

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for a comprehensive crop insurance scheme and for matters connected therewith."

*The motion was adopted.*

SHRIMATI USHA CHOUDHARI :  
Sir, I introduce the Bill.

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15-05 hrs.

CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT)  
BILL

*(Amendment of Eighth Schedule)*

*[English]*

PROF. NARAIN CHAND  
PARASHAR (Hamirpur) : Sir, I beg to  
move for leave to introduce a Bill further  
to amend the Constitution of India.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The  
question is :

"That leave be granted to  
introduce a Bill further to amend the  
Constitution of India."

*The motion was adopted.*

PROF. NARAIN CHAND  
PARASHAR : Sir, I introduce the Bill.

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BEEDI AND CIGAR WORKERS  
(CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT)  
AMENDMENT BILL, 1985—*CONTD.*

*[English]*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We  
shall now take up further consideration of  
the motion moved by Shri Ajit Kumar  
Saha on the 14th April, 1986.

Shri Hafiz Mohd. Siddiq may speak  
now.

*[Translation]*

SHRI HAFIZ MOHD. SIDDIQ  
(Moradabad) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir,

I am grateful to you for providing me an opportunity to speak on this Bill. It has been introduced for the welfare of the Beedi workers. I think that Beedi Industry in India is the only industry where the poor labourers can get employment very easily. It is spread throughout the country and the poor farmers, the unemployed people and women are engaged in this industry because employment is easily available there. I observe that wherever the beedi industry is located, it provides livelihood to the poor but these workers are also facing certain difficulties and problems. It is the duty of our Government to remove their difficulties and problems.

In the rural areas where beedis are manufactured, the poor labourers are exploited by the contractors and manufacturers and they do not get even the minimum wages. Therefore I would like to stress the need of a legislation to check such exploitation by the contractors and Manufacturers and to ensure payment of minimum wages to the workers. The poor workers work from the morning till evening in the factory to feed the irchildren. The toilet and bathroom facilities should be provided to them at their working places so that after the day's work they may take bath before leaving the factory and attend to their domestic chores. I want that law should be enacted to ensure that the wages settled between the workers and the contractors are paid to them. The labourers do not get their full wages. It is possible only if our Labour Inspectors go there and check them. If the Labour Inspector perform their duties, honestly I think the labourers would get their full wages.

Similarly, there provident fund case is also under the consideration of the Government. Provident Fund Facility should be provided to them because it is also a small scale industry and is spread all over the country like the Cotton Industry. The Government wants to help the poor, but the benefits do not reach them. Therefore, I would like to suggest that provident fund should form part of their wages and only then it will benefit the Beedi Workers. Whatever benefits Government wants to

give to them must reach them and they must also get their full wages. Being a small scale industry, its work is spread in every village and in every city. This work cannot be undertaken at one place because lakhs of workers are engaged in this work and it is not possible to make their sitting arrangement at one place. That is the main reason why proper control could not be exercised over it till now. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to make law to have uniform wage structure in the entire country. Besides, other facilities proposed to be given to them, may be given as part of the wages so that the worker may take full advantage of the scheme. All the manufacturers and contractors are licence holders, so their registers should be checked to confirm whether they are paying minimum wages to the workers or not because the owners of the Beedi Industry make them full payment. With these words I thank you and conclude.

\*SHRI V. S. VIJAYARAGHAVAN (Palghat): Sir, I am in support of the objective of this Bill. While supporting it I would demand that the Govt. bring forward a comprehensive Bill for the welfare of the beedi workers.

There are above 33 lakhs employees engaged in this industry. Although the Govt. has passed a law for the welfare of the beedi workers they are not getting the benefits of the law.

The beedi workers are facing many problems. The first and foremost is the absence of a uniform national minimum wage. We have not been able to introduce national minimum wage in this industry. In many States there is no minimum wage for the beedi workers. The demand for a uniform minimum wage throughout the country was made in a meeting of the federation of the beedi workers and a memorandum to this effect was submitted to the Prime Minister. Later this issue was discussed in the tripartite meet but the opinion emerged in that meet was that introduction of a uniform national minimum wage was not feasible at

the moment. But there was an agreement on a regional minimum wage. In this context I must say that my State of Kerala is facing the problem of migration of beedi industry to the neighbouring States like Tamilnadu, Karnataka etc. Since the wages in these States are low the beedi manufacturers and contractors go to these States manufacture beedi there, put a label and then bring them back to sell. This has seriously effected the employment opportunities in this industry in Kerala. The workers are losing employment. Therefore, the Govt. should take initiative in introducing national minimum wage in this industry.

Another problem is that the beedi and cigar workers (conditions of employment) Act is not being implemented in many States. The beedi workers are subjected to perpetual exploitation by the beedi manufacturers and contractors. They work from 10 to 12 hours but do not get enough wage to make both ends meet. The welfare officers do not act in time because they have no interest in the welfare of the beedi workers. According to an estimate half of the beedi workers are suffering T. B. The Govt. of India made some attempts in the past to organise them on the basis of cooperatives. I want the hon. Minister to tell the House as to what has been done in this respect and to what extent the Govt. has succeeded in it. The problems of the workers could be solved only by bringing them into the cooperative sector. The Dinesh Beedi Corporation in Kerala is a good example of the success of the cooperative endeavour in the beedi industry. I would request the Govt. to take initiative in this regard.

I am very happy that the Govt. is paying attention to the health problems of the beedi workers. But the existing medical facilities need to be augmented. For example, there is only one hospital for the beedi workers in the whole country and it has only 10 beds. More such hospitals should be set up in different parts of the country. I take this opportunity to request the Govt. that a couple of hospitals

\*The speech was originally delivered in Malayalam.

[Shri V. S. Vijayaraghavan]

should be set up in Kerala exclusively for the benefit of the beedi workers.

There is a housing scheme for the beedi workers. But the fact is that it is not beneficial to all the workers. This scheme benefits only those workers who are working in recognised manufacturing units and thus a large number of workers are deprived of its benefits. My request is that all the workers in beedi industry irrespective of whether they work in recognised or unrecognised units should be brought under the housing scheme. Similarly, pension should be given to all the workers above the age of 50, Beedi workers are most disabled section of the working class in the country. When they become old and sick they have nothing to fall back upon. Therefore, pension should be given to them.

The beedi workers organisations have put forth a demand that the excise duty on beedi should be shifted to tobacco. They also say that if it is not possible to shift the excise duty in this manner then the exemption given upto 20 lakh beedis should be removed. There are complaints that the exemption given is being misused by certain vested interests. I would therefore request the Govt. to reconsider this issue.

I would also request the Govt. to extend the coverage of BSI scheme to all the beedi workers in the country. I feel that the present bill is not such as would help in solving all the problems of the beedi workers and therefore I request the Govt. to bring forward a comprehensive legislation to deal with all the aspects of the welfare of the beedi workers. With these words I conclude.

\*SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI (Bellary): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are discussing an important amendment bill which seeks to provide more and more facilities to the beedi workers. In this regard I would like to give some suggestions. Children and women from various parts of the country are entering this

industry. There is a steep increase in the number of persons smoking beedis, cigars, cigaretts etc. Earlier, only a few persons used to smoke. These days we see many people smoking. Even children have started smoking. Day by day more and more people are taking to smoking. Smoking is injurious to health. This fact has been given sufficient publicity. Newspapers are publishing various articles, research studies etc. about the danger of smoking. Many notable doctors have given their expert opinion in this matter. In spite of all these precautions and warnings the number of smokers is increasing in the country. This habit of smoking was rampant in many foreign countries. Some of the foreign countries have taken various measures to curb this habit among the people. Studies have revealed that smoking may lead to cancer which results in death. World Health Organisation is doing its best to curb this habit among the people in our country. Even then, particularly in our country this disease of smoking is spreading all round like wild fire. Here I would like to cite an example. Many snakes are poisonous. Even a poisonous snake which can move anywhere does not enter the field where tobacco is cultivated. It is understood that it dies if it enters the field. From this one can imagine how dangerous is tobacco. When the smoke of tobacco is inhaled it spoils the health of the body. Hence the Govt. have to take proper measures if they want to protect the health of the people of our country.

Tobacco is grown in various parts of the country as a commercial crop. In Andhra Pradesh tobacco is produced in large quantity. The tobacco that is grown in "Guntur" is of a better quality than that of virginia tobacco. The tobacco Board is buying tobacco at remunerative prices to help the growers. Tobacco is yielding substantial foreign exchange to the country. By exporting tobacco, our farmers are getting very good return.

Various people are getting profit from tobacco but the conditions of the persons

\*The speech was originally delivered in Kannada.

working in tobacco industry is really miserable. The owners of the beedi factories and cigarette factories are not taking proper care of the workers. All these workers especially in beedi factories have to work from morning to night. Most of these workers are children and women. They work in a very bad environment. Many of the workers are attacked by diseases. The wages that they get is very meagre. Child workers get very low wages. In some factories the records show a particular pay and the workers get another pay. This deserves all condemnation. The children who work in this industry gradually become slaves of smoking. The Government has to take steps to see that the children do not become habitual smokers. Childrens' work in beedi cigarette factories should be abolished completely. Women working in these industries should be provided alternative jobs and they should never be allowed to work in beedi factories.

The facilities provided to these workers are very poor. There is no medical check up of workers. Work load is too much. When the worker becomes a patient due to some disease he will not get proper compensation from the owner of the factory. Stringent action must be taken against such owners.

Beedi workers who are severely attacked by diseases will reach a stage when they are no more capable of doing any work in their life time. For such persons it is very essential to provide rehabilitation. In this regard the Govt. should bring an amendment bill to help such persons.

There are several thousands of persons working the beedi industry in Karnataka and also in other States. It is the responsibility of the States to look after the welfare of the beedi workers. Some States have provided the facilities to some extent. But in some other States the condition of the beedi workers is miserable. Therefore I request the Govt. of India to come forward to frame a uniform policy and to rescue the poor workers. The workers work in a very bad atmosphere. The factory buildings are small and we see thousands of people working under the

same roof. Neither there is light to see or air to breath. Under these circumstances how can one expect the poor beedi workers to sit and work from early morning to night. Therefore, I earnestly plead with the hon. Minister to introduce a uniform policy for the welfare of the beedi workers. Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak and with these words I conclude my speech.

**SHRI RAM PYARE PANIKA** (Robertsganj) : Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I support the objectives of the Beedi And Cigar (conditions of Employment) Amendment Bill, 1985 introduced by Shri Saha. I request the Government to bring a comprehensive legislation for the welfare of the Beedi workers so as to solve their problems.

Sir, the condition of unorganised labourers, whether they are Beedi Workers, agricultural labourers or workers in any other industry, is appalling. In my area Tendu leaves are available. Sir, you will be surprised to know that so many contractors are exploiting Beedi workers there and do not pay them minimum wages.

15.29 hrs.

[**SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI**  
*in the Chair*]

Madam, the main problem of the Beedi workers is that they become victims of dangerous diseases like T.B. But neither the Government nor the contractors have provided any facility for their treatment. These contractors engage Beedi workers at very low wages. Therefore, I request the Government to ensure minimum wages for the Beedi workers. What actually happens is that the contractors give some advance to the workers and purchase Beedis from them at a very cheap rates. This is the reason that the workers are compelled to work for the contractors at very low wages. Therefore, a legislation for the welfare of the workers should be brought and arrangement should be made to pay them their wages.

There is no facility of health centres, educational institutions and other basic

[Shri Ram Pyare Panika

amenities for the workers. Generally these people live in the villages and in Jhuggis and their living conditions are appalling. The companies engaged in Beedi industry are increasing their assets and doing nothing for the welfare of their workers. We want that the Government should compel these companies to open schools for the children of poor workers. Besides keeping in view their low wages, Government should provide them the facility of gratuity, provident fund and some other old age scheme.

The Government have enacted various laws, particularly after 1980, for the welfare of the workers but I would like to bring it to your notice that the State Governments are not at all implementing these laws. Such laws are confined to statute books and gathering dust in the almirahs of the offices of the State Governments. You must have a machinery to ensure implementation if the laws passed by you.

In the previous plans, you had appointed some inspectors at Block level on the payment of Rs. 250 as honorarium. Regarding this I would like to say that these inspectors come to the Block offices just to collect their honorarium. They neither have any concern with Beedi workers nor do anything for their welfare. Therefore, I would request you to appoint full time inspectors at Block level and they should be empowered to ensure implementation of the laws by the States Governments.

The issue of bonded labour in the carpet industry was raised in the Parliament sometime back and after that a plan of Rs. 40 crores was formulated for the welfare of the carpet industry workers at Mirzapur and Banaras. I want that similar arrangement should be made for the workers engaged in Beedi industry.

Generally, adivasis and harijans are engaged in the Beedi industry who live in jhuggis in villages. Some training arrangement should be made for them. The

contractors are exploiting the workers in the name of training, and as such Government should itself make arrangement for their training. The raw material and tobacco should be supplied to them in time. The officers deputed by the Central Government ask the contractor to give him the names of 10-20 workers; to whom he makes payment of half of the amount earmarked for them and pockets the rest of the amount. The Central Government has initiated so many labour-welfare programmes. It is, therefore, necessary to form a monitoring cell which should submit its report to the Government regarding the implementation of these programmes. Only then there will be some use of formulating such laws. You will have to take drastic steps to uplift the labourers of Beedi industry, who are leading a miserable life, to the level of other well-to-do section of the society. You will have to exhort the State Governments to take action to implement the objectives of the Central Government regarding the welfare of unorganised and bonded labour. It will not be possible to implement it by appointing supervisors or inspectors on honorarium basis. I want that Government should formulate a policy regarding the inspectors appointed on honorarium basis in all the Blocks to ensure that appointment of inspectors is made mandatory to look after the interest of the labourers of unorganised sector and they should be asked to submit their report to the Government. The funds are provided by the Centre whereas the appointments are made by the State Governments. I know that out of Rs. 250, they pay Rs. 100 to the Block officer. Such cases have come to our notice that the names of the villages mentioned in the inspection report, do not exist in that area. I personally enquired from many agricultural labourers in this regard. In this way whom are we deceiving ?

I am sure that under such circumstances, the hon. Minister will bring a comprehensive legislation in this regard. I fully agree with the objectives of the Bill introduced by one of our friends but I do not support it because it is not comprehensive. I request the hon. Minister to bring a comprehensive legislation in consonance with the sentiments expressed by me.

**SHRIMATI USHA CHOUDHARI** (Amravati) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I welcome this important Bill. Maharashtra is also one of the States in the country where Beedis are manufactured. In Maharashtra, the Beedis are manufactured in Vidarbha, Dhoda Bhondap, Marathwada, Beed district and its surrounding areas and the areas along the Western Maharashtra and Karnataka border and mostly women are engaged in this industry. Manytimes I also got an opportunity to listen to their grievances and had participated in the agitation. I tried to raise this issue in the Parliament several times. I am happy that this Bill has been introduced in the House. Before the land ceiling Act came into force, there were two distinct classes the Zamindars and the tillers. Similarly, there are two distinct classes of workers. Various laws have been enacted for the workers but to no effect. The educated people who work in the organised sector have formed strong unions and can exert political pressure also. Their agitation can hold up our work, that is why their problems are solved immediately. But the problems of the unorganised and uneducated workers remain unsolved because they do not have a union, are scattered all over the country and do not know how to fight for justice. The workers of the Beedi and Cigar industry are also in this category.

For this purpose a very effective law is needed, not only on paper but in practice also. It has been cited or we have mentioned in this Bill that more than 50 lakh workers are engaged in this industry. I feel that you might be knowing that very few people work in the factories but a large number of people are given Beedi leaves to prepare Beedis on contract basis. They are given bad quality leaves and tobacco. If beedis are of bad quality or their number is less, then the wages of beedi workers are deducted. If you wish, you may ask them On the one hand a deduction from their wages is made on this account and on the other hand full quantum of work is also not given to them. This Bill has been brought to stop such exploitation of labourers.

We find posters of Malaria and Smallpox eradication programmes and

feel proud in saying that we have eradicated Malaria. But T. B. is also spreading and a survey is needed in this regard. The incidence of Cancer and T.B. is increasing I want to inform the House that workers of Beedi factories generally fall victim to T.B. Why do you not check the site of any factory before issuing an industrial licence, which leads to pollution. No action is taken if Beedi factories or Cigar factories do not provide for the requisite facilities in accordance with the rules. These industries do not have facilities such as light, air, sufficient space to sit as a result of which the workers cannot move their bodies and they have to work for 12 hours at a stretch. What is the criteria of issuing licences to such industries. What are the laws which govern the setting up of this industry? I would urge the hon. Minister, through Mr. Chairman, to provide for deterrent punishment to these people. If some factory owners are punished in this way it would be helpful in preventing the recurrence of such lapses in future.

I also want to inform you that in our society ladies get the work, which is considered low in dignity and fetches less wages. That is why generally ladies are engaged in Beedi and Cigar industry. We want that nobody should be hungry and unemployed but it does not mean that in order to get a square meal, six children of a family should work. Therefore, we should help them in improving their living conditions. It may not be binding legally but it is the need of the hour. The works of these industries fall victim to T. B. and other diseases. We should give them attention. We always demand facilities for labourers as well as farmers, such as hospitals, schools and service security for them but they are never fulfilled, because it is not practicable. We must conduct a survey to find out the number of workers suffering from T.B. and how many out of them are women. After getting these figures, we must make an introspection to find out how it was permitted to continue so long. In this way we shall be able to identify the areas which we had ignored so far. Late Shri Nehru had said that we could bring about social and economic change through Five Year Plans and the

[Shrimati Usha Choudhari]

Twenty point programme. Cooperative movement is a must for our country. Late Shrimati Indira Gandhi made possible the implementation of the plans and put the country on the road to progress through the Twenty Point Programme. Pandit Nehru had said that the poor could be uplifted through the cooperative sector only. Only if we associate the poor people, farmers, workers and labourers with the cooperative movement, can the country make progress and we can bring about economic revolution and also stop exploitation by the industrialist and the zamindars. Therefore neither can the poor think of establishing big industries nor can we stop the business of the Tatas and the Birlas. We should, therefore, frame a policy under which subsidy may be provided to the poor to set up their own industry in the hand loom sector or in the Beedi industry which do not require much finance. We find that some women organisations are doing well in the fishing trade in Bombay and all over Maharashtra. This trade can be carried out better through cooperatives than through a Government agency. Women should be provided with assistance in the field of Beedi and Cigar industries. Fifty per cent of our population consists of women. Unless we provide them facilities to earn their own bread or to run their own trade, we cannot bring about economic revolution and our families cannot be uplifted. Therefore, Government should help them in forming cooperative societies.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : The time allotted for this Bill is almost over. There are yet many Members who want to speak on this Bill. If the House agrees, the time for this Bill may be extended upto 5.30 p.m.

MANY HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The time for this Bill is extended upto 5.30 p.m.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI USHA CHOUDHARI : support this Bill but still I request the

hon. Minister and the Government to order an enquiry into the Beedi and Cigar industry. Merely passing the Bill cannot help in this matter. You should look into the working conditions of this industry. Some steps should be taken to protect the health of the workers and to provide guarantee of service and wages to them. We have seen that some industries undertake measures to prevent the ill-effects of tobacco on the workers. We cannot close this industry because even now the poorest of the poor smoke Bidi. Therefore, we should refine it to see that the likely ill-effects of Bidi and Cigar could be reduced.

With these words, I support this Bill.

CH. SUNDER SINGH (Phillaur) : Madam, Chairman, I had been Minister of labour in Punjab for two terms. So far as this Bill is concerned, I know the condition of the labourers there. Be it bidi labourers or agricultural labourers, I tell you no law can help them unless they organise themselves to agitate unitedly. You may make a number of laws for them but they can't defend themselves unless they are imbued with the spirit to fight for their Cause.

So far as this Bill is concerned, I would like to quote Mahatma Gandhi :—

[English]

“Smoking is in a way a greater curse than drinking inasmuch as the victim does not realise its evil in time. It is not regarded as a sign of barbarism, it is even acclaimed by the civilized people. I can only say, let those who can, give it up and set the example”.

‘M. K. Gandhi’

[Translation]

Mahatma Gandhi had forbid smoking. He said I have horror of smoking as of wine.

[English]

“Smoking I consider to be a vice. It is a habit which is difficult to get rid of when once it seizes hold of a person.

It is an expensive vice. It fouls the breath, discolours teeth and sometimes even causes cancer". It is a dirty habit."

'M. K. Gandhi

[Translation]

Mahtama Gandhi had said that bidi smoking affects health. Even the labourers who manufacture it fall victim to its ill-effects.

[English]

Mussoloni had said : "First I am a labourer than anything else".

[Translation]

Only a labourer can feel another labourer's problems. You may pass a number of laws but nothing can be done till the labourers organise themselves. You people enjoy all facilities in your life. Has anybody ever said that land belongs to the tillers ? Shri Jakhar owns vast area of land. Rao Birendra Singh owns 3000 acres of land. There are persons who own as much as 5000 acres of land. Shri Sparrow owns land and bungalows at so many places. If you distribute it among the poor it will be a practical step. We just talk of Mahatma Gandhi but do not follow his teachings.

[English]

Even the small morsel of food that he eats is taken away from his mouth.

[Translation]

You may frame a number of laws but if the poor people do not organise themselves nothing is going to happen. We also cannot do anything for them till they produce their own leaders.

Mahatma Gandhi first reformed himself and then asked others to follow the right path. How far you people have been influenced by his teachings ? You people talk of the poor and suggest all sorts of laws for them. Mere passing of laws cannot solve the problem; what matters is your intention. Once the labourers become

aware of their rights, they will set the things right. Mahatma Gandhi did "a practical thing. You may pass a number of laws, give a number of laws, give a number of speeches but these cannot solve the problems. This would not work. The straight fact is that unless the affected people, who are the poor workers themselves, organise themselves and find leaders from among themselves, no good can happen to them. Untill life is infused into these people, the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Nehru would not be fulfilled. We do not want their upliftment and that is the bare fact. If they are filled with enthusiasm then who would care for us ? Therefore, make hay while the sun shines. People are able to talk well, but there should be an ideal as well.

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA :  
Madam, they are speaking ill of us.

(Interruptions)

CH. SUNDER SINGH : When I became an MLA, I had observed certain ideals. My people have elected me not merely on political grounds but for economic reasons as well. It has been my endeavour that they should not possess less money than I possess. What I mean is their financial standing should in no way be less than mine and this should be the cherished goal. Until this is accepted as the ideal, your becoming representative of the people will not benefit at all. Mahatma Gandhi had said the same thing and our leaders also reiterate it but unless we follow it ourselves, it will not have any meaning at all. Pray, follow it yourself just a little and you will see how people follow you. I have been a member since 1946, but I have never canvassed for votes. Yet people surround me wherever I go. As they do not find another candidate more suitable than me, they elect me, I do not canvass for votes. Well, I am not indulging in self praise but what I am saying is that you should also follow the same course and you would enjoy it. Mere talking won't do.

[English]

It is better to be cheated by others than to cheat others.

[Ch. Sunder Singh]

[Translation]

We must reform ourselves. Unless we follow these ideals ourselves, it would be very difficult to bring about socialist pattern of society. The educated people exploit the depressed section of the society to the maximum but a time would come when the exploited people would take their revenge and set you right. They would accuse you of not practising what you preached. A day of reckoning would come but before they take the matter in their own hands, you should correct yourselves. When I was the Labour Minister, I went to see a factory at Khanna. There I saw a man standing and working near fire. He used to earn only 75 paise per day. He requested me that he would be satisfied if his daily wage was increased by 15 paise. When I come out, I saw that a white cloth was spread on which rasagulla's and other delicacies were kept—it was a grand affair. I declined to partake of the feast. When they asked the reason for it I replied that I had no right to partake of the feast; it was only the labourers who could have it. When the labourers come to know about that incident they raised slogans in my support, I was told that since I was the Labour Minister, I must think about the development of the industries but I had done the very opposite. I replied that the welfare of the labourers was uppermost in my mind. I then increased the wages by 15 paise per day which resulted in extra payment by the factory to the tune of Rs. 40,000. You should also act in a similar manner. These who want to do something are easily discernible. You should first reform yourself. One should be realistic... (Interruptions)

16.00 hrs.

People read voluminous scriptures and visit temples, mosques and Gurudwaras for praying to God, but they never work in that spirit. It is no use doing all this if it does not bring any change in a person. The terrorists had entered the Golden Temple. Those who entered were worthless people otherwise why should they have become terrorists.

[English]

“Where should you seek for God. Are not the poor, the down trodden and the miserable Gods? Worship them first. I do not believe in God and religion who cannot wipe out tears from the widow's eyes, who cannot bring a morsel of food to the orphan's mouth.”

Vivekananda'

“All expansion is life, all contraction is death, all love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction. Love therefore is the only life line. He who loves, lives, he who is selfish is dying. Therefore, love for love sake, because it is the only life line.

Vivekananda'

“Truth, purity and unselfishness, these three are present. There is no power below and above sun to crush the possessor thereof. Equipped with these. Even a single man can stand against the whole universe in opposition. Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.”

Vivekananda's

[Translation]

The person who can mend himself will go ahead. If you want to bring about change in the society you must change the whole atmosphere. A person who derives the least benefit from society and gives back the maximum, only he would become the leader. The person who takes Rs. 4000 from the society and does only Rs. 500 worth of work would never become a leader. One who exploits the society cannot progress. The bidi workers or the poor people who take least from the society and give back more, in my opinion, should become the leaders. These people will definitely come forward one day, so you should set yourself right. One cannot expect much from you as you like to live well. So, how can you reform yourself? We must think before we utter the name of Mahatma Gandhi. Wherever Mahatma Gandhi went, he always tried to find out the per capita diet available there and did not partake of more diet than the per capita

consumption. But you are not following his ideals. Wherever you find an opportunity you take advantage of it. With these words I express my thanks.

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER (Ghazipur) :  
Mr. Chairman, Sir, I wish to thank Shri Ajit Kumar Saha, for introducing this Bill. Through this Bill we have been given the opportunity of discussing a section of labour whose condition is indeed appalling. I think there is no other class of labourers whose condition is worse than that of the bidi workers. It can be guessed from the appalling conditions in which they lead their life. Those who have seen their pligh and suffering must have been greatly moved and in fact it does cause distress. It is a matter of regret that although laws regarding welfare of bidi workers exist yet those are not helpful to them. Laws are violated time and again and attempts are made to see that a sizable section of the bidi workers is not covered by the laws enacted for them. The Bill has been introduced by Shri Saha for removing this Lacuna in particular, and I appreciate it.

The bidi factory owners do not show in their office registers the names of many bidi workers although they work there. They show the names of a very few workers in their registers. Most of the workers are engaged on contract basis, who are given the bidi leaves and tobacco and are asked to deliver the rolled bidis, and in this way they are shown as contractors or agents or bidi retailers. In this way a large number of bidi workers are deprived of the benefit of the laws enacted for them. When such a large number of bidi workers are taken outside the purview of these laws then those laws cease to have any value for them. They are not paid the wages which are reasonable under the law.... The labourers in every district and State do not get their due wages as fixed by the law.

Both men and women work in the bidi industry. Rather, I would say that the number of women workers is more. These women workers are either widows or from very poor families where there is no other earning hand or those women whose husbands also work in the bidi industry. And the anomaly is that the factory owners give

more wages to the male workers as compared to women workers. Whereas there is a provision in our constitution that equal wages should be paid for equal work and there should not be any discrimination on the basis of sex. Whenever this matter is raised, they argue that women do not make bidis correctly, their hands are not clean and these bidis have to be sold at a lower price. But less wages to women is a sort of exploitation. Even children in a large number are engaged in this trade. This is the violation of the law that children work in factories. But they are also paid less wages even though they do not have anything to eat and are in distress. It is the poor and people in distress who are engaged in this trade and their plight causes great concern. So far as Government machinery is concerned, the labour laws are not enforced effectively.

I shall tell you about my district, Ghazipur. Bidi workers live there in large number. I have been drawing the attention of the State Government and the Central Government to their plight for the last many years. Sometimes some big officials visit these places and even raids are conducted but the owners tell them that they have employed only ten workers who are being paid full wages and the rest are not workers. These people do not come in the category of the workers. So far as their welfare and medical facilities are concerned, cess has imposed to create welfare fund for them but from that fund even they do not get money in time. The intention behind this Bill is good and it is in the interest of the workers and it is necessary to cover all the contractors, Agents and the bidi makers under the provisions of this Bill. I would therefore, request the Labour Minister that if this Bill is not acceptable to him and according to him there are some lacuna then these lacuna should be removed and a new Bill be introduced in the House so as to fulfil the intention behind this Bill.

Madam Chairman, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the prevalence of T.B. among the bidi industry workers about which other hon. Member have also spoken. I do not know about the reason,—whether it is due to the leaves or the tobacco—but bidi smokers do not suffer from this disease. The bidi smokers can contract other diseases

[Shri Zainul Basher]

but not T.B. There are few examples of tobacco smokers suffering from T.B. But the bidi workers are largely afflicted with this disease. We know all this because people come to quite often for medicines and help. A survey must be conducted to find the reasons why bidi workers become victim of tuberculosis while the bidi smokers are not affected by it. I do not have the courage to say that the bidi industry should be closed down because more than fifty lakh people are engaged in this trade and their livelihood depends on it. We are not in a position to offer them some other work or some alternative employment and as such cannot demand the closure of the bidi industry. But we can at least ask that efforts must be made to remove the root cause of tuberculosis or other diseases prevalent among the bidi workers before treating these diseases. We must conduct research to find out why the bidi workers are prone to this disease and make efforts to remove these causes. There should be full arrangements for medical aid and their treatments.

The welfare fund, created by imposing cess on bidis, should be used for the treatment of workers, for the marriages of their daughters for their other necessities and needs. Today the situation is that these workers do not get the money. It is all due to the lacuna, pointed out in the Bill, that the workers of this trade are not registered as labourers. Even if some of them are registered they do not get the money properly because the procedure for it is very complex and difficult. The decisions regarding this fund are made at the State level and only four to five persons per district get the benefit of the scheme. It is my request that this procedure may be made easy and simple. Wherever there is concentration of bidi workers, the disbursement should be made at district level. A committee should be constituted at the district level consisting of public-representatives, bidi workers' representatives, Government officers and persons from the labour department. It would be easy for this committee to process the case and recommend payment to the workers. This step is quite important. The sooner the

Government pays attention to the plight of bidi workers and the loopholes in the law, and removes these shortcomings, the greater is the justice we can provide to this neglected, and poor section of society. If we delay this work, I am afraid then we would not be able to ameliorate their lot. Poor women and children are engaged in this work. The conditions of these poor bidi workers is really miserable. You can recognise a bidi worker from a distance. Just a glance at the face and dress of a bidi worker would reveal his industry. The plight of no other worker is so appalling. Madam Chairmain, through you, I would forcefully request the hon. Minister to pay immediate attention to this matter.

Madam, Shri Saha has done a commendable work by introducing this Bill because it has provided an opportunity to discuss this subject in the House and as a result an outline of the condition of the bidi workers has emerged. I am hopeful that keeping in view the sentiments of the House the hon. Minister will bring forward a Bill in the House which will remove all the shortcomings of the present Bill and injustice would no longer be meted out to the workers.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH RATH (Aska) :  
Madam Chairperson, I thank Mr Saha for having brought this amending Bill to the Beedi and Cigar Workers Act of 1966, so that some loopholes in the Act can be plugged and these workers can be helped and their living conditions improved.

As you know, this beedi production is labour-intensive and is done in various stages and levels. Usually, a factory employs very few workers while the major portion of the beedi production is done typically outside the factory. The principal employer supplies the raw materials, namely, the tendu leaves, tobacco and yarn etc. to the contractor who, on the other hand, distributes the same to several workers, who take these to their homes and prepare beedi and do the levelling, rolling, etc. The different stages of preparation of beedi is done by different persons and also this is done mostly by ladies. Firstly, the leaves are cleaned, washed and dried.

Beedi is prepared and sent to the market after packing. There are problems relating to the wages of these beedi workers. The shortage of the raw materials supplied to them is realised from these workers. The damage done while preparing the beedis is also realised from these workers. Suppose there is a sudden gust of wind, the leaves may blow away including tobacco and the workers have to pay for it. There is an improper counting of beedis and bundles. So many other things are there for which these workers are suffering a lot. They are taking loans and their indebtedness continues for a long time.

16.19 hrs.

[SHRI ZAINUL BASHER *in the chair*]

Their children are pledged to work in the factories for many years. An amount of one rupee and fifty paise is paid to them for working for ten to twelve hours per day which is adjusted against interest of the borrowed amount. And if they are released from the bondage the amount that is advanced by way of loan is to be repaid and the work done so far is adjusted towards the interest.

Sir, these workers are not in the organised sector. The women workers of the bidi industry are not members of the trade union and the District Labour Officers and the Instructors many times have expressed their inability to protect the beedi workers because of the inherent lacuna in the Beedi and Cigar Workers Act, 1966. Though the Act demands that the workers must be given a service book, in fact this is not supplied and there are many lacunae in the Act, as I have stated, and here are many problems too. They are not paid minimum wages and there is improper distribution of wages. Even the purchases of gum and yarn for levelling are paid from their own earnings. As I have stated, there is improper counting of beedis and there is shortage of beedis. It is because of short supply of raw materials to workers. Besides that, there is health problem. High incidence of T.B., asthma, ischaemia and nervous disorder are common, there is no access to beedi workers dispensary for women workers.

There is no proper medical attention to them and they are exploited to a large extent. The contractors by and large supply less raw materials and fix a target for a number of beedis to be rolled and necessarily the number of beedis will be less and the workers are made to pay for this. Sir, while the employers can afford the commission they pay to the contractors, the workers on the other hand suffer enormously. They cannot protest. If they protest, they stand to lose their jobs specially since many others are in queue and there is no alternative employment for them. So, what is needed is that the hon. Minister may think of cooperative societies through which this manufacture of beedis can be done and the workers can be protected.

If possible, and it can be made possible, loans under the Prime Minister's 20-point programme can be advanced to these workers. So also there can be the bank's lending scheme for individuals and organised cooperatives with or without guarantee. The low rate of interest being charged, compared to the exorbitant interest rate by the private money-lenders can be taken advantage of. There must be special schemes to educate the unemployed youth, both men and women and how to protect themselves from this health hazardous atmosphere and all these must be looked into. I would suggest that unless stringent measures are taken and all these aspects are looked into, their problems are sorted out and a comprehensive Bill is brought forward, the workers can not be helped. It is because, in this area, we find that women and children are involved and they work in their houses and the wages they get are too low. One of the reasons for this is, these labourers are not in the organised sector. In Orissa, *Kendu* leave has been nationalised and the labours mostly Adivasis, Harijans and backward people collect the leaves. But they are not getting proper wages though it is nationalised. It is not that they are not getting better wages than what were given previously. They are getting better wages. But they are not getting the wages that were expected, which they ought to get after it is nationalised.

[Shri Somnath Rathod]

Similarly, the labourers engaged in the collection of raw materials for the production of bidis such as Kendu leaves tobacco etc. should be given proper wages and protection should be given. Steps should be taken to see that the labourers and these employees are benefited. As I have said, in this area, the labourers are not organised and they are not in a position to bargain. They are mostly exploited and the hon. Minister knows about it. I congratulate him as he is taking keen interest in their welfare and he wants to bring forward a comprehensive Bill. When a comprehensive Bill is brought forward, all these aspects must be looked into.

I invite his attention when I speak of unorganised labour sector. In Orissa, thousand of labourers who are working as *Dadan Sheramikas* are being exploited. They are being brought to Bombay and specially to Delhi, by the construction companies, both in private and public sectors and thousands of rupees are collected from them, with an assurance that they will be sent abroad. Before that, they are made to work in different projects by the same continental construction companies inside India and the minimum wages are not given. They are made to work in unhygienic conditions and many of them have met death because they were not given protection by these contractors. For years, they are not sent abroad and they are roaming without any work. You will be surprised that these contractors have no licence for years together. In reply to a question of mine, the hon. Minister said that only one manpower company in Orissa has got the licence to send labourers abroad till the period 1987 but no other. But how the unauthorised agents or contractors are functioning? They are *exploiting the labourers from Orissa*. What action has been taken? I invite the attention of the hon. Minister to this aspect.

Now there are about 500 workers in Delhi who have come from Orissa. They have got their passports to go abroad. But these companies under which these workers worked in India and which found these

workers fit, are not sending these workers abroad. The reason for their not sending these workers abroad is that some complaints were made in the House against those companies for exploiting labourers, and illegally collecting huge amount.

You may kindly imagine the gravity of the situation. The workers are all the more exploited simply because the Members in the House have mentioned about the legitimate demands of the workers inside the House and the Members have brought to the notice of the Government how much the workers are exploited by these companies. The matter raised by the Members in the House has resulted: not in giving protection to the workers, not in the eradication of the evil, but in more humiliation and sufferings of the workers.

I have brought this fact to the notice of the hon. Minister in the House many times earlier and I urge, the hon. Minister to take necessary action.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE  
MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A.  
SANGMA): You have told me many  
times.

SHRI SOMNATH RATH: I have brought this matter to the notice of the hon. Minister of Labour many times earlier but till today no action has been taken. That is the problem.

I have brought this matter to the notice of the present hon. Minister of Labour as well as the previous hon. Minister who complimented me in the House for bringing this matter to his notice but nothing has been done. I do not know what is the remedy to the situation.

How many workers of Orissa have been sent abroad? How many companies which have illegally extracted crores of rupees have been penalised by the Government? The beedi workers are also not in the organised sector. The labourers who are not in the organised sector are

exploited most because they have no bargaining power. As all these workers, starting with the beedi worker to the worker to be sent abroad, are being exploited.

The hon. Minister of Labour should pay more attention to the beedi workers who are in the unorganised sector.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA : Yes. We should pay more attention.

SHRI SOMNATH RATH : Any worker going abroad is required to pay Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000 illegally to the companies.

I hope that the hon. Minister would take into consideration all these facts while bringing forward a comprehensive Bill. These workers should be protected. The Government should give more attention to this unorganised sector than the other sectors where there is trade union right. That is my contention. I hope that my voice will not be a cry in the wilderness and I know that the hon. Minister would take note of these facts and take necessary action for the workers in this unorganised sector and against those companies which are exploiting these workers.

[Translation]

SHRI KEYUR BHUSHAN (Reipur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, this Bill has provided us an opportunity to discuss the plight of the bidi and cigarette industry workers, about which all of us are concerned.

So far as the bidi or cigarette industry is concerned different types of people work in it. First, those who are the industrialists; Secondly, those who work as employees and Thirdly, the persons who directly work as bidi labourers. One related activity is of plucking and gathering the leaves. All these activities are inter-related and a large number of people are earning their bread from this industry. Near about fifty lakh persons are involved in it. There categories of persons are engaged in this industry in the State to which I belong and there is wide dissimila-

rity between them. The bidi factory owners are so powerful that they constitute an influential section in the society. They have become influential because of their enormous income from this trade. The second category comprises the workers who collect leaves. A look at their condition would reveal the wide disparity between the two groups. If not cent per cent, at least 90 per cent people are addicted to smoking and it has become a part of their life. Though it is an intoxicant and harmful yet it has become an item of common use. But the more important thing is that the livelihood of 50 lakh people is dependent on it. The main objective of this Bill is to provide protection to Bidi workers and to provide them an opportunity to lead a comfortable life.

What is their condition now? If we look at the condition of the working class we shall find that they are being exploited very badly not only economically but physically also. The majority of the workers do not work in factories, they work at their own houses. It is necessary for all the Beedi factory owners to build a factory for this purpose. In the factories, the working hours are fixed and under the law, they have to provide all the facilities to their workers. But you will find that the facilities which are due to the workers are not provided to them. Most of the workers bring tobacco leaves and thread to their houses and prepare Beedis there. They work for 24 hours at home and prepare Beedis. After that, the contractor or the agent of the owner sorts-out their Beedis and makes payment of only the approved Beedis. The rejected Beedis are not even returned to the worker and instead leaves and tobacco are weighed and if found short, the recovery is made from his wages. Even the Beedis with minor defect are rejected very cleverly by these contractors and recovery is made from the wages. After all these deductions have been made, the payment to the workers is so meagre that they are in a position to make both ends meet. What we have to see is how we can protect the workers and how to remove such deficiencies. The hon. Minister must pay full attention towards it and take steps to check exploitation.

[Shri Keyur Bhushan]

The second problem is related to their health. Under the existing law, there are provisions to provide many facilities to the worker. Under the existing rules, if any worker falls sick, the factory owner has to make arrangement for his free treatment but actually the rule is not being followed by the factory owners. If a survey is conducted regarding the average age of the workers, you would find that old age overtakes them even in the prime of youth due to the ill effects of tobacco from their childhood. As a result, they meet premature death. The labourers are aware of it that they will become victim of T. B. and once they become T. B. patients, they meet premature death in the absence of any treatment. We must think of measures to save him from this disease.

Free medical facilities should be provided in the localities of Beedi factories and Beedi manufacturing centres. This is the condition of the Beedi workers. Their children also make Beedis in their houses in the light of kerosene oil lamp from their childhood and they are exposed to the tobacco dust. There is no arrangement for their education.

The labourer generally accepts this work when he does not get any other work. He takes up this work in compulsion. He knows the fact that it is a poisonous substance which can kill him but he has no other alternative to feed himself and his family members. Under such circumstances, the labourer and his children take up this work. As a result of it, the children can neither get education nor can maintain their health. The Government should provide scholarship to their children so that they may pursue their studies. The Government should provide all other facilities for their education and health.

We have to take steps to redeem the labourers who are engaged in this industry for many years. Due to the non-availability of any other occupation in their area, they are deprived of the opportunity to leave this occupation and go for any other occupation. For example, Sagar in Madhya Pradesh is a very large area

where beedis are manufactured but besides Beedi industry, there is no other industry in that area. Therefore, our Government should set up new industries in such areas so that Beedi workers may get employment there. In my constituency, there is an area named Dhantri where Beedis are manufactured. As no other industry or occupation is available there, the beedi workers cannot leave the Beedi industry.

I would like to inform the hon. Minister that child labour is being engaged in this industry and until some alternative arrangement is made for them, they will continue in this trade. While providing scholarship, it must be ensured that the children do not go back to the beedi industry. Children who have worked in the Beedi industry from the age of 8 to 10 years, should be given scholarships equivalent to their wages so that they may be in a position to pursue their studies. I therefore, request the Government to provide adequate scholarship so that the children may not go back to beedi industry. The students pursuing higher studies should get sufficient scholarship and also some other work. An intelligent student of Sagar got first class first but he did not have any facility to go for further studies because he was the son of a Beedi worker. Though he belonged to a scheduled tribe, yet he could not go in for higher studies. He, wanted to do Ph. D. Some legal restrictions come in the way of granting scholarship to him because he was the son of a beedi worker and was himself engaged in the Beedi industry on part time basis. He, therefore, faced difficulty in getting scholarship for his Ph. D. And ultimately on the intervention of the Central Government the scholarship was granted to him. Therefore, I would like to say that full opportunity should be provided to the intelligent students irrespective of their caste, class of social status. Beedi workers are poor. I, therefore, request the Government to provide all those facilities to their children as are being provided to the children of the scheduled tribes. And if there is a brilliant student, the Government should make full arrangement for his studies and the expenditure should be borne by the Industrialist. These industrialists are prospering due to the Beedi

industry and are expanding their business. Therefore, some part of their income should reach the workers. I would, therefore, request that full attention should be paid towards the welfare of the workers.

SHRI K. D. SULTANPURI (Simla) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the House is discussing the Bill regarding Bidi and Cigar workers, introduced by Shri Ajit Kumar Saha. I feel that he has done so with good intentions. But so far as this Bill is concerned, I feel that there was no need for it. Under the labour laws of our country, various facilities have been given to the workers and the industrialists have also been kept under check. These laws govern the working conditions and wages of workers.

I would like to submit to the hon. Minister that so far as bidi workers are concerned, they may be getting low wages but the only way to increase it is to provide them work for at least 8 hours a day. I do not fully agree with the view that they have to toil throughout day and night. I cannot say much about bidi workers but I know that bidi is manufactured on a large scale in Madhya Pradesh and they have such brand names like 'Khilari bidi', 'Pahalwan bidi' etc.....(Interruptions)

It is the poor who fall sick because of bidi smoking. I think that bidis worth crores of rupees are sold in our country today because cigarettes have become expensive and, therefore, the poor are forced to smoke bidi. I wanted to submit that besides looking after the interest of workers, Government should also take note of the fact that a handful of businessmen are pocketing crores of rupees and, therefore, this trade should be nationalised.

The habit of bidi smoking is hard to die. It is a common addiction in a village. Bidi has reached each and every worker's house in the same way as television and Radiodid. Shri Ajit Kumar Saha has introduced this Bill. Shah is considered a rich man in our area. Had this Bill been moved by Ajit Kumar it would have served the interest of the poor people .....

(Interruptions)

SHRI AJIT KUMAR SAHA : Not Shah but Saha.

SHRI K. D. SULTANPURI : Shah is supposed to be a money lender and therefore an influential man. His intentions may be to organise the unions. I feel that it is not a bad idea. The Government is also interested in safeguarding the interests of workers whether they are bidi workers or other workers. The 20 Point Programme is benefitting everybody in the villages. Those living below the poverty line are identified, statewise. It was pointed out here that the workers are being exploited, the Government should therefore look into it. It has also been mentioned that the workers and their children suffer from T. B. and therefore efforts should be made to save their children. Many things have been mentioned here. I think that even in remote areas, where people used to smoke cigarettes, they now smoke bidi. In Gujarat there is a heavy concentration of the bidi industry. In Rajasthan also there are many brand names of bidis like 'Shankar bidi', 'Khilari bidi' etc. Even the women and children are engaged in bidi making during spare time. They do it to feed themselves. There is nothing wrong in it. There should be fixed working hours in the bidi factories. Bidi factories should be registered. The labour Ministry should look into the working of bidi factories and ensure that a record is maintained of the quantum of production as well as the number of employees, so that there is no exploitation (Interruptions) So far as our workers are concerned, they should get fair wages. The big industrialists who are engaged in bidi production should not be allowed to exploit workers. It would be appropriate if the Government looks into it. The Government is otherwise safeguarding the interests of workers. I feel that Shri Saha should withdraw this Bill and the Government should itself consider it. With these words I thank you.

SHRI SYED MASUDAL HOSSAIN (Murshidabad) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, a lot

[Shri Syed Masudal Hossain]

of discussion has already taken place on this Bill. I would also like to make a few points. There are about 1.75 lakh beedi workers in my district Murshidabad. The problems there are somewhat different from those being faced at other places. A number of the problems are, of course, common. The Beedi owners have no factory of their own, they get this work done through contractors. They entrust this work to *Munshis* who get *beedis* manufactured from the people in different villages. Those *Munshis* indulge in a lot of exploitation. The beedi workers do not get proper wages. The *Munshis* have their own shops and they tell the beedi workers that since the owner had not made them cash payment, they could take rice, wheat or pulses. On the one hand, they pay less wages and on the other, hand they over-charge for wheat, rice and pulses. I do not know whether such a problem exists elsewhere or not. So far as the child labour problem is concerned, it will continue to persist as long as the beedi owners do not have factories of their own, and as long as the Contractors or *Munshis* continue to get the beedis manufactured in the villages. The entire family of the worker who brings beedi leaves and *masala* gets engaged in this work. There is no check on this process. Therefore, it is imperative that in the first instance, factories should be set up.

Secondly, no identity cards have been issued to the beedi workers. Identity cards must be issued to them. A lot of discussion has taken place on the question of wages of the beedi workers, but I would like to say something about the problems being faced in my district. There is Jangipur Sub-Division of Murshidabad district which has the highest concentration of beedi workers. This Sub-Division is flanked by Bangladesh on one side and Bihar on the other. When the beedi workers start agitation there for wages, it is heartening to note that the hon. Members from that side also support them the owners shift their factories from Jangipur to Bihar which results in the closure of the work. When this situation continues for months together, the helpless beedi

workers agree to work on the same wages paid hitherto. Therefore, the labour laws should be made applicable on all India basis and should apply to beedi workers also because when the beedi workers resort to agitations, the owners shift their factories to Bihar and elsewhere and the agitation fizzles out. the workers have no rights whatsoever.

Besides, there are a lot of problems due to its being a border area. My friend from Madhya Pradesh was telling that during the process of sorting, they reject a large number of beedi as bad and refuse to pay wages therefor. They send such rejected beedis across the border to Bangladesh. The State Government has no control over it. Everybody knows about it. Shri Sontosh Mohan is present here and he also knows about it. The Government should pay attention towards that border also. Everybody knows the conditions under which the beedi workers have to work there. During the course of his speech, an hon. Member from that side was saying that those who smoke beedis do not contract T. B. but those who manufacture them do contract. It is a fact that if they work in such conditions, they are sure to contract T. B. Therefore, I urge the Government that at least one T. B. hospital should be set up in the area where more than 50,000 beedi worker live, of which they are very much in need. There is a proposal for setting up of a T. B. hospital in my district, but there is a dispute on the question of its location. It is not being located where it should be. You have laid the foundation-stone of the proposed hospital elsewhere. I do not know whether the foundation-stone has actually been laid there or not, but it has surely put me in great peril. I do not know. You had to lay the foundation-stone at Dhulian, but you did it at Aurangabad. You did lay the foundation stone at Aurangabad, but thereafter the Government did not take any action.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE  
MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A.

SANGMA) : According to your formula, there should be one T. B. hospital for 50,000 workers or more whereas Dhulian has got 45,000 workers. So, it does not qualify. According to your formula; I am saying this.

SHRI SYED MASUDAL HOSSAIN :  
I think your figures are not correct.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA : I do not know. But it is the official figure.

[Translation]

SHRI SYED MASUDAL HOSSAIN :  
Anyway, you have laid the foundation stone at Aurangabad, but there are about 1.75 lakh beedi workers in my district also. You should pay attention to them also. You did it at Aurangabad. We do not want that to be shifted to Dhulian but you should set up a hospital at Dhulian also. Let there be hospitals at both the places. What is the harm if two hospitals are set up for two lakh people? This is my appeal to you on behalf of the beedi workers of my district. At the same time, I would also request you to get the Bill moved by Shri Saha in this House passed, if possible, because it has received support from all sections of the House. If necessary, some amendments can be brought later on and passed, but you must do something in this regard. In the end, I shall resume my seat by saying that you must pay attention to the problems of the beedi workers and take action to solve them.

[English]

SHRI K. S. RAO (Machilipatnam) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have certainly admiration for Mr. Ajit Saha for bringing out the various problems faced by the beedi workers wherein about 50 lakh people are engaged who, without and doubt, are living below the poverty line. Taking the average living cost as Rs. 2700 per annum, the entire 50 lakh beedi workers are living below the poverty line. So, this requires the attention of the entire House, particularly, the

attention of the hon. Minister in plugging the loopholes that are there in the Act. Every time when we think terms of the problems of the workers, we are always discussing about the organised sectors and it is the common knowledge that the organised sector is able to get a part of its due at times, but in the case of unorganised sector it is not like that and it is well known to everyone of us that the number of workers in the unorganised sector is no less than those in the organised sector and beedi workers is one such unorganised sector. So, not only the Government, but I would even request the trade union leaders and social scientists also to give thought to this and think how best the living conditions of the people working in this unorganised sector could be improved.

Sir, a good number of my friends here have already brought out various problems faced by the beedi workers. Sir, I come from Warangal District in Andhra Pradesh and I know the living condition of these workers. If you look back the history of these poor people, especially the living condition of these people, you will know that these beedi workers since the period of their grand-fathers and ancestors have been living the same way of life i.e. for hundred years or more. This is particularly so because at no time their income is sufficient to meet their meagre requirements. The immediate relief that the hon. Minister could think of is as the hon. Finance Minister has already included the urban poor to get the benefits of the 20-point programme i.e. to the 'rikshwa pullers' 'cobblers, etc.', beedi workers must also immediately be included in the category to take advantage of this 20-point Programme. There should absolutely be no second thought about it because the hon. Minister also agrees that the beedi workers are comparable to 'rikshaw pullers'. The only difference is that the Rikshaw pullers are known to everybody in the cities and towns whereas the beedi workers may not be so. Therefore, a definite consideration must be given to these poor people, particularly because a good number of them are women.

17.03 hrs.

[SHRI SOMNATH RATH in the Chair].

[Shri K. S. Rao]

It will be surprising to know that the daily earnings of the Beedi workers are Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 not for six or eight-hour work, but for more than eight hours. Therefore, there need not be any hesitation or delay on the part of the hon. Minister in bringing forward an amendment either on his own, or with improvement necessary in the Bill moved by the hon. Member Shri Ajit Saha, so that we can save these people from avoidable sufferings.

Invariably whatever may be the minimum wages fixed for the Beedi workers, the practice is that they are paid on piece rate basis. The owner, his petty contractor or his munsii gives certain material to the Beedi workers and they carry it to their houses and bring back the finished Beedis. The average efficiency of a worker can be gauged and on that basis a proper piece rate fixed so that it is not less than the minimum wages. If that is done, the efficiency would not be reduced and at the same time their interests would be secured. I do not know whether there can be a provision made in the law for fixing a proper rate on quantum of work to be done. If it is possible, either the minimum piece rate, or minimum wages should be enforced. But our experience shows that in spite of the Contract Labour Abolition Act and the Minimum Wages Act, whatever be the rules thereon, when it come to the question of implementation, some loopholes are there in every Act and it is being taken advantage of by the concerned people. The result is that the real beneficiary, who is supposed to get the benefit, is not getting the same. Either of these two, that is, either minimum piece rate or minimum wages, should be ensured for the beedi workers.

It has already been explained by many hon. Members that Beedi workers are exposed to health hazards. The people engaged in the Beedi industry are suffering from T.B. The highest forum of this country should take care of these people and save them from this health hazard, otherwise their lives became more miserable. Not only they are getting meagre earnings,

but their meagre earnings are further getting reduced in terms of purchasing power, and some of it is going in getting their diseases cured. Constantly, they are suffering from ill-health. That needs to be taken care of.

At least to put an end to this from becoming perpetual, their children must be given extra care and extra privileges in the matter of education. Education is the only instrument that can bring a change particularly to the poor. Whatever be the grievances of Beedi workers, whether they are getting correct wages or good remuneration of less wages, at least their satisfaction would be that their next generation would be saved of these ills. If necessary, by giving proper identification to the Beedi workers, their children must be given all this privilege in the matter of education. It has mentioned by many hon. Members earlier also.

We are all one and we have no hesitation in supporting, irrespective of the party affiliations, when it come to the question of serving the poor, particularly the neglected sector in the country. We extend our full support to such measures

We request the hon. Minister to come forward with a suitable amendment in the next session itself, so that 50 lakh Beedi workers can feel confident that once their plight has been brought to the notice of the highest forum of the country, the Members have not kept quiet or it has not fallen on the deaf ears of the Minister. So Sir, I am sure that I need not tell much about it. I request you to see that people in this sector who are living below the poverty line, not just below, but much below, are soon given all the benefits that are due to them.

[Translation]

PROF. NARAIN CHAND PARASHAR (Hamirpur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I welcome the Private Member Bill introduced by Shri Ajit Kumar Saha because he has drawn the attention of the House to a burning topic. Many a time speeches have been made in

this House on this problem and important information, in reply thereto, has been submitted before the House. According to the information given to us in reply to Question No. 434 on 15 April 1985, number of workers engaged in 'bidi' industry is 30 lakhs 77 thousand and out of this, the maximum number—about 5 lakh—is in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Uttar Pradesh where this number is about 4.5 lakhs.

It is a matter of regret that their working conditions are not satisfactory. In 1978-79, a survey was conducted about the working conditions of the bidi workers and it was found that out of every 100 families, 1975 families that is about 20 families are suffering from one or the other disease. From this you can guess as to how serious this problem is. Among the workers, there are handicapped persons as well as women who observe *purdah*. In this way this bidi industry helps in providing employment to very backward and weaker sections of the society.

According to an estimate, 130 crore bidis are manufactured every day in India and from this not only the Central Government earns excise duty worth Rs. 25 crores, but the State Governments also get Rs. 5 crores. Almost equal income is earned on the sale of tobacco. The number of workers in this industry is next only to the number of workers engaged in agriculture and in the handloom sector but the desired attention is not being paid to them. It is, therefore, necessary that the Government should pay attention to the suggestions made in this Bill and should take steps which may result in not only good work but better health for them also.

I am one with Shri K. S. Rao on the point that something should be spent on the workers, almost all of whom get a very meagre amount of Rs. 5 per 1000 bidis and even then total earning comes to Rs. 200 crores. They come below the poverty line and it is, therefore, necessary that some special scheme is formulated for them and the way the Government takes care of the other weaker sections of the society under the 20-Point Programme, this section too

should be covered under the programme. They should also be provided facilities under this Programme. Bidi is quite popular in the world today. According to an information, 800 packets of bidis are smoked every day in Japan and there is great demand for it in the Japanese market. India is, of course, earning from it but we should pay attention to the workers also. Neither is their any arrangement to supply medicines to them nor any hospitals are there for them. As an hon. Member had said, they should be covered under the ESI scheme. Why is it so that the workers, if organised, can jolt the entire nation and if they are unorganised, no one bothers about them? They have no trade unions and are not organised. Therefore, they cannot put pressure to the desired extent. In such a situation, it is necessary that the House should pay attention towards them and the Government too should pay immediate attention to them. Not only should they be covered under the 20-Point Programme and special provisions made for them, but a fresh survey should also be conducted, as the 1978-79 survey has become 9 to 10 years old, to know about their living conditions. It is the duty of the Government to remove the difficulties that they are facing.

Socio-economic organisations should also pay attention towards them and extend a helping hand. I am grateful to Shri Saha because he was done a good turn to them by drawing the attention of the House towards this important matter. I would like that the spirit of the Bill be respected and if the hon. Minister is not agreeable to pass this Bill in its present form, he should immediately bring before the House a Bill in a better form so that these workers come to know that Parliament and the Government care for them.

With these words, I support the spirit behind this Bill and thank you.

SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI (Mandsaur):  
Mr. Chairman, Sir, there is a feeling of labourers' welfare behind the Bill introduced by Shri Ajit Kumar Saha. In this

[Shri Balkavi Bairagi]

House whole-hearted respect has been shown to this spirit and nothing against it has been said from any quarter. So far as manufacturing and consumption of bidi is concerned, as Prof. Parasar had been saying just now, if we make a comprehensive survey, I am sure we will find that at least 1/5th of our population consumes bidi. Around 20 to 25 per cent people smoke bidis and the Government realises revenue also from it. But what is the condition of the workers i.e. the people who are engaged in its manufacture. As Shri Keyur Bhushan and also Shrimati Basavarajeswari had stated, even a serpent does not make its habitat in a tobacco field whereas these people toil day and night in these very fields, Bidis are manufactured in some parts of Jawara, Neemuch and Mandsaur in my constituency. When I go there to meet those labourers, I really feel sorry to see them toiling the whole day. When I ask them when can I meet them, the labourers some time say "Any time convenient to you, you may come any time at night." When I ask them now can they keep awake, they reply with a heavy heart as to when do they sleep to think of getting awakened. They are all the time in the environment of tobacco. They keep on coughing whole night. There is no protection or guarantee for their health. The whole night is spent working and they fall victim to diseases. Many of the hon. Members have expressed concern over T.B. I want to go further. They fall victim to even cancer; the entire labour class has become its victim. For them whatever you do will be inadequate be it an expression of your concern or making any provision for them.

I want to submit some points. I hope the hon. Minister will consider them. Whatever law you enact, kindly include these points in it. First, further you keep the children from its manufacture the better it will be and it will be an obligation on this generation. There are two reasons for it. One is that this situation is known to all the hon. Members of the House and secondly. Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you I want to tell the Labour Minister that they

use the children as guinea pigs; they ask them to smoke the bidis and tell about its effect. Because of such experiments on children, they become prone to such diseases right from childhood. Therefore, you should take steps which may help in saving the children from these diseases.

The Madhya Pradesh Government gets welfare revenue up to Rs 4 crores from the bidi industry, out of which certain amount is spent on their welfare but even then between Rs. one to two crores is left unspent with the Madhya Pradesh Government every year. We shall, of course, ask the State Government but to you also we want to submit that you have figures about the incidence of these diseases with you. Therefore, hospitals should be provided in those areas for the treatment of those particular diseases where such patients and children of tender age are struggling for life. They should be given scholarships also. Our friend is sitting here whose constituency is Jabalpur, which is the largest bidi manufacturing centre of the country. The constituency of Shri Ajay Mushran, the biggest bidi manufacture of the country is Jabalpur. The entire business is carried out through aeroplanes. But if the hon. Minister gets a survey conducted, he will find that there is not a single family of bidi labourers in the country which is not in debt. Even if all the members of the family work as bidi workers, they cannot free themselves from the debt because the bidi manufacturers give some advance to them which they realise alongwith interest. That interest never ends. Generation after generation vanishes in rolling bidis even then they are unable to pay the interest in full.

Just now an hon. Member was saying that bidis are rejected but even these bidis are sold, though the labourers do not get full wages for them. You go and visit the bidi factories and see the situation prevailing there 150 crore bidis are manufactured daily in our country and the factories do not have the capacity to store them. Then there do they keep them? They store them in the workers houses who are known as contractors' workers. They are not called

factory owners' workers. Therefore, no law of yours benefits them because in between comes the contractor. If you order a survey, we will feel obliged. A bidi worker is not aware of the brand of bidi he is making. He is not aware for whom he is making the bidis. He does not know as to which brand will be affixed on the bidis he is rolling. He does not know why he is making bidi. He knows only this much that he is making it for the contractor and that too for paying the interest. There is no chance of paying the principal. His life is spent in paying the interest only. Kindly make a provision in the law that the bidi workers will get rent for storing the bidis. At least the workers should get this amount. The workers should get that money which the manufacturer would have spent on storing the bidis in godowns. Besides, he should get the full wages. The workers should be protected and if possible, should be issued identity cards. If it is possible, keep the women and children away from this industry. If you accompany me, I will show you the condition of the women workers. The women bidi workers get afflicted with diseases right from the period of pregnancy with the result that they give birth to unhealthy children. This is a humanitarian problem. It is related not only with the law but with human values as well. This Bill has been brought with good intention and there is much scope in it. The Governments which work for labour welfare and public welfare, keep themselves abreast with the problems of the people and if the need is felt amendments are made in the law from time to time. You have not taken care of the bidi workers. It will not be proper if protection is given to those who just affix the label and not to the workers. You will have to choose between the label and the labour.

I would like to suggest that the issue of brand names of the bidis should be looked into afresh. Sometimes it creates ridiculous situation. We have come across Shivaji brand bidis. If the bidis carry the brand names of the great national heroes of the country, what will be the fate of the

country. There are number of such names. The bidi manufacturers have made the situation ridiculous. They adopt different brand names for the bidis just to popularise them. They make Ganesh brand bidis. Now the manufacturers of Ganesh brand bidis will have grouse against me that I have made complaint against them in the Lok Sabha. I would urge that the labourers, Lord Ganesh and Shivaji should be saved from these people. They make bidis in the brand names of deities and great people of the country which is not proper. In Rajasthan, Chetak brand bidis are manufactured I do not know how many other brand names are used in manufacturing bidis. Therefore, I would like to say that the issue of labels may be reviewed afresh and the brand names should be strictly screened at the time of registration. At least they should not disgrace the great people of the country by using their names on the label. I fully respect the spirit behind the Bill and this Bill should motivate you to bring a better Bill. Every fifth person in the country smokes bidis. We three are sitting here. I do not smoke bidis...*(Interruptions)*... He is chewing tobacco and its smell is coming to me. No one smokes in my family but many people chew tobacco. There is a close relationship between bidis and the voters. The hon. Labour Minister must bear in mind that three things cannot be stopped in our country. One is post card which cannot be discontinued in the country. We all know that if the Government discontinue Post Cards in the country, it will lose half of its votes. Post Card cannot be discontinued in the country. The second thing which cannot be discontinued is bidi and the third thing—please do not ask me to name it. In this way these two or three things cannot be discontinued in the country. But what we want is that we should at least do something for those workers who are engaged in manufacturing items which fetch good revenue. We must ensure that they remain safe as well as healthy and go on doing their work. We should provide them all kinds of facilities.

With these words, I would like to make a request that a comprehensive and better

[Shri Balkavi Bairagi]

Bill may brought forward so that the entire House gets credit for it from the people. The Government should give special attention towards those workers who manufacture bidis for the bidi smokers by leading a miserable life. I convey my thanks to you for giving me time to speak and convey my gratitude to the Member who brought this Bill.

17.29 hrs.

STATEMENT RE : GOVERNMENTS  
DECISIONS ON THE REPORT OF THE  
MEDICAL EDUCATION REVIEW  
COMMITTEE

[English]

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI) : Sir, I place on the Table, the Report of the Medical Education Review Committee and also a Statement indicating the decisions of the Government on the recommendations of the Committee. The terms of reference of the Committee were as follows :—

[Placed in Library See No. LT 2609/86]

- (i) to review the current admission procedures (including entrance tests) and domiciliary restrictions for admissions to under-graduate and post-graduate courses and to make suitable recommendations separately, in regard thereto;
- (ii) to suggest measures aimed at bringing about overall improvement in the under-graduate and post-graduate medical education, paying due attention to;
  - (a) institutional goals;
  - (b) content, relevance and quality of teaching and training and learning settings; and

(c) evaluation systems and standards.

- (iii) to recommend the optimum duration of under-graduates and post-graduate courses of study separately;
- (iv) to examine the existing Internship programme and to recommend its future pattern;
- (v) to review the working of the Residency Scheme along with the Housemanship Programme and to make recommendations regarding a uniform pattern of post-graduate training;
- (vi) to examine the current requirement of Thesis or Dissertation as an essential part of post-graduate medical education and to make suitable recommendations in regard thereto; and
- (vii) to examine the feasibility of a period of service in the rural areas for medical graduates and post-graduates.

The committee was also asked to evolve realistic projections of medical manpower requirements.

The recommendations of the Committee were examined at great length by the Ministry. The developments which took place in the field of medical education subsequent to the receipt of the Report, have also been taken into consideration. I am also placing on the Table a Statement indicating briefly the recommendations of the Committee and the decisions of the Government on the recommendations. Most of the recommendations have been accepted. Some of the recommendations which are accepted would require to be implemented by various agencies such as the medical colleges, State Governments, Medical Council of India, other autonomous organisations involved in the field of medical education and the Central Government. In these cases action will be initiated in consultation