

[Shrimati Kanak Mukherjee]

Region and is facing an unprecedented crisis, political and economic and problems of national integration. This region is most backward even after 39 years of Independence. To meet this challenge what is most important is to build up an infrastructure for rapid economic progress. Extension of Railways not only to Tripura but also to other States of this region is most important and vital from this aspect. Tripura has rich raw materials, plenty of gas and forest products. If utilised properly, they can offer employment and living to 22 lakhs of its population. Though the State Government is trying its level best to uplift the living conditions of the people consisting 70 per cent refugees and 29 per cent tribals and 80 per cent below the poverty line, the response of the Union Government is not upto the mark. Even the formation of the North Eastern Council was of no special benefit to the region. The Dinesh Singh Committee recommendations were not implemented so far. The State of Tripura has at the moment only 34 kilometres of metre-gauge railways. Though all the three survey works for extension of Railways upto Agartala have been completed, it is difficult to understand why the Union Government could not include this extension works in the 7th Five-Year Plan. The construction of the metre gauge line from Dharma-nagar to Kumarghat (33 kilometres) was taken up in 1978-79 and the said project was scheduled to be completed in 1984; but only 22 kilometres lines have been completed as on 26-3-1986. Rest of the ten kilometres is yet to be taken up for construction. Distance from Kumarghat to Agartala is 120 kilometres and for this survey work has been completed. But the Central Government has not given any assurance to construct the Railway line beyond Kumarghat in the 7th Plan period.

Therefore, in order to emphasise the high importance of this work and for setting up of gas-based fertiliser industry, spinning mill, jute mill in Tripura, students and youths of Tripura have undertaken a long journey of about 2.700 kilometre, from Agartala to New Delhi to place these demands before the House

of Parliament which is in Session on 7th May, 1986. This is the culmination of their Statewide struggle which included civil disobedience and courting of arrest. Alongside, the State Legislative Assembly adopted unanimous resolutions in favour of these demands. In the Parliament also Members pleaded for extension of Railways to all the States in this region.

I, therefore, urge upon the Government to fulfil the long-standing demands of this region and request the Minister concerned to make statements in the House in this regard.

THE TEA (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1986

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Now we take up Government's legislative business—the Tea (Amendment) Bill, 1986. Shri P. Shiv Shanker.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER): Sir, the main objectives of the Tea Board, which was set up under the Tea Act, 1953, include besides regulation of production and export of tea, measures for development of tea industry, such as increase in productivity, improvement in quality, undertaking research projects, promotion of Indian tea and provision of incentives for planned increase in tea production and modernisation of tea industry. For this purpose, the Board increased expenditure on tea promotion activities and a number of other schemes. In order to defray this expenditure, there is a provision under Section 25 of the Tea Act for levy of cess at a rate of not exceeding eight paise per kilogram. Over the years expenditure of the Tea Board has been increasing and rate of cess was increased from 4 paise per kg. to 6 paise per kg. on 27th November, 1975 and 8 paise per kg. with effect from 11-8-1978.

The average tea prices in 1978 when cess was fixed at 8 paise was Rs. 14 per kilogram. In 1985 average auction prices were Rs. 25 per kg.

Although the rate of cess levied is near the maximum allowed under the Tea Act, the cess collections are no longer sufficient to meet the expenditure of the Tea Board on its developmental schemes. The short-fall in cess collection in 1983-84 over net expenditure was of the order of Rs. 47 lakhs, and in 1984-85 was of the order of Rs. 115 lakhs. If the current rate at which cess is levied is maintained, the gap is likely to increase because of a higher level of expenditure envisaged in the Seventh Plan. Further, the lower cess collections will limit the capability of Tea Board to extend its operations for promotion of tea in India and abroad as well as its developmental activities for increasing production—especially so—in the context of resources constraints with regard to plan outlays.

Taking into account the increase in prices and profitability over the last seven years which has enhanced the capability of the industry to bear a higher rate of cess, as well as the need for increased incentives and expenditure by the Tea Board upward revision of rate of cess is fully justified. Teas produced in certain areas like Darjeeling where profitability is low, for which concessional excise duty has been extended, can be exempted from the increased rate and continue to pay a cess at the present rate or whatever may be revised. This differential is justified keeping in view the peculiar topography and agroclimatic factors and special developmental needs of the tea industry in these areas.

There is, at present, no express provision in the Tea Act to provide for powers of the Tea Board to write off losses as irrecoverable. The Bill also seeks to incorporate a provision to this effect in the Tea Act.

I take leave of the House for consideration of the Bill.

The question was proposed.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN (West Bengal): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, this amendment Bill proposes to enhance the cess from 8 paise per kg. to 15 paise per kg. on tea. The Statement of Objects and Reasons

says that in order to meet the expenditure of the various developmental and other activities of the Tea Board the cess collected so far has become insufficient. It also says that the gap between the proceeds from the cess and the actual expenditure of the Tea Board is likely to widen further in view of the higher level of expenditure envisaged in the Seventh Plan.

Now, Sir, if this is the increase in the cess on one side it will affect the consumers and on the other it will result in large tax revenue coming to the Tea Board. To that extent, I fear the Parliament control will be diluted. Before I come to the cess aspect, I would like to point out the activities of the Tea Board. The Minister says in the Statement of Objects and Reasons that the Tea Board activities are likely to increase in the future. So the increase in the cess is necessary. As regards the Tea Board it has six overseas offices. They are in New York, London, Brussels, Cairo, Kuwait and Sydney. The maintenance cost of these six offices is about Rs. 2 crores in foreign exchange. You can just imagine how such an huge amount is spent for maintenance of overseas offices of the Tea Board. Actually what is the performance of the Tea Board? Let us go into it and what benefits the country is getting because of the existence of these offices abroad which cost such a huge amount of money from the public exchequer.

Now, Sir, we find that our tea industry is facing stiff competition from other tea exporting countries. Although, we are perhaps the biggest producer in tea, we are facing stiff competition from other tea exporting countries, particularly, we are facing very stiff competition from Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka tea has been successful in capturing many of our markets which traditionally purchased Indian tea and Sri Lanka has captured all those markets.

Sir, India's export last were 220 million kgs. of tea out of which, Soviet Russia alone accounted for 106 million kgs and India's export to countries other than Soviet Russia have dropped by 50 per cent during the last 15 to 20 years. Sir, if this be the record of tea export from India, I do not know why the hon. Minister says, the activities of the Tea Board

is likely to increase in future and that is why the cess has to be increased to meet that expenditure. Sir, while these things are happening in case of tea export, we find another problem in our domestic market also. Sir, in the domestic market, the production of tea is increasing very slowly but the domestic consumption of tea is increasing very fast. As a result, the Government is unable to solve this problem. Sir, in the seventies, I do not remember the exact year, the Government decided that they will encourage Indian tea, I mean the value added tea which means instead of sending large quantities of tea, they will send value added tea so as to bring forth much more profit to the value added tea. But that decision remained on paper.

Then, Sir, the Tea Trading Corporation of India (TTCI) was set up. Although the TTCI was set up for dealing in the tea trade, at the same time, all the private companies were also allowed to deal in tea. Sir, in reply to one unstarred question, the Government said, the major part of tea trade is in the private sector. Now while the major part of the tea trade is in the private sector and in public sector, not only the TTCI is there, the Balmer-Lawrie is there, the Andrew Yule is there but at the same time, the STC is also doing tea trade. Now, I feel the entire tea trade in our country is in a mess, and there is a big gap between the cost of production and the sale price of it in the domestic market.

Sir, in the past also, if I remember correctly, it was demanded that the tea trade in India should be channelised through one organisation. Why has this TTCI been set up in addition to STC, Balmer-Lawrie and Andrew Yule unless we channelise the entire trade through one organisation i.e. TTCI? Now, the TTCI has become a subsidiary of STC. The STC is doing tea trade. They are getting orders from outside and those orders are being executed by some private companies and thus, TTCI is losing market because of the private companies entry into the tea market to the help of STC. In this way, when we set up a public sector company for doing tea trade, and at the same time, we

allow the private sector company in such a way and the STC also gives business to the private sector company then the main purpose of setting up of TTCI is being defeated.

Then, Sir, there was a report of the Committee on Public Sector Undertakings. They also recommended and so far as I remember, the Secretary of the Commerce Ministry when he appeared before the Committee on Public Undertakings, he also agreed to it that this tea trade conducted by the Balmer-Lawrie and Andrew Yule should be merged with TTCI. And the entire tea trade should be done in the public sector. But even now a major part of the tea trade is done by the private sector. Packaged tea that is being sold outside and also inside the country is being done mainly by two multinational companies, Brooke-Bond and Lipton, which are subsidiaries of Unilever of London. Now these multi-national companies are given the liberty to do everything in tea and they, at their whims and caprices, increase the prices. That is why there is a big gap between the cost of production and the price at which tea is sold in the domestic market. And in between there are so many parasites also. These parasitical elements also take advantage of this situation and they also collect money while the consumers are fleeced. I feel that the entire tea trade is in a mess.

The Tea Board, the TTCI, Balmer-Lawrie, Andrew Yule, the STC—so many public sector organisations are in the field of tea trade. At the same time, the private sector is also there. So in this situation, what happens is, on the one side, our foreign markets are being squeezed. The foreign markets are being captured by other tea exporters like Sri Lanka and, to some extent, Kenya. And now China is also entering the tea market in a very big way. On the other side, domestic consumers are being made to suffer due to the high cost of tea. This is one side. Another side is, India is said to be the largest democracy. We say we give much

weight to the public sector and talk of the commanding heights of the public sector. But there are several countries like Egypt, Libya and Afghanistan where the tea trade is entirely controlled by the public sector. Not only is the tea trade done by the public sector but it is highly subsidised also. And they are allowed to sell only packaged tea. Loose tea is forbidden in these countries because loose tea is subject to adulteration. To check adulteration in tea, all these Governments allow only packaged tea to be sold in their countries, and it is being done by the public sector companies. They do not allow adulterated tea to be sold in the market. But in our country, most of the tea trade is being done by the multinational companies and other monopoly companies like Duncan Brothers of Goenka, while the entire public sector companies like the Tea Board, the TTCI, the STC, Andrew Yule and Balmer-Lawrie are kept aside. And they are fighting against each other. Although the TTCI is a subsidiary of the STC, there is a tussle between the TTCI and the STC. The STC collects orders and distributes to private parties. The TTCI is neglected. Balmer-Lawrie competes with the TTCI and Andrew Yule competes with Balmer-Lawrie. In this way the public sector companies compete among themselves. So the entire tea trade in a mean is this country. Because of this mess the price of tea is rising day by day and the people are suffering.

Now, the Tea Board is supposed to help the development of tea gardens. What is the situation in our country? Look at Darjeeling tea. Darjeeling tea is supposed to be the best-flavoured tea in the world. In the Darjeeling area, formerly there were 107 tea gardens. Now the number of gardens has come down to 72. And out of these 72 gardens, many are sick and many are going to be closed down throwing out of employment a large number of workers in the tea gardens. In fact, if you go to the Darjeeling area, you will find thousands of workers, mainly Nepalis, who have been thrown out of jobs. For instance, the "Gurkha Land" demand is being raised in the Darjeeling

area because, as the "Gurkha Land" leaders say, the tea gardens are not maintained properly and the traditional industry of Darjeeling is being neglected, is being destroyed. That is one of the charges of the "Gurkha Land" leaders against the Government—the neglect of the tea industry. So in that way we would also be subscribing to the secessionists and separatists who are raising the slogan of "Gurkha Land". Tea plantation is done in Darjeeling area. Tea plants are as old as a hundred years, sometimes more than a hundred years, 140, 150 years. These plants have to be replanted. For replantation heavy subsidy is necessary. But the Tea Board is unwilling to help those gardens with the result these tea gardens are dying. You are allowing the private sector to indulge in tea trade in Darjeeling. In Assam if you go to Cachar you will find that Cachar tea gardens are owned by private garden owners. What they do is within a short time they want to squeeze more money and more money; therefore, they do not nurse the plants, they do not nurse the gardens, they do not invest money for revitalisation. They squeeze and leave the garden dry. Naturally what happens is the tea gardens get destroyed, the tea workers are thrown on the streets and ultimately the growth of tea industry in our country is seriously hampered. In Assam in Cachar, in Silchar, and in Darjeeling where tea replantation is necessary, the Tea Board is not paying proper attention. Thus one of the foremost industries of our country is suffering seriously due to the neglect of the Tea Board—so to say, of the Government. (*Time bell rings*) So I would like the Government to look into all these aspects of the tea industry. Not only that. The tea garden workers are living in sub-human living conditions. In this civilised and developing world while the living conditions of other workers are said to be improving, in the case of tea garden workers there is no change; they are still a neglected lot. They are still living in miserable conditions and there is no attention whatsoever paid to their plight from the side of the Government to see that their living conditions improve. Therefore, I feel if this Bill is passed, it means the cess will

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be raised, the consumers will suffer, but it will not help the developmental activities of the Tea Board. I, therefore, request that instead of getting this Bill passed in the House in a hurry, the Government should see to it that the Tea Board actually pays attention to the developmental activities and that the entire tea trade is channelised through one public sector organisation and not through the multiplicity of agencies. Tea trade should be brought into the public sector and not left in the hands of the private sector and the multinationals. Unless and until we pay more attention for replanting and for revitalising, the tea industry in our country cannot develop just by raising the cess. I, therefore, cannot support this Bill.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE): *in the Chair*]

SHRI P. N. SUKUL (Uttar Pradesh): Madam Vice-Chairman, I rise to support this rather simple piece of legislation brought before Parliament for having a little more cess levied on the production of tea in the country so that the Tea Board could be better off financially to meet some of its urgent commitments in the direction of development of tea production in the country. It is, therefore, that—as the Minister has stated—it is proposed to amend Sec. 25 of the Act. The Bill also seeks to empower the Government to levy different rates of cess on different grades of tea. Earlier it used to be one and the same. But now they can levy different rates of cess on different grades of tea. Now the Board is also being empowered to write off losses as per the recommendations and observations of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation. As I was saying, it is, therefore, a very simple Bill. So far as production of tea and export of tea are concerned, those things are not as simple as this Bill is. Tea production in the country has been stagnant for quite some time running between 56 crore and 60 crore kgs, it has been around 55-56 crore kgs, mostly and it is stagnant. As regards the export of tea, it is also not very inspiring and it is supposed to be of the order of, say, 2 crore kgs. out of the 56

crore kgs. of tea which is produced. In other words, it is a little more than one-third of the tea produced in India which is being exported to the other countries. You see, it brings us almost Rs. 700 crores in foreign exchange. So, tea is a very important plantation for the purposes of our country, so far as our economy is concerned, and Indian tea enjoys the pride of place in almost all the countries of the world. I myself have visited more than twenty countries in the world and in 90 per cent of the cases, the tea that was served in the hotels in those countries was the Indian tea, whether it was in Japan or whether it was in the Philippines or whether it was in America or whether it was in any of the European countries. Indian tea enjoys the pride of place still. When it brings so much of foreign exchange and when it provides employment to lakhs and lakhs of workers in the country simultaneously, it is a very important subject and it is a very important plantation and we must try to ensure that there is the maximum possible increase in production as well as exports so far as tea is concerned.

Now the cess that is levied on the production of tea at present varies from 4p per kg. to 8.8P per kg. That is the maximum limit and that limit is now proposed to be revised upwards up to 50P. But, as the Minister has explained in the other House, it is not that 50P is levied as cess on the production of tea. At the moment, the Government proposes to levy only 15P per kg. by way of cess on the tea produced in the country. So, from 8P it is going to be 15P in the near future. In other words, we can say that it is going to be doubled almost, not exactly, but almost, to meet the inadequacy of funds with the Tea Board for purposes of development of tea, production and export, especially production. The Board is mainly concerned with production of tea and it is the TCI and the STC which are concerned with exports. So, through the cess the Government or the Board raises money to meet its own expenditure on the development of tea. Naturally, as I have said earlier, it is a very important matter and, there-

fore, funds have to be provided for its development. Well, the Board now has to encourage people to grow more tea and to grow tea on a large area, to increase the area of production of tea and also increase productivity. Production per hectare has also to increase along with the area under production. For this, so many inputs have to be provided and so many incentives have to be given to the growers and only then the desired level of productivity can be achieved. The third thing is that the Tea Board is supposed to look after the welfare of the employees, for which this cess money was raised. These three things have to be done by the Board. The fund available at the moment for the purpose is totally inadequate, and that is why this is proposed to be revised up. The Government is not going to get anything out of it. It is only the Board that is having more funds for having a better functioning and with greater achievements.

Well, as I was saying, export is almost the same. In fact, it decreases. These things only, over a number of years, go to show that the Tea Board has not been functioning in the desired way. Inadequacy of funds has been there. The amount of cess leviable on the tea was 4 paise and it was increased to 6 paise and to the present level of 8 paise per kg. From 4 to 8 paise, since 1975 till date, during the last ten years, the cess has been almost hundred per cent more. But has the Tea Board justified this excess? Are they doing better by producing more tea in the country or by looking after the welfare of the staff better? No, Sir. This has not been done. That is why, simply going on revising the cess or excise duty is not the panacea. If it has to be there, it should be better. But it must be ensured by the Government that whatever amount is increased, whatever amount is raised further, for the purpose, is utilised for that purpose also. As I was enumerating, the lion's share of this cess should be spent on three main things, that is, on enlarging the area of production, that is, on enlarging the production itself, then on improving the productivity and taking better care of the workers engaged

in the industry, in the plantations. Personally, I feel that on all these three counts the Tea Board has failed. I mean, it has failed to justify the increase that was granted to it by way of increase in cess. That means, from 1975 to 1985 practically nothing was done to improve the state of affairs of the tea industry. And again the Tea Board has come up with a proposal that it should be revised so that they get about 100 per cent more funds so that they can take better care of the tasks that have been assigned to them by the Government. Well, it has to be seen what the Board actually does in future. But I hope our Government, our hon. Minister, will also kindly go into the past achievements of the Board and the utilisation of funds, of the cess, that was revised up and collected for doing certain things. As Comrade Sukomal Sen was just now saying from the other side, mostly these funds are frittered away by the agents who stay in other countries or who go to other countries. Despite their restraint, they are coming and going back. Their exercise has not been able to ensure or secure a better demand from other countries. They have neither been able to step up the export nor any other thing. Tea prices have of course been going up, but proper utilisation of funds has not been there. And personally I also feel that the funds that have to be spent on other things have been frittered away mainly on foreign tours and 1.00 P.M.

Such other things. So, it should not be done in future, I hope the present Minister will kindly look into this aspect of the situation as we'll and try to improve matters.

As so many Members have said in the other House also, the constitution of the Tea Board is such that people, especially the small growers and others, feel that it is the big growers alone, the monopoly bosses, who are able to reap the maximum benefit out of the activities of that Board. That is why, if necessary and if the Government feels that it should be done, this Board should also be reconstituted and more representatives of small growers should be taken in the Board so that the interests of the small

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growers are really served. The post of the Chairman of the Tea Board has been vacant for nearly two years now. It should be filled up.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: A decision has been taken.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: I thank you for that. It is really very good that a decision has been taken to appoint the Chairman of the Board. I earnestly hope that with these additional funds, our Tea Board with a new Chairman will be in a better position to deal with the situation.

As regards the stagnation or lowering down of quality, it has to be noted that there have been complaints so many times that the quality of our tea is not guaranteed. When we secure orders, we do that for some particular standard of tea. But when we actually send our consignments, they contain a poor quality of tea. Different grades of tea leaves are added up together and that is how a little more money is tried to be earned. But that is not in the interest of the country. Quality must be maintained. You will see that in most of the European countries and in America, there is perhaps nothing like adulteration in foodstuffs. If they come to the conclusion that a particular thing is adulterated, they won't have it. That is why, you see that China has not taken so many consignments of our tobacco because it was of a poor grade. It was after a lot of haggling and pursuing that they agreed to take that tobacco from us. Similar is the case with marine products and so many other things. If the people of other countries do not get the desired quality, they discourage such imports because they can have better quality from elsewhere.

There has been a perpetual demand for the shifting of the headquarters of the Tea Board. People from Assam have been demanding it. They say that the largest portion of tea is produced or grown in that State and in the North-Eastern region of the country. Why is it that the headquarters of the Tea Board has been kept at Calcutta? Personally, I do not agree to this argument. Calcutta being a port, there are facilities of shipment. So much

of distance does not matter these days. These days, one can go to Kanyakumari and come back the next day, if not the same day. This distance is not material. By shifting the headquarters, you will be creating a problem for Calcutta itself. So, either they go or they get unemployed. So, it would not be in the fitness of the things to transfer the headquarter of the Tea Board from Calcutta to Assam as demanded by some Members of the other House in this fashion.

Madam, as regards the welfare of the plantation workers, the Plantation Workers Act which we amended sometime back in this very House also provides for all kinds of welfare activities for the staff, for their children and housing facilities, medical facilities and even distribution of foodgrains through fair price shops. All these activities are contemplated through that Act. But, Madam, there is a complaint from tea workers, specially working in the North-Eastern region that they do not get foodgrains from fair price shops, and also not in the desired quantity. I hope, our Minister would kindly go into this demand also. And if the workers are not able to get foodgrains through the fair price shops, they must be enabled to do so in their larger interest and in the larger interest of the tea industry.

Madam, more than half of the tea plants are more than five decades old. And this age is also supposed to be responsible for the lower productivity. Therefore, if possible, as the Government or as the Coconut Board is doing in the case of coconuts, the old and the diseased plants must be weeded out and healthy plants planted in a phased manner so that as soon as possible all these trees are healthy and be able to bear the maximum possible and also good leaves. Comrade Sen was hinting at one thing. I would also request the Minister to consider this. In the interest of the people of this country, the domestic price of tea should not increase with this increase in the cess. The domestic price of tea has already increased so many times in the past. And irrespective of an increase in the cess, it has increased. This should be ensured because there have been increases in other commodities recently, and the people feel

that they should not be taxed any more right now, specially in the case of an article like tea which is, perhaps, used in every home of this country from poorer sections to affluent sections. It should be ensured by the Government that there is no price rise in the case of tea because of the proposed increase in the cess through the Bill under consideration.

With these words, Madam, I wholeheartedly support this Bill which is a simple Bill and I hope that this House will pass it without any amendment, without any opposition.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN (Tamil Nadu): Madam, Vice-Chairman, this Bill appears to be a very innocuous one. But still as this gives us an opportunity to say something not only on the amendment which is brought forward but also something related to the tea industry, I would like to take a few minutes of this hon. House's time in saying something on both the Bill as well as the tea industry.

Madam, though I do not consider myself to be an expert, I represent this august House in the Coffee Board, and tea being a rival commodity, I know something about the problems of the tea industry also. I would not like to repeat many of the points made by my hon. friend sitting here, Shri Sukomal Sen, or Shri Sukul, who has gone through extensively all the points and particularly the debate in the other House. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister and, through the Minister, the tea industry in India for their impressive performance over a period of years. No doubt, it is true that production of tea in India was only about 245 million kilograms in the 50s but today that they have achieved a record production of 685 million kilograms is itself a tribute to the industry as a whole, despite the many vicissitudes through which they have gone. There was some stagnation a few years back when the production was hovering around 550 to 560 million kilograms, but after this with the recent upward trend in the world tea markets Indian tea has come to stand on its own and today if we

have been able to export 220 million kgs. valued at Rs. 712 crores, I think this is no small achievement. Why I say this is because the Minister himself has said that the trade deficit is likely to touch Rs. 9 thousand crores this year and there is an inherent and imperative need for the country to concentrate and maximise exports both in traditional as well as non-traditional items, and tea being one of the traditional items of export, I think a little bit of effort and concentration on this would definitely lead to a further rise in our exports with its attendant inflow of foreign exchange. In terms of yield, I think the industry has done well because from 1061 kgs. per hectare, today the yield is 1659 kgs. per hectare. So, the yield in the tea industry, whether with or without Government help, has increased.

Madam, the tea industry employs about 11.6 lakh workers in this country in the organised sector and, as you know, it extends from the North-East Assam and Tripura down to the deep south, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It is an industry which really calls for some sort of regulation. It is here that the hon. Members have commented on the performance of the Tea Board, which is far from satisfactory. I will not make any wild allegations of corruption or things like that about the Tea Board but only point out to the Minister what the Business Standard, a paper from Calcutta, which sent a research team into the working of the tea industry and the Tea Board, has commented, and I quote: "The Tea Board which was never known for efficiency has, of late, become a hot-bed of favouritism, nepotism of intrigue, groupism and what not." Since he has taken over as the Commerce Minister, knowing the dynamism of Mr. Shiv Shankar, he has done something but I do not understand why the Government of India from October 1984, when the last permanent chairman left, could not make up its mind about the appointment of a chairman till a few days back. If this is the efficiency with which the Government works, I am sorry it is no reflection on Mr. Shiv Shankar, there is certainly something wrong with the system of working of the Government. In fact, the tenure of the chairman is known to end on a

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certain date. The machinery of the Government is there. The machinery should be set in motion well in advance and it should see that the next chairman, whoever he is, is appointed in a very short time, and, in fact, his appointment must be announced even before the tenure of the retiring chairman comes to an end, so that the new chairman is able to take over and understand the policies and objectives and there could be a continuity...

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH (West Bengal): How can it be like that when the two Ministers are fighting?

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: Suppose the retiring chairman's term comes to an end on 31st October, 1984, they can make the announcement...

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Here two Ministers are fighting.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: Shri Shiv Shanker is the only Minister that I know. There is no Minister of State since he came to the Ministry. I am sure Mr. Shiv Shanker will keep this point in mind. Here I would like to tell him and draw his attention to the functioning of the Coffee Board, which is not having a Secretary for the last one year. I would like to request him to appoint a secretary and attend to that also. If this is the way the commodity boards are to be treated, then I am sure they will not be able to function efficiently.

Coming to tea prices, after a check on the upward trend which had gone up to about Rs. 50 per Kg. at one time, they have now come down and reached a realistic level and are hovering around Rs. 27 per Kg. The Government has taken powers to come up with the cess of upto 50 paise but as the Minister has made it clear, it would be at 15 paise; but still, there is a definite case for increased amount to be spent usefully by the Tea Board. Hon. Members referred to foreign jaunts and the huge amounts spent on the Tea Board. I would like to ask the Minister, through you, Madam, whether he has visited or proposed to visit the Tea Board offices in London and Sydney. They have got two show-

pieces. Once upon a time, the Tea Board office in London was pride of India but later, due to competition from both Sri Lanka and China. Sri Lanka Tea Board office became so popular and Indian Tea Board office was lost. I know it personally; I visited that office at the time when it was doing very well and now also when it is almost in a shambles. But now there is some improvement. Similarly, there is a Tea Board office at Sydney. They have posted IAS and IPS officers; all good persons, perhaps. But then there should be a continuous monitoring of what these offices do. A huge amount spent there will definitely be worth its while if these officers function efficiently and not just dance in attendance of VIPs who visit there.

Coming to the Seventh Plan the Seventh Five Year plan is very ambitious as far as tea is concerned. They are proposing to have 4300 acres of new plantation; 3750 acres on re-plantation and more than 23,450 acres are being rejuvenated. These are very good and tall objectives and I hope the Minister will direct the Tea Board to see that these objectives are fulfilled.

I would now like to come to the question of promotion of Indian tea. Mr. Sukul made a point about deteriorating quality of exports. Just like the Darjeeling tea, our Nilgiris tea which is grown in Nilgiris, the blue mountains of Tamil Nadu, is also quite famous. And here I would like to tell the Minister that—and it is not a reflection on the other Governments—despite the claims of various progressive Governments all over India, it is the Government of Tamil Nadu which has done the maximum under the leadership of our, Pura-tchi Thalaivar M. G. R. for the plantation labour. The wages in Assam are only Rs. 9.50 for tea labour; in West Bengal your own State, Madam, it is Rs. 10.50; in Kerala which is supposed to be very very progressive whether under Communist or Congress or Coalition rule, it is Rs. 15.5 but under our progressive AIADMK, the wages for tea labour are Rs. 16.32.

On this occasion, I would like to bring to the notice of the House the progressive measures adopted by our Government.

The Tea Association of India has requested the Government of India to continue the subsidised housing scheme for plantation workers. No doubt, plantation workers are a neglected lot. Plantation Labour Act provides that every year 8 per cent of the labour should be given subsidised housing. Here, they are starving of funds. I would request the Government of India to see that the needs of plantation labour are attended to.

Before I conclude, I would only like to make one or two points about the State of our friend, Shri Sukomal Sen and your own State. Recently, in the West Bengal Tea Corporation which is a State Government undertaking in West Bengal, nearly 4000 workers have not been given wages and statutory dues. It is not a reflection on that Government. Unfortunately, they are suffering from severe resource crisis. I would request the Government of India and the Ministry of Commerce to see what the problem is and to see that they are given necessary funds. On account of West Bengal Government's or the Central Government's difference of opinion, the workers should not go without wages.

On this occasion, I would also request the Minister—because he is so progressive—to see that while maximising tea exports, there are other commodities also like Coffee which he should keep in mind. There is no scope now because international coffee agreement is not there; it has been suspended. Madam, there is a good market for Indian coffee. On this occasion, I would appeal to him, since he is the Minister concerned to talk to the Finance Minister and see that the export duty on coffee which was reduced is totally abolished so that the growers will be benefited and our coffee becomes competitive in the world market. There has also been a strong demand from the grower-members of the Coffee Board for upward revision of the minimum release price which is under the consideration of the Government. I would request the hon. Minister to view this sympathetically. Before concluding, I would once again request the hon. Minister to see that the functioning of the Tea Trading Corporation of India which is a subsidiary of the State Trading Corporation of India, for which

again no chief executive has been appointed, is improved. This is supposed to exclusively look after the sick tea estates. A chief executive for this Corporation should be immediately appointed so that the sick tea estates are revived once again.

Finally, Madam, the Tea Board has its head office in Calcutta. I have no grouse on that. But there should also be an office, a zonal office, at Coimbatore. A regional office is there now with some skeleton staff. There is also an office at Guwahati. Both these offices should be strengthened, they should be given a proper status and they should function under a Deputy Chairman of the Tea Board. As you know, Coimbatore is very near to Nilgiris. Cochin is also nearby. Both are equidistant and nearby. Tea auction takes place at Coonoor as well as Cochin. Therefore, the regional office at Coimbatore should be strengthened into a zonal office with a Deputy Chairman at the head. The same should be done in the case of Guwahati. This will definitely help the Tea Board to function more efficiently. With these words, I commend the Minister for bringing forward this Bill. Thank you Madam.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondichery): Madam Vice-Chairman, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the tea (Amendment) Bill, 1986. This Bill seeks to amend two provisions of the Tea Act. This is a simple amendment Bill and I support it.

Firstly, it is proposed to amend section 25 of the Act for providing higher ceiling of levy of cess at a rate not exceeding 50 paise per Kg. from the existing 8.8 paise per Kg. In clause (b) a new proviso is proposed to be substituted empowering the Central Government to fix different rates for different varieties and grades of tea having regard to the location of and climatic conditions in the tea estates.

Secondly, a new section, section 28A, is proposed to be inserted, whereby, the Board can, with the previous approval of the Central Government, write off outstanding amounts from different parties. Here, I would like to point out that our country is deficient in foreign exchange. The tea industry, to a certain extent, is

[Shri V. Narayanaswamy]

contributing to our foreign exchange reserves. The export of tea in 1982 was 189.8 million Kgs. In 1983, it was 208.5 million Kgs. In 1984, 216.7 million Kgs. We have earned foreign exchanges in these three years, of Rs. 355 crores in 1982, Rs. 516.82 crores in 1983 and Rs. 744.92 crores in 1984. Actually, Indian tea export account for 26 per cent the total world consumption. Therefore, the tea industry has been given importance by the Government and this is taken care of by this amendment Bill. The Government which was getting Rs. 6 crores will now be getting Rs. 28—30 crores by this increase in cess. I would like to suggest to the Minister that the amount which will be raised by increasing the cess should be utilised for strengthening and improving the functioning of the Tea Board, for the purpose of increasing the export of tea. Madam, I would like to suggest that there should be a long-term price policy and also marketing policy, about tea export because there has always been fluctuation either in the inland price or in the foreign market and the ultimate sufferers are the persons who are planting tea or who are exporting tea with the permission of the Government of India. Therefore, hon. Minister has to come with a proposal of long-term marketing policy on tea exports and also for the local tea price.

Then, Sir, the tea industry has got record production of 645.3 million kgs in 1984. It is actually 9.6 per cent above the last year's production. The Government's ambition is to increase its production to 1000 million kgs by 2000 A.D. Therefore, for the purpose of increasing production of tea in our country the Tea Board and also the Government have to give remunerative price to the persons who are engaged in that field and also to the exporters of tea.

While exporting tea the quality has also to be given prime importance. Small country like Sri Lanka and other adjoining countries are trying to compete with our country's export. The Government has, therefore, to ensure that the export of tea from our country is always on the increase.

For this purpose, two points, price policy and maintaining quality, should be kept in view by the Government. Also the Government has to give impetus to the tea research units to benefit the persons who are engaged in the plantation of tea so that they could adopt new methods to increase tea production in this country.

Madam, the new provision 28A which is sought to be inserted provides for enormous powers to write off the amounts from parties. Hon. Minister has to make use of this provision carefully because the amounts due from various parties have to be collected. Writing off of the dues from various parties inside the country and outside is on the increase. Therefore, this provision is to be utilised and used for the purpose of giving protection to the Tea Board and also to the persons who are involved in this industry.

With these words I conclude and I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on this Bill.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Madam Vice Chairman, the present Bill seeks to amend sections 25 and 49. There is insertion of new section 28A.

SHRI S. W. DHABE (Maharashtra) He can continue after lunch.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE): We will just adjourn at 130. Let him speak for one or two minutes.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: The Minister while introducing the Bill has stated that the purpose of this Bill is to increase the cess in order to meet the expenditure that is necessary to carry out...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE): Hon'ble Member you may please continue after lunch. The House stands adjourned till 2.30 P.M.

The House then adjourned for lunch at thirty minutes past one of the clock

The House reassembled after lunch at thirty-two minutes past two of the clock. The ice-chairman (Shri R. Ramakrishnan) in the Chair.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): We now proceed with the Tea (Amendment) Bill Mr. Satyanarayan Reddy.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Sir, as I was saying, the Bill seeks to amend section 25 of the Tea Act, 1953 (29 of 1953) and insertion of new section 28A. By this amendment of section 25, power is being given to increase the levy of cess from 8.8 paise to 50 paise. I do not know whether this power is being given to increase the levy from 8.8 paise to 50 paise at one time or whether it will be increased by stages. But what I could understand from the honourable Minister's speech is that he will have the power to increase it up to 50 paise. Presently I think it is being increased up to 15 paise. But tomorrow he may come again with an increase of 25, 30 or 50 paise. I do not know. I would like the honourable Minister to clarify this point.

The purpose of increasing the cess has been stated to be to meet the expenditure of the various developmental and other activities of the Tea Board. What are those developmental activities? It is all right to meet the expenditure of the development activities, but what kind of developmental activities, the honourable Minister has in mind has not been clearly stated. But generally it has been said that so far as the object of the Board is concerned, the developmental activities are the same. That is what I could understand from the honourable Minister's speech. The main objects of the Board which was to be set up under the Tea Act of 1953 including, besides regulation, production and export of tea, measures for development of the tea industry such as increase in productivity, improvement in quality, undertaking research projects, promotion of Indian tea, provision for planned increase in tea production and modernization of tea industry. These are some of the objects or the development activities that the Board would like to carry on.

For this, the Board or the Government wants money. For this purpose they thought it fit to increase the cess from 8.8 paise to 50 paise. The purpose is to meet the increased expenditure on tea promotion activities and other schemes. I do not know what those other schemes are which the Minister has in mind.

It has been stated that the shortfall in the cess collection in 1983-84 over the expenditure was of the order of Rs. 47 lakhs; in 1984-85 it was of the order of Rs. 115 lakhs. And a higher level of expenditure has been envisaged in the Seventh Plan. All this he has in mind, and hence has increased this cess. But, as far as this Board is concerned, it is already collecting cess which totals up to about Rs. 6.27 crores. Now the cess range has been increased up to 50 paise. It comes to about Rs. 30 crores to Rs. 40 crores. I do not know exactly. But approximately I am telling that it will be Rs. 30 crores or Rs. 35 crores or so, with this increase in the levy of the cess.

Of course, we have generally said about research and modernisation of the tea industry and all other things. But what are the specific steps that you would like to take or the Board would like to take for the development of the industry? As a matter of fact, a lot of expenditure has been incurred by the Board unnecessarily, and a loss has been made to this industry. I do not know what is the expenditure that is incurred by having Tea Board officer or its representatives in foreign countries. Of course, the production has increased, and our exports have been encouraging. We are earning foreign exchange. But at the same time, I would like to know from the Minister the expenditure that is being incurred by the Board in foreign countries for having its offices and representatives. What is that amount? How are you going to minimise this expenditure? That point you have to take into consideration. (*Time bell rings*)

Sir, I have not yet started.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Seven minutes already over.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Of course, you have earned foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. 711.90 crores. From the export of about 222 million kg. in 1985, Rs. 711.90 crores worth of foreign exchange you have earned. That is good. It is a very encouraging aspect so far as the production is concerned. The yearwise figures are: In 1951 we had 285.4 million kg; in 1982, we had 560.7 million kg; in 1983 we had 581.1 million kg; in 1984 we had 645.1 million kg; in 1985 we had 657.1 million kg. This is encouraging as far as the production is concerned. But the main point is about our expenditure on our foreign representatives, whoever they may be and offices in London and other places. That aspect has to be seen. We have to minimise this expenditure.

The other important point to which I would like to draw the attention of the Minister is this. Of course, we are increasing raising the levy. But what is the condition of the labourers, the workers who are working in the tea gardens. I had been to Assam. I have gone to many parts of the tea gardens. I have seen them. The conditions of the workers is miserable. They have no proper facilities so far as their living conditions are concerned. Their wages are also very low. In Assam, the wages are the lowest. There is no proper facility for the education of their children. They also do not have medical facilities. These have to be borne in mind when you take some measures to carry out the socio-economic reforms there.

We have also been told that no bonus has been provided for the tea garden labourers. There are two types of labourers. One is permanent and another is semi-permanent labourer in the field.

Now, I come to the question of development of tea industry. What are the main steps that you have taken to improve this industry? You have said so many things. You have said that research work is going on and modernisation plan is in process of implementation. Apart from that you have said you are going to do many other things. But actually what steps you have taken so far to develop this industry has not been clearly stated by the Minister either in this House or in the other House.

So far as the Board is concerned, an allegation has been made that most of the Members on the Board have vested interests. I do not know, but even in the other House it has been stated.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: What?

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: That Members on the Board have got some vested interests. I don't know.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: What is meant by vested interests?

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Promoting their own interests. You must understand what is meant by vested interests. I would like to know from you.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I don't know.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: This allegation has been made in the other House. You have to make it clear to the House and to the country whether it is correct or wrong. Otherwise this impression will be carried on that there are big bosses on the Tea Board; here are vested interests in the Tea Board and they are selling their products on a very good price, but the small growers are not able to do that. The small growers are mostly in the South—Tamil Nadu and Kerala. What steps are you taking to protect the interests of the small growers?

Sir, there are 1300 tea estates in India, out of which 775 are in Assam alone. I would like to the Hon. Minister to give an assurance that the interests of the labourers working there will be properly looked after.

So far as the appointment of Chairman is concerned, it has been stated that this post has been lying vacant for a considerable period of time. No proper steps have been taken to fill up this post in time. I would like to know why there is such a delay in its filling up and why a prompt action has not been taken. I would like to know what steps the Government of India is contemplating to protect the interests of about 20 lakh labourers engaged in the tea estates.

and about 10 lakh labourers engaged in tea estates in Assam alone. I would request the hon. Minister to see that not only the industry is improved and modernised, but at the same time the interests of the workers are also protected. Until and unless you protect their interests, our tea industry is not going to progress. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): I request the Members to be brief. Since many of the points have already been made, I request the Members to make fresh points only.

SHRI PRITHIBI MAJHI (Assam): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on this Bill. I rise to support the Tea (Amendment) Bill, 1986. Section 25 empowers the Central Government to levy cess at the maximum rate of fifty paise per kilogram. Earlier it was 4 paise to 8.8 paise. This increase, I think, will increase the capability of functioning of Tea Board. India is the leading country in tea production and tea exporter in the world. In 1983, 208.48 million Kg. of tea which was worth of Rs. 516.81 crores was exported. In 1984, 217.04 million kg. of tea was exported which was worth of Rs. 740.48 crores. And again in 1985 222.35 million kg. of tea was exported, which was worth of Rs 711.90 crores. On an average there was an increase in our exports. But the export of tea may not stand in the same line, as it is now, keeping in view the increase of domestic consumption of tea in India. The consumption of tea is growing at a rate of 5.7 per cent per annum and we may find that in 2001 A.D. India's consumption would be 1,171 million kg. that is 4.32 times more than the consumption of 1973. that means in 2001 AD no tea may be exported as compared with 206 million kg. exported in 1973. So keeping in view this point, the production of tea in our country must be augmented; otherwise our foreign exchange will be dwindled in future.

No doubt, Sir, our Tea Board has a very important role to play in the production of tea, marketing and looking after the welfare of tea labourers. But I

have my own opinion that the Tea Board is not discharging its functions properly, effectively and reorganisation of Tea Board which should be made as early as possible, because we have seen that the Tea Board has become a silent spectator and it cannot tender advice to the sick gardens, how to overcome their sickness. It is unable to take effective measures in the initial stages of sickness of tea gardens. We have had sick tea gardens in West Bengal and other parts of the country. But it was never heard in Assam. Now, in Assam also many of the tea gardens have become sick. Sir, perhaps, you are aware of the fact that recently 35 tea gardens in Barak Valley of Assam have been closed down for a long time as a result of grave economic crisis faced by tea industry and I quote from the Assam Tribune dated 10th March, 1986

"The caption is 35 Tea Estates in Barak Valley closed down. Thirty five tea estates out of a total of 103 in Barak Valley Districts Cachar and Karimganj have closed down during the past few years as a result of the 'grave economic crisis' faced by the tea industry in the valley".

I request the hon. Minister to take over these tea gardens and save the lives of poor tea garden labourers of 35 sick tea gardens of Barak Valley of Assam.

Another point I want to raise here is that so many producers from the government-side as well as from the tea board side have said, 'more land for more tea' but expansion of land for more tea is not correct. I think expansion of area alone will not solve the problem. Proper management and proper care will make production increase. Now, expansion of area affect the people who are residing nearby the tea gardens. Here I must say that hundreds and hundreds of people are becoming landless due to the expansion of tea cultivation and mostly the labourers residing near to tea gardens in Assam are the worst affected. Expansion of tea cultivation is made by evicting those labourers from the land they

[Shri Prithibi Majhi]

possessed legally. So, this should be stopped. The existing tea gardens should be improved by proper management and by providing proper irrigation facilities.

In production of tea, Kenya is having the boost because with their 50 years of tea experience, they have been able to produce tea despite dry weather but we are depending on climate in this country, India should learn a lesson from Kenya in tea production. Tea Board should encourage the production of green tea to produce more green tea. There is no consumption of green tea in India. The consumption is much more in China, Japan and Morocco and I think, India will have a good market in Morocco—it produces more green tea. Morocco market needs 15 million green tea from India every year whereas India is producing 5 million kg of green tea every year. So, India can have a good market there. I think, the Minister as well as the Tea Board will look after this aspect of the matter and encourage producers to increase the production of green tea. Sir, the Tea Board should take initiative in social education and development of its workers because workers and industry are reciprocal to each other. One cannot survive without the other. The Tea Board has not taken any initiative for the welfare of the tea labourers. So a big initiative should be taken in this regard.

Now I come to the State of Assam. Assam has the highest number of tea gardens in India, which is earning 66 per cent of the foreign exchange out of tea. At the same time, Assam has the highest number of workers in the said industry who are still living below the poverty line after 38 years of independence. In a welfare country like ours, the Government has the obligation to improve the socio-economic and educational conditions of the working class, who feel deprived even today. Part III and Part IV of our Constitution speak for the working class, such as humane conditions of work, living wages, workers' participation in management and equal treatment in the eyes of law. In addition a good

number of labour laws under the banner of the Constitution have been made for the poor and working class, but still they have not yet received the taste of democracy. And they cannot get the taste of democracy unless they are given economic freedom. In my own experience, I have not seen a single high school near about 757 tea gardens in Assam, but I have seen a good number of country liquor shops near about each and every tea garden. There are less than 0.01 per cent educated persons belonging to the tea labour community which has a strength of 55 lakhs. Regarding the conditions which are prevailing in Assam, I may quote from "Tea India". This news was also published in London. This is about spraying of pesticides. I think it is not only about spraying of pesticides and chemicals, but about the condition of tea labour as a whole. It says:

A London datelined report distributed by Earthscan, the British agency, which appeared in a local newspaper recently, sensationalizes the conditions of tea labour in India by linking it with "the modern danger of hazardous chemicals" and by using the evocative caption, 'Slavery still alive in plantations'.

Sir, this is a fact. Slavery is still alive and the Government should bestow more and more care for these people. So I draw the attention of the Government to the need for making a special provision for the upliftment of tea labourers not only in Assam but in the country as a whole.

In this regard I support the demand made by a Member of other House for a separate Tea Ministry in the Centre. The permanent labourers number 9.15 lakhs and the casual labourers will be more than 10 lakhs. So far as the upliftment of these 20 lakhs of tea garden workers is concerned, a separate Tea Ministry can function independently. I think it will help in the rapid upliftment of the tea labourers.

Again I want to draw attention to a very important point and that is regarding the tea labourers of Assam. Mostly these tea garden labourers are tribal people. The forefathers of these people had come from Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, other places, and most of them are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But it is unfortunate that in Assam they have not been recognised as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes whereas in Tripura and Manipal at least some castes have been recognised. I therefore, draw the attention of the Government and request that it should look into this matter seriously. With these words I support the Bill.

3.00 P.M.

SHRI P. BABUL REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chairman, for giving me this opportunity. The Bill is a very simple one. There are only two aspects. One is increase in the quantum of cess from 8.8 paise to 50 paise with the consequential amendment in the rule-making power. The second is to give effect to the recommendation made by the Committee on Subordinate Legislation. With regard to the writing off of the arrears by the Tea Board some sort of fetters are placed. Government's approval is needed if the sum sought to be written off exceeds a particular amount prescribed by the Government. Tea industry is a very important one in the economy of our country. Millions of workers are engaged both in tea gardens and in tea factories. Tea is the largest foreign exchange earner. That way also it is very important. From 1981 onwards I am happy to see that the quantum of our exports is going up from year to year: 189 million kgs, 208 million kgs, 214 million kgs and 222 million kgs. But what we have to see is that between 1984 and 1985 there is steep fall in the prices. The peak prices were in 1984. They touched Rs. 29.5 per kg. Then in the next year the price went down to Rs 23. This seems to be the common feature in all agriculture products like cotton, jute, coconut, cardamom, ginger. All these prices have come down unfortunately though industrial products were going up. The result is that though

quantum-wise our exports have increased from 214 million kgs. to 222 million kgs. money-wise the foreign exchange has fallen down from Rs. 744 crores to Rs. 711 crores. Small countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kenya....

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: The unit value in the international market has gone up.

SHRI P. BABUL REDDY: Yes, Correct. I am not disputing the prices have gone down in the international market. Sri Lanka, in fact, had quoted one US Dollar less than India when they wanted to offer their product. Consequently the prices have fallen down. The point I am making is while quantum-wise our exports have increased from 1984 to 1985 from the point of view of money, foreign exchange, it has gone down from Rs. 744 crores to Rs. 711 crores. We have had occasion to go to Kerala and interview the Tea Board employees and also in Assam the Tea Board Vice-Chairman. I was very happy to see that India is the largest producer of tea in the world, the largest consumer of tea in the world and the largest exporter of tea in the world. On all these three aspects India is the largest. In our country the consumption is very high. In West Bengal itself it is about 70 million Kgs. In Maharashtra it is 58 million kgs. So, there is no gainsaying that this industry requires all the attention at the hands of the Central Government. So, the crashing of prices has to be arrested. Now I have got two or three suggestions to make. Our country is divided into two parts: In South India, the people take coffee and, in North India, the people take tea. I have also seen that the consumption of tea is the minimum in South India and the consumption of coffee is the minimum in North India. It looks as though South India, represented by our friend, Shri Mohanaragam, the people love English and coffee and, in the North, represented by Shri Ramannad Yadav, the people love Hindi and tea.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): What do you stand for?

SHRI P. BABUL REDDY: Sir, I come from Hyderabad and it is a cosmopolitan city. We take both. We take coffee in the morning and tea in the evening. So, there is a synthesis of both. There is no conflict at all.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: As far as I know, after Mr. Babul Reddy left Hyderabad, he has started taking tea only.

SHRI P. BABUL REDDY: Anyway, what I have said has also to be seen carefully because home consumption is also very important. In this connection, I have got two or three suggestions to make. One is about the value to be added by the packing of tea. We have to increase the percentage of packed tea which is being exported. It is only 15 per cent which is now being exported and that should be increased. Even in respect of home consumption this should be increased because that would generate a lot of employment. If packaging is encouraged and value is added, it would create employment. I am sorry to find from the figures when I was in the Library that in the previous years it was 40 per cent in respect of home consumption and now it has come down to 30 per cent. This aspect also has to be taken care of. One more suggestion I want to make and it is about this increase from 8.8P to 50P of cess. It is a very steep increase. I say this because now the production is about 700 million kgs. and even if it is one paisa per kg., you will get about seventy lakhs of rupees. At this rate, so, if it is 50P per kg., it should give you thirty-five crores of rupees. This is pure arithmetic. Now, I have found the gap that was mentioned. One year it is about 48 lakhs and in another year it is .5 crores or maybe 2 crores. But I am also alive to the fact that this 50P is not straightway levied, but it is only the maximum limit and the Government may notify from time to time. But the Government must bear this in mind and should not do it straight way. I am saying this because any Government, whether Central or State, whenever there is an opportunity to raise revenue, cultches at the opportunity and

goes the whole hog. So, this should not be done. In this context, I would also like to suggest that the activities of the Tea Board are very much in the interest of our country's economy and every step should be taken to spread its activities to new areas like Arunachal Pradesh where we have seen, very good lands are available, like Meghalaya where not an acre is covered by tea and so on. Now they should go to Mizoram. They have gone to Tripura where, due to the crashing of prices, 42 gardens have been closed down and the garden owners have run away and the result is that the workers' co-operatives have taken over those gardens. What I suggest is that cess should not be levied at 50P immediately. 50P is the maximum and so, the Government should go step by step. From 8.8P, they should go to 12P or 13P or 14P or 15P. Even if the gap is Rs. 1.5 crores, the maximum should be only 15P which would be enough to meet the gap. So, would like to caution the Government that they should not take undue advantage of this Bill when it becomes an Act and straightway go up to 50P, but they should go step by step only.

Sir, these are a few of my suggestions which I wanted to make. Thank you, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Now, Mr. Shanker Sinh Vaghela.

श्री शंकर सिंह वाघेला (गुजरात) : उप-सभाध्यक्ष महोदय, चाय की आदत हमारे यहां अंग्रेजों के जमाने में आ रही है। अंग्रेज चले गये पर चाय रह गई, और इही चाय और ज्यादा हमारे लोगों के दिमाग में उसकी आदत मजबूत लग गई। इसलिए आपने 1953 में टी बोर्ड बनाया।

टी बोर्ड का काम तो था इसमें और इम्प्रूवमेंट के लिए आपने जो सेंस की बात की है, इसमें इनकी जो कार्यवाहियां हैं, उसमें प्रोडक्शन व क्वालिटी, रिसर्च प्रोजेक्ट और कई चीजें इसमें हैं। लेकिन हमारे देश में सब से ज्यादा बोर्डिंग और कार्पोरेशनज जिसमें केन्द्रीय सरकार और राज्य की सरकारें जिनको नियुक्त करती हैं, वहां किसी की जिम्मेदारी नहीं होती है। सब से ज्यादा करप्शन बोर्डिंग और कार्पोरेशनज में है। सब से ज्यादा अगर मुनाफा देखना है तो आपके कन्ट्रोल में जो

चीज है वह है इसका भाव बढ़ा देना। प्राइज राइज से प्रॉफिट को मिलाना यह कोई एफीशियन्सी नहीं है। टी-बोर्ड की भी यही हालत है। हमारे देश में जो पूर्वी हिस्सा है आसाम, त्रिपुरा और साउथ में केरल और दूसरे हिस्से जहां पर चाय के बाग हैं और जो टी बोर्ड है इनकी कार्यवाही को और मजबूत करके और फिर देश के बाहर फारेन एक्सचेंज कमाने के लिए एक्सपोर्ट के हेतु आपने टी.टी.सी.आई. बनाया है, पता नहीं टी ट्रेड कांफॉरेशन आफ इंडिया की हालत क्या है? बोर्ड की जो कामगिरी है उसमें तकरीबन दो करोड़ रुपये से ज्यादा तां आफिसर्स के विदेशों में दौरे पर खर्च होता है। खर्चों के लिए आपको यह देखना चाहिए कि 8 पैसे से 50 पैसे न बढ़ाकर उसकी रेश्यो कम की जानी चाहिए और तीन-चार पैसे से ज्यादा 8 में 11-12 पैसे तक ही इसको बढ़ाना चाहिए।

श्री पी. शिव शंकर : 15 पैसे रखे हैं। मैं बोलना चाहता था।

श्री शंकर सिंह वाघेला : हां जी, लोक सभा की डिबेट में आपने 15 पैसे का जिक्र किया है। लेकिन एक पैसा या दो पैसा भी बढ़ना है तो वह कामन सैन पर ही जाता है उसका भार कंज्यूमर पर ही जाता है। अपने देश में कोई भी चीज देखिए कहीं भी एक पैसा डाला गया तो डायरेक्टली इट गोज टू द कंज्यूमर, कामनसैन ही मरता है। चाय की कोई भी प्रोडक्शन करता हो आखिर में जिम्मेदारों पे करना है वह कंज्यूमर ही है और उसे ही पे करना है। कंज्यूमर का इसमें प्रोटेक्शन नहीं है। इसलिए आप आश्वासन दे तो आभारी हूंगा कि यंत्र उप-भोक्ता पर नहीं जाएगा। उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, हमारे जो गार्डन्ज हैं, बड़े-बड़े गार्डन्ज की बात तो अलग है, सब तो मॉनेज कर लेते हैं। चाहे बड़ी इंडस्ट्री हो चाहे बड़ा किसान हो, चाहे बड़े गार्डन वाले हों, वे तो अपना मनेज कर लेते हैं कि सरकार से लाभ उठाया जाए। लेकिन जो स्पॉल गार्डन्ज हैं, जो सिक गार्डन्ज हैं उनके लिए भी आपको चिंता करनी चाहिए कि बोर्ड के लोग इनके लिए कुछ देखते हैं कि या नहीं देखते हैं। जो छोटे-छोटे गार्डन्ज वाले हैं इनके लिए आपने क्या प्रबंध किया है। योजनाएं ऐसी हैं कि जिसमें छोटा किसान या छोटा गार्डन

वाला भी न करे, इसको भी आपको दोखना चाहिए। वे जो स्मॉल और सिक गार्डन्स हैं, इनके लिए भी एक अंदाज लगाना चाहिए कि आखिर इनके लिए कौन जिम्मेदार है। वे खुद हैं या कि लेबर प्रॉब्लमज हैं या फिर गवर्नमेंट की पालिसी भी है? बोर्ड को जो आपने पावर देने की बात कही है, जहां भी पावर पैसों के लिए आती है वहां करप्शन आती है। इसलिए चाहे लॉन्ज का मामला हो, और राइट आफ करने की पावर्ज दे, वहां से फिर यहां आये और फिर एक्स रकम के लिए एक्स फिगर के लिए बोर्ड को पावर दें लेकिन वह फाइनल अथारिटी नहीं होनी चाहिए। कोई भी बोर्ड, कांफॉरेशन के आफिसर एम.डी., चेयरमैन अगर फाइनल अथारिटी हैं तो उसे कैसे मनेज करना है लॉन्ज का और कहां से लॉन्ज आये, उनसे लिया या नहीं तो राइट आफ करने की पावर पर जरूर कन्ट्रोल रखना चाहिए, वरना वहां करप्शन होता है। जहां पैसे का राइट आफ करने की बात होती है वहां सीधा करप्शन होता है। इसलिए आप इतना भरोसा मत रखिए कि यह सही चलेगा। आज तक चलता होगा, अभी भी चलता होगा, लेकिन इसमें और भी पावर्ज की बढ़ोतरी होगी तो ज्यादा करप्शन की संभावना है। उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, चाय के मामले में मंरे स्थाल में हम दनिया में पहले नम्बर पर हैं एक्सपोर्ट में और 712 करोड़ रुपये का एक्सपोर्ट भी अच्छा है। एक्सपोर्ट के लिए हमको मेहनत करनी चाहिए। लेकिन एक्सपोर्ट के लिए आपके पाम एस.टी.सी.आई. है। तो टी.टी.सी.आई. ने इतने सालों में कितना एक्सपोर्ट किया था एस.टी.सी. वालों ने कितना एक्सपोर्ट किया? तो दोनों का तालमेल होना चाहिए या तो टी.सी.आई. को वाइड-अप कर दीजिए और एस.टी.सी. को दे दीजिए या फिर एस.टी.सी. से चाय को निवालाकर सिर्फ टी.सी.आई. को दे दीजिए, जिससे दोनों में आपस में कंपीटीशन न हो या दूसरे जो मामले हैं उसके लिए सीधे टीसी.आई. को जिम्मेदार बना सकें। इसलिए मेरा यह सुझाव है कि 8 पैसे से बढ़ाकर आप इसे 15 से भी नीचे रखिए, जिससे कंज्यूमर पर इसकी बढ़ोतरी न चली जाए। साथ ही आफिसर को जो पावर देते हैं राइट आफ करने की लॉन्ज की, उस

[श्री शंकर सिंह वाघेला]

पर भी कड़ा चेंकिंग रखना चाहिए, जिससे करप्शन न बढ़े और छोटे और सिक जो हैं, उनकी देखभाल की जाय। इसके बाद जिनसे प्रोडक्शन बढ़ता है, एक्सपोर्ट बढ़ता है, जो पैदा करने वाला लेबर है, वह जहां भी जाएगा, अगर यूनाइट होता है तो वहां से कुछ भी निकाल लाता है। अगर यूनाइट नहीं है, आर्गेनाइज नहीं है तो मरता है। आखिर मजदूरोंकी हालत भी देखनी चाहिए यही लोग प्रोडक्शन में अपना योगदान देते हैं, इनका जो मेहनताना होता है, जो मजदूरी होती है और जो अन्य सुविधाएं होती हैं, उस ओर ध्यान दिया जाय। इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूँ।

श्री सूरज प्रसाद (बिहार) : महोदय, यह बिल तो बहुत छोटा है, लेकिन बड़ा ही खोटा है और इसलिए मैं इसका विरोध करता हूँ। विरोध इसलिए करता हूँ कि इसके चलते सरकार की जो चाय नीति है, वह विफल होगी। सरकार ने अभी तक 4 पैसे प्रति किलो या 8 पैसे प्रति किलो चाय पर सेंस लगा दिया था, अब इसको बढ़ाकर 50 पैसे करना चाहती है। अभी तक हमें जो इन्फोरमेशन है चाय से सरकार को आमदनी 4 करोड़ रुपये की होती थी, जो इससे बढ़कर 30 करोड़ की हो जाएगी। अगर 50 पैसे प्रति किलो के हिसाब से एसे बढ़ा दिया जाता है, तो देखना यह है कि सरकार की इस नीति का हमारे निर्यात पर क्या असर पड़ेगा? साथ ही साथ हमारे देश के अन्दर जो चाय पीने वाले हैं, उन पर क्या असर पड़ेगा? जहां तक मेरी समझ है, वह यह है कि भारत को चाय निर्यात में विदेश में कई देशों से प्रतियोगिता करनी पड़ती है। भारत को प्रतियोगिता करनी पड़ती है श्रीलंका से, कोरिया से, मलेशिया से तथा अन्य देशों से। अभी हाल की फिगर यह है कि भारत का व्यापार इंग्लैंड के साथ प्रतिकूल दिशा में जा रहा है और भारत का व्यापार इंग्लैंड के साथ घटा है। अगर यह सेंस बढ़ा तो निश्चित ही हमारा जो विदेशी व्यापार है, उस पर इसका प्रतिकूल असर पड़ेगा और भारत को और भी अधिक जबरदस्त कंपीटिशन दूसरे विदेशी देशों से, जो चाय का निर्यात करते हैं, उनसे करना पड़ेगा।

महोदय, दूसरी बात यह है कि चाय की खपत हमारे देश में पूरे उत्पादन की दो-तिहाई है। इस देश के अन्दर जितने भी गरीब हैं, उनकी कम कीमत की पेय-पदार्थ चाय होती है। गत् दो-तीन वर्षों के अन्दर चाय की कीमत में दूगुने से तिगुने तक वृद्धि हुई है। अब अगर पचास पैसे प्रति किलो के हिसाब से सेंस बढ़ता है तो देश के अन्दर चाय की कीमत भी और बढ़ेगी और जो गरीब लोग, चाय पीने वाले हैं, उन पर इनका बहुत बुरा असर पड़ेगा। इसलिए इस कारण से भी मैं इसका विरोध करता हूँ।

एक बात, जो मैं और कहना चाहता हूँ, वह यह है कि उस देश के अन्दर अगर सरकार को टी-बोर्ड की हालत में सुधार ही करना है, तो कोई यह जरूरी नहीं है कि सरकार इस सेंस को बढ़ाए, दूसरे तरीके से भी इस काम को किया जा सकता है और टी पर सेंस बढ़ाने की कोई जरूरत नहीं होगी। लेकिन सरकार ऐसी बात न करके सीधे कंज्यूमर्स के माथे पर बहुत बड़ा फेंककर चुपचाप बैठ जाना चाहती है और गरीबों की पाश्चि से पैसे छीनने का एक नया तरीका सोच लिया है। एक बात इस सम्बन्ध में कहना चाहूंगा कि बहुत से छोटे-छोटे चाय-बगान हैं, जिनकी हालत बहुत ही खराब है। देश में जहां तक मुझे जानकारी है, 40,000 के लगभग छोटे-छोटे टी-बगान हैं और उनमें करीब-करीब आधे टी-गार्डन की हालत खराब है। अगर यह सेंस उन पर लगाया जाता है तो इसका उन पर प्रतिकूल असर पड़ेगा और उनकी हालत और भी खराब होगी। इसलिए सरकार को चाहिए कि टी-टैक्स न लगाकर अपने बजट में कुछ ऐसा प्रावधान करे ताकि जो टी-बोर्ड है, उसके जो खर्चे हैं, उससे उमका चल सके। दूसरी बात जो मैं इस संबंध में कहना चाहूंगा वह यह कि अभी भी हमारे देश के अन्दर बहुत से ऐसे टी गार्डन हैं जो बीमार पड़े हुए हैं और ये टी गार्डन बड़े-बड़े लोगों के हाथों में हैं। उनके जो पेड़ हैं वे पचास वर्ष पुराने हो चुके हैं और उनके जो मालिक हैं वे नए-नए पंड नहीं लगा रहे हैं। इन टी गार्डन्स के बीमार होने का प्रतिकूल असर उत्पादन पर पड़ता है। इसलिए मैं सरकार को सुझाव दूंगा कि सरकार ऐसे टी गार्डन्स का राष्ट्रीयकरण कर ले।

दूसरी बात इस संबंध में मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि अभी टी का व्यापार कुछ विदेशी कम्पनियों के हाथों में है और वे टी को डाइवर्ट करके गलत मुनाफा कमाती हैं और हमारे देश में वे जो मुनाफा कमाती हैं उसको विदेशों को भेजती हैं। देश में एस टी सी भी है जो इस व्यापार का करती है। मैं सरकार से कहना चाहूंगा कि टी का व्यापार जो प्राइवेट कम्पनियों के हाथों में है, खासकर विदेशी कम्पनियों के हाथों में उसको सरकार को एस टी सी के हाथ में देना चाहिए ताकि सही ढंग से व्यापार किया जा सके और इसमें जो गोलमाल होता है उस पर रोक लगाई जा सके।

टी में 11 लाख मजदूर काम करते हैं। उनको न न्यूनतम मजदूरी मिलती है, न बोनस मिलता है, न दूसरी सुविधाएँ मिलती हैं, न ग्रेजुटी मिलती है। इसलिए मैं सरकार से कहना चाहूंगा कि वह कुछ इस तरह से काम करे कि जो टी गार्डन्स में काम करने वाले मजदूर हैं उनकी हालत में सुधार हो। इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं पूनः इस बिल का जोरदार विरोध करता हूँ।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Now, we will have a maiden speech by Shrimati Bijoya Chakravarty.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY (Assam): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, all of you know that Assam is the largest tea-producing States in the country and it is a fact that crores of rupees are being earned from this precious product. But what a pity that the State that produces this real gold gets nothing. It is because the companies who owned these tea estates are situated outside the State. And these companies have never cared to improve the condition of the labour and the condition of the people of the State. And 20 million labourers who are working in the tea gardens are gruelling in grave misery while these companies are earning a huge profit. So, I request the Minister concerned to make a provision in the Tea (Amendment) Bill so that these poor people may get ample chance to live like human beings. And, Sir, one point I might refer here, and it is about employment in these companies. As the owners

of these tea companies are living outside the State, these companies never employ the local people in the tea gardens. They should employ the local people in these tea gardens. Another point is that there is one tea research centre in Assam. It is situated at Jorhat. It is Tokoiai Tea Research Station. And this is run by the membership fee and some amount is offered by the Government to run it. But this is the only research station of its kind situated in the country. During the British days, this research station offered a great service towards the improvement of the tea industry. Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I request the hon. Minister to take such measures that this research station is brought under the Government control. If that is done, the private companies, which are exploiting this research centre, by making use of its technical services and scientific services, without giving anything, will be prevented from doing that.

Then, Sir, I request the hon. Minister to take such measures that all the employees working in the tea industry and all the labour force which is engaged in the tea gardens, who are giving this rich beverage to the world are given such a wage that though they may not be able to live like barons, but they should be able to live like human beings who are able to satisfy their wants.

With these words, Sir, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on this Bill.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय (उत्तर प्रदेश) : माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, अंग्रेजों के जमाने में, आज से 40, 45 वर्ष पूर्व मुस्त चाय पिला कर अंग्रेजों ने इस देश में लोगों को चाय की आदत डाली है। जगह जगह उन को एजेंट्स चाय का बर्तन ले कर घूमते थे और लोगों के घरों में जा कर चाय दिया करते थे और उम के बाद आज स्थिति यह है कि चाय इतनी महत्वपूर्ण हो गयी है कि गांव गांव में शहर शहर में केवल कुछ लोगों को छोड़ कर आज सभी लोग चाय के आदी हो गये हैं। यहां तक कि गांव में लोग कहा करते हैं कि हम को चाय की तलब हो गयी है। 1964-65 में समाजवादी विचारक

[श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय]

और नेता डा. राम मनोहर लोहिया कहा करते थे कि कुछ दिनों के बाद एक समय ऐसा आयेगा कि जब इस देश में चाय लोगों को एक रुपये कल्हड़ या एक रुपये प्रति कप मिला करेगी और आज इतिहास से यही स्थिति हो गई है।

1953 में चाय अधिनियम लाया गया था और पहली बार टी बोर्ड का प्रावधान किया गया था। इस उद्देश्य से इस को बनाया गया था कि चाय के उद्योग में प्रगति हो और साथ साथ चाय बागान में लग जायें मजदूर हैं जो वहाँ काम करते हैं उन के जीवन में कुछ प्रगति हो और वे कायदे से अपना और अपने परिवार का भरण पोषण कर सकें। यह जो संशोधन विधेयक लाया गया है इस में दो बातों का प्रावधान है। एक तो वर्तमान में जो 8 पैसे प्रति किलो सेंस है उस को बढ़ा कर 50 पैसे किया जा रहा है यानी प्रति किलो 6, साढ़े 6 गूना बढ़ोत्तरी हो रही है और यहां यह बतलाया गया है कि टी बोर्ड के जो बढ़ते हुए खर्चे हैं उन से निपटने के लिये इस बढ़ोत्तरी की आवश्यकता है। तो मेरा एक सुझाव है कि एक दम से साढ़े 6 गूना बढ़ोत्तरी करना उचित नहीं है। पिछली दफा जो बढ़ोत्तरी की गयी थी उस में यह सेंस 8 पैसे किया गया था 4 या साढ़े चार पैसे से बढ़ा कर। तो मंत्री जी इस और पुनर्विचार करेंगे और इस बात का जो प्रावधान किया गया है कि सरकार अपने हाथ में अधिकार ले लेंगी कि 50 पैसे तक की वृद्धि वह कर सके तो मैं ऐसा मानता हूँ कि आप ने 50 पैसे तक का अधिकार ले लिया है लेकिन ये आवश्यक नहीं है कि आप 50 पैसे ही बढ़ा दें और मेरा सुझाव यह है कि इस में बढ़ोत्तरी ज्यादा से ज्यादा 14 या 15 पैसे तक की करना चाहिए।

दूसरा जो संशोधन किया गया है दफा 29 में उस टी बोर्ड को यह अधिकार दिया गया है कि जो भी संपत्ति है, जो भी प्रापटी है, जो धन है उस को अगर टी बोर्ड यह समझता है कि उस को बसूला नहीं जा सकता है तो उस के लिये टी बोर्ड को अधिकार दिया गया है कि वह उस स्लिसिले में माफी-नामा कर देगा और उस खर्च को राइट ऑफ कर देगा भले ही उस में इस का प्रावधान है

कि केन्द्रीय सरकार की अनुमति इसके लिये आवश्यक है। लेकिन कोई भी संस्था इस तरह से अपने मसतों को जब नहीं हो सकती और इस लिए मैं बात का विरोध करता हूँ और चाहता हूँ कि इस अधिकार का केन्द्र सरकार के पास ही रहना चाहिए। अगर वह अधिकार टी बोर्ड को दे दिया गया तो वह संस्था निरंकुश हो जायेगी और वहाँ पर जो अनाप-शनाप खर्च होगा उस स्लिसिले में केन्द्र सरकार के पास एक प्रारूप आ जायेगा और केन्द्र सरकार उस स्लिसिले में केवल अपनी स्वीकृति दे दिया करेगी। इसलिये मैं इन दोनों प्रावधानों का विरोध करता हूँ।

तीसरा मेरा निवेदन है कि चाय बागानों में मजदूर लाखों की संख्या में हैं लेकिन जो उनकी हालत है, जो उन का स्तर है वह बहुत गिरा हुआ है। उन के बच्चे स्कूल नहीं जा पाते हैं, उन में बहुत गरीबी है, वे बीमार पड़ जाते हैं और उनको दवा नहीं मिल पाती। जो नयी शिक्षा नीति आ रही है उस में आदर्श स्कूलों का प्रावधान किया गया है लेकिन चाय बागानों में जो छोटे छोटे बच्चे हैं जो चाय बागानों में मजदूरी करते हैं उन की शिक्षा के लिये कोई प्रावधान किया जाना चाहिए। वहां पर भी स्कूल अधिक खोले जाने चाहिए जिससे कि वहां के मजदूरों के बच्चे पढ़ सकें और उन्हें भविष्य में मजदूरी से हटाकर दूसरे कामों में लगाया जा सके।

श्रीमान, मेरी जानकारी है कि पिछले 3 वर्षों से टी बोर्ड का कोई अध्यक्ष नियुक्त नहीं हुआ है। मंत्री जी से मैं जानना चाहूंगा कि इसका क्या कारण है। अंत में अपने सुझावों को दोहराते हुए मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि आप सेंस बढ़ाने के प्रश्न पर पुनर्विचार करें और धारा 29 में जो पावर आप बोर्ड को दे रहे हैं वह अपने पास रखें। इन शब्दों के साथ मैं इस बिल का विरोध करता हूँ।

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO
(Jammu and Kashmir): When I rise to support the Bill, I take a defference line

than taken by my other colleagues with respect to raising the cess to 50 paise. This is only an enabling clause for the Government to collect the cess up to that amount. Shiv Shankerji may also take into consideration the fact that there are many varieties of tea at present. Even in the Parliament House Tea Board, we have one in the name of SUPREME Brook Bond or Darjeeling Tea sold at Rs. 35 for 500 grams. If the Government should get the power to raise the cess to Rs. 1, I would have been happy so that such brands as are very heavily taxed and highly priced teas should have been subjected to the highest incidence of cess and relief should have been given to ordinary tea.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): You are not a tea drinker.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO: So, this provision is to raise is to 50 paise and I agree that this is to be used with discretion and the Government has to see that poorer sections do not undergo a great burden and I hope that the rate of cess of common tea would be less and it would be more on the higher quality of tea, as suggested by other Members.

I have only two points to make in this connection. Firstly, of all the States in India, Jammu and Kashmir, and particularly Kashmir, is the only State where the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich have been taking tea. Tea worth hundreds of crores of rupees is being imported in Kashmir valley because everywhere, in the poor families also, green tea with salt, what you call 'namak-chai' is being served and taken regularly two times a day. Similarly, tea is must there because of cold climate also. I regretfully say that even when the Tea Board collects about Rs. 20 crores odd—as suggested it has not opened an office or an outlet in Jammu and Kashmir. Why I say this is because the tea merchants there are really making hay while the sun shines; they are selling tea at very exorbitant rates. If the Tea Board has an outlet in Kashmir where they can sell janata tea, green and black, the one we get in Parliament House, I think not only the Tea Board sales will go

up by several crores of rupees but this will provide relief to Kashniris. I would request him to immediately order opening of an office of the Tea Board in Kashmir.

My second point is, the function of the Tea Board is to promote cultivation as well as sale. So far as promotion of cultivation is concerned, before 1947, we had three places in Jammu province, called Katra, Pauni and Ramnagar which were producing lot of tea and because of neglect of those areas, no tea is being grown there now. You should see that Tea Board helps in the promotion of cultivation of tea in these traditional areas in Jammu region.

My last point is in regard to cess. We are depending upon tea primarily for export. I would request the hon. Minister to enlighten me whether the cess which is being levied will be reimbursed to the exporters so that we can increase the export of tea. These are the points I wanted to mention.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Mr. Dhabe. Last speaker. You have only one minute.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the first point which I would like to make is that the Bill has no rationale so far as the expenditure of the Tea Board is concerned.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI (Maharashtra): One minute over.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: As has been mentioned by the hon. Minister, in 1983-84, the gap was Rs. 47 lakhs and in 1984-85, Rs. 115 lakhs. In 1984, the expenditure was Rs. 4.90 crores. The Government's share in its expenses, in the expenses of the Tea Board, is not more than Rs. 6 crores. Now, by this levy, Government expects to get about Rs. 30 crores. When the gap is only Rs. one crore, there is no reason why cess should be levied at the rate which has been proposed.

Secondly, Sir, the burden of this cess will be passed on to the consumer and the consumer will have to pay more for tea. Tea will become costlier. Under these

[Shri S. W. Dhabe]

circumstances. I do not know whether the promise made by the Minister will be fulfilled. As you know, the Finance Minister's promise has not been fulfilled and prices have gone up.

The third point which I would like to make is, when Assam is an important tea-growing area, there is no reason why a person from the Assam cadre should not be appointed as the Chairman of the Tea Board. When tea cultivation is an important activity in Assam, there should be a zonal office at Guwahati.

The last point which I would like to make it, by means of the proposed new section, section 28A, a blanket power is given to the Tea Board to write off losses. The principle is totally wrong. Such a power should not be given to the Board.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री आर. रामकृष्णन) अब माननीय मंत्री श्री शिव शंकर जी जवाब देंगे ।

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKEK: Mr. Vice-Chairman, I am thankful to the hon. Members who have participated in the debate on the Tea (Amendment) Bill. Many hon. Members have said that this Bill is innocuous. But at the same time, they have digressed into various other fields pertaining to the tea industry as a whole. I would like to meet the salient points made by hon. Members. It is not possible for me to reply to each and every point, each and every objection, which has been raised. But I will try to meet the salient points which have been raised. I have also noted the various suggestions made by hon. Members.

Firstly, in regard to this amendment Bill, two aspects have been covered by this Bill. One is, so far as the cess is concerned, through an amendment to section 25 of the Act, the power to impose cess is sought to be increased to the extent of 50 paise per kg. from the existing 8.8 paise per kg. But I have already said in this House and in the other House that it has been decided that the cess should be increased to 15 paise per kg., subject to the proviso which has been added, namely, taking into consideration the quality, area and other aspects, different rates may be

prescribed. It is possible in some areas, the cess may not be increased at all. That is why, the power in the proviso has been sought. Subject to this, from 8.8 to 50 paise per kg. is the increase in the cess that has been sought. But I have also given the word that to start with we are taking it only to 15 paise, that means it would be a case of 7 paise per kg. increase. Lot of arguments have been addressed by the hon. Members that this will affect the consumer, this and that. I just submit that if per kg. the price of tea is round about Rs. 27, because within this short time the price has varied between Rs. 23 to Rs. 27 per kg, 7 paise increase per kg. is not going to affect the consumer price. It will be absorbed at the stage of the producers itself. (*Interruptions*). It is 7 paise per kg and actually I have worked it out and the position is like this. So far as tea is concerned, per cup the price of tea does not exceed more than 7 paise but then the sugar, the milk, and then the establishment. Now it is that which makes it at some places even Rs. 7 or Rs. 8 per cup of tea.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): In five-star hotels.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: In the Parliament House canteen it is 50 paise per cup.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: That is why I said establishments. Therefore, the position is that *per se* this is not going to affect the price in any form. 7 paise, having regard to Rs. 27 per kg. is not going to change the position in any respect.

The other point is with reference to the power that has been given to write off. I am only dealing with the two aspects so far as the Bill is concerned. In this, it is not as though today the write off power is not used by the Board. That power vests in the Board but the Subordinate Legislation Committee of this House has felt that these matters must be incorporated in the law itself. Instead of leaving it to the executive power and then acting thereupon, it is desirable that it must be incorporated in the law itself. It is in

pursuance of that that this provision has been incorporated. Otherwise, this power exists even today. Even with regard to this power some hon. Members said that it is not proper to give these powers to the Board. The reasons they have given I would not like to go into them but the point is that under this law it has been delegated to the rule-making power as to what is the quantum that has got to be left to the Board and I am sure the rule-making authority would certainly take care to see that undue powers are not given to the Board which could create more complications. One of the hon. Members has gone to the extent of saying that large amounts will go into the hands of the Board and then there will be no control. In fact, I have worked out the position as to what is going to be the situation. As I have submitted earlier, in 1983-84 the Board had to incur Rs. 47 lakhs of expenditure more than the cess that was collected. In 1984-85 an amount of Rs. 1.15 lakhs was spent more as compared to the cess that was collected. It is only to get over this phenomenon that has come to stay in the Board with reference to the cess that this action of raising the cess was taken. Now, Sir, the position is that if at the present rate the cess is collected, it amounts to Rs. 5 crores and 40 lakhs.

And if it is raised to 15 paise uniformly, which is not likely to be there because, as I said, in some area like Darjeeling etc. or areas of Cochar where perhaps it will not be possible to raise the cess to the maximum of 15 paise, but assuming for a moment that uniformly the cess is raised to 15 paise per Kg. then the level of income that would accrue to the Board on this account would be Rs. 10,20,00,000. And in my submission if we take a reasonable approach of maintaining the cess at the same rate in different areas, perhaps it would not be more than 7 to 8 crores and this is only to meet the necessary expenditure that the Board has got now. It is not as though anybody is making a profit out of it or there are any chances for that. It is not as though a large amount is in the hands of people already. If from 4.40 it goes to 7 or 8, and then the guidelines are there for the purpose of expenditure,

I am sure it cannot be said that there is a case of a large amount being in their hands.

More than one Member had been pleased to observe—and very rightly perhaps—that it should be a case of export of value added tea. In 1982, the value added tea that was exported was 11.5 million kgs. valued at Rs. 33 crores. I would not like to go into details of successive years but in 1984, 19 million kgs of value added tea were exported at seventy and odd crores of rupees. In 1985, 33 million kgs of value added tea has been exported and the value of it was Rs. 134 crores. So gradually export of value added tea is increasing and the thrust that the Government is giving is to see that the export of value added tea increases.

Another point which was made was with reference to what was being done about the labour. A general question was raised in this regard. I must submit that so far as Board is concerned, it is taking various labour welfare measures. What the Board does with reference to these measures or schemes is only supplementing those which are provided under the Plantation Labour Act. The schemes include educational stipends to children of workers, rations at subsidised rates, capital grants to educational institutions and hospitals in tea plantation areas, reservation of seats in vocational training institutes for wards of workers, reservation of beds in specialised hospitals for treatment of cancer, TB etc. During 1984-85, the stipends that were given to the wards of the workers were 401. I would not like to go into details but illustratively I thought I should bring to the notice of the hon. Members this factor.

Some of the Members have been pleased to observe that production and export are not increasing. That is not the correct position. In fact, some of the hon. Members themselves have said that in both the cases there is an improvement. In fact, in the year 1985 657 million kgs. of production had taken place and in 1986 it is a case of 670 million kgs. When it comes to the question of exports, from 189 million kgs of exports in 1982, as the hon. Members have been

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pleased to observe, it is a case of 222 million kgs in 1985. It is true, as one of the hon. Member had said, that the unit value of tea has gone down, as a result of which we have not been able to achieve that much of foreign exchange which we should have. I must say that it is because of the keen competition in the international market, because the other countries are also trying to see that their tea is sold at a lesser price and in more quantity. That has a natural effect in the market of demand and supply and that is how sometimes it affects.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): If that be so, has it a depressing effect on the internal market?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: The point is, so far as the internal market is concerned, been ranging between Rs. 23 and Rs. 27 per kilogram.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Let me clarify. Your explanation is that the unit value realization is down in the international market. Now, if it is only that, then it will have a depressing effect on domestic prices also.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: No, no. I will tell you. (Interruptions) ... will you listen to me? I have understood the point. The point is, so far as we are concerned, today when it is case of 657 million kilograms of production out of which 222 million kilograms is exported, the rest of it, so far as the country is concerned, is being sold on the basis of the auctions that are conducted. The position is that in fact it has been seen that the prices are maintained at a particular level so that in the ultimate analysis the small farmers should not be affected. If the prices fall, the first casualty will be the small farmer. That is why I said that we try to maintain a certain level so far as the internal markets are there in Assam and they have not been affected.

Sir, some of the honourable Members had also said that the Tea Board office should be shifted. I have considered this issue in a different form.

SHRI R. MOHANARANGAM (Tamil Nadu): Where do they want to shift it?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: They want it at Guwahati. It may be that Guwahati could be taken care of in some other respects, but when it comes to tea, even West Bengal areas also produce tea and for a long time, so far as Calcutta is concerned, today when it is a case of the place for the Tea Board for the purpose of various other facilities that are available there.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: May I put a question, Sir?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Please wait. Let him finish. ... (Interruptions) ...

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: My question is this. In West Bengal if they have got a legitimate right to have the Head Office there, then we demand that it should be there in Assam and not West Bengal because most of the tea gardens are in Assam. Twenty lakh workers are there in Assam and they have no housing, no food, nothing and the conditions of these people must be improved.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I understand your anxiety and emotions, both. But you sort it out with Mr. Chatterjee, I don't mind. The point is this (Interruptions) ... As I observe, for Guwahati something else could be thought of. It is not necessary that the Tea Board office should be shifted there because, from Calcutta the exportable commodities also move, including this tea which moves from there through ships.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): You have a strong regional office there.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: Various other things could be thought of.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: That means all the other eastern States like Assam, Mizoram and so on have no capacity to export what they are producing?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I think I would not like to join issue with the honourable Member because I see that emotions, not reason, are involved in it.

Sir, some of the hon. Members have asked about the functions. I have even previously said at the very outset that the functions of the Board were to regulate production, to improve the quality of tea, to promote co-operative efforts, to undertake scientific, technological and economic research, to control pests, to regulate sale and export of tea, to register and license manufacturers, dealers etc., to improve marketing of tea and to secure labour welfare. In fact, I must also submit that various measures from time to time were taken by this Board in different places for the promotion of the tea production and sale, in both respects.

One aspect which was observed by the hon. Members was about the expenditure that is being incurred outside the country. In spite of all that, some of the hon. Members have expressed their anxiety. I must submit that there are six offices outside the country. They are in London, Brussels, New York, Cairo, Kuwait and Sydney. These offices undertake tea promotion outside India. They aim at improving the marketing of Indian tea and its consumption abroad. These activities are intended to create a favourable climate for marketing of Indian tea which is under strong competition from other tea-producing countries. Various strategies are adopted. For this purpose, the Board has promotional activities, and amongst them, they arrange to see that the overall consumption of tea in the world is increased. This is one of the strategy that they pursue. They also pursue the strategy to increase the popularity and marketing of Indian tea abroad. In this process, it is true that they have got to spend money. The question whether Rs. 2 crores should be spent is a matter perhaps I will have to go into in a little details because these officers have to be maintained. Their maintenance is also costly. I do not know why the hon. Members felt that this was an excessive expenditure. But I would like to go into it, whether it is really excessive.

One of the hon. Members was pleased to make an observation that when it comes to the question of the Board, it is dominated by vested interests. This is what was said. I was trying to look into the membership of the Board, which could invite this criticism. Sir, the membership consists of a Chairman and 30 other Members. The other Members comprise of representatives of owners of tea estates, employees of tea estates, manufacturers and dealers of tea, consumers, Members of Parliament and Governments of principal tea-growing States. I do not see how it is dominated by vested interests. I have not been really able to appreciate this. Perhaps if I would have really gone into it in a little detail, I could have looked into it.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: To the allegation that was made in the other House no proper reply has come. The allegation is not mine; I have not alleged that.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I hope you are now satisfied when I have given the composition of the Members.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: I also wanted you to elucidate whether that allegation is correct or not, I wanted an explanation.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: He was only trying to say what was said in the other House. That is all. And I have tried to give the details, the composition, so that he could come to a conclusion really whether there was any vested interest.

Then, Sir, one of the hon. Members was trying to say, I thought he was trying to say, that the Tea Board could take steps for the purpose of effecting sales in Kashmir. That is a matter which could be looked into. It is not possible for me to immediately answer that 4 P.M. question or respond to it. Sir, I have practically covered all the major points that have been raised by the hon. Members.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Sir, the hon. Minister has missed one point. I had asked what steps were being taken to look after

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the tea gardens. In the Assam and Cachar area and also in Darjeeling many tea-gardens are falling and that they are dying down their number is getting reduced. I wanted to know what steps the Tea Board is taking for their replantation.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: That part I have answered in the House in a different form. In fact, in the Budgetary support also we have been spending money for replanting. This aspect I have explained. Of course, subject to the constraints on their finances, if it is possible they should do it because one of their functions is to increase the production as also the productivity. Therefore, one need not go into so much minute technicality because there is also the support from other ends for the purpose.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA: Why was there such a long delay for the appointment of Chairman?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I have explained that in fact, in answer to different question that come up. Well appointment orders are being issued. Sometimes it does take time to get a proper person for a particular job.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA: But it is now more than three years.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: Well it is inherent in the system itself. Mr. Malaviya, if you were here, you would have perhaps taken even four years. But, as I said, in fact, a couple of days after I took over, we have spotted a person and I think the appointment orders are under issue.

With these words I once again thank the hon. Members who have participated in this debate.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): The question is:

"That the Bill further to amend the Tea Act, 1953, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): We shall now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 4 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: Sir, move:

"That the Bill be returned"

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

RESOLUTION APPROVING DRAFT RULES UNDER SECTION 11 OF THE SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES OF MINISTERS ACT, 1952

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN): Now we take up the Government Resolution.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): Sir, I move the following Resolution:—

"This House approves the draft Ministers' (Allowances, Medical Treatment and other Privileges) Amendment Rules, 1986, framed under sub-section (1) of section 11 of the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Act, 1952 (58 of 1952) and laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on the 24th April, 1986."

The salaries, allowances and other privileges of Central Ministers are governed by the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Act, 1952 and rules framed thereunder, namely, the Ministers' (Allowances, Medical Treatment and other Privileges) Rules, 1957.

Rule 3 of the Ministers' (Allowances, Medical Treatment and other Privileges) Rules, 1957 provided that—and I quote—

"there shall be granted with effect from the 28th May, 1964 to the 31st June