

[Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandre]

ter and the Foreign Ministry, should take up this matter in all seriousness, in all earnestness, and advise the Bangladesh Government and the martial law authorities in Bangladesh to desist from pursuing this foolhardy policy and see that confidence of minorities in that country is restored without affecting the wellbeing of our country.

THE RUBBER (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1982

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI
P. A. SANGMA): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Rubber Act, 1947, be taken into consideration."

Sir, under the provisions of the Rubber Act, 1947, the Central Government have constituted the Rubber Board, whose duty is to promote by such measures as it thinks fit, the development of the rubber industry in this country. The Rubber Board consists of a Chairman and 24 other members representing different interests. The main functions of the Board are:

(a) undertaking, assisting or encouraging scientific, technological and economic research;

(b) supply of technical advice to rubber growers;

(c) improving the marketing of rubber; and

(d) securing better working conditions and provisions and improvement of amenities and incentives for workers.

The post of Chairman, Rubber Board, is in the scale of pay of Rs. 2,000 to 2,250. The Chairman is the chief executive of the Board and presides over its meetings.

The Board has been implementing a large number of developmental schemes for boosting rubber production in the country. The expenditure of the Board is met from out of the releases made by Government every year from the Consolidated Fund of India.

Under sub-section (3) of section 4 of the Rubber Act, 1947, the Chairman of the Rubber Board is to be appointed by the Central Government. In the past the post of Chairman in the scale of Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 2,250 had been filled by the Central Government by the appointment of a full-time officer generally belonging to the Indian Administrative Service. On one occasion a non-official was appointed as full-time Chairman.

It is observed that a number of persons who had distinguished themselves in the field of rubber plantations and are fully conversant with the problems relating to the development of the commodity are available in the private sector and from public life. In view of their vast experience with rubber plantations they can make substantial contribution to the rubber plantation industry and guide the affairs of the Board to great advantage. Such persons may not always be available for full-time service as Chairman while they may be prepared to render service in their capacity on a part-time basis. Appointment of a part-time Chairman will, however, render it necessary to have a full-time Government officer to discharge most of the executive, administrative and other functions which, at present, are required to be performed by the full-time Chairman. It is in this context that it is proposed to provide for the creation of a statutory post of Executive Director. The Act does not, at present, contain any provision for the appointment of an Executive Director in the Board and hence this Amendment Bill.

It has also been proposed to amend sub-section (3) of section 25 of the Act to bring the formula with regard

to the laying of rules before Parliament in accordance with the one which is currently in force.

With these few words, Sir, I would request that the Bill be taken into consideration.

The question was proposed.

SHRI SHIVA CHANDRA JHA (Bihar): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Rubber Act, 1947, be referred to a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha consisting of the following members, namely:

1. Shri R. R. Morarka
2. Shri Shridhar Wasudeo Dhabe
3. Shri Rameshwar Singh
4. Shri Hukmdeo Narayan Yadav
5. Shrimati Mohinder Kaur
6. Shri Kalraj Mishra
7. Shri Hari Shankar Bhabhra
8. Shri Suraj Prasad
9. Shri Biswa Goswami
10. Shri Harekrushna Mallick
11. Shri Shiva Chandra Jha

with instructions to report by the first week of next Session."

The question was proposed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA): The motion for consideration of the Bill and the amendment are open for discussion. Shri Mohanan. Not here. Shri Sukul.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, I rise to support this simple and rather innocuous Bill known as the Rubber (Amendment) Bill, 1982.

Sir, rubber has today become an integral part of our society and rubber products are most extensively used in our daily life.

Whether it is a question of the tyres of cycles or scooters or mopeds or tractors or trucks or buses, rubber

has to be there. Even in aeroplanes rubber is to be used. In the railway trains also rubber is to be used. Without that, you cannot apply the brakes. Whether it is air-conditioning or sound-proofing or insulation of any kind, the use of rubber is a must. And we also know how much useful rubber is for purposes of family planning. Then our children use chewing-gum, which is also another form of rubber. So, practically in all forms, in all ways, rubber is most extensively used today in our society. The demand of rubber has grown to such proportions that where natural rubber is not available, synthetic rubber is produced and is used as a substitute.

As our Minister has just said, for developing the rubber industry in our country, the Rubber Act was passed in the very year of our independence, i.e. 1947. This Act provides for the constitution of the Rubber Board of India which looks after the development of the rubber industry through scientific, technological and economic research, training of students, improving the marketing of rubber as well as securing the working and living conditions of the workers. Sir, the Rubber Act, 1947 provides for the appointment of a Chairman as well as a Rubber Development Commissioner. This Bill, however, contemplates the appointment of a part-time Chairman as well as an executive Director of the Board. Sir, in the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill, it has already been stated that in the private or the public sector a number of such people as have distinguished themselves in the rubber plantation field and are fully conversant with the problems of the development of rubber are available for serving as the Chairman of the Rubber Board but only as a part-time Chairman; and that is why this Bill which seeks to avail of the services of such persons provides for the appointment of a part-time Chairman. Sir, when this Rubber Bill was placed on the Table of the House, our Deputy Chairman had said that if it is a question

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of a part-time Chairman, then a part-time Chairman is included in the term 'Chairman', which is already there in the Act. If we can appoint a Chairman, we can also appoint a part-time Chairman. And if competent persons who can deliver the goods are available to serve as part-time Chairman, there could be no objection absolutely in having such an appointment. To help this part-time Chairman of the Rubber Board, it is also proposed to appoint a full-time Executive Director who can exercise such powers and perform such duties as may be prescribed or delegated to him by the Chairman of the Board. In view of the exigencies of the situation, there may absolutely be no objection to the passage of this Bill and, therefore, I wholeheartedly support this Bill. In other words, I support the appointment of a part-time Chairman as well as a whole-time Executive Director. But then there is one point. According to section 6A(1) of this Act, a Rubber Production Commissioner has to be appointed, as I said earlier. And according to section 6A(2), the Central Government are to appoint a Secretary to the Board to exercise such powers and perform such duties as may be delegated to him by the Chairman. Now the same thing is being made applicable to the Executive Director. He has also to perform such duties and to exercise such powers as are delegated to him by the Chairman. Now personally I think some dualism is going to be there because of these two appointments, of the Secretary of the Board and of the Executive Director of the Board. I hope the Government has fully considered this situation also and I would like to know how this dualism is going to be dispensed with.

Sir, today in India, 15 lakhs hectare, of land is under rubber production. If we go through the figures of production in the past, we find that our production has almost become stagnant—around 1,50,000 tonnes of rubber. That is all that we produce. In 1978-79, the production was 1,35,297

tonnes. In 1979-80 it was 1,48,470 tonnes. In 1980-81, it was 1,53,100 tonnes. In 1981-82, it was 1,52,000 tonnes. So around 1,50,000 tonnes has been our production for the last so many years. Against this production, the consumption in our country is naturally much more. And that is why a lot of rubber has to be imported from foreign countries. In 1978-79 as much as 12,000 tonnes of rubber had to be imported. In 1979-80, 45,000 tonnes had to be imported. Last year that is, 1981-82, 42,750 tonnes of rubber had to be imported. This year also, that is, 1982-83, it is estimated that our rubber production will fall short by about 80,000 tonnes. It means that we should import 80,000 tonnes of rubber from foreign countries, out of which, I think, 30,000 tonnes of rubber has already been imported. Now, in this connection, a very peculiar situation is there. While the cost of production of rubber in our own country comes to about Rs. 16 per kg., the cost of imported rubber comes to not more than Rs. 7 per kg. We import rubber from Sri Lanka, from Malaysia, from elsewhere. The cost of production of rubber there is Rs. 7 per kg. In our country it is Rs. 16 per kg. I fail to understand why this high cost of production is there and why we cannot bring it down. And even at this exorbitant cost of Rs. 16 per kg., rubber is not available in our country for the rubber industry. We have to import rubber. In today's paper I read that the Rubber Growers Association have demanded that there should be a ban or restriction on the import of rubber. Our rubber growers want a ban on rubber import, while our rubber manufacturers want more, and more of rubber to be imported so that there may be no set-back to the industry. In my humble opinion, we must import rubber to feed our industry so that there is no dearth of the basic goods that are produced out of rubber.

In this connection, I have a few suggestions to make. The first suggestion is that the area of indigenous rubber production must be expanded and the rubber plantation should be

extended to the non-traditional areas also of our country. Today the South has almost a monopoly over rubber production. What I want is that this production of rubber should be extended to other hill areas of Uttar Pradesh, Kumaon hills, Garhwal hills, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir or even the north-eastern region. I wonder if any study has been made there, but I am quite hopeful that if a study is made, even in the northern India, in the non-traditional areas, we can produce rubber. The second suggestion is that the factors responsible for the increased cost of production of indigenous rubber should be studied in depth and efforts must be made to bring down this cost as much as possible. Thirdly, relief in the duty on the imported rubber should be suitably granted as demanded by the Rubber Manufacturers Association, so that the rubber industry in the country does not get a set-back due to the increased cost of production. Fourthly, the import of rubber should be so regulated that there is never any dearth of rubber and the industry does not suffer on that account. The last suggestion is that since the Rubber Board is also concerned with the workers working on these plantations, the working and living conditions of these workers must be suitably improved. They must be paid the due wages and all those amenities and facilities that they require must be extended to them.

With these words, I support this Rubber Amendment Bill.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, my honourable friend from the ruling party who spoke just before me, described the Bill as a very innocuous one. I wish it were innocuous. Unfortunately my fears are that it is not as innocuous as it appears. Shorn of frills, the Bill provides for the appointment of a non-technical person, a non-administrative person, as Chairman of the Rubber Board. Those who know of the situation on the rubber front, are aware that the ruling party has been trying to

appoint a political person as Chairman of the Rubber Board for quite some time. In actual fact, a key figure of the ruling party was offered the post and it was reported in the press that he did not accept it for reasons which I cannot surmise. Why is it that the ruling party wants to have a political chairman for the Rubber Board? Kerala is a very important State from the viewpoint of the prospects of the ruling party. The last State Assembly elections proved that there is a very delicate balance and the party ruling at the Centre is very anxious somehow to tilt the balance in its favour. Rubber is a very important product of Kerala. Rubber lobby is a very important and influential factor in Kerala politics and it is in order to have a lever for the purpose of influencing this rubber lobby that a provision is sought to be made for the induction of a political chairman for the Rubber Board. The euphemistic explanation given is, of course, that we want to make use of talent, experience, this that. It is the usual a cosmetic touch being given to every highly politically motivated move. I wish I am proved wrong in future, but I am aware of an earlier experience, and if the honourable Minister who is piloting the Bill, is aware of that earlier history, he would bear me out that in 1976-77 also we had a political chairman, Mr. Chandy, of the Rubber Board, and it was at that time that a political move was made for the purpose of placating the rubber lobby, rubber plantation growers. For that purpose wrong statistics were fed to the Government and permission was taken for export of rubber. Of all things India exporting rubber! Something like 25,000 tonnes of rubber was exported at that time because of the wrong statistics being fed to the Government of India. Earlier to that rubber price had not gone above Rs. 6 a kilogram.

But after that, the whole balance was upset so severely that we have not been able to go back to the earlier price of Rs. 6 or so. Actually,

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a Central Minister was on record of having said that they were misled into taking this decision of sanctioning export of rubber.

As my hon. friend was saying we are a country which is short of rubber and naturally we have to depend upon imports of rubber for a pretty long time. The National Council of Applied and Economic Research was asked to go into this question and their report is that even after ten years from now we shall have a shortage of rubber and probably by that time our shortage will be as much as our total production of rubber. My friend was correct in saying that the estimated shortage this year is about 80 000 tonnes. Even then the influence of the rubber growers' lobby is such—and he referred to the press report—that the demand is being made very loudly that imports of rubber should be stopped. In all countries of the world, they want to have a buffer stock of rubber. Rubber is a very strategic commodity a crucial commodity. It is a commodity which is very important for the economy of the country. Without rubber no war can be fought. War machines will be paralysed if we do not have rubber. From this point of view, our living on a month to month or year to year basis for our current needs or rubber will be something definitely harmful and damaging to the country's interest.

I am not able to understand why the Government or the Minister has brought forward a Bill providing for a non-administrative or non-service Chairman. Why not have a full-time administrative serviceman as the Chairman? Why not have a technical man who can look at things in an objective fashion and who is not influenced by political factors of election and votes? Mr. Sundaram who has been there as Chairman of the Rubber Board for several years, has done commendable work. His performance has been creditable. Why not his experience be used and why

not continue the practice of having a full-time administrative serviceman as the Chairman? The pity is that the Government seems to be bent upon doing everything that it ought not to do. (Bell). Just three or four minutes more. I do not think there are many speakers. I have been in touch with this problem and I have been raising this subject on the floor of the House. I seek your indulgence.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA): Your time is seven minutes.

DR BHAI MAHAVIR: Why not Government adopt a commonsense attitude on this problem of rubber? I will give one example.

The present shortage of rubber is about 80,000 tonnes. But only 30,000 tonnes of rubber import have been sanctioned. Out of these 30,000 tonnes, 21,000 tonnes of imported rubber have arrived in Madras. They are held up there. They are rotting and getting spoilt there because of inter-ministerial rivalry? What is this inter-ministerial rivalry? The Finance Ministry has withdrawn the exemption from customs duty which was available to the STC. Since 1978 the STC had an exemption of customs duty. But the argument of the Finance Ministry is that if the STC can make a profit of 75 to 80 per cent, why should they spare their pound of flesh? If the STC is taking its pound of flesh or kilo of flesh in such a merciless manner, why not the

Finance Ministry do it?

4 P.M. Sir, the Finance Ministry has not granted extension of this exemption for this customs duty with the result that rubber is rotting there nor have they decided that they would not grant this exemption. It is just a suspension midway. They are considering it and for months they will keep on considering it while the rubber industry goes on suffering, with the smaller units threatened with closure and lakhs of workers under

the threat of being thrown out of job. What is worse is this: My friend was quoting the correct figures by saying that the present cost of rubber in this country is said to be very high, said to be higher than the price outside. But even the imported cost of rubber, when we import rubber from Malaysia or from Sri Lanka or Indonesia, is Rs. 8 per kg. That is the cost. But the price in Kerala is Rs. 16.50; in Delhi it costs Rs. 18.00 per kg.; while the last floor price which the Government fixed for rubber was Rs. 8.25. The floor price was Rs. 8.25, but the STC is selling it above almost double the price that was fixed by the Government as the floor price. In a recent report, Sir, in "The Financial Express", of the 11th July, it is stated that the STC is likely to charge more for rubber. They are not satisfied even with this high price, even with this profiteering, and they may raise even higher. And, Sir, if the STC is profiteering, why should the Finance Ministry be soft in its attitude? That is the present rivalry that is going on because of which no decision is taken and rubber is rotting in Madras and the industry is not getting its raw material.

Sir, our friends the Ministers exhort the industrialists to lower prices. Mr. N. D. Tiwari, our Industry Minister, was asking the rubber industry to reduce tyre prices, exhorting them to lower their prices and can you expect this of them while starving them of raw material? Now, Sir, this is a very peculiar way of making industries lower their prices: keeping the prices of the raw materials at artificially and abnormally hiked levels and talking to them loudly of the need for lowering prices.

Sir, there was an offer from Malaysia some time back of creating a long-term buffer stock in India. They said that they would keep the buffer stock at their own expense. It was not accepted for reasons I can not imagine. Even if we consider this proposal today, it would be in the country's interest to have an arrangement like

this because today, Sir, rubber is at a low ebb. This international price of rubber is at rock bottom and this is the time when we should have a long-term contract with some country or countries growing rubber for a period of five or seven years. It is desirable, so that we can be sure of the supplies of this strategic raw material and our rubber industry can do its best on the export front also. I know, Sir, of some units which have won awards, certain firms having won national awards, for having exported more than a crore of rupees' worth of rubber products. They having won national awards, they are in doldrums now and they are also being tempted to go to Sri Lanka or to some other country and set up units there. Sir, Sri Lanka has set up an export processing zone near Colombo and they are giving all facilities and would be providing rubber at four or five rupees per kg. to units which would go from India and set up their plants there. Now, some units have already migrated. I know of one Carona Sahu unit which has already set up a plant there. I know also of one or two others which are thinking of setting up plants there because of the facility of getting the raw material at such cheap prices. Sir, getting rubber at four or five rupees per kg. in Sri Lanka with the technical know-how they already have here, when they would be able to throw out competition from this country's units which are able to get it at Rs. 16.00 or Rs. 17.00 per kg., is something which we should ward off and we should try to make arrangements where by our industry is not starved and our export effort is not jeopardised.

Sir, I will give just two or three points by way of suggestions which, I hope, the hon. Minister will give careful consideration to, because these are the things which, I feel, are necessary for reviving the health of rubber industry and for bringing it to its best level in the export sphere also.

[Dr. Bhai Mahavir]

Sir, *ad hocism* in the matter of rubber supply should be ended. A long-term arrangement, a buffer stock, or a long-term contract with some rubber-producing country should be entered into for ensuring that every month we have not to ask whether rubber will be available or as to how much will be imported. Even when sanction issued is the STC does not receive intimation for months. that is one thing. Secondly, de-canalisation is an urgent necessity. Unless you decanalise and release rubber imports from the throttle-hold of monopoly of STC, which does not have the know-how, or business instinct, you cannot deliver it efficiently to the units which are starving for it. I have already talked about the long-term contract. I have mentioned Customs exemption. It is necessary that Customs exemption be decided upon and announced as early as possible. (Time bell). It is necessary so that 20,000 tonnes of rubber rotting in Madras can be saved. There is also, a countervailing duty. When I met Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, then Commerce Minister, he said that a wrong step had been taken by Chaudhury Charan Singh who was Finance Minister by imposing this countervailing duty, because rubber is not a manufactured product but it is a natural product. But since it was there it could not be removed. Some months ago it was withdrawn but even then the benefit of the withdrawal of the countervailing duty has not been passed on to the industry but remained with S.T.C. The prices remained where it was. Now this countervailing duty is being re-imposed. (Time bell).

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA): You have taken far too long. Please conclude now.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Last sentence. By revising the definition of 'manufactured goods' under Item 68 of Central Excise Tariff, they have again made leviable an 8 per cent. countervailing duty. This is something which is definitely harm-

ful. That is why I say that the Government should have come with a more open mind and a balanced approach and not with any political motive, at least in an industry which is so crucial for the country's development.

SHRI M. M. JACOB (Kerala): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, rubber is a vital industry for 25 lakhs people in the State of Kerala. It is actually small farmers' crop. Seventy per cent of rubber is grown by small farmers of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and adjoining States. The hon. Minister has moved this amendment with the purpose of producing more rubber. The crux of the problem is that there is a shortage of rubber in the country. Rubber production has to be stepped up. I am told that due to the drive and efforts of the Commerce Ministry and the Government of India rubber productivity has gone up several times. and this is one single crop among the cash crops of the country which has shown a tremendous increase during the last 20 years. From 20,000 tonnes per annum it has now gone up to 1,50,000 tonnes. It is a contribution of small growers to the rubber industry. How do we produce rubber? Fourteen years ago, rubber trees were sprayed by chemicals, because in Kerala and in other parts of the country where the monsoon is so active, there is a disease called phytothera (leaf-fall during monsoon). It has not affected Sri Lanka. It has not affected Malaysia. It is an additional expenditure for spraying. Helicopters are needed and so much of chemicals are needed. The Government of India used to give subsidy for this kind of spraying for the last several years. This subsidy for spraying has been stopped for the last more than 3 years. The production of rubber does not show that kind of increase which it used to show before. The Government will have to consider very seriously the introduction of subsidy for spraying rubber trees against disease.

Another aspect is the cost of production. It is a question of 25 lakh

people of the State. One important factor is the import substitution. If the rubber is not produced in the country, it will have to be imported. Now, the price of rubber in Malaysia is Rs. 7 or Rs. 8. After terminal tax and other expenses, it comes up to Rs. 12 or Rs. 13. Therefore, import is not going to be a solution. The solution is to step up production. As the hon. Member from the other side suggested, it has to be planted in the non-traditional areas. Efforts are being made in Tripura, in Assam, in Goa and in some other areas. This is really a welcome sign. You will be able to produce more rubber in the country. All the efforts of the Government should be directed towards improving and increasing the production of rubber. Rubber Boards are doing commendable work in this direction. It is a cash crop. My hon. friend from the other side was mentioning about imports through private agencies or canalisation. I have my own serious doubts about it. It has to be canalised through the S.T.C. Sir, the S.T.C. has the experience of purchasing rubber and importing it whenever it is necessary. I would like to point out one thing. About four years back, rubber used to be exported from this country. There was an agreement that time. The agreement was that there should always be a discussion among the growers, the industry and the Government. They should sit around a table in order to decide whether the rubber has to be imported and if so, how much. If it is to be exported, then how much should be exported. I say this because whenever rubber is imported, there is a terrible fall in the rubber prices in the country. Naturally, the farmers will not go in for more inputs and will not produce more. But the country wants more rubber. We cannot afford to waste the foreign exchange for a commodity which can be produced in this country. Therefore, import substitution has to be found for growing more rubber in the country and not by importing rubber from other countries. There should be periodical

conferences of the Commerce Ministry, Industry Ministry and the other interested parties in order to find out the reason for the trouble and also to see how the cost can be brought down. The growers will be very happy if the inputs costs are reduced and the cost of pesticides is reduced. The inputs are more and the cost of production is more. Therefore, there should be dialogue between the manufacturers and the growers on the one side and between the Government Ministries on the other side. It is a vital strategic material and the country has to produce more. I have gone to Tripura, Assam and Goa. There is great scope for production there. I live in Kerala. I have seen Cape Comerin and Tamil Nadu. I know very well that India can produce the rubber which is required for the growing needs of the Indian industry provided that the Government gives more subsidy for new plantations in the non-traditional and traditional areas. Replantation should also go on without interruptions. There is need for a constant dialogue between the industry and the growers in order to determine how much rubber has to be imported. Sir, if there is shortage of rubber, it has to be imported. It has to be planned in such a way that it need not be imported when there is peak production in the country.

When there is peak production, if you also import there will be absolute mess, and that means there won't be real cultivation of rubber by the farmers in the next season. So, Sir, this is a very sensitive crop of the State, and of the country, and that is why I say, that when we speak today something here, tomorrow it affects the market and somebody will immediately cut off the trees and plant something else. I have seen people cutting off rubber and going in for palm cultivation which is much more remunerative. They do not want rubber to be planted. They go for some other crop which will bring more remunerative price for them.

[Shri M. M. Jacob]

So, the small farmers feel very sensitive about the whole thing. That is why, Sir, I say, let us reduce the cost of inputs, let us give support to small farmers and see that more rubber is produced in the country and in the same way let us import only when it is absolutely necessary. I also welcome the question of buffer stocks if it is possible. I also welcome the idea, if it is possible, of having permanently helicopters purchased by the Rubber Board so that we can do the aerial spraying at a concessional rate and the small farmers get their rubber trees treated with chemical pesticides against the leaf-fall disease.

Sir, I do not want to take more time of the House. Thank you very much. This is a very vital thing and the farmers of Kerala are looking forward to increased production and increased productivity. Thank you, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. RAFTQ ZAKARIA): Mr. Jacob, I think this was your maiden speech.

SHRI M. M. JACOB: Yes, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN: Well, I congratulate you. Yes, Mr. Surendra Mohan.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHAN (Uttar Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the first speech after the speech of the hon. Minister, the speech of my friend Mr. Sukul, mentioned that this was an innocuous Bill. I would have also thought so but for the fact, after having learnt a little more, that the innocence of my hon. friend, Mr. Sukul, is really misplaced because there have been a number of press reports much before this Bill was introduced, suggesting that a political appointment was to be made. Unfortunately, Sir, there is a tendency not only in the case of the Rubber Board but in the case of various other Boards, whether it is the Coffee Board or whether it is the Cashew Board, or whatever other

board it is, to make political appointments in the name of experts, in the name of those who would know about the industry more, and an attempt is being made to appoint people who know politics more than the industry. Now, this is a deplorable thing. It is an attempt which will be more harmful to the growers of rubber industry and to rubber production and all manner of industries connected with rubber. If instead of having real experts, full-time experts, experts who would know intimately about rubber and its produce, if you have only political appointees, then there will be only manipulations and the future of the country will be seriously hurt.

Now, Sir, on the one hand, rubber is a strategic industry. The argument is that we must do everything possible to see that the production of rubber increases. And, on the other hand, we are playing with the Rubber Board in a manner as if it was something of a very ephemeral nature, of a very non-essential nature. After all, why is it that we always think of politics before we think of the industry, before we think of agriculture, before we think of progress, before we think of development? Why is it that we are obsessed with politics? Why is it that in the case of every single Board, in the case of every Government appointment, in the case of every place where some profit can be made, we are thinking of political appointments? This is a tendency which must be stopped as early as possible. Otherwise, Sir, I am afraid, that when we politicise everything, and if you politicise everything, production, industry, agriculture, you should realise what a sorry pass this country will come to. It is not possible for me, Sir, to mention any names, but there have been press reports mentioning the names of people who are sought to be appointed as Chairman or as specialists of the Indian Rubber Board, after this Bill is passed.

And I think Mr. Sukul also, who thought that the Bill is so innocuous,

would know the names or if he comes to find out, he would know that—as it happens—certainly the name will be one of his colleagues in his own party. I am not bothered as to who will be benefited thereby, but I feel that the country will be ruined by this tendency of the ruling party in making such appointments.

The Indian Rubber Board has one of its objectives the increased production of rubber. There have been reports that in the Konkan region, rubber can be produced in a big way and at least 100 thousand acres of land can be devoted to the production of rubber. In northern India also, survey has been conducted which established that at least 3 per cent of the total production of rubber can be from northern India. Now, if we take all this into account, we would find that certainly indigenous rubber can be produced in a much bigger manner, in a much bigger quantity and then it will not be necessary for us to import rubber as we are doing now. On the other hand, the pricing of rubber is in such a state that we are being threatened by strong competition from Ceylon, from Malaysia and other countries. Unless the whole thing is discussed in depth, it will not be possible for us to stand up to their competition and the natural resource that we always had, the traditional resource that we have, will be harmed to the detriment of the progress of the country.

I am afraid, some monopolistic tendencies have been strengthening in the case of rubber industry and tyre industry and other industries connected with the produce of rubber. Recently, I think just two days back, there was a written answer to a question that Firestone is now being sold to some other monopoly house, mainly, the Modi Rubber and Modi Rubber has been allowed to purchase 35 per cent of the shares of Firestone. If it is not strengthening monopoly, what else is it? On the one hand, whether it is in the Direc-

tive Principles or in the various announcements and pronouncements of the Government policy we say that monopoly has to be discouraged, monopoly has to be stamped out at least in the private sector, on the other hand, every effort is being made and every opportunity is being made use of to strengthen the monopolistic trends. It is not only in case of Firestone and Modi Rubber. Wherever this question comes up, the tendency of the Government is to have collusion with private interest, with monopolistic interest and to strengthen them so that they strengthen the coffers of the ruling party. You want to politicise everything on the one hand and on the other, there is such a powerful collusion between the rulers in politics and rulers in industry, the monopolists in industry. These two factors are seriously damaging the interests of the common man.

Sir, the Rubber Board concerns itself with the welfare of the workers. However, on the Rubber Board, there is not a single representative of the working class and I was a little surprised that a trade union leader of the calibre of Mr. Sukul also made no reference to it. Unless workers are properly represented on the Rubber Board, their welfare will not really be looked after and at the same time, various disparities will continue. Disparities between the indigenous rubber and other rubber on the one hand and between synthetic rubber and tyre industry on the other hand, will continue. These disparities have been allowed and are being encouraged so that the rich monopolists become richer, so that the industry, the private people in the industry, can earn as much as they can and they can fleece the common man, they can fleece the cultivator of rubber and they can also fleece the consumer of rubber. That is why, this disparity is being allowed. I would submit, Sir, that this is also something which should be looked into and every effort must be made to see that this disparity is not allowed to remain.

Sir, with these words, I thank you very much for allowing me to speak on this Bill.

श्री रामपूजन पटेल (उत्तर प्रदेश) : माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, रबर का जो विधेयक लाया गया है, यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। मैं दो-एक सुझाव देना चाहता हूँ। जब तक किसानों को इस के लिए श्राफ्ट नहीं दिया जायेगा, बढ़ावा नहीं दिया जायेगा इसके उत्पादन में, तब तक रबर की खेती किसान नहीं करेंगे। इसका बहुत महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है। आज इसकी मांग पूरे देश के अन्दर है। हम को बाहर से आयात करना पड़ता है। हमारे यहां हिन्दुस्तान में जो रबर पैदा होता है उसकी कीमत अधिक होती है और जो बाहर से आयात करना पड़ता है उसकी कीमत कम है। इसका कारण क्या है? इस बारे में भी हमको ध्यान करना पड़ेगा। किसान जो पैदा करता है उसको व्यापारी लोग, बिचौलिए किसानों से कम दाम पर खरीद कर ज्यादा दाम पर बेचा करते हैं। इसलिए हम आपसे निवेदन करेंगे कि सरकार को ऐसी व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए कि रबर की खेती में किसानों को ज्यादा प्रोत्साहन दिया जाय क्योंकि यह कॅश-क्रॉप है, इसमें नकद पैसा किसानों को मिलता है, लेकिन इस ओर अभी सरकार का ध्यान कायदे से नहीं पहुँच है जिसके कारण किसानों को इससे बड़ा नुकसान होता है। मैं यह चाहूँगा कि सरकार इस तरफ ध्यान देकर रबर की खेती को और फैलाने की कोशिश करे।

मैं आपको थोड़ा सा बताना चाहता हूँ कि पंजा में रबर का मूल्य 8 रुपए किलो पड़ता है, लेकिन हिन्दुस्तान में 12 रुपए किलो रबर का दाम पड़ता है। अभी रबर के उपयोग के बारे में हमारे कुछ साथी लोग बता रहे थे।

इसका उपयोग खिलौनों में भी हो रहा है। इसका उपयोग दिन पर दिन बढ़ता जा रहा है। इसलिए रबर की खेती के लिए सरकार की ओर से किसान को प्रोत्साहन देना बहुत जरूरी है।

अभी जो रबर के लिए कारपोरेशन बनाया गया है उसमें चेयरमैन परमानेंट रखे गये हैं। परमानेंट चेयरमैन होना बहुत जरूरी है। इस की देखरेख हर कीमत पर सरकार को सुचारु रूप में करनी चाहिए जिससे किसान प्रोत्साहित हों, जिससे रबर का उत्पादन रबर की बढ़ती हुई मांग को पूरा कर सके। इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं आप को धन्यवाद दे रहा हूँ और मंत्री जी से निवेदन करूँगा कि किसान को उचित मूल्य दिलाने के लिए हर सम्भव प्रयास करना चाहिए। जय हिन्द।

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

(I) Increase in the issue price of wheat to the Public Distribution System and the Roller Flour Mills.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (MISS KAMLA KUMARI): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, honourable Members are aware that the procurement price of wheat for the 1981-82 crop was raised to Rs. 142 per quintal with effect from 1-4-1982 in order to provide remunerative price to the farmers.

2. The increase in the procurement price by Rs. 12 per quintal has resulted in a heavier subsidy burden on the Government. The House is aware of the policy of the Government to bring down the food subsidy gradually.

3. Taking an overall view and after consideration of various factors, Government have now decided to fix the issue price of wheat to the public distribution system at Rs. 160 per quintal and to roller flour mills at