accidents here. Other conditions of their work are also not similar to the conditions obtaining in well establishment indus-

[Shri Warior]

trial concerns. It is, therefore, very necessary that these coal miners in our country get a fairer deal than what they have been getting all these years.

Before this scheme was introduced in 1947, the wages of the coal miners were as low as Rs. 4 per week. At that time the D.A. was not calculated for the purpose of provident fund contributions. Because the basic wage was very low, the amount at the credit of the provident fund account of a worker after taking into account his own contribution as well as that of the management at the time of his retirement was very small. In 1955 a change was made whereby the D.A. was also included along with the basic wage for the purpose of determining the contribution to provident fund account. In 1951 the weekly earnings of a worker including his D.A. was only Rs. 10.90 nP. In 1955 it went up a bit and it was Rs. 12.32 inclusive of D.A. Only in 1955 the Government said that D.A. also should be taken into account for determining the provident fund contribution. As a result of that, of course, the workers got a better accumulated amount on their retirement. In 1958 the wages went up to Rs. 20.86 and in 1960 it stood at only Rs. 23.21. These are the figures given by the *Coal Bulletin* of 1960. On the basis of these earnings, we find from the 1958 report, 11700 claims were disposed of—there were certain claims which were not disposed of due to some obvious reasons—and they have paid an aggregate amount of Rs. 21.41 lakhs. That works out, on an average, to Rs. 183 per worker or per claim. After all his toil over a number of years when the workers is thrown out of employment he has to depend on this Rs. 183 for help or succour. How can any worker, for that matter, pull on with Rs. 183 for the remaining years of his life?

There is one other thing which you have to consider. In our economy

there is a tendency for one-way traffic. The father is expected to bring up his children and take every care of them. But when the children grow up they are not expected to look after the father because they in their turn have to look after their own children. Previously when there were joint families they were keeping all the resources together and anybody could take advantage of those resources when needed. Things were very easy then. Now there is a special trend in the present economy where you will find that, by and large, it is a one-way traffic—father looking after his children and the children becoming fathers and looking after their children. Therefore, in a worker's family, especially, the worker has to depend on his own resources. He cannot depend on his son's earnings. He is not given a living wage and, at the same time, the next generation of workers will not be able to protect him. In such circumstances, by whatever means of calculation or whatever be the ingenuities, how can a worker in his old age live upon this Rs. 183 which alone he gets for his labour? Out of the 3.50.000 workers in the coal mines, I am told that only about 25,000 are getting gratuity. Only such a small number is covered by the gratuity scheme. But how much is the percentage? It is a negligible percentage out of the 3.50.000 workers. All the remaining workers are more or less dependent upon this Rs. 183.

If we take into account the disbursements of earlier years, we will find that this did not come even up to Rs. 183 when the claims were met. The amount is quite insufficient and there is no necessity to elaborate on that.

Under the employees' provident fund scheme, the workers got their dearness allowance included in the basic wage from 1952. But in respect of the coal mine workers, this was not done by the Government. The distinction was made in this case. It is

**Rate of Contribution
under the Coal Mines
Provident Fund
Scheme**

more or less a case of discrimination. While the employees' provident fund scheme was introduced in 1952, the workers' dearness allowance was also included in the basic wage for the purpose of calculating the contribution to the provident fund; why were the coal mine workers left out? Hence the coal mine workers suffer a lot.

Last year, the Government received the report from the study group on social security. They had instituted a study group to study this problem and in that report, the study group had conclusively recommended an enhancement in the rate of contribution. There is the recommendation or the charter of the study group; the report was published in 1958. I think the study group was constituted in 1957. On page 36 they have discussed the circumstances leading to the question of pension scheme and an integrated pension-cum-provident fund scheme. They were arguing as to why the provident fund contribution should be enhanced while the integration scheme had to wait and so on. Finally they came to the conclusion which I quote:

"Therefore as a first step, the present rate of contribution to the provident fund should be raised from 6½ to 8 1/3 per cent from as early a date as possible."

That means this should not wait till the pension scheme is actually introduced. This report came in 1958 and it was lying with the Government from then. If that recommendation had been accepted by the Government—it is very vital in the interests of the workers—by this time, at least about Rs. 3 crores would have been accumulated in the provident fund of the coal mine workers. The Government have worked out that with the enhanced contribution of 8 1/3 per cent, the total sum would come somewhere near Rs. 75 lakhs. We think it is a bit less. Anyway, it will be somewhere near Rs. 75 lakhs. In two years it will mean Rs. 150 lakhs. This will be the contribution from the employers. A similar contribution from the workers

also would mean that about Rs. 3 crores will be invested in the provident fund. But two years have been lost. The study group says it should be done as early as possible. If two years is not "as early as possible" and are not enough for the Government, I do not know when the Government will start it and what they mean by "as early as possible"

Not only that. The Government are getting something from the coal mines. The coal mines can afford to pay that amount. This is also one of our contentions. The coal mines are paying about Rs. 6 crores to the Government. When the Government are getting this amount, why not they at least give up about Rs. 70 lakhs to Rs. 75 lakhs in the interests of the workers as contribution to the provident fund?

Another factor is, production has also increased in the coal mines tremendously, from 1951 to 1960. In a decade, the increase is shown to be about 20 million tons; that is, from 32 million tons to 51 million tons. Within the space of a decade, this increase has worked up to almost 75 to 80 per cent. or more. Further, the productivity of the worker has also increased. According to the data available, the productivity of the worker has increased from 0.33 to 0.42 in 1959. When the productivity of the worker has increased and industrial production also has increased, and when the contribution to the Government has increased, the only thing that has not increased is the contribution to the workers' provident fund. In every other sphere, it has increased. Why should such a discrimination be made and why should the Government keep this in abeyance for such a long time?

Another aspect of the question is that the employers or the mine owners have nothing to complain if there is an enhanced rate of payment for the precise reason that the price of coal is fixed by the Government. Whenever there was a slight wage increase for the workers, the mine owners only

[Shri Warior]

advanced the plea that the cost of production had gone up and that therefore the price also must be higher. What do we mean by the increase of the price of coal? We mean that more money comes from the people for coal. More money is spent by the railways; more money is spent by the industries, and even for the ordinary home consumption, the people are paying much more. All this money is contributed by the people in one form or the other and in one direction or another. But the coal mine owners as such do not suffer anything by the increase in wages, because it is compensated by the increase in the prices. It is within the hands of the Government to increase the price even now. But in this respect, I wish to tell the Government that the workers do not want any increase at all in the prices because of the fact that contribution is increased. The consumers must not be taxed in the name of the workers. Even without all this, the mine owners or the mine operators are in a position, in this country, to give an enhanced rate as far as their contribution to the provident fund is concerned.

In the report on the administration of the provident fund schemes, there are very many things to be seen. But we do not take this report as a whole now. We confine ourselves on the present occasion only to the simple issue of the enhancement of the rate of contribution from 6½ per cent. to 8 1/3 per cent. I hope that the Government will find it possible to give this increase for the benefit of the most illiterate sections of our population. In the report itself it is mentioned that the coal mine workers are hard-working and are at the same time undergoing many hazards and even accidents are hitting them. The conditions in which the coal mine workers are working are deplorable, and the workers need the sympathy of the Government; they need the help and guidance of the Government and therefore the rate of contribution to the provident fund must be enhanced.

There are many more arguments to come and I think those hon. Members who are waiting to speak after me will mention them. I hope that in the circumstances explained by me, the Government will not find much difficulty in accepting this enhanced rate which has already been recommended by the study group. I hope that the Government also are very sympathetic to the workers and at least now, in 1961, they will accept this recommendation of the study group.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Resolution moved:

"This House is of opinion that the rate of contribution under the coal mines provident fund scheme should be enhanced from 6½ per cent. to 8 1/3 per cent. immediately."

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Sir, I rise to support this well thought-out resolution of my hon. friend, Shri Warior. Much has been said in this House regarding the increase in the contribution to the provident fund from 6½ per cent. to 8 1/3 per cent. Questions after questions have been raised in this House whether the employers controlling the coal industry or any other industry have agreed to this increase and every time we received the reply from the Government that the matter was engaging their urgent attention.

This resolution concerns the workers employed in the coal mines. The various accidents in the coal mines will prove that social security of the workers in the coal mines is absolutely essential. I do not say there is no social security, but the mine-owners are in a position today to increase the provident fund contribution from 6½ to 8 1/3 per cent. The workers are running great risks and the figures regarding various accidents will reveal how badly the mines are managed by the owners. I want to know from the hon. Deputy Minister why this matter

has not been considered as yet. Who is standing in the way? If Government feel that this has to be done, I am sure this would have been done by this time. If the pressure of the coal magnates is so much on the Government, then I am afraid no amount of official or non-official resolutions will help the workers. The time has come when we want a definite assurance whether this demand is genuine and if so, what steps Government contemplate to take to see that this is implemented.

The condition of the mine workers will excite pity. In certain mines, they are denied even the basic amenities. Recently in Calcutta I saw on the stage a play called *Angar*. When I saw it, I saw a true picture of the conditions under which the mine workers work. I wish the same play is staged everywhere. Our Ministers at least should see it to realise the bad conditions under which the mine workers work. It is so true, so real and so genuine that when you see it, you really see the horrible conditions in the mines.

I do not want to quote the same figures quoted by Shri Warior. But I once more request the hon. Deputy Minister to let us know the real reason as to why this has not been implemented as yet. I wish this resolution is adopted by this House. This should have been brought by Government themselves, but since they have forgotten the whole thing, merely because the opposition has raised it, it should not be rejected. With these words, I lend my full support to this resolution and I request the House to adopt it.

Dr. Melkote (Raichur): Sir, I rise to support the motion made in this House with regard to the increase in the contribution to the provident fund from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. As the House is aware, this House has been pleading, particularly those Members who are working in the labour field, for a rise in the provident fund contribution from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. Now this motion is restricted to the coal workers alone. I have had intimate connections with some of the

coal mines and I am aware of the difficulties which the workers there are undergoing. Their lot is indeed very difficult and the stress of life that they undergo, particularly those who work underground, is not merely hazardous and difficult, but at the same time very dangerous.

But apart from this, apart from the question of cost of living having gone up, as the previous speakers have pointed out, Government themselves off and on have been making concessions to the owners of these mines with regard to the cost per ton of coal that has to be fixed. They have been consistently raising the cost in the past decade and more and therefore, they have protected the interests of the mine-owners very well. All this money comes from the consumer, who is not an ordinary domestic consumer, an individual. Most of the coal is consumed either by the railways or other major industries in the country and those industries have been increasing the price structure of the different commodities. The Government have felt that the cost structure pattern of coal should be enhanced in order to give the management a sufficient return. It is, therefore, fitting that Government themselves should come forward to increase the provident fund contribution from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent.

I do not know what is holding back the Government from doing this. They promised to bring a very comprehensive security scheme wherein pension, accident insurance, provident fund—all these things will be merged in such a manner that the worker gets all these benefits. It is nearly 3 or 4 years since Government made that promise and that Bill is yet to come before the House. Delays are always not welcomed by any party, particularly the worker who has to do hazardous work. Therefore, while supporting the motion, I plead with the Government that they should bring forward the scheme as early as possible. Meanwhile if for any reason there should be delay, then they should implement this part of the scheme at least immediately.

Shri Nath Pai (Rajapur): Sir, the strong endorsement of Shri Warior's resolution by Dr. Melkote shows that there is a consensus of opinion in this House as regards the desirability of increasing the provident fund contribution. Very often we have heard Government spokesmen showing a kind of agreement with this thing and we, therefore, remain a little puzzled as to what is it that has been coming in the way of giving effect to this kind of anxiety which has been reflected in their speeches in this House.

There are only a few points to be made, because the case is very cogent and does not need much elaboration. Let us remember that so far as the employers' side of this is concerned though I do not like to accuse this Government, we have found very often an undue anxiety to protect their interests. When we come with this resolution that the provident fund contribution may be increased, what will be normally argued—we anticipate it because we have heard it in the past—is that the cost of coal will go high and therefore it will be reflected in higher industrial costs and this may not be good for the country as a whole, if the prices of industrial produce go high. There is a plausibility of this argument. But may I point out one or two factors? When the railway Board increase the freight on coal by 5 per cent., as the railways normally earn Rs. 40 crores, as a result of this 5 per cent increase another Rs. 2 crores would be added. This the industry can afford to bear.

When we say that the increase should be from $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent., a plea is raised that this will be reflected in the cost of the coal and that the industry cannot bear it. Now let us examine the two aspects. In the first place, when in last August, August 1960, the Coal Price Revision Committee recommended an increase it seems it was concerned only with the employer side of the problem and not the labour side. It should be borne

in mind that during this period the coal exported from India was of the order of 1,700,000 tons. As a result of that, they have made a very substantial profit because whereas the internal price of coal is, if I am not very wrong, about Rs. 19 per ton, the export price was of the order of Rs. 31 per ton. They have been, I think, cushioning this against all those eventualities, the net increased burden which they may be called upon to bear if they are called upon to implement the Government's labour policy, to which a poignant reference was made by Dr. Melkote just now when he called upon the Government to come out with a comprehensive scheme. So, in a nutshell, it is not quite correct to say that if the industry is called upon, if the employer's side is called upon to make a higher contribution, they cannot bear it and, therefore, it will be reflected in the higher cost of coal and, therefore, of industrial produce. I am trying to make out a point that the industry has the capacity to bear this burden. It is another thing what the burden will be.

There are 360,000 employees in the coal fields. Out of this, about 11,000 employees roughly retire every year, because of their pitiable condition and health to which Shri Banerjee made a reference. The scheme was implemented so late and it originally was on the basic wage with the result that after an arduous life in the cause of society they get something like Rs. 200. You can imagine how big an amount Rs. 200 is after a life of service in the coal mines of India, with their present conditions! What a man can do to his family when all his earnings at the end of his life is only Rs. 200? But this is what a large number of them are getting. This, of course, will be increasing because the number of years during which this provident fund will have been accumulated is increasing. The scheme was originally introduced in 1947 and then it was only on the basic wage; but, since 1955 it has been based on the total emoluments of an employee. But the fact remains that

11,000 or something like that number claims mature every year and the employee who goes hopefully gets something like Rs. 200 by way of his savings of his life, and he is no longer able to take any other work because of the incapacitating effect of his work in the Indian mines, whose condition and hazards are proverbial.

Before I conclude here are some figures given in the Monthly Coal Bulletin for July 1960. The accidents that take place in the Indian mines are heart-breaking. They come under the two main categories—fatal accidents and serious accidents. Here I will mention one or two figures. In 1951 the number of fatal accidents was 319. In 1952 it was 353 and 1953 it was 330. It goes on like that every year. The next year it was 429. Then, of course, it has come down slightly and fallen to 309. These are the number of fatal accidents in the coal mines. The number of serious accidents for these years again are of the order of anything between 2,000 or a margin of 100 here or there. This is the hazard involved in this industry. These figures are from your official bulletin and this is not a party literature. This is the hazard that he has to undergo every day of his work and what he gets as his life's saving is a pittance of Rs. 200.

Then, is there not an economic aspect in which we can take an interest? I will be happy if we persuade our employers or, for that matter, all sections of our community to get into the habit of thrift and saving. In industry if the contribution is increased from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. what will be the heavy burden on the industry. The total contributions—again, the figures are subject to correction—may be of the order of Rs. 60 lakhs. We know that labour is ready to bear its part of the burden. I would like to be convinced by anybody that if labour can bear the burden of Rs. 60 lakhs and if savings is very good for the country, this kind of saving which we have been trying to encourage in

the country, cannot the industry bear it? If the plea was that only the employers' side should bear the burden then, of course, one could say this was a partisan, untenable and unsound approach based on some emotional kind of approach to the labour. But the cogency of the plea is established by the fact that labour will be increasing its own contribution. Now, if labour in its present condition is willing to pay Rs. 60 lakhs, is it unfair, is it bad economics to suggest that the employer be called upon to shoulder the burden too?

I think we have made a very convincing plea. Let us remember that there are 360,000 employees and if we multiply the figure by five, which is the normal family unit in India, we know the sector of society that will be benefited, which is quite considerable. It is good for the general economy of the country also because any savings that we made during our developmental stage ultimately benefit not only those who have saved but the society as a whole. We, therefore, would call upon the Government to shed its over-anxiety. Every time a plea is made for social security Government shows over-anxiety as to how the employers will be affected. I hope the Government will show the same sympathy to the employees and come quickly with a scheme which will implement the plea contained in Shri Warior's resolution.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): While supporting the resolution moved by my hon. friend, Shri Warior, for increasing the rate of contribution to the Coal Mines Provident Fund from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent., I would just like to refer to the First Plan. In the First Plan, in the chapter on labour policy and programme there is a very good sentence and it is better that the treasury benches are reminded of it often. When a worker has placed the assets, labour and skill, at the disposal of the community, he should be assured of a measure of social security against the hazards to which he is

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exposed. This was stated some ten years ago.

At the time when the Second Plan was being drafted, when the labour policy was being evolved, there was a tripartite meeting representative of all interests under the chairmanship of Shri G. L. Nanda, the then Planning Minister, in which I was also present. Almost an agreement was reached in that committee that the rate of contribution should be increased from 6½ to 8-1/3 per cent and there was not much opposition. But the Chairman, Shri Nanda, advised us that we should defer this question of raising the rate of contribution for a while because he was thinking of imposing a levy on the industry for housing. Now what has happened? We are at the fag end of the Second Plan. Only a month more and the Second Plan will be over. In what manner has the assurance he held out in the tripartite committee been implemented. He said that it will be implemented. Now neither has he raised the rate of contribution, nor has he imposed a levy for housing on the industry. This is how that chapter has been given effect to. Here is a failure on the part of the Government in not giving effect to it. In 1957, the Labour Minister wrote to me a letter that a decision has been taken and it is only a question of time to enforce this. Four years have passed. Nothing has been done. In 1959, I sent a note to the Minister to include this matter for the Industrial Committee on Coal Mines. He did not include it. In 1960, it was not included. In 1961, it is supposed to be included for the Committee which was to have met tomorrow and the day after, but which has been postponed to April. Why all this? Are we asking anything which is unnatural? We are asking this for the poor coal miners.

15 hrs.

Let us examine the performance of the coal miners during the past de-

cade. Whether it is in the matter of production or whether it is in the matter of productivity, he has done very well. Production has increased during the course of the past 10 years from 35 million tons to 51 million tons in 1960. Similarly, his productivity has also increased from .33 a decade ago to .43 recently. Can there be a better climate than this to give effect to this? What prevents the Government from giving effect to this, I am not able to understand.

If you take their arguments for a minute, the very same Government will not be able to stand them. For instance, we have increased the price of coal so many times. We did not increase the price of coal to give effect to this. Was it borne by fact? Immediately after the statement was made, the Railway Minister increased the freight charges on coal by 5 per cent, which my hon. friend Shri Nath Pai very ably put. What prevents the Government from doing this? Has the industry not been doing well? The industry has been doing very well. Examine this point. There are 481 joint stock companies in the coal industry. If you take the internal resources used by the various joint stock companies, public limited companies, for capital formation, the figures would be very revealing. I would only quote a few figures about internal resources used by the various industries in the country for capital formation. These are given out in the Reserve Bank bulletin 1956 Rs. 117 crores; 1951—Rs. 83 crores; 1958—Rs. 103 crores. The picture will not be different in 1959 though the data is not available. What does this show? For ploughing back into the industry, the worker has contributed. For society, the worker has raised the production. What does he want? Some people might ask, why do you single out the coal miners. I want this for all the factory workers as well. For the factory workers, this question has been referred to a Technical committee. I do not agree with the approach

of the Government in appointing the Technical committee, because I have shown in the various committees in which I participated that there is a strong case for increasing the rate of contribution. Only to avoid enforcing it, they have appointed this Technical committee. Not with a sincere desire. Because, profits during all these years, whether you take the coal industry or the other industries, have increased. Profits have not gone down. Otherwise, there would not have been so much of internal resources used for capital formation.

The hazards to which a coal miner is exposed are nine times more than of a factory worker. If you take the serious injury rate, it is far far greater than any other worker. Is that worker not entitled to a fair and better treatment? In reply to a question, the hon. Deputy Minister said that the liability on the coal industry will be Rs. 75 lakhs a year. What has been the value of coal raised by these workers? He raises coal worth Rs. 100 crores. Are not the workers who raise Rs. 100 crores worth of coal entitled to an additional Rs. 75 lakhs? For what purpose? So that he can fall back upon it when he retires from service after putting 25 or 30 years of service. Is he not entitled to spend his leisure after active service in a very good way? Is he to be thrown on the streets after having given his best to the country and to the industry? What stops the Government from doing this? I have always observed that this Government does certain things only after a very long time, after pressure is brought. When there is a case, when there is need for it, why wait at all? We have seen, for example, the Workmen's Compensation Act. The coal miners also come under this. This is also a form of social security. For the last so many years, the rate of compensation to be paid to those who are injured in accidents, which has been put in the schedule prepared in 1939, continues. The schedule has not been revised. They said they are going into it. They have

appointed a committee. The committee has given a report. The Government have examined the report and a Tripartite committee has also endorsed it over a year ago. They have not amended the schedule. What does this show? Have you got the interests of the workers at your heart? Tomorrow the coal miner has to produce 97 million tons of coal. If he is not going to raise that, the whole industrial development of the country will founder on the rock of coal. Therefore, in order to enthuse him, in order that a worker may spend his leisure after active service in a better way, he should be ensured a proper social security measure. Can there be a better climate than this for enforcing this measure?

I have proved from the production point of view, from the productivity point of view, from the productivity of internal resources that have been utilised for capital formation. The royalty that is being paid year after year to the State Governments has increased. The coal miner's wage has also increased. But, when he retires, he gets only Rs. 200. Is that sufficient for a worker who has got a family? He will immediately be thrown on the street. Either he has to go in for another job with a less wage or go abegging. Therefore, I would earnestly request the Minister to accept this Resolution moved by my friend Shri Warior.

Let us take the earnings of a coal miner. An average factory worker, in 1958-59, got an earning of Rs. 1284 whereas a coal miner got only Rs. 1200. He has always got the lowest. If you take an industrially advanced country, you will find that the wages of a coal miner are the highest amongst all the industrial workers in that country. Any industrially advanced country you can take. That is so because the industry is like that. The hours of work in those countries are less than the hours of work which a coal miner has to put in in our country. Under these circumstances, I would very strongly urge upon the

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Government to accept the Resolution moved by my friend Shri Warior.

Another point which I wish to make out is about the plea that is made out—which I do not accept; I say that the industry can meet this liability of Rs. 75 lakhs. Even assuming for a moment, that it results in an increase in the price of coal, the plea that the industries which are based on coal will not be able to bear this burden is untenable. Because, the cost of coal in the most coal intensive industries accounts for only 10 per cent of the cost of raw material. Therefore, the plea that the industries cannot bear the increase is not tenable. Only last year the Railway Minister has proved that the industries are able to bear another Rs. 2 crores, by enhancing the freight rate.

Therefore, considering the life to which a coal miner is exposed, I once again strongly urge upon the Minister to accept this resolution. Let him not say that he is not in a position to accept it because we, as Members of Parliament, have to discharge our responsibility towards these workers who are in the lowest rung today.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): There are some foreign observers who have told us in their reports, after visiting our country, seeing our industrial establishments and our labour legislation, that the labour legislation of India is very much out of proportion....

An Hon. Member: Out of date.

Shri D. C. Sharma:....to the social and economic exigencies of the country. They think that our labour legislation is very progressive and that it goes so far that some of the industries in India cannot bear its impact.

Shri Chintamoni Panigrahi (Puri): From which countries are they?

Shri D. C. Sharma: Though our labour legislation is very advanced in

some respects, is very progressive in some ways, so far as the coal industry is concerned I feel that it has been by far and large out of step or out of tune with the changing conditions of the social and economic climate of our country. When I look at the coal industry map of India, I find it to be a kind of patch-work. In some parts it is good, and in some parts it represents some out of date things, things which should have become obsolete long ago.

For instance, though we stand for a mixed economy—I also stand for a mixed economy—I believe that so far as the coal industry is concerned, no cogent grounds have been given for having this mixed economy in it. This industry, I believe, in the interests of the country, in the interests of the proper working of the coal mines and the proper utilisation of the coal resources in the country, deserves to be nationalised straightaway, here and now. There should be no delay about it. I do not understand why this is not being done, why the private sector is being kept alive in this industry. The private sector has so many other industries to look after, to exploit and make use of, but this industry deserves nationalisation.

An Hon. Member: Immediately.

Shri D. C. Sharma: If you will keep quiet, I think I will be able to make my own point, and I do not think I stand in need of prompting from you.

I was submitting very respectfully that if there was one industry which needed immediate nationalisation, it was the coal industry. Look at it from any point of view. Here are so many accidents in the coal industry. Only some time back, there was a very disastrous accident in a coal mine. We hear of strikes in this industry, we also hear of other things which are not socially desirable connected with this industry. We also hear that some of the proprietors of these coal mines are exploiting the mines in such a way

that they are doing harm to the national good in the long run, that they are not exploiting them in a proper or scientific way, in a way to give the maximum results to the country. Therefore, I feel that this coal mine business is such as will not make any Indian happy if he goes into it properly, thoroughly and exhaustively.

While the coal mines are not up to date in the matter of exploitation, in the matter of utilisation of our resources, I also believe that the coal mine worker is not receiving his due. I say this with due deference to all those persons who are responsible for running these coalmines. As the coalmines are a patchwork of progress and backwardness, so the coalmine worker is also a victim of, I should say, things progressive in some parts and retrogressive in other parts. Therefore, I feel that the coalmine worker should be given his due, his proper due, in this country, about whose labour legislation we feel so very proud and happy.

I say this for many reasons. When I talk of the workers, I feel that it is the worker's standard of living, the worker's standard of wages, the worker's economic status in whatever field of industry he may work, that conditions the economic conditions of all the workers in the other fields. I do not say this only with reference to the skilled workers. I say this with reference to unskilled workers and to mechanical workers. A worker sets the pace of economic standards in any country, and I feel that if we want to see whether a country's standard of living is going up, whether economic prosperity is being shared by all, we have to look to the worker. What is he getting in terms of wages, in terms of holidays, in terms of amenities, in terms of other social benefits? We have to ask ourselves these questions and if they are answered satisfactorily, they are answered not only for the good of that worker in that particular field, but for the good of all kinds of workers, even white-collared workers, workers in all fields of endeavour in the country. But when you look at

these coalmine workers—I have seen some of them—I feel that somehow we have not been able to give them as much attention as necessary. What does a worker want? A worker wants proper conditions of work. I ask the Labour Minister: has the coalmine worker proper guarantees of safety in the mines? So far as safety in the mines is concerned, our country is not very up to date. I say this with a due sense of responsibility. We have not taken note of those devices of safety which the coal mine workers in other countries have.

Again, have we provided all those amenities to our coal mine workers, which are given in other countries of the world? I saw a picture of Queen Elizabeth in one of the papers in UK when she went to visit a coal mine. A coal mine is a place where you should be able to show that the workers are being treated with the utmost consideration. But, here, I think most of us would not like to go to those coal mines, because there the safety of the worker, and the standards of living of the worker are not looked after properly. Therefore, I would say that, in order to redeem our name, and in order to redeem our reputation in this country, we have got to look after the workers in these coal mines. We have to provide him with greater safety of work, because he goes down into the bowels of the earth to bring coal for us. We have to provide him with those modern things which enable him to enjoy the amenities of life. We have got to do all those things.

It is said that the industry will not be able to bear the extra cost of this rise in the rate of contribution to the provident fund. I say that provident fund does not benefit only that person who gets it: it does not benefit only that worker who is going to get it, but it is going to be a kind of national investment. To look upon provident fund as something personal, as some advantage which some person gains is not right. Provident fund is a kind of national saving; it is a kind of national deposit. It is so because it is the most

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visible and concrete form of social security which any progressive country can provide to any worker. Therefore, to say that by paying 8-1/3 per cent as provident fund to the coal worker, you are taking away something from the industry, which will be very detrimental to its interests, is utterly wrong. Any amount that the industry gives to the worker, so far as provident fund is concerned, will in the long run be conducive to the good of the nation. That is so because, in the first place, the worker will be more productive than before. Productivity is the slogan of the twentieth century. All the countries of the world are progressing only because they are trying to step up the incidence of production. There are some countries where people are paid in terms of hours of work, per hour of work. Here, of course, we are paying our workers in terms of a day's labour or a week's labour or a month's labour. Provident fund gives greater sense of social security to the worker than anything else.

My hon. friends have been talking about compensation and all that. I do not say that the workers should not get adequate compensation. But compensation is something positive done for something negative. That is to say, compensation is given for some injury that has been sustained, for some risk that has been run. That is also good. I do not say that compensation should not be given. But this provident fund is something positive done for something positive. That is to say, you give this provident fund to a worker because he has been putting in good service all these days in the mine or in some other field of work in which he is engaged. Therefore, provident fund blesses both those persons; it blesses the worker, because he works with a greater determination than before, knowing well that his old age will be looked after better; it blesses also the person who owns the coal mine and who gives it, because he knows that he is going to be paid back

in terms of greater work and greater productivity than before. Therefore, nothing can promote the contentment of the workers to a greater extent than the provident fund.

I am a firm believer in this, and I believe that the coalminer who has to run so many hazards deserves this as much as anybody else. I was going to say that he deserves it much better than anybody else, but I do not want to make any invidious comparison between one type of worker and another. Therefore, I believe that the rate of contribution to the provident fund should be raised now.

It will be said that the industry cannot bear it. It will be said that our resources are not adequate for this purpose. I believe that in this matter we should not always equate resources with social security. Social security stands on a higher footing, and, therefore, it is not to be relegated in that manner. I would, therefore, say that the desire generally expressed in this resolution that the rate of contribution to the provident fund should be raised is something that deserves consideration, not only because our Industrial Policy Resolution says that, not only because we say that our labour legislation is very progressive, not only because we are thinking in terms of the Industrial Policy Resolution, but because I feel that the worker in the coal mines has to be looked upon as a worker whose condition of living is going to affect the conditions of life of all other types of workers. I think, if I am not wrong, that the coal mine worker is the first kind of industrial worker in this country. Therefore, the coal mining industry is a kind of pioneer industry in this way. Therefore, I would say that this resolution which has been put forward by my hon. friend Shri Warior deserves the entire support of this House.

We are now in the beginning of the Budget Session. We are at the end of the Second Five Year Plan, and we are

going to embark on the Third Five Year Plan. We are going to have a new plan for the economic improvement of our country. I believe that in the Third Five Year Plan, the worker is going to play a very important role. If this resolution is accepted today, I can assure you that it will be like a word of good cheer not only to the coal mine workers but to all kinds of workers. I would say also that this kind of thing will affect not only the industrial workers, to whatever categories they may belong, whether skilled or unskilled workers, but also the so-called white-collared workers.

We should not think of white-collared workers only in terms of secretaries, additional secretaries, joint secretaries, half secretaries, under-secretaries, section officers and so on. There are other kinds of white-collared workers also in our country and their number is much more than that of the persons whom we see around us, and who are doing good work for our country. There are white-collared workers in the field of teaching, for instance, and also in other fields. I do not want a teacher to be called a worker, but I am calling him a worker in a different sense. The white-collared workers of all varieties, in all classes and at all levels of life will feel happy when they get this news. I believe this will be a very good beginning for the launching of the Third Five Year Plan. This will be an auspicious beginning; it will be something which will let our Five Year Plan proceed very fast and very successfully.

I was told the other day that the Naga State's interim body was going to be inaugurated on the 15th of February, but it was put off because it was thought that the 15th February was not an auspicious day. I want that the 17th February should be an auspicious day in the annals of labour legislation and we should accept this proposal and see that this auspicious day marks also the beginning of the

Third Five Year Plan. With these words, I support the Resolution whole-heartedly.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: How long will the hon. Minister take to reply?

The Deputy Minister of Planning and Labour and Employment (Shri L. N. Mishra): Ten minutes.

Shri Huhammed Elias (Howrah): I shall not take more than 5 minutes.

Shri Ranga (Tenali): Are you calling upon the Minister?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Not just now.

Shri Muhammed Elias: I am very much thankful to my hon. friend, Shri Warior, who has moved this Resolution, and to other hon. friends who have supported it. This Resolution is absolutely non-controversial and the Government should not hesitate to accept it, because it seeks to increase the provident fund contribution of coal mine workers from $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent to $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent.

The coal mine workers in our country are the worst sufferers, in spite of their holding a very important position as the coal industry is a most important industry. Without coal, the trains cannot move, the factories cannot run, steamers and ships cannot operate; nothing can go on without coal. That is why the workers of this industry should be given better facilities and the best wages. This principle is universally accepted. In other countries, the coal workers are the best paid workers. Their amenities are also of the best standard. Recently I had occasion to visit some of the European countries, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany and the Soviet Union. There I saw how the coal miners are given the best wages and amenities. In those countries, their wages are similar to those of the Ministers. In Czechoslovakia, the coal miners get nearly 3,000 to 4,000 crowns; the Ministers' salary also is 3,000 crowns. In the Soviet Union, the respective salaries are almost the same—I do not know the exact figure

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because there is some change due to the new currency coming into force.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Are the professions also interchangeable?

Shri Muhammed Elias: The professions are not interchangeable. But it is because of the importance of the work and the fact that they have to work under very difficult conditions that their wages are the same as those of the Ministers. We hear of many accidents in many countries in coal mines; but we never hear of an accident happening in those countries, because the safety measures there are so wonderful that no accident can happen. Except for one accident in Czechoslovakia within the last ten years where just 12 workers died, we do not hear of any accident in those countries.

If I go on narrating the amenities which the workers get in those countries, it will take nearly one hour. So I am not going to go into details of the amenities which these workers enjoy. But in our country the condition of most of the workers is very very bad; it is the worst in the coal industry. That is why, as Shri D. C. Sharma has said, without nationalising this industry, the condition of the workers will never be improved. This is because the employers and industrialists who are in this industry are only interested in making profits; they are not interested in improving the working and living conditions of the workers.

I support Shri D. C. Sharma in saying that the Government should think of nationalising this industry so that the conditions of the workers may be improved. But now I am only pleading for the acceptance of this Resolution by Government for the simple reason that thereby the workers would be a little benefited. I do not believe that if this Resolution is accepted, the whole misery of the coal mine work-

ers will be ended. But even under present conditions, a little bit of benefit will accrue to them if this Resolution is accepted. That is why I request Government to accept this Resolution.

Shri Ranga: I am glad to associate myself with this Resolution and I hope the hon. Deputy Minister in charge will be able to associate himself also with the spirit and the principle of this demand.

Shri L. N. Mishra: Of Course.

Shri Ranga: I can easily appreciate how my hon. friend would be feeling because he has himself been a well-known labour champion. Therefore, he would be able to appreciate the need for this little mercy that our friends are asking for our coal miners.

There may be practical difficulties for the time being, but I would like Government to try to overcome them. In view of the fact that they are now planning for further production—stepping up the production of coal—and also in consideration of the fact that there is an improvement in the conditions of labour all round, I think it is only reasonable for them to agree to this demand and try to improve conditions of miners to this small extent. In other countries, the wages of miners are very high because, among many other reasons, there is full employment there. The workers have a choice between coal mining and various other employments. Naturally, very few are willing to continue to be coal miners unless reasonable and humane conditions of employment are afforded to them. Unfortunately in our country, we are too far removed from the prospect of full employment for our labour force, and most of our miners have very little choice between coal mining and any other employment. Often times, they have no other employment at all if they were to give up coal mining. It is for that reason that they have to agree to work under these sub-human, if not inhuman, conditions of employment.

The question of nationalisation is relevant in this particular matter, because quite a good proportion—I speak subject to correction—of coal mining today is under the control of Government themselves through the National Coal Development Corporation. I would like to know whether the conditions of employment afforded in these mines are very much better than those offered by private enterprise. Even if Government were willing to do this bit of justice to coal miners in the mines under their control directly or indirectly, it would be some consolation, and it would be some kind of a challenge also as between the protagonists of private enterprise and public enterprise. Let Government take this point also into consideration and try and help these miners by raising the quantum of provident fund.

A very good point was made by Shri Sharma that whatever contribution is being made to the provident fund is, in an indirect manner, a contribution to national savings; and until the workers come to be qualified for receiving the payment out of the fund, that is when they cease to work, all this money will be at the disposal of Government and Government would be in a position to make use of quite a good proportion of this accumulation for national developmental purposes. Therefore, this is also an additional reason why Government should welcome this proposal.

Shri L. N. Mishra: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I have listened very carefully to the speeches made by hon. Members. I have noted the interest and support given to the resolution on the part of hon. Members. I also appreciate the anxiety of the hon. Members. So far as we are concerned, we are not also opposed to the spirit and object of the Resolution. We want to provide for fair wages, better living conditions and to secure more of social security measures. We stand for the welfare of labour. But the question is how and when to do all these.

So far as the question of raising the rate of contribution to the provident fund is concerned, it has been under the constant consideration of Government for some time; and we are going to consider the issues at the meeting, next month, of the Industrial Committee on Coal Mines. The hon. Member, Shri Vittal Rao happens to be a member of that Committee and he has made some suggestions and we hope we would come to some decisions at that meeting.

In the course of the debate many other points, which have not much of relevance to the subject, have been raised. However, I would like to say something about them. The first was about accidents in coal mines. I might inform hon. Members that things are not as bad as they have been stated here. About six months ago we had a full-dress debate on that question. The House will remember that hon. Shri Nanda had stated what the working conditions were and what were the safety conditions and safety measures taken in coal mines. A comparative study of the situation will convince hon. Members that the rate of accidents in our country is in no case higher than in other countries. We have enough of safety conditions though there is still scope for improvement. We had safety conference; a number of committees have been appointed and we are at it and we propose to improve their conditions further. There is nothing to be pessimistic about the working conditions in coal mines.

Shri Vittal Rao raised the question of housing and he said that the housing problem has not been solved. It is a fact that the problem of housing in coal mines is there. I have myself gone to the coal mining areas and I might inform the House that the housing problem is there not because of want of funds. There is enough of money. But there are other problems. Land is not available; materials are not available; there is not enough of co-operation from the parties con-

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cerned. That is why the problem of housing has not been solved till now.

Recently, we have raised the coal mines cess from 6 annas to 8 annas per ton and we believe that this will also give us some funds to cover the programme of housing.

Shri Vittal Rao asked what prevents Government from increasing this rate of contribution. As I said earlier, we want other things to be taken into consideration. Hon. Members raised the question of the capacity of the industry; especially, Shri Nath Pai raised it. It is a fact that coal-mining is one of the best organised industries in the country. Whenever there has been a demand for raising the wages, there has been a simultaneous rise in the price of coal also. Therefore, if we raise the rate of contribution it will have its effect on the price of coal; and that is a thing which has got to be taken into consideration. In the Third Five Year Plan, any rise in the price of coal will have a bearing on so many other things such as railways, transport etc. These things cannot be brushed aside lightly as some of the hon. Members have suggested.

Shri D. C. Sharma referred to our progressive measures of legislation. We do not think that our laws are in any way much ahead of the times. Our labour legislation is meant just to meet our needs. It would be wrong to say that we are going much ahead of the times and that it is not proportionate to the economic capacity of our country.

He also raised the question of nationalisation of the coal mines. You are all aware of our industrial policy and our economic policy. We are not opposed to such measures. So far as nationalisation of coal mines is concerned, it may not be a wise step to take at this stage. We are opposed to nationalisation of coal mines at the present moment because we have very many important things to do. Our

resources and capacities are limited. If we take it up at the present moment, I do not think we will be doing justice to ourselves.

About the living conditions in coal mines, I want to say that it would not be correct to say that they are as bad as they are represented or worse than the living conditions of other working class people. It is fact that, compared to some highly organised industries like the textiles and iron and steel, their conditions are bad. But if we take into consideration the working conditions of other working classes as agricultural labour and other industrial labour, I do not think their conditions are worse in any sense.

I have seen some of the miners in the iron ore mines in Bihar, Orissa and Bengal. Their conditions are worse than the conditions of coal miners. So, as far as priority is concerned, it should first go to the iron ore workers. Their living conditions, so far as welfare measures and housing are concerned, are hopelessly bad. If anything has to be done we have to start with those people.

Anyway, I am not opposed to the idea of enhancing the rate of contribution to the provident fund—of coal mine workers. But this has to be considered in the light of other problems like its effect on the price of coal. The question is under the consideration of the Industrial Committee on Coal Mines. After that we will come to some decision. So, I would suggest to Shri Warior to withdraw his Resolution and not press it.

Shri Warior: Sir, I am thankful for all the support I had received from various sections of the House including the hon. Minister. Really, there is no cogent reason not to accept the Resolution. The Minister did not advance any reason at all. Rather he had answered those points which had only an indirect relation to the subject.

The question is a simple one of enhancing the rate of contribution from one rate to another. There are so many other matters connected with the provident fund scheme. For instance, only after the worker has put in a service of 15 years is he entitled to have the benefit. We want to reduce it to 3 years or something like that. The rate of interest paid is only 3.75 per cent; and we want to raise it to 4 per cent. or more. I did not bring in all these matters because they have been discussed and discussed and argued and argued and, as the hon. Minister, suggested, have been receiving the attention of Government for the last so many years. The study group has also gone into this along with other schemes of integrated social security benefits. They have also recommended two years back that this must be done. There is no reason to be advanced against it. The question is evaded even now; the final settlement and implementation are evaded. Government has nothing to say against it; the employers have nothing to say. All the arguments are in favour of enhancing the rate. How long are the workers to wait. A day more means the workers lose and the nation also loses. It is now postponed to the next industrial conference. We do not know what all new subjects will be brought in and what irrelevant and extraneous matters will be brought in to defeat this proposition. That is the only fear we have. If the Minister can give us an assurance at this stage that this can be implemented, I am cent per cent. willing to withdraw the Resolution. Otherwise, I will request the indulgence of the House to have at least a voice vote.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"This House is of opinion that the rate of contribution under the coal mines provident fund scheme should be enhanced from 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. to 8 1/3 per cent. immediately."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We shall now take up the next resolution. Shri Warior wanted only a voice vote.

RESOLUTION RE: PREVENTION OF THE USE OF PLACES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP FOR POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

Shri Parulekar (Thana): Sir, I beg to move:

"This House is of opinion that the Government should bring forward suitable legislation to prevent the use of places of religious worship and pilgrimage for political propaganda and agitation."

Sir, I do not expect that the subject matter of this Resolution can be of any serious controversy.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Why is there the need for this Resolution?

Shri Parulekar: Because there are many things which are not controversial and yet the Government does not take steps to implement them.

Shri Punnoose (Ambalapuzha): Government has to be encouraged.... (Interruptions).

Shri Parulekar: I do not expect it to be a controversial issue for the reason that the principle embodied in this Resolution is innocuous, innocent and reasonable. This Resolution says that the places of worship should not be used for political propaganda or agitation. The merits of the Resolution are so obvious and apparent that it is not necessary for me to dwell at length on them.

Now, what is the object of a place of worship? The object is to worship God, to offer prayers to God, to seek His blessings for various purposes. It is the individuals business. Anyone can go to a temple, a mosque or Church or to any other place of worship and seek the aid of