

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : . . . that the Prime Minister is marking a statement in the other House and she is expected to come here round about 5.30.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION ON
MATTERS CONNECTED WITH BEN-
NETT COLEMAN & COMPANY—
contd.

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pia-desh) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, we want to raise. . .

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Is it a point of order? What is the point of order?

SHRI A. D. MANI : Yes, Sir, a point of order. Mr. Rajnarain has taken fifteen minutes and the Minister is going to take the required time. We want to put questions to the Minister also.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Please sit down, Mr. Mam. I will now call the Minister to reply, and then you can have your questions put.

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE (West Bengal) : We also want to put questions.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAB ALI KHAN) : There are some names here with me and I will see.

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED) : Sir, I do not know what was actually the purpose for raising this discussion, in fact, when these questions were raised on one or two occasions in this House, I had given all the information which was at my disposal. I have also informed the House of the stage in which the proceedings in this matter were pending before the Tribunal and now in the High Courts of Bombay and Calcutta. My friend has levelled the charge that Government have not taken any action to expedite

these proceedings. I would like to point out that there were two petitions filed. One under section 398 of the Company Law and the other under section 388B . . . (*Interruptions*). Instead of giving a long statement I would just read what happened date by date in order to indicate how the matter stands at present. The petition under 398 was filed on. . .

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE : On a point of order, Mr. Vice-Chairman—the hon. Minister will kindly sit down. The hon. Minister is trying to repeat the statement which he made earlier as to the proceedings under section 388B and 398. If I have understood the discussion raised by Mr. Rajnarain just now, the discussion that he wanted to raise was on a particular point, namely, on the question of the criminal case which has been sent to the Attorney-General for opinion and which has been vegetating in his file for the last six months, and about which Mr. Rajnarain had made some allegations that one of the Ministers, namely, Mr. Dinesh Singh, had been talking with the Attorney-General for an unconscionably long time and for unconscionably long periods also. Now, to that he will answer, not about this 388B and all the rest of it. We know all these things. He has already said that. It is on record. I have got it, his answer to Question 350. Let him reply to the specific question.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : You refer to the criminal case. All right, I would like the hon. Minister to refer to it, but then he has started just now.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : I think Mr. Chatterjee need not be impatient and need not tell me how I should proceed. So far as I understood Mr. Rajnarain, he had raised the question about all the proceedings pending before the court, and I was referring first of all to this, and then I will come to the other point also. I do not know why he was so impatient that before I had concluded he wanted to tell me how I should proceed.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI (Maharashtra) : One can understand.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : I am not to be blamed; if I am interrupted the time will be consumed.

Now, on the 30th of September, 1964, the petition under section 398 was filed before the Companies Tribunal. On the 1st of December, 1964, applications were filed by Shri S. P. Jain and other respondents for furnishing of particulars. On the 21st of January, 1965, the particulars were furnished to the respondents. On the 3rd of February, 1965, a letter of dissatisfaction with the particulars was filed by Shri S. P. Jain. On the 21st of April, 1965, an application was filed by Shri S. P. Jain challenging the verification of the main petition. On the 13th of May, 1965, was the order of the Companies Tribunal rejecting the objections raised against the particulars and verification. Then on the 18th of June, 1965, appeals were filed by Shri S. P. Jain in the Bombay High Court against the order of the Companies Tribunal dated the 13th of May, 1965. On the 24th June and Bombay High Court granted a stay. On the 18th October the appeal was dismissed by the Bombay High Court. On the 24th November special leave petition to the Supreme Court was filed against the order of the Bombay High Court. It was disallowed and on the 11th April 1966 issues were "framed by the Companies Tribunal and the evidence of the first witness was recorded. On the 29th June the Companies Tribunal was still examining and on the 30th the Tribunal was abolished and the matter was transferred to the Bombay High Court. From that time the case is pending before the Bombay High Court and directions were issued for the preparation of a comprehensive compilation of all documents including the affidavits. So far as we are concerned we have taken no time whatever. The matter is pending before the High Court which directed that all these documents should be prepared. They have now been prepared and I understand that the matter will come for hearing

before the Bombay High Court in the month of September.

Now I would not like to take the time of the House in giving the information regarding the case under 388. There was a writ petition in the Calcutta High Court; there were appeals thereafter. Then there has been a stay order by the Calcutta High Court. All these things have delayed the matters. These are the matters which are pending under the Companies Act.

So far as the criminal matter is concerned, an investigation has been made. Now the question is whether on the basis of that investigation some prosecution can be launched. So far as this matter is concerned various aspects have to be taken into consideration. We have submitted the material collected by the investigation branch for consideration by the highest legal authority and for giving us advice how this matter should be proceeded with. The matter is now pending before the Attorney-General.

श्री राजनारायण (उत्तर प्रदेश) : पुरानी बातों को दोहराने से क्या फायदा है क्योंकि समय जल्दी भाग रहा है।

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : As soon as his opinion is available action will be taken by the Government as is considered necessary. I may point out that the Attorney-General has also been very busy representing the cases of India in some important matters and it may be for that reason that he may not have been able to find time for this.

So far as the conversation between him and Mr. Dinesh Singh is concerned, to which reference was made by my friend, Shri Rajnarain, I am not aware of any such discussion which has taken place between Shri Dinesh Singh and the Attorney-General. I think it is very unfair to bring in the names here when the hon. Member himself was not present and cannot say whether this discussion had taken

[Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed]

place. There is nothing on the record to indicate that any such discussion had taken place.

Then there was the allegation that Shri Dinesh Singh had taken plenty of money from Shri Shanti Prasad Jain and that is why the whole matter is being delayed. This is also a baseless allegation which ought not to have been made in the absence of the Minister concerned. If he wanted to make that allegation, notice of that ought to have been given by him. Then I would have forwarded it and he would have replied to it. It is an absurd allegation to make : because such and such thing has happened therefore these things are being delayed. By this he is not only dragging Shri Dinesh Singh but he is also attributing motives to me that because of these things I am not allowing these matters to go forward. I categorically deny the allegation; there is no basis in the allegation that because of any conversation or because of any dealings between Mr. Dinesh Singh and Shri Shanti Prasad Jain or any discussion between him and the Attorney-General the matter has been delayed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Would you draw the attention of the Attorney-General to expedite this matter?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED: We have already taken up the matter and we hope that the matter will be disposed of soon.

The other question which he has raised is regarding the employees who are giving evidence or who are prepared to give evidence. On behalf of the Company Law Department I can assure the House that adequate protection has been provided to them. This matter has been taken to the court and an appeal against court's decision has been filed by Shri Shanti Prasad Jain.

श्री राजनारायण : इससे क्या मतलब

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : We are taking all necessary action.

श्री राजनारायण : अगर मंत्री जी पूरा समय ले लेंगे तो हम सवाल कब पूछेंगे ?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : If my hon. friend is satisfied that I have met all the points raised by him, then I will not proceed further.

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, मैं यह

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Not now Mr. Rajnarain. There are four names here. I would call them so that they can seek their clarifications. After that if there is anything and if you also want to ask anything, I shall come to you.

Mr. Kulkarni.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : In view of the statement given by the Minister for Industrial Development may I know whether it is a fact that in the 'Times-of India' dated 4th October 1966 it was reported that Mr. Justice Gokhale of the Tribunal has observed that Mr. Cooper was an active member and office bearer of the Swatantra Party and he should not have been appointed as Chairman of the Company. Mr. Vice-Chairman, I want to go further also. Perhaps this observation of Mr. Justice Gokhale might have been different or it might have been interpreted differently because I have not seen the judgment but may I know from the Government whether the Government is aware that the present Chairman of Bennett Coleman and Co. is indulging in public activity ? Under section 388(c) if a company is or has been managed by any person in a manner which is likely to cause or has caused serious injury or damage to the interests of the trade, industry or business to which such company pertains anybody can represent to the Government. May I know whether under this provision of the Company Law the Government has received two memoranda one from the firm's side and the other from the workers' side where mismanagement has been alleged, where misappropriation of funds has been alleged, where abuse of power

has been alleged and may I know whether the Government will assure us that they will take early steps to move the Bombay High Court to change the Chairman of the Bennett Coleman & Co.?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : Sir, two questions have been raised. One is with regard to the judgment given by the Tribunal and I would like to quote the wording of the Tribunal itself which would remove all the misunderstanding regarding this matter. This is the quotation and these are not my words :

"Some suggestions appear to have been made that Dr. Cooper is an active member and an Honorary Treasurer of the Swatantra Party. Now, Dr. Cooper has not given any indication as to from whom these suggestions have emanated. In a free and democratic country like ours it would be difficult for any person to keep aloof from political questions. He is bound to have his own views and opinions. The holding of certain political view or office would be no disqualification for being appointed as the Chairman of a Company. In fact, before sending his resignation if Dr. Cooper had approached us and complained about the suggestions alleged to have been made against his political connections we would have ourselves tried to dissuade him from tendering the resignation on this ground. In our view the holding of the office of the Honorary Treasurer or any other office in the Swatantra Party as indicated in his letter of resignation would be no disqualification for his continuing as the Chairman of the Company."

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : I am talking of active participation in politics by the Chairman. I am not talking of the honorary post held by Dr. Cooper.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : That is all right; you have made your point.

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SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED: It may be when the appointment was first made he might have perhaps demurred at the suggestion of appointing any person who might have been closely connected as office bearer of any political party. These are the actual words used by the Tribunal. May I point out that it is very apparent that the Tribunal has held that a person connected with any political party is not disqualified from being appointed as Chairman and in this particular matter may I also point out that the Chairman was appointed by the tribunal, now the Court? So far as the Government are concerned, they have no power of removal. And according to the order passed by the Tribunal only two Directors are to be nominated by Government, four by other parties and the Chairman is appointed by the Tribunal. So if the Chairman has to be removed he can only be removed by the Tribunal, now the Bombay High Court.

Now, we have received certain allegations from the employees and also some reports from the Government Directors of the Company. The matter is under examination and as soon as it has been investigated whatever action is called for will be taken.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Mr. Bhupesh Gupta.

SHRI A. D. MANI : Sir, I am a newspaper man and. . .

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : Your name is not here.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Let him speak.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN) : No, no. Mr. Bhupesh Gupta.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal) : I should like to know whether it is a fact that certain officers of this company brought it to the notice of the Government, including

LSHri Bhupesh Gupta.]

the Prime Minister, that because they had given information and moved the Government in the matter against the company's malpractices and corruption they were being persecuted by means of all kinds of cases by the owners of the company. I should like to know whether—in this regard the correspondence is with the Government—the hon. Minister is aware that Shri Shanti Prasad Jain and company are using all kinds of methods to frustrate the processes of law and also to influence certain people in the Government, the officials and others. Then, I should also like to know how is it that when it comes to a criminal case against Shri Shanti Prasad Jain the matter goes to the Attorney-General the papers being looked into, whereas in ordinary cases it is the investigating authority which files cases and the matter is left, well, to the court to decide. Sometimes it may happen that the Government may decide to withdraw the case. Why is it in this case a kind of special treatment is being given? Is it because the person involved is Shri Shanti Prasad Jain? Does it ensure the equality of law? Suppose it is not Shri Shanti Prasad Jain, but a common man, an ordinary man. Would the matter have come up to the Attorney-General for his opinion for initiating criminal proceedings? That itself shows that the Government either is scared or they have other extraneous considerations to treat Shri Shanti Prasad Jain's case in a special manner. Finally, I should also like to know why Mr Kunte is being maintained there on the Board. He is utterly useless, he is an utterly useless fellow.

SHRI A. D. MANI : He is a Member of Parliament.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Does it matter? Members of Parliament and some other people are useless. You may be also useless. Therefore, Mr. Vice-Chairman, I am not questioning him as a Member of Parliament, but as the nominee.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS (Orissa) : He is Accepting it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : If Mr. Aiani does not accept it, who will accept it. Now, therefore, I should like to know why he is being kept, firstly because he is not doing anything, and secondly because of my complaint that he is using the Times of India's resources for this type of propaganda...

SHRI A. D. MANI : For example?

[THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : For example, he is a great anti-communist, the General Secretary of the BKD and he is there to disrupt all the United Fronts in the country. Now, this gentleman had been utilising the columns of the Times of India and his position in order to get all these things published in that group of papers. Besides there have been many complaints against him. Well, why has the Government got such a fancy for this man Kunte? Cannot they find some other person more acceptable to the workers and certainly not so much prejudiced in his views and who wants to utilise the resources of the company for his own propaganda? I can give instances of corrupt practices by Mr. Kunte, but I leave it for the present.

(How. Members stood up)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : I think we must observe the rules of procedure. Only those who have given notice to put questions may put questions very briefly and this must be enforced in this House. It is Half-an-Hour Discussion and not one hour. The normal procedure is all questions are replied together. Mr. Krishan Kant.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA (Bihar) : Before the question is put, I would like to bring one matter to your notice. It is a very established tradition of parliamentary democracy that no adverse reference by name can be made to a Member of the other House of the same Parliament. It has become...

(Interruptions.)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : I repeat Kunte is indulging in malpractices.

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI (Maharashtra) : Is it the privilege of Mr. Bhupesh Gupta every time he speaks that he goes on repeating things? (Interruptions.) I want to know whether he can attribute such things. . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : What are you talking?

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : . . . to a Member of the other House. You are not to shout. . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : It is my privilege.

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : You cannot do that. He cannot be allowed to behave like this in this House. . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : You cannot shout. . .

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : He is a Member of the other House.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Ask him to sit down. • Ask him to sit down.

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : Ask h'im to sit down. You must sit down.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Whenever I expose him, he goes on shouting. He is a. . .

(Interruptions.)

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : He is shouting. . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : * * *

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Sinha is on his feet. I want to hear him. Mr. Sinha. (Interruptions.) Let us carry on this business.

SHRI GODEY MURAHARI (Uttar Pradesh) : Mr. Sinha is speaking on something and I do not know on what I would also like to speak.

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : The decorum and dignity of the House must be maintained. * * *

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : I am riot here at your pleasure.

(Interruptions.) * * *

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please take your seat.

SHRIBHUPESH GUPTA : ***.

SHRIBABUBHAI M. CHINAI : ***.

SHRIBHUPESH GUPTA : » * *

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please sit down. I think all this abusive language that has been used will have to be expunged. I shall go through it very carefully. Mr. Sinha, do you want to draw the attention of the Chair to any particular thing? Please do so.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA : I will be very brief. I have already said that it is a well-established convention evolved after centuries of experience, in the interest of dignity, in the interest of the dignity of individual Members, in the interest of the harmonious functioning of the two Houses of a Legislature, that no adverse reference by name should be made against a Member of the other House. I think this convention should be observed and if it is violated, the name which is adversely commented upon should be expunged.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : No, no. I have not said anything.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Godey Marahari.

श्री गोडे मुराहरी (उत्तर प्रदेश) : श्री बी० के० पी० सिंह साहब ने आप की खिदमत में कुछ अर्ज किया और उस के बारे में मैं भी कुछ अर्ज करना चाहता हूँ। उन्होंने यह कहा कि किसी दूसरे मेम्बर के बारे में यहां कोई मेम्बर बोल नहीं सकता। मैं उन को सिर्फ

[श्री गोडे मुराहरि]

यह याद दिलाना चाहता हूँ कि पालिया-मेंटरी प्रेक्टिस में यह भी होता है कि एक मेम्बर से दूसरे मेम्बर सवाल भी पूछ सकते हैं और मैं उन से यह भी जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या यह सही नहीं है कि बहुत से क्वेश्चनेबिल करेक्टर्स अगर पालियामेंट में किसी प्रकार पहुँच जायेंगे तो पालियामेंट के किसी सदस्य को यह अधिकार होना चाहिये कि उन करेक्टर्स को यहाँ डिस्कस कर सकें। तो माननीय मेम्बर का यह कहना कि किसी का नाम नहीं ले सकते हैं यह बिल्कुल गलत है और यह किसी पालियामेंटरी प्रोसीजर के हिसाब से ठीक नहीं है।

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Krishan Kant. Please put your question briefly.

SHRI KRISHAN KANT (Haryana): Madam Deputy Chairman. . .

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE : Madam Deputy Chairman. . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please read the Rules of Procedure. You cite the rule. I wish you open the book of Rules of Procedure and read it. Yes, Mr. Krishan Kant.

SHRI KRISHAN KANT : The hon. Minister while replying to Mr. Rajnarain referred to the allegations Mr. Rajnarain made. I think he need not take them seriously. I think he is doing it because there are some allegations—I do not know whether they are correct or not—about the party's collusion with them. I do not know whether it is a fact or not. He is trying to wash them. He need not take them seriously. Secondly, can the Minister also lay on the Table of the House the memorandum submitted by the leaders and also the complaints which the Government director has referred to the Government? "What are those complaints? Thirdly, how long the Government will take to decide and take action on the two memoranda and the report of the two Directors? Then, I want to know

whether the Government of India asked the Directors to press the Board of the "Times of India" to accept the Wage Board award because they represent the Government? The Government is committed to accept it and it is the "Times of India" management which is standing in the way of an early settlement of the dispute between the workers and the management. I want to know how the Government of India is dealing with it.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr A. P. Chatterjee. Mr. B. K. P. Sinha brought the question that no name should be mentioned here. Keep that in mind.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Why are you saying that ? We are not mentioning any Parliament Member.

(Interruption.)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Order, Order. Mr. Chatterjee.

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE : I shall confine myself to one aspect of the matter and I shall put one question very briefly. It is this. As far as the criminal case is concerned, we understand that the criminal case has been sent to the Attorney General for opinion. The point is this and I am asking this question. As far as the criminal case is concerned, the Ale has been with the Attorney General admittedly for more than six months. The Attorney General is a busy person, everybody knows. All lawyers are supposed to be busy. Even if they are not busy, they call themselves busy, and the Attorney General must be -busy. He is a busy lawyer, he certainly must be busy. Therefore, would the Ministry try to get the opinion from the Attorney General within a reasonable period by chasing the matter? That is the first question in regard to this aspect.

Another question which arises from this aspect of the matter is this. Did the Ministry or any representative of the Ministry go to the Attorney General and have any consultation with him on this matter? That is the second aspect of this question.

The last thing which I shall ask him is this—I shall be brief. In answer to the question on the 29th July the hon. Minister said that as far as the Bombay High Court case is concerned it will be heard next month. That would mean that it would be heard in August. Now he is again repeating the words "next month". Will the hon. Minister enlighten the House whether "next month" is an abstract concept or really means any particular month.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Alva.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please sit

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Your name is not here.

down. Mr. Alva.

श्री राजनारायण : मैंने ही डिस्कशन रोज़ किया है। इस तरह प्वाइन्ट आफ़ ऑर्डर उठ जायगा और उसमें दो मिनट चले जायेंगे। एक चेयरमैन की बी गई रूलिंग को दूसरा चेयरमैन काट नहीं सकता है। जब हमारे नवाब साहब चेयर पर थे तो उन्होंने कहा था कि जिन्होंने प्वाइन्ट्स उठाये हैं वे सब के नाम खत्म होने के बाद स्पष्टीकरण कर सकेंगे। यह व्यवस्था दे दी है हमारे नवाब साहब ने।

SHRI JOACHIM ALVA (Nominated) : I want to know from the hon. Minister when there will be a finality about the Times of India business. You know that two editors of the Times of India and the Economic Times met the late Pandit Nehru and presented him a formidable memorandum about the misdeeds of the Times of India. The employees are in confusion; the management is worse; and most objectionable things are taking place. Please let us know when you will have a finality about this. You know how the present management of the Times of India was born; it was born in sin. Please let us know when you are going to have finality on this.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : I would briefly refer to many of the points which have been raised. First of all the question was raised as regards the employees of the company. May I point out, as I have already said, that whenever cases of punishment against some of the employees are referred to us, whatever is possible is done and adequate protection is given by the Company Law Board. These persons are rendered the necessary assistance. In this connection I would like to point out that against five persons there was a suspension order, and the company has now filed an appeal against the order of the Tribunal which had decided on the application that this suspension order should be withdrawn, and the appeal is now pending before the Tribunal and it will be disposed of.

Regarding the question that Shri Kunte should be removed, I have already replied to this question that it is not within our competence to remove Shri Kunte because he was appointed by the Tribunal, now the Bombay High Court. We have received certain allegations from the employees of the Times of India as well as from one or two of the Directors which are under examination. After examination and investigation if any action is called for, we shall certainly take necessary action to move the High Court.

One of the Members wanted a copy of the representation made by the employees to be placed before the House. I have no objection to do that, and that will be placed before the House.

So far as the delay in these cases is concerned, I have already pointed out that so far as we are concerned we are not responsible for this delay. I have given dates according to which the proceedings have been postponed from time to time, and Shri Chatterjee complained that last time I said that this case in the Bombay High Court would be taken up next month. I am only conveying the dates fixed by the High

[Shri Fakhruddin Ah Ahmed]

Court, and it is not within my jurisdiction to fix the date I am told that -the case wall be taken up by the Bombay High Court in the month of September

So far as the criminal matter is concerned, the matter, as I have said, is pending with the Attorney General and I shall certainly request him to expedite the disposal of his opinion so that we can take necessary action

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN The Prime Minister.

श्री राजनारायण : माननीया,

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN I shall quote the rule.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN . Rule 60,

श्री राजनारायण : हा, रूल कोट कर दीजिए ।

sub-rule (5) :

"There shall be no formal motion before the Council nor voting The member who has given notice may make a short statement and the Minister concerned shall reply shortly". Now the Prime Minister

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER *RE* EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI) Madam Deputy Chairman, it is with a heavy heart and with a profound sense of concern that I have to report to this House certain events which are currently taking place in Czechoslovakia.

We have always been deeply committed to the cause of freedom everywhere We have stood for certain principles as guiding and informing our attitude to international events The principle of non-interference by one country in the internal affairs of another constitutes the very basis of peaceful co-existence We have always believed that international relations should be governed by respect for the

sovereignty and independence of nations, big or small We have always stood for the right of every country to develop its personality according to its own traditions, aptitudes and genius India has always raised her voice whenever these principles have been violated

Sir, the House is aware of the reports which have come through the world Press and radio as to the nature of the developments which have taken place in Czechoslovakia We have also made enquiries from the diplomatic missions of the countries concerned as well as others, and continue to be in close touch with them The armed forces of the Soviet Union and four of its Warsaw Pact allies began crossing the Czechoslovak borders at about 0330 hours IST They are now reported to be in Prague and other towns of Czechoslovakia.

In the early hours of this morning, the Soviet Government, through their Charge d'Affaires in New Delhi, informed us that the Governments of the Soviet Union and four of its Allied countries of the Warsaw Pact had decided to send their armed forces into Czechoslovakia. Hon'ble Members have presumably seen the statement Which has since been put out by the Soviet news agency, Tass, stating the view point of the Soviet Government

Although it was only after our own independence that we were able to establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Czechoslovakia, we have a long history of friendship towards Czechoslovakia and its valiant people I recall, as I am sure many of my colleagues on both sides of the Houses will remember, the tragic and iateful events of 1938 and 1939 Even then our sympathies were with the people of Czechoslovakia in their travail and my father gave poignant expression to them I am sure that the House will join me in conveying to the people of Czechoslovakia the profound concern at the turn which events have taken so soon after what appeared to be a peaceful resolution of problems and differences between Czechoslovakia and its allies.