

14.41 hrs.

**TOBACCO BOARD (AMENDMENT)  
BILL**

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI MOHAN DHARIA): I beg to move:

'That the following amendment made by Rajya Sabha in the Bill to amend the Tobacco Board Act, 1975, be taken into consideration:—

"Clause 2—That at page 1, lines 10-11, the words 'or at such other place as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify' be deleted."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

That the following amendment made by Rajya Sabha in the Bill to amend the Tobacco Board Act, 1975, be taken into consideration:—

"Clause 2—That at page 1, lines 10-11, the words 'or at such other place as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette specify' be deleted."

*The motion was adopted.*

MR. CHAIRMAN: We shall now take up the amendment.

SHRI P. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU (Chittoor): I am very glad that the hon. Minister has taken the public point of view into account and has acceded to it. I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister for it. With regard to creation of platforms, it is a good thing. But unless the statutory minimum prices are fixed and the grading of the farmer is accepted, I think there will be no use of having platforms here. Now I think on the suggestion of the hon. Minister the tobacco producers have organised some co-operative societies; they have done grading and that grading has been accepted, without any question, by the foreign purchasers also. Therefore, I think it is easy for the Government to

organise co-operative societies for the grading in almost all the villages; and that will not only help the auctioning business but also provide further employment to the villagers.

I would request the hon. Minister to see that the grading is done at the farmer's level and the statutory minimum prices should be fixed. If you cannot do it, then there will be difficulty.

With regard to voucher system, I want to tell one thing. As far as tradesmen and monopolists are concerned, they oppose it. They oppose both the voucher system as well as the cheque system and therefore, they create trouble. The Government has to compromise on this thing primarily in the interest of the producers. I am afraid, in this respect also they may play some game. Therefore, I want to know what the Government is contemplating to do. Unless the Government asks them to purchase graded tobacco, at least 20,000 tonnes, the tradesmen and monopolists will create some difficulty. They had done it last year; and the hon. Minister knows how the producers are hard hit. The decision and the resolution of the Tobacco Board became very much unpopular though it had been done in the interest of the producers. It is not in the principle there may be difficulty; it is in the implementation there may be difficulty because of the retaliation of the monopolists and tradesman. Therefore, I request the hon. Minister to see that the STC buys 25,000 tonnes so that we can create competition and the tradesman will not have any other option except to purchase in the market.

SHRI P. ANKINEEDU PRASADA RAO (Bapatla): I thank the hon. Minister for accepting popular opinion and keeping the Tobacco Board office at Guntur. About auction platforms system we are supporting. But without making preliminary arrangements if you introduce the system there is bound to be some reaction. The Government will have to take necessary

steps. Auction platforms should be introduced as soon as possible. It must be seen by the Tobacco Board or the Government that there are facilities for curing tobacco. Auction platforms should also have godowns so that tobacco that could not be auctioned could be kept. If the traders want to monopolise the whole auction system and if they do not want to bid above a particular minimum price, the government agency or the STC or the Tobacco Board should come forward to buy tobacco at a certain price fixed by the government to assure the agriculturists. In case the traders band themselves together, the government should do this. It is only when precautions like this are taken that auction platforms should be introduced, not in burry-burry. Otherwise there may be reaction from the traders and agriculturists will suffer; they will not be able to retaliate. These are two suggestions, namely, providing adequate godown facilities at the auction platforms for the agriculturists and secondly, governmental agency to go into purchase if in the auction platform the traders are found to come together and bid too low.

With these words, I thank the Minister for accepting the popular demand for keeping the Tobacco Board office at Guntur. I request the Minister also not to change that decision in future. It is against the policy of decentralising offices; the government is following this policy. Everything should not be concentrated in some metropolitan cities like Hyderabad, Madras, Bangalore, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi as other places do not develop. It may be little inconvenient for a few officers to come and go from Guntur but Guntur is the accepted capital of tobacco trade; tobacco trade is being done from Guntur for decades. Therefore, I request the Minister not to shift the headquarters from Guntur and I thank him for accepting the suggestion.

**SHRI MOHAN DHARIA:** As the House is aware the Bill has already been passed by this House and the

Rajya Sabha has suggested certain changes. Of course some friends, some hon. Members from Andhra had also made that demand. I had already explained that it is not the desire or intention of the government to take the Headquarters outside Andhra State. The present tobacco board deals with only Virginia tobacco. As against the production of about a lakh and twenty thousand tonnes of virginia tobacco, the country produces nearly 4 lakh tonnes of tobacco, right from Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and so many other areas in the country where tobacco is grown. Naturally Guntur is not that accessible. We have not taken a decision in haste to shift the HQ from Guntur. The moment we took the decision that the tobacco board should expand its activities, there should be suitable headquarters; it is a must. That was the whole reason; I do stand by that reason, I do not want to go into that controversy.

I feel that the creation of auction platforms is very much in the interest of the growers. It is the traders who did not allow the growers to get the proper price. In case we have auction platforms, it should be possible to ensure that growers get at least reasonable price. I share the concern expressed by the hon. Members; some traders may come together and they may not like to give the proper price and so some agency should function. As the hon. Members are aware, this year when the government went ahead in giving all possible cooperation; government asked the STC to purchase it. We have already asked the state governments that they should encourage their marketing cooperatives and in case tobacco is purchased on the account of cooperative societies we have assured them that there will be no question of funding; there would not be that problem. It is the bounden duty of the Government to see that remunerative prices are made available to the producers and it is in this context we shall have to strengthen these cooperatives.

[Shri Mohan Dharia]

A point was made by an hon. member that the Government should mobilise these co-operatives. The House will please bear with me that the whole co-operative movement...

SHRI RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: rose--

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rajagopal Naidu, please do not interrupt. Strictly speaking you would have been ruled out of order. I gave you an opportunity to speak. But it was not in order. Anyway, He is replying. Please do not interrupt.

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA: My only submission to the hon. members is that co-operative movement cannot that way be thrust by the Government. It is for the people, it is for the producers to come forward. We could give them all possible encouragement. We could give them all possible strength. We could give them some equity share capital. But then, in case if the local leadership is lacking, it is not possible for the Central Government to run co-operative movement in the country sitting in Delhi. It cannot happen. It is not indeed the spirit and not the idea behind the whole co-operative movement as such, and, therefore, my appeal to the hon. members—not only to those who are coming from tobacco growing area in India but from all over the country that in case they could mobilise those co-operatives—producers cooperatives all over the country, as a Minister for Co-operation, I can assure them all possible co-operation from the Central Government. I do believe that the formation of the producers co-operatives at one end and the formation of consumers co-operatives on the other end and bringing down huge margin of profit by the traders will solve all our problems—both from the point of view of producers, giving them remunerative price and also making these things available at reasonable prices to the consumers.

I am sure, the House would join me in taking up these activities. I do not want to say much because last time

when we discussed the Bill, I had cleared all the points. But I have come here to-day and I have accepted this amendment from the Rajya Sabha because I feel, in case, if we fail in going ahead with this movement of creating platforms, it is the producers who will suffer. Therefore, in the interest of the producers I have come before the House. The House is aware, we have constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of our Additional Secretary. On the basis of that report I would like to come before the House with exhaustive Bill, making amendments to this Tobacco Board Act so that not only virginia but also all the Tobacco is properly covered and we give all possible encouragement for production and making remunerative price available and also make some arrangement in the marketing of tobacco. All efforts are being made by the Government. I was recently in Russia. I am having my discussions with several countries in East Asia and I am sure that it should be possible for us to have better marketing facilities. At the same time to the extent we should market outside, to the extent we could consume outside, to that extent only we should allow production and not above that. On these lines we are proceeding ahead. I am grateful to the House for co-operation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:  
"Clause 2

That at page 1, lines 10-11, the words 'or at such other place as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify' be deleted."

*The motion was adopted.*

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA: I beg to move:

"That the amendment made by Rajya Sabha in the Bill be agreed to."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the amendment made by Rajya Sabha in the Bill be agreed to."

*The motion was adopted.*

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will now take up discussion on the Press Council Bill.

14.55 hrs.

### PRESS COUNCIL BILL

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI L. K. ADVANI): Mr. Chairman, I beg to move\*.

"That the Bill to establish a Press Council for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the Press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

As the House is aware, the Press Council was set up in pursuance of a recommendation made by the Press Commission. It was set up in 1966 and thereafter there had been some amendments made in the Act as passed then. During the period of emergency, while the Press suffered many assaults, most of them of an executive and administrative nature, there were three enactments during that period which severely constricted the freedom of the Press. The first was the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act. The second was the one that repealed the Feroze Gandhi Act and the third was the enactment repealing the Press Council Act. While this House as well as the other House have undone the first two anti-press laws which I mentioned, namely, the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Act and the Parliamentary Proceedings Immunity Act, the third one still remains to be undone. Government on its part had indicated

right at the outset that so far as it was concerned, it was committed to reviving the Press Council. The Press Council Bill was brought before the House and in its wisdom, Parliament referred it to a Joint Committee. The Joint Committee has done valuable work. It has tried to round off the edges to arrive at a broad consensus on the more important matters in the Press Council Bill and what has emerged, I think, is a very good piece of legislation which if enacted would go a long way in fulfilling the main purposes of the Press Council, namely, on the one hand performing the role of self-discipline in the press circles and on the other, protecting the press from various onslaughts and encroachments being made either by the Government or by any other agency—by big business, by industrialists or by any other sector.

I may mention one or two points that have emerged from the Joint Committee's deliberations. There has been a long debate as to how the Chairman of the Council should be nominated or whether he should be nominated at all. Two views have been there. One view has been, why not the Press Council elect its own Chairman? In this way, Press Council Members also would participate in selecting their own Chairman. The other view, which has dominated political thinking in this country in all sections, right from the beginning, from the time of the Press Commission right up to this day, and it has prevailed even in other democratic countries, where the Press Council had been there, has been that the kind of authority that we want to invest in the Press Council would be best ensured if the Chairman is a nominated Chairman and he is not in any way subject to the various pressures of politics that do come into operation in an election. This question was debated at length even in the Joint Select Committee and both viewpoints were ex-

\*Moved with the recommendation of

the President.