

RESULT OF ELECTION TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MR CHAIRMAN There were ten members duly nominated for election to the Public Accounts Committee of whom three members have withdrawn their candidature. As the number of the remaining candidates is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the following Members are declared duly elected to the said Committee —

- 1 Rajkumari Amrit Kaur
- 2 Shri Amolakh Chand
- 3 Shri T R Deogirikar
- 4 Shri S Venkataraman
- 5 Shri M Govinda Reddy
- 6 Shri Rohit M Dave and
- 7 Shri M Basavapunnaiiah.

12 NOON

MESSAGES FROM THE LOK SABHA

I THE BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS PORT TRUSTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1958

II THE HYDERABAD SECURITIES CONTRACTS REGULATION (REPEAL) BILL, 1958

SECRETARY Sir, I have to report to the House the following two messages received from the Lok Sabha, signed by the Secretary of the Lok Sabha:

I

"In accordance with the provisions of Rule 96 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose herewith a copy of the Bombay, Calcutta and Madras Port Trusts (Amendment) Bill, 1958, as passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 29th April, 1958"

II

"In accordance with the provisions of Rule 96 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business

in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose herewith a copy of the Hyderabad Securities Contracts Regulation (Repeal) Bill, 1958, as passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 29th April, 1958"

Sir, I lay the Bills on the Table

THE APPROPRIATION (NO 2) BILL, 1958—continued

MR CHAIRMAN We now come back to the Appropriation (No 2) Bill. Dr Dube, are you ready to speak now?

DR. R P DUBE (Madhya Pradesh). No, Sir, not now.

MR CHAIRMAN All right Mr Abid Ali

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI ABID ALI) Mr Chairman, during the course of the discussion on this Bill, references have been made to the Working Journalists Act, and some criticism has been levelled with regard to the working of the Minimum Wages Act. It has also been alleged that the Labour Ministry is not helpful to workers in the public sector and that hospitals etc for insured workers under the Employees State Insurance Act are not being provided for, and then much has been said with regard to the allegations about discrimination in giving representation to the various State trade union organisations. I propose to give a brief reply to these criticisms.

Firstly, Sir, the Working Journalists Act has been referred to during the course of this discussion. There is perhaps a feeling in one section that the Government of India is very much partial to working journalists, particularly because this Act has been enacted to regulate their conditions of service, working hours etc. Sir, it should be borne in mind that even

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commercial employees and workers in factories, mines, plantations etc have got the protections of several Acts. Also the workers who are employed in the newspaper industry—those who are not working journalists—have got the protection of several Acts like the Industrial Disputes Act, the Minimum Wages Act, the Provident Fund Act, the Payment of Wages Act, etc. Those who are covered by the Working Journalists Act were not entitled to protection under various other enactments. Therefore it was considered very necessary that these workers should also be given appropriate protection.

Then, Sir, there was another criticism as to why this particular Act was piloted by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. An attempt was made to show that he was much more partial to them. The Labour Ministry could have taken up that Bill, but the reason was that the Press Commission had been appointed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and consequently it was thought more appropriate that the Minister of Information and Broadcasting should pilot the Bill, which was on the lines of the recommendations made by the Press Commission. Sir, it has been said that working journalists should not be treated as workers in any industry. But as I have already submitted, if commercial employees, shop assistances and those working in offices also have been given the protection of other Acts, there is no reason why these working journalists should not be treated at least on par with those working in the commercial offices. They are doing hard work, they have to move about all the 24 hours, and certainly they were in difficulty because of no protection by any enactment. And therefore, Sir, this Working Journalists Act did not come a day too soon, and also there was no haste. All the three stages, both in the Lok Sabha and this Sabha, were gone through and there was an intelligent discussion, amendments were moved, and

appropriate time according to the requirements of the rules here was allowed. Therefore it is too late for any hon Member now to say that everything was done in haste.

With regard to the Minimum Wages Act, Sir, I may submit that 17 lakhs of workers have been covered. It was stated that the Central Government is not doing its job well, because the State Governments are not helping in the implementation of the Minimum Wages Act. Not a word by way of criticism has been said so far as the Central sphere is concerned. The State Governments are alive to their responsibilities, and all that has been done with regard to this Act has already been reported here. The last statement placed by me here was on the 24th of April which gives all kinds of details. The hon Member, Dr Gour while making—all sort of—uncharitable remarks also said here “I do not really want you to interfere.” He rightly says that the Centre should not interfere in the working of the State Governments. Then all this criticism that he has chosen to level is entirely misplaced, because we are not supposed to interfere. And I request him also not to interfere. (Interruption) Then, Sir, he has said that at some places the wages fixed were lower than those prevalent in other areas. But he has not mentioned any area, nor any prevalent wage there and how much has been fixed by the fixing authority. Sir, I may submit that these types of general remarks do not help us, do not help them and do not help the workers either. Of course, Sir, if any specific case has been brought to their notice, that should be communicated to us, and we will certainly forward it to the appropriate authority. The Act itself says that the minimum wages will be fixed by appropriate authority. As I have already submitted there is no criticism so far as the Central Government sphere is concerned, and so far as the States are concerned, they have got also Legislatures and these things should be most appropriately discussed there and not here.

About Labour Ministry not being helpful to workers in the public sector, it is a very uncharitable charge and is absolutely without any foundation. It is not correct to say that the Labour Ministry is being prevented from interfering in labour disputes in the public sector. The Industrial Disputes Act applies to industrial establishments both in the private sector and the public sector. The conciliation machinery is helpful in the public sector also. As the hon. Members are aware, the Railways and the Defence establishments have negotiating machineries which provide for settlement of disputes. Only when this machinery is not able to solve any dispute, the industrial relations machinery comes in. With regard to the other undertakings in public sector, the Conciliation Officers are always available to bring about amicable settlements. We have recently constituted an Inter-Departmental Standing Committee to quicken settlement of industrial disputes in the public sector. Representatives of all important employing Ministries are associated with the work of this Committee. A large number of cases have been successfully settled with the help of the industrial relations machinery at different levels. Therefore this charge also has no basis.

With regard to the Employees State Insurance Corporation, it was stated that 7 years back a decision was taken that families of the insured workers should be covered. It is not a fact. Only two years back this decision was taken and the attempt is first to cover all workers who can be covered by this Insurance Corporation scheme and in the second phase, workers' families should be covered. Of course it may be that at some places workers' families also may be covered in the first round but we have to wait for some time to cover all insured workers' families.

About hospitals, of course a decision was taken that there should be hospitals but we have no magic power

that just by touch, hospitals can be created with full equipment. The plan of the Corporation is to provide hospital accommodation and give treatment to all insured workers needing it. At some places beds have been reserved in hospitals and the number is 1139—654 general beds and 485 reserved for T.B. patients. Then annexes have already been constructed in Delhi, Nagpur, Hyderabad and are under construction in Coimbatore and Secunderabad.

DR. R. B. GOUR (Andhra Pradesh): The decision was taken 3 years ago. Land has been purchased in Kanpur and Bombay but no construction is there. There is no question of magic touch.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are critical and he is defending.

SHRI ABID ALI: The workers need hospital treatment. That treatment . . .

DR. R. B. GOUR: The ordinary citizens have to be deprived of the hospitals if the workers are to be reserved seats there.

SHRI ABID ALI: They have reserved seats in the general wards, in annexes, and hospitals are being built. The decision has been taken to build hospitals in Kanpur, Madras, Bangalore, Bombay and Calcutta.

Some very unfair remarks have been made with regard to the Chief Minister of West Bengal, that he is against this. I don't know from whom the hon Member gets this information. The State Government of West Bengal has planned for the construction of an additional block of 360 beds out of which 180 beds would be reserved for insured workers.

About discrimination in the insurance corporation the hon. Member said that in the Standing Committee of the Corporation, there is no AITUC representative. So far as Government is concerned, they have invited all the

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three Central organisations—AITUC, INTUC and HMS—to nominate their representatives on the Corporation. Now the Corporation Standing Committee is nominated by the Corporation, not by Government. If the Corporation does not—which is a tripartite organisation—nominate the representative of a particular organisation, certainly a complaint about that cannot be made here. The representative of the organisation concerned is at liberty to plead his case in the Corporation itself.

DR R B GOUR You mean that Government has nothing to do with it?

SHRI ABID ALI Government has everything to do but not dictate . .

MR CHAIRMAN No nomination

(Interruptions)

SHRI ABID ALI We have a democratic set-up and we want it to progress and flourish.

With regard to Wage Boards etc, we have no power to secure popularity for any particular trade union organisation, whether it be INTUC or any other. We cannot tell the workers to have confidence in this or that organisation. If AITUC has lost confidence of the workers, it is for them to take care of it and not to blame us.

DR R B GOUR Have you any principle to nominate

(Interruptions)

SHRI ABID ALI Is it not unfair to make unfounded charges and not hear the appropriate replies? He should not make charges which are entirely baseless, which have nothing to do with realities, and now he gets worried when I tell him the correct position. He deserves a little education and he should take

DR R B GOUR Sir, what does he mean by education, that I deserve some education?

SHRI ABID ALI In this respect he is much more educated

MR CHAIRMAN We are trying to educate all

SHRI ABID ALI I am prepared to learn from everybody

DR R B GOUR What does he mean by saying that I need education?

MR CHAIRMAN Your representations were baseless and not founded on facts as he has pointed out. That is what he says.

DR R B GOUR I would like to know whether they have evolved any principle for nomination of representatives of those Central organisations on the various Committees throughout the country, whether by them or by the State, or whether they are still considering this question.

SHRI ABID ALI That is what I was going to explain which he has not the patience to listen to. He said that the hon. Deputy Minister evolves principle after principle that suits the INTUC but which utterly excludes other organisations. And subsequently he charged the Andhra Government and he charged some other Government. Not one word has been said as to where we have been unfair or partial to any organisation. Here is his speech. I must submit that the AITUC has no affiliation of workers of a sizable number in the industries in which Wage Boards have been appointed. Figures have been quoted. If the hon. Member has forgotten, I may give him some information but I may submit one thing more. There is a saying

“चोर कोतवान को डंडा मारे”

MR CHAIRMAN He knows it

SHRI ABID ALI He knows it very well. Therefore I am saying it. The position with regard to the list of affiliation, with regard to membership, is as on 31st March 1957 and not 1958. We wrote to the Central organisations

including the one the hon. Member represents on the 23rd May 1957. The AITUC asked for extension on 13-8-57 saying that they will submit the return by the 15th September 1957. Then Mr. Dange again wrote to us that their organisation was not able to submit the list and again asked for extension. I told the hon. Member here in December and his colleague in the other House "We are not receiving the membership return from you and again you will say that we are unfair". Then we got a letter from Mr. Dange in February 1958 giving bare figures, not mentioning details, not mentioning the list of Unions affiliated to them nor their membership—nothing was mentioned—and then he said that details would follow. This was in February 1958. Then my senior colleague, the Labour Minister, wrote to him on the 12th March 1958 asking for details. Till this time, 13 months completed, from 31st March 1957 to this time, we have not received the required details from the A.I.T.U.C. Now we have been giving them representation wherever we felt that they should get. So to come here and say that their membership is ignored and their organisation is ignored is not fair.

DR. R. B. GOUR: On what basis he is saying that we have 5,000 members only and that is why he has not given any representation. If we have not given any number . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: He said that Mr. Dange's letter mentioned the number with the proviso that details would follow.

DR. R. B. GOUR: The number in his letter was 25,000 . . .

SHRI ABID ALI: Sir, am I speaking or is he speaking?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Raj Bahadur Gour always wants to speak when he does not agree with you.

SHRI ABID ALI: But I never interfered when he spoke.

DR. K. B. GOUR: But you were not here then.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down.

SHRI ABID ALI: For this purpose we have adopted the figures of 1956 as the basis. With regard to the wage boards concerning cement and sugar, the figures submitted by Mr. Dange did not make any mention of these two industries and still the complaint is made that we have not given them representation in these wage boards.

DR. R. B. GOUR: Will you please place a copy of that letter on the Table?

SHRI ABID ALI: The hon. Member can get it from the office of the A.I.T.U.C. for he belongs to that body. And if what I said is found to be incorrect, certainly I will be prepared to apologise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is time, Mr. Abid Ali. You take a long time trying to give him an answer in detail. That is the trouble.

SHRI ABID ALI: Then the hon. Member said that in the case of sugar, we did not give any representation to the H.M.S. That is incorrect. We have taken a representative from the Hind Mazdoor Sabha and one from the I.N.T.U.C.

It is not as if we have not given them representation on these wage boards because they had not supplied figures for 1957. On the basis of the information given by them for 1956, though they are not entitled to it, we have given them representation in various conferences and committees. In the case of the textile industry, though the figures given by Mr. Dange are without details, in 1957, according to their own claim, their membership had gone down.

DR. R. B. GOUR: They have the membership.

SHRI ABID ALI: One should deserve before one desires. If I do not deserve and yet go on desiring, nobody will come to my rescue. Of course, so far as the workers are concerned,

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they know that all that is necessary and possible under the given circumstances is being done for them, and they are fully satisfied and they are happy. We know that the masses are our *Sarkar*. If we are the *Sarkar*, then they are the *Sarkar* of the *Sarkar*. That is the real position. As for the hon. Member, his feeling is that he does not get the representation that he deserves, but in reality he does not deserve it.

STATEMENT RE DEATHS IN LOK SAHAYAK SENA CAMP AT SAS-THAMKOTTA FROM SUSPECTED FOOD-POISONING

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI V. K. KRISHNA MENON): Sir, Government deeply regret to inform the House that a large number of persons had to be sent to hospital suffering from suspected food poisoning from the Lok Sahayak Sena Camp at Sasthamkotta, many of whom have already died. This Camp had started on 10th April 1958 and had a total strength of 525 persons. Signs of food poisoning appeared among the inmates of the Camp shortly after breakfast yesterday morning.

All available means of transport were immediately commandeered for the removal of the affected persons to the nearest hospitals. Eighty-four persons were admitted of whom unfortunately 60 had died up to last night. Precise figures are not known, but a large proportion of those who have died are military personnel.

The Assistant Director of Medical Services from the Madras-Mysore-Kerala Area Headquarters has left Madras for the site with medical supplies by air this morning. The G.O.C. Madras-Mysore-Kerala Area has also left Madras and is reaching the site by mid-day today. A party consisting of one Lieutenant Colonel and two other officers has been detailed to make enquiries at the spot and to establish wireless communications so

that the progress of the patients can be followed closely and arrangements can be made without delay for any assistance which may be required.

Rations for Lok Sahayak Sena camps are ordinarily supplied through Army sources. But this camp, however, was located 70 miles from Trivandrum and 20 miles from the nearest Railway station. Local arrangements had, therefore, to be made for the supply of rations and these were made through a contractor. Cooking was, however, done by the permanent staff of the L.S.S. Training team. Further details are not available, but it appears from Press reports that there have been some food-poisoning deaths in the last few days in the area. Eight out of several persons who were taking meals or light refreshments from a hotel in Karamana which is about 60 miles away from the L.S.S. camp have also died yesterday in hospitals of suspected food-poisoning. The Police have sealed the mess at the L.S.S. Camp and the hotel at Karamana after taking samples of food for analysis.

The Local Government have suggested that the Camp should be dissolved. This, however, cannot be done until all the enquires have been completed.

I must here acknowledge the assistance which we have received from the local Civil Authorities in the evacuation of patients to the hospitals.

I am sure the House will share with the Government their feeling of distress at this heart-rending tragedy and sympathise with all those men, women and children who are bereaved today and survive in the shadow of this catastrophe. We hope that the next of kin and the widowed and the orphaned will find strength to make readjustments imposed upon them by the irreparable loss they have suffered and the human tragedy that is theirs as a result.

While all indications point to food-poisoning, it is not possible to state