

[Mr. Speaker]

must be appointed. That is a suggestion for action. Shri Prabhat Kar says that this is causing serious inconvenience and workers will be discharged and therefore effective and immediate steps ought to be taken. The Minister will kindly bear all this in mind and make a complete statement on Monday. Let us see thereafter. In the meanwhile, I do not think it is necessary to allow this adjournment motion.

Shri Sadhan Gupta: (Calcutta—East): The adjournment motion may be held over.

Mr. Speaker: I have disallowed the adjournment motion.

Shri Sadhan Gupta: Before hearing the hon. Minister?

Mr. Speaker: He will make a statement on Monday.

NOTIFICATION UNDER ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT, 1955

The Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of Notification No. G.S.R. 537, dated the 17th April, 1961, under sub-section (6) of Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. [Place in Library. See No. LT-2902/61.]

12.8½ hrs.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Shri H. C. Dasappa (Bangalore): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Minutes of evidence given before the Sub-Committee of the Estimates Committee on Public Undertakings and Minutes of the sitting of the Estimates Committee relating to Hundred and twenty-fifth Report on the Ministry of Steel, Mines and Fuel—The Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited.

STATEMENT RE: ACCIDENT IN THE EAST KAJORA COLLIERY ON THE 22ND APRIL, 1961

The Deputy Minister of Planning and Labour and Employment (Shri L. N. Mishra): An accident occurred in the East Kajora Colliery near Asansol at about 4 P.M. on the 22nd April, 1961 involving the loss of five lives and injury to one person.

2. The accident was due to fall of roof, 70' x 40' x 4', in a demilairing area in which extraction of pillars had been completed and which had been fenced off after withdrawal of the roof supports. Six miners, who were to work on a new pillar, left off their legal working place and entered the prohibited area after removing the fencing for the purpose of collecting fallen coal. The roof fall took place when they were busy loading coal. Five persons were buried completely and one partially. The latter was extricated and sent to the hospital.

12.08 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDIT ACCOUNTS OF HINDUSTAN INSECTICIDES LIMITED, 1959-60

The Minister of Industry (Shri Manubhai Sah): I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following papers:—

(i) Annual Report of the Hindustan Insecticides Limited for the year 1959-60, along with the Audited Accounts and the comments of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon, under sub-section (1) of Section 639 of the Companies Act, 1956.

(ii) Review by Government of the working of the above Company. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-2901/61.]

3. Intimation about the accident was received at the office of the Regional Inspector of Mines at 2 P.M. An Inspector of Mines left for the mine immediately. The Deputy Chief Inspector of Mines, who was at Dhanbad, also left for the mine shortly thereafter.

4. The mine was last inspected by the Inspectorate on the 28th January, 1961. The roof that collapsed and caused the accident had not been exposed at that time. There had been no fatal or serious accident in the mine during the last three years.

5. It is unfortunate that the present accident in East Kajora Colliery (West Bengal) has followed in quick succession the two accidents in the Simlabanhal and Budroochuck Collieries (Bihar) about which a statement was laid on the Table of Lok Sabha on the 21st March, 1961. It may, however, be mentioned that in recent years the fatality rate in mines has registered a downward trend. The fatality rate per thousand persons employed in 1954 was 0.72. As against this, the rate in 1955 was 0.64; in 1956, 0.53; in 1957, 0.40; in 1958, 0.78 and in 1959, 0.47. The comparatively high rate during 1958 was due to the unfortunate disasters in Chinakuri and Central Bhawrah collieries which took a toll of about 200 lives.

6. As required under the Mines Act, all fatal accidents are enquired into by the Mines Inspectorate. The causes of, and the responsibility for, the accidents are fixed and suitable action is taken against managements in cases where the responsibility is theirs. Courts of Inquiry under the Mines Act are also set up where the causes and circumstances of an accident cannot be ascertained otherwise. Separate Courts of Inquiry under the Regulations are set up for considering the fitness of defaulting officials like managers and surveyors.

7. Inquiries into the fatal accidents that took place in 1959 show that 53 per cent. of the accidents were due to misadventure, 18 per cent. to fault of subordinate supervisory staff, 15 per

cent. to fault of management and the rest to miscellaneous causes.

8. As regards the vigilance of the Inspectorate in launching prosecutions, statistics for the five years 1955 to 1959 show that convictions were secured in the large majority of cases, the percentage of convictions to decided cases varying from 67 to 97. There was thus no inefficiency in the conduct of cases.

9. An analysis of accidents by causes shows that accidents due to falls of roofs and sides account for over 50 per cent. of the total accidents in mines. This is true not only of Indian mines, but of mines all over the world. Large areas of the roof are constantly exposed in the course of working in every mine, and the only way to prevent roof falls is to support the newly exposed roof as required by the law. This responsibility rests squarely on the management. Inspectors can discover faulty supports of roof that exist at the time of their inspections but can do nothing in respect of defaults committed in day to day working. The penalties provided under the Mines Act were suitably enhanced recently. The special Safety Conference convened some time ago has helped in laying greater emphasis on safety by all concerned. It is hoped that there will be steady improvement in the matter of safety in the coming years.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Sir, this is the third accident in succession.

Mr. Speaker: The suggestion of the hon. Members was that the inspection was not carried out in the proper way. One after the other the roofs of mines are collapsing, causing danger to lives. From one it has come to three accidents now. So, according to them, the inspection is no good. The hon. Deputy Minister is defending the inspecting authorities who, on the other hand, must be requested or directed to take a greater interest in this matter. Immediately after inspection, the roof collapses. How can you say that the inspection was right?

Shri L. N. Mishra: This accident took place two months after the inspection was over. Roofs have to collapse after you take out the coal from the mines.

Mr. Speaker: Roofs have to collapse even when the men are there?

Shri L. N. Mishra: It was declared a prohibited area and the labour were not allowed to go there. The labour went there to take out coal. This has taken place in an area which was declared a prohibited area. No labour of the management was allowed to go there. The labourers went—to take coal—to this area which was declared a prohibited area.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Sir, I seek your help. My submission is that there should be some high-power enquiry committee. The Minister is making a statement on the basis of the inspection report that the workers left their legal place and went to a prohibited area. Their dead bodies were found. It is a serious matter. Let there be an enquiry. Just to deprive the workers of their legitimate compensation even the dead bodies are changed by mine owners. There should be a discussion on this. Sir, you allow a discussion when the reports are laid on the Table.

Shri L. N. Mishra: There is no compensation for loss of life.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member deny that it is a prohibited area?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I want to know whether he had the entire mining area....

Mr. Speaker: I am putting a straight question to the hon. Member. There is no good asking the hon. Minister from time to time not to be satisfied with their own inspectorate, and then ask them to have a high-power committee. They cannot be brought from heaven; they are already here. But there must be sufficient ground for appointing one. Does he deny that this was a prohibited area?

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Firozabad): This can only be said by the hon. Minister. But my point is, how were the workers allowed to be there? Was there no machinery to check them from going to that area?

Mr. Speaker: People commit trespass to pick out some coal that is left out.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): Sir, it happens in mines sometimes that there are some mis-adventures. What I would like to know from the hon. Deputy Minister is whether a trade union representative was present when the Regional Inspector or the Deputy Chief Inspector of Mines carried out the enquiry?

Shri L. N. Mishra: I have not ascertained that. They should have been there. I will try to find out whether they were there or not.

12.15 hrs.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Deputy Minister of Works, Housing and Supply (Shri Anil K. Chanda): Sir, there is a half-an-hour discussion today on Asoka Hotel. It is scheduled to begin at 5.00 P.M. There is an investiture ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan and some of us have accepted the invitation to attend that function. My humble submission is that we may have the half-an-hour discussion at 4.30 P.M. instead of at 5.00 P.M.

Mr. Speaker: I am not here to decide, but I can only take care of Parliament. The Parliament won't adjourn on account of any of these matters. Hon. Members must be here. Whoever wants to go, I can't prevent him from doing so.

Shri V. P. Nayar (Quilon): After the investiture let us go to Asoka Hotel.