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Shri M.R. Masani,
M.P.
57, Lodi Estate,
New Delhi-4.

Dear Sir(s) ,

We take pleasure in forwarding herewith tear-sheets from the April '66 issue of the MOTOR TRANSPORT in the hope that it may be of interest to you.

Yours faithfully,
for MOTOR TRANSPORT

Encl.- Tear-sheets

Chittaranjan Das
Editorial Department

Date _____

Dear Sir(s) ,

We take pleasure in forwarding herewith tear-sheets from the _____ issue of the MOTOR TRANSPORT in the hope that it may be of interest to you.

MASANI'S FORCEFUL PLEA FOR ROAD TRANSPORT

Speaking on his cut motion in the Lok Sabha during discussions on the demands of the Transport Ministry, Sri M. R. Masani said, 'In the short time that is available I shall try to touch on three separate topics - Road Transport, Tourism and Aviation.

In so far as Road Transport is concerned, I have no time to go into the matter thoroughly except to say that it remains the Cinderella of Indian industries and services. There are two points on which I would particularly like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister. One is the gross over-taxation from which Road Transport suffers in this country. Taxation is discriminatory and it has reached such limits today that, if a truck has to go from Delhi to Calcutta or Bombay, taxation borne by the operator through various States comes to twice the amount of the entire Railway freight! Over taxation on Road Transport has created today in the Punjab a very unfortunate

situation where trucks have gone off the road, because it is no longer possible for Road Transport to function except at a loss. Thousands of trucks are lying idle there as a consequence of which valuable goods including food-stuffs which are to be transported are rotting. This is an unfortunate development to which one cannot take objection. After all, if the truck operators make losses, there is no point in saying that they should carry on their business. The All India Motor Unions Congress has backed this development, and it is likely to spread to Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh on the 7th of April. Soon over the whole of Northern India road transport will come to a stop. I would urge the hon. Minister to invite the leaders of the All India Motor Unions Congress in Delhi to come and meet him and try to understand their difficulties. I hope that when he is satisfied about their case he would ask the Punjab Government to withdraw the additional levy of 50 percent on Goods tax which has brought about the stoppage of Road Transport in the North.

The attitude of the Railway in trying to use their monopoly to throttle long distance development on the roads is objectionable. Even today there are two Circulars in force—one is dated 9th September 1958 and the other 16th June 1959. They lay down that Road Transport cannot function inside the country over a distance of 300 miles or a radius of 150 miles without the permission of Their Majesties of the Railway Board! This is a highly objectionable position. Repeated assurances have been given in this House, including one by Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri before he became Prime

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mes within the States. Under these various categories, the assistance given, has been of the order of Rs. 130 to 135 crores in the First Five-Year Plan programme; about Rs. 245 to 250 crores in the Second Plan period; and about Rs. 480 crores in the Third Plan to the close of which we are now coming."

"Developmental works in connection with national highways, roadways of inter-State importance and the State road system have been extended after careful examination by this Ministry and with this, we have progressed considerably in the direction of establishing national highways of the length of about 16,000 miles. We had several missing links in this network of national highways; all of them have practically been linked up except a few."

"We had to plan and build about 252 bridges over the various national highways; most of them have been completed; only a few of them are in arrears which we are presently considering."

About the border roads Sri Poonacha said, "As far as border road development programme is concerned, we have the Border Road Development Authority constituted which has taken up a programme for developing roads in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal, Bhutan area, Assam, NEFA, Mizo Hills, Nagaland, etc. The length of road under this programme would be 5,341 miles, of which 3,887 miles of road work has already been taken up. We have also a programme for improving the roads which are in existence in these areas, such improvements being to an extent of 2770 miles. This is as far as border

road development programme is concerned."

"Later, after we had the conflict with Pakistan in 1965, we were confronted with certain deficiencies in our communication system in the region of Rajasthan and Gujarat. There also, we have drawn up plans for the development of 2,500 miles of road length in Rajasthan and 954 miles or nearly a thousand miles of road length in Gujarat area at an approximate cost of about Rs. 26 crores so far as Rajasthan is concerned—this is all additional—and about Rs. 12 crores so far as Gujarat area is concerned. It might take two to three years for us to complete this programme of road development in the States of Rajasthan and Gujarat and in the other areas."

Referring to the point made early—about transport operators strike in the State of Punjab, he said, "Here again as related to transport problems, I must say that the Ministry has been endeavouring its best to develop the transport system in the country because that is the surest and the quickest way of transporting commodities from one place to another within a State area, within a limited area, barring of course the Railways which do a commendable job of transporting goods from one end of the country to another—on long haulage routes—on an economical basis and on an efficient basis too. To supplement the Railway system, we have the road system and the road transport organisation set up. In this very many factors come up for consideration at every stage—the question of vehicles, the question of roads, the question of bridges and then also the question of uniform transport policy. The administration of the Motor



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Vehicles Act largely vests with the State Governments and they have their own programmes for the motor vehicles taxation and other regulations. But, by and large, it has a uniform pattern and it is being co-ordinated at the Centre by what we call, the Inter-State Transport Commission. This Commission assists the various transport authorities in the country, co-ordinates and also programmes for the issuance of inter-State or multi-State permits and thereby assist in the easy flow of goods from one end of the country to another. It might, therefore, be interesting to know that, with the various works that we have taken up, the transport system has no doubt increased in this country and one cannot say that the transport system has been put under sufferance because of the great importance that we are giving to the Railways; it is not so. If we look into the figures, we would find that the number of transport vehicles that ply in our country has increased two-fold in about five or six years' time and the capacity of production of vehicles in this country has also increased tremendously. We are now in a position to

(Continued on page 31)

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Minister, that these circulars would be withdrawn. But even today these circulars are in force.

If I may say so, this discrimination has gone on because of the weakness of my hon. friend's predecessors. They happened to be people who felt not strong enough to stand up against the Railway Minister and the Railway Board of their time. Today we have a happy combination of two developments. One is that we have got a strong Transport Minister at last, one who has got political strength and stature and one who can make his voice heard in the Cabinet. Therefore, he need not take these things lying down, as did his predecessors, who had not got this much political stature. The other happy development is that our present Railway Minister is a friendly person, in every sense of the word. He is not only friendly with the hon. Minister of Transport but is also more friendly.....

Shri Shinkre : He is the Swatantra version within the Congress.

Mr. Masani : ...towards Road Transport development. Only the other day, speaking at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on 13th March, Shri S.K. Patil stated ;

Competition was also 'a matter of religion' with him. If national economy has suffered it was solely because of lack of competition. There was no question of favouring any particular sector.

The fact remains that, although the Railway Minister has given expression to these very enlightened sentiments, those circulars which the Transport Ministry have issued are still very much there. I urge that the hon. Minister should get together with his Railway colleague hold him to his enlightened sentiments and get his cooperation in cancelling these two offensive Circulars which are a relic of the past but which are holding back Road Transport development.

Now, I come to the second topic, and that is Tourism. There, I have got three cut motions which

I may briefly refer to. One is the failure of the Government to formulate a policy on tourism ; the second is the desirability of recognising the tourist industry as an export industry, and the third is the need for the establishment of an Autonomous Authority for the promotion of tourism.

India is made for tourism ; it is a country with a very high tourist potential. It has been estimated that in the next five years, if we can only run over tourist industry and our tourist promotion properly, this country can make Rs. 100 crores of foreign exchange. Unfortunately, today, only 1.5 per cent of the world's tourist traffic comes to our share, and what is worse, the growth rate of tourism in India, which was of the average of 20 per cent from 1955 to 1960 has, in the last five years, from 1961 to 1966, dropped to an average of only 10 per cent. Other countries are forging ahead much faster. The reason is that they have got a properly planned, integrated tourist policy.

Let me say that, when this hon. Minister took charge, this Government had no tourist policy worth the name. It is a hand-to-mouth affair ; a hit-and-miss affair ; improvising all the time. There are two basic examples of where a tourist policy needs to be evolved.

The first is the recognition of the tourist industry as an export industry. Tourism is a paying "invisible export". It, like other exports, earns foreign currency, but nothing valuable goes out of the country. It is doubly valuable. We lose nothing in return for what we get. The job of the Government is to lay the infra-structure for the tourist industry ; to provide highways and roads, air fields, tourist resorts, civic amenities. Secondly, the Government has to give incentives to the tourist industry so that it may advance. By the tourist industry, I mean the hotel industry, transport companies and travel agencies. This can be done in many ways. One is to give loans for the building of hotels ; there is need for a Tourist Development Loan Fund. Another is to provide foreign exchange to hotels

and restaurants for importing essential materials and paying cabaret artistes. Another thing is to give foreign exchange for doing publicity and advertising abroad to attract more tourism. Another method may be to give an import licence for air-conditioned cars, for teleprinter facilities and so on. Every dollar of foreign exchange so spent will give us hundreds of dollars of foreign exchange in return within a year or two.

Today, unfortunately, our rupee is at a discount ; it is quoted in the free market in India and abroad at a dollar for Rs. 9 and a pound for Rs. 26 or Rs. 27. Now, the result of this blackmarketing in currency which is going on in India is that only 25 per cent of the foreign exchange which is being earned from tourism comes through the banking channels to our country. 75 per cent leaks ; it leaks in the form of export of travellers' cheques and high denomination currency notes. Anyone who knows anything about travel knows this. I have had guests in my own home in the last few months from abroad : distinguished, respectable people, who came, and with a shock told me : "What is happening ? The taxi driver accosts us and asks ; "Sir or madam, would you like to buy rupees in the black market ? We will give you twice of what you can get from the bank". When foreign visitors go round Connaught Place or Connaught Circus, they are accosted by people who ask ; "May we give you rupees at half the price of what you get

(Continued overleaf)

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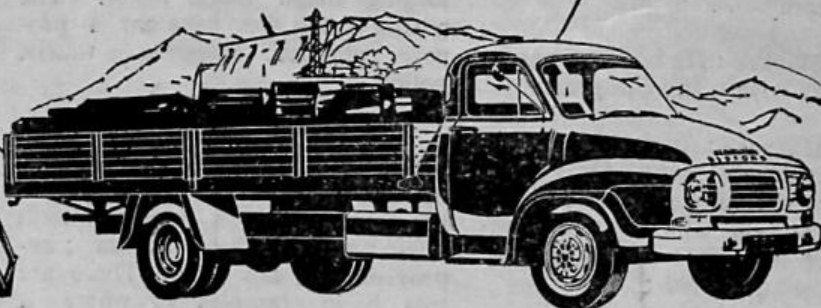
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Speech of Sri M. R. Masani

Contd.

in the banks?" And we have to answer the foreigners apologetically by saying: "Unfortunately the rupee is at a discount but the Government is so wooden as not to face the fact."

Shri Joachim Alva; This happens in the corridors of many hotels abroad.

Mr. Masani: Now, there is a thing known as 'the 8 o'clock knock on the door' in some of our well-known hotels, when, as Shri Alva says, some people come and ask, "May we oblige you in this manner?" Instead of the 2 o'clock knock on the door by the NKVD in Soviet Russia, it is the 8 o'clock knock on the door in the hotels of Delhi

In Soviet Russia, where also the rouble has depreciated like the rupee—that seems to be a consequence of communism and socialism—they have faced this problem in a realistic manner. I received a letter from a friend from Moscow last November, in which he told me what was happening there and how they are facing this problem. He said.

"One new development in the Soviet Union since my last visit is the opening of a number of stores where everything from a bottle of vodka to a volga automobile may be purchased substantially below their cost in regular stores—for foreign currency. And the acceptable

currencies are listed on the doors of the stores and include the U.S., Britain, all the Common Market and Scandinavian countries, but none of the Socialist block. In both Moscow and Leningrad foreign currency bars have been opened where drinks average about half a U.S. dollar and closing time is a good two hours later than any other similar institution in the city. Posyltorg, a mail order establishment encourages residents of hard currency countries to give Russian relatives hard-to-get items like "Moskva" refrigerators (350 rubles, two year wait) for 260 dollars, Volga cars which cost Soviet citizens 5500 roubles and at least a year's wait for 2700 dollars, delivery in ten days. These elaborate measures are calculated to bring in more scarce foreign currency so necessary to the Soviet economy..."

Why can't we do something like this here? If we do not want to have devaluation of the rupee, all right, but let us, have selective devaluation. There are two ways of doing it. One is to have a "tourist rupee" by allowing the tourists to get twice of what others get for their dollar or pound. The other is that, since 80 per cent of what the tourist spends is on hotels, shops and cars or transportation, allow the hotels, that is, recognised hotels, shops and transport agencies to change travellers' cheques and dollars at the free

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market rate, by which they will make a loss but they will go to the bank and the country will get foreign exchange, and then, compensate those who are out of pocket in the way the French Government does. What they do in France is that, when the French perfumiers give a discount on travellers, cheques, the French Government give the perfumiers half of what they have lost. The other half of the loss may be made good by giving them import entitlements. These are ways of doing it. If you study it and ask for expert advice, these things can be done.

Finally, I come to an autonomous Authority. Today, you are trying to do all this through a small department in a big Ministry. Bureaucracy is no way of developing tourism. Almost all progressive countries have established autonomous authorities or corporations or associations with Government participation and help, but with no government domination or interference. Let us do that here. The British have an example in this respect. They have the British Travel Association, a predominantly non-official body, but the Government gives 85 per cent of the funds and the tourist industry in Britain contributes 15 per cent. Let us invite our tourist industry here to contribute at least 10 per cent, if they cannot afford 15 per cent in this very early stage. Let the Government give 90 per cent; let them set up a mixed Corporation where the Government may be represented, but where experts and those who are interested in tourism may predominate, so that this can function as an executive authority, but that corporation also or authority also should not go in for commercial

(Continued overleaf)

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cial operation. It should be to promote or foster tourism, as they do in other countries. Building a hotel and providing taxis is not the job of Government. This is the job of private enterprise which can do it best. These are some ways in which you can put tourism on its feet and make money which at present it does not. So far we have escaped disaster perhaps because those in charge of tourism have been dedicated to this cause but, later on, what is going to happen? Bureaucracy is no way of doing this job.

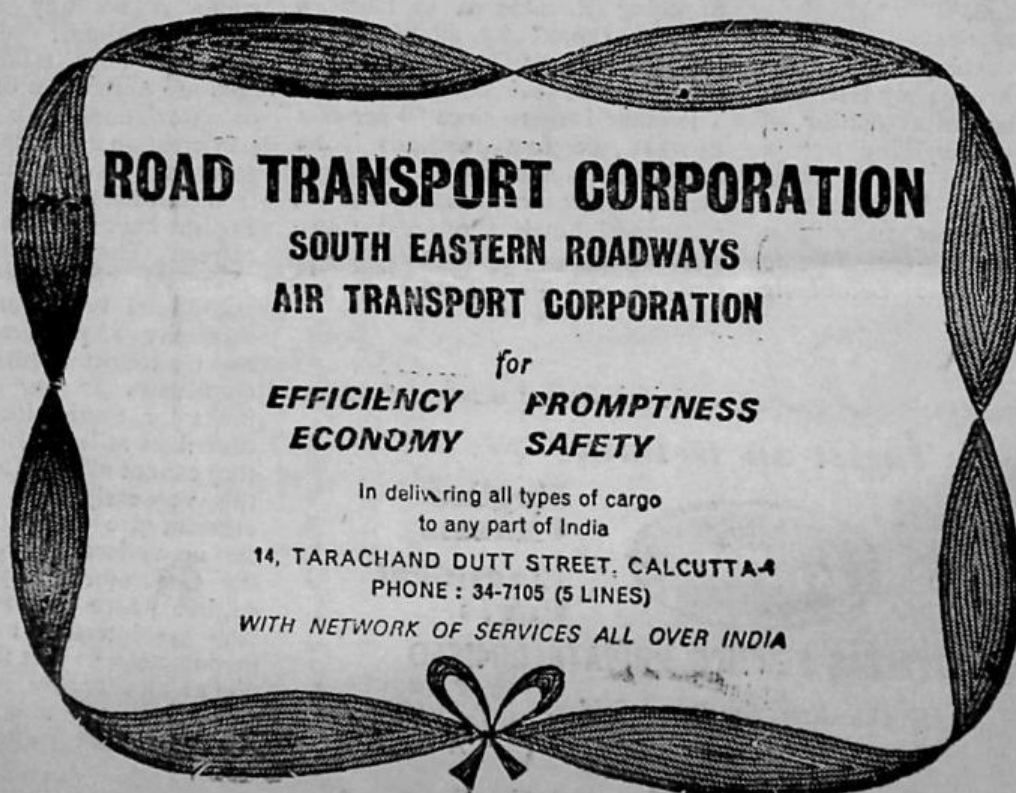
Before I conclude, I shall refer to the last topic, and that is, the Air India strike. I was very glad to hear the statement made by the hon. Minister. The facts are very clear. We are not concerned with the merits of the dispute between management and the employees concerned. We are concerned with the maintenance of law and the maintenance of the process of collective bargaining and decent trade unionism. The Navigators'

Union disliked the Award of the National Industrial Tribunal given in February this year, so they demanded a variation of the Award. We on this side have fought against the provision in the law allowing Government to vary Award. We have said that an Award must be final. Why should Government be allowed to vary an award at will? What is the sanctity of an award if Government can arbitrarily vary it? I have said this myself, and I stick to this sound proposition. I am very glad, therefore, that the Government did not vary the award. I hope they will never vary an award in future. Anyway, the matter is academic, because as the Minister has now explained, on the 23rd March the award became final, and even Government cannot change it. There is no authority on earth that can vary the award now and it is the law of the land for three years. If it is the law of the land, then we can only bow to it, and carry it out. But the point is, the union could go to the Supreme Court or could have

gone, but they chose not to. Obviously then, it is a sign of a very weak case. What did they do instead?

On the 17th March, at 4 p.m. the Navigators' Union gave notice of strike. When? After 14 days' stipulated by the Act? No. They gave notice of a strike at 4.30 a.m. that same night, that is, the following morning. In other words, the Union gave 12½ hours' notice to the country and to the Corporation in the place of the 14 days required by the law. Therefore, the strike is illegal.

Now, we on these Benches believe in the right to strike. We have opposed measures coming from this Government trying to limit the right to strike by Central Government employees, postal employees and others. We believe that the right to strike is part of a free society. But an illegal strike or wild cat strike is not a strike: it is a conspiracy against the nation and against labour itself.



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I am very glad that the Minister pointed out that these are not workers or proletarians. These are people getting more than Rs. 3000 per month, people the equivalent of those gentlemen sitting in the Official gallery over there. What kind of people are we talking about? These are a few people, 41 people, who are highly paid, holding this whole country to ransom, throwing out of employment, as they have done today through the lay-off, thousands of poorly paid people who are getting Rs. 100 or Rs. 150 per month. Why? Because the Award was not to their taste! Arbitrarily they want the Government to set aside the award. In a case like this, when the country is suffering a loss of Rs. 5 per lakhs a day—already Rs. 80 lakhs have been lost to the country—the country is being held to ransom by 41 highly paid executives. This is an intolerable position.

Let me tell the Minister that this is the result of many years of appeasement on the part of the Government and the Management of Air-India. They have been repeatedly warned not to connive at this kind of indiscipline. Time after time they have negotiated under the threat of an illegal strike and succumbed. Now the chickens have come home to roost. I am very glad, however, that for the first time I heard from those benches a firm statement in regard to this kind of industrial hooliganism. I congratulate the Minister on his statement. I was wondering all these days why, if the strike was illegal, the penalties of the law were not being enforced; why the ring-leaders were not being brought to book as the law demands; why the recognition of the union was not being withdrawn; why these 41 gentlemen were not being dismissed from their positions, as they should have been long ago, I understand that it is going to be done now, and I congratulate the government for the first time on a show of firmness and justice. It is no justice to the nation or to the millions of poorly paid people that a handful of well-paid people getting over Rs. 3,000 per month can hold up the country

to ransom. I am very glad, therefore, that this attitude has been adopted. I hope the Minister will adhere to it and not allow some misguided members of his party and other parties to push him off this principled stand.

I am also very glad to know that it is considered feasible to start some services, even of a skeleton nature, in the next few days. As the Minister pointed out, on the 1st May last year, the Navigators' Union was on an illegal strike. But at that time, the Pilot's Guild saw no difficulty in flying a plane with two pilots without a navigator. If last year the plane could be flown by two pilots without a navigator, then the Minister's proposal that there should be three pilots, the extra pilot to do the navigational work, is a measure of caution and safety which we welcome. It is to be hoped that the pilots at least will do their duty by the country. But whether they do it or not, I hope the Government will stand firm and see to it that the rule of law is maintained in the field of industrial relations. The people who will be most hurt if this kind of hooliganism is allowed is the working class in this country. Collective bargaining and trade unionism will get into disrepute. Ultimately, people will get so fed up that the public will turn against unions and organised labour. This is happening in other countries. It is as a friend of organised labour, as a believer in trade unionism, as a believer even in the right to strike after proper notice, that I felicitate the Minister on the stand he has taken. I only hope he will stick firmly to it, whatever the consequence.

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Sri Barooah speaking during the debate on Transport Ministry's budget during the current session of the Parliament said that reasons for greater stress on road transport were that the modern industrial complex needed speed and flexibility besides economy in transportation and all these advantages were available with the road transport. A part of his speech is published here.

Transport is a forerunner to development as there cannot be any development without good transport. It plays a very vital role in building the economy of an area or a country. It is gratifying to note, as Mr. Masani stated, that its importance has been realised to a certain extent and the ministry has been upgraded. It has been placed under the charge of a very able Cabinet Minister. I welcome our new Minister, Mr. Sanjiva Reddy and Mr. Poonacha, who have had very distinguished careers.

Our transport planning has not been able to keep pace with the overall demand for haulage capacity in the economy and the capacity of our road transport is one of the lowest in the world. It is capable of handling only 19½ per cent of traffic carried by the railways. In U.K. road transport handles 70 per cent of that country's total surface transport. In Italy, it is 69 per cent. In USA miles and miles of railway lines are being taken out during the last two decades, yielding place to road transport.

The reason for greater stress on road transport is that the modern industrial complex needs speed and flexibility, besides economy in transportation and all these advantages are available to a much greater degree with the road transport than with the railways.

Firstly, it is the speed. It is generally seen that the speed of goods transport by rail is only 50 miles per day, while that of road transport is 300 to 400 miles a day. Secondly, the cost of laying of a railway line is three times the cost of construction of a road. Thirdly, it takes much lesser time for the construction of a road than for laying a railway line. Fourthly, it is not possible to take the railway line to all the places anywhere; the road, on the other hand, can be taken anywhere, whether a hill-top or a dale. All these factors place road transport in a more advantageous position than the railways. Besides, road transport has greater employment potentiality than the railways. For handling the same volume of goods, road transport employs seven times as many persons as the railways do. For every one crore of rupees invested in road transport, there will be employment for 12,000 persons. All these are important factors in favour of road transport. That is why developed countries are generally taking to more of road transport than rail transport.

Instead of dealing with it in a general way, I want to mention the specific problems of my State, Assam, because of its backwardness in transport facilities. If a straight question is put as to which of the States in India is suffering most for want of transport facilities, readily