

[Shri K. Raghu Ramaiah]

(5) Consideration and passing of the following Bills, as passed by Rajya Sabha:—

(a) The Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill, 1976.

(b) The Pharmacy (Amendment) Bill, 1976.

Sir, I suggest that Calling Attention can be taken up a little later.

MR. SPEAKER: We can take this up in the afternoon—not at 5—just before the Private Members' business comes up. (Interruptions) Order please.

SHRI B. V. NAIK (Kanara): Sir, I wanted to raise a matter under 377. It would have hardly taken one minute. Sir, 144 people, in implementation of the court order of the Supreme Court, are being put behind the bar.

MR. SPEAKER: You have raised it but I did not agree to that. You know that the reasons have also been given.

Now let us go to the next item.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: Kindly give some consideration to allow it to be raised during this session itself. There is harassment on the face of the Supreme Court order. Kindly give consideration to this.

MR. SPEAKER: Next item is Call Attention by Shri Indrajit Gupta.

11.57 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED MOVE BY U.K. GOVERNMENT TO COMPEL INDIAN NATIONALS IN U.K. TO ADOPT BRITISH CITIZENSHIP OR TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (All-pore): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of External Affairs to the

following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The reported decision of U.K. Government to compel resident Indian citizens in U.K. to adopt British citizenship or to leave the country".

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN): Sir, I apologise to the House because I was not here when the question came. I was in the other House answering certain questions. I apologise for this. I did not expect that the business would collapse so soon.

Government has seen a newspaper report to the effect that the authorities in Britain were asking Indian nationals in Britain to adopt British nationality or face expulsion. On informal enquiry the British Foreign Office denied that the British Government had decided to compel Indians to adopt British citizenship or leave the country.

The House is aware that there is a sizeable population of Indian origin living in Britain. While precise figures are not available, the total is estimated at around 500,000. Most of them went to Britain in the early years after independence until the beginning of the 1960s when the British Government enacted the Commonwealth Immigration Act (1962) and thereafter gradually tightened immigration restrictions. We do not have precise figures as to how many persons of Indian origin have acquired British nationality, but it is estimated that about 50 per cent may have done so. The people of Indian origin in Britain have made an important contribution to the social, economic and political life of that country.

The grant of British citizenship is regulated by the British Nationality Act of 1948 which has been amended from time to time. Under this Act,

Commonwealth citizens who entered Britain prior to 1st January, 1973 are entitled to be registered as British citizens after completing 3 years ordinary residence without any other requirement. Moreover, the Immigration Act of 1971 provides that Commonwealth citizens settled in the U.K. on 1st January, 1973 are to be treated as having been given indefinite leave to remain in the U.K. It is understood that a review of the Nationality Act is in progress at present in order to remove certain ambiguities regarding British citizenship, but no decisions have yet been taken nor any legislation drafted.

If and when legislation of the kind mentioned in the newspaper reports is introduced, it would presumably apply not only to people of Indian origin but also to all other immigrants including those from other parts of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The question should therefore be looked at in its totality in proper perspective and not in isolation. Government would however like to take this opportunity to underline the importance it attaches to just and humane treatment being accorded to all those Indian citizens who are resident in Britain and are playing their due part in the life of the community and to express the hope that the British Government would give due consideration to avoiding any action that might cause suffering or hardship to these people.

12 hrs.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, from this statement one thing is quite obvious that whatever changes in the Nationality Act or Citizenship Regulations the U.K. Government may be contemplating, apparently they have not bothered so far to consult our Government. You may say it is not necessary to consult our Government but in view of the fact that half a million people from this country are living and working in Britain and also in view of the fact that we are a part of the Commonwealth, I think, we could

expect reasonably that some consultation would take place at Government level before any such move is contemplated but it is obvious from this statement that our Government has not been consulted.

The first question that I would like to put is: whether, in view of the fact that these reports have appeared, our Government would at least insist that before any new amendments are brought or anything is finalised, our Government should be kept fully informed and should be consulted by the Government of U.K.

Secondly, I am sorry to find in this statement also that some concession is being made to what I was suspecting all along behind such a move; whatever form the move may take ultimately, it is aimed not against all commonwealth citizens but only against those who are coloured people. Sir, there are people from Canada, Australia, etc. who are also resident in Britain but they happen to be white people. In this statement the Government advises us to see the problem in its proper perspective and says that legislation when introduced would presumably apply not only to people of Indian origin but also to all other immigrants including those from other parts of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The newspaper report says—whether it is correct or not, I do not know—that the British Home Office has already written to people who are holding Indian, Pakistani, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka passports. Sir, should our Government not get this question clarified from the U.K. Government that whatever changes they may want to bring about would not smack of racial discrimination, that is, if they introduce such regulations now they would not be aimed against those Commonwealth residents of Britain who happen to be coloured people and it would apply equally to all Commonwealth people. We have got our apprehensions about this matter because we know from the Press that there is a certain section of public opinion which is being mobilised

[Shri Indrajit Gupta]

ed on the basis of racial intolerance? What is the information of the Government and what attitude are they going to adopt in this matter?

Thirdly, in the first line of his statement Shri Chavan has said—I think this is an inadvertent slip—'Government has seen a newspaper report to the effect that the authorities in Britain were asking Indian nationals in Britain. Not Indian nationals. We are concerned with Indians who are permanently resident in Britain who have been given permits what are called Permanent Resident Permits. Now quite correctly, it has been pointed out that they are performing various types of jobs there. The U.K. Government has admitted many times that if the Indian doctors are withdrawn suddenly half their health services will collapse. It is also true that there are Indian citizens there working in such types of service jobs which British workers would not like to do, they do not come forward for that work and therefore perhaps our people and people from other countries have got an opportunity. Then there are industrial workers working in so many factories.

As far as we in this country are concerned it is a fact that we have not been able to provide perhaps adequate employment and so on or adequate incentives to many people who have left the country and gone there thinking that since we are all members of the Commonwealth they would enjoy certain facilities which they have been enjoying. I do not deny that they have been enjoying certain facilities in Britain all along. But now if it is contemplated suddenly that a sort of change is to be brought about and a sort of compulsion is to be exercised 'Either you must adopt U.K. citizenship or you must leave the country' would it not amount to a form of compulsory alienation? I have nothing to say about those Indians who may voluntarily

have, by this time, accepted U.K. citizenship. They are welcome to do so, if they want to give their Motherland. But for the future, there may be thousands of people who have no desire to give up their Indian citizenship. But if this kind of contemplated legislation is brought in, it would amount to pressure and compulsory alienation of citizenship which I do not think is at all desirable. I do not know whether the British Government is thinking on these lines because of their own growing unemployment difficulties, and they want to get rid of some of these black people who have come from outside and are working in jobs or whether it is some from—I do not know, I do not suppose it is—of retaliation for various things which they do not like. For example, we also now going to conclude the tariff preferences which Britain had enjoyed in India all along, we have announced that we are going to terminate these and so on.

But the point is that we would not like them to try to solve their own internal unemployment problem at the cost of the right of Indians resident in Britain to adopt whichever citizenship they want to that is, to retain their original citizenship if they want to and not be compelled to give up their own citizenship on pain of having to leave the country. As you know thousands of people are there not only people like doctors and so on but common folk particularly from Punjab and other parts of the country who have gone there to work at manual jobs. Of course we are not altogether unhappy about that because quite a lot of their earnings are being remitted to this country from abroad. But a situation is developing, if you read the press reports of what is being talked about in Britain in which I think our Government should not just allow matters to drift a little too late when we may be faced with the fact accomplishment of a Bill being brought forward. Since these indications are available already would not Government take the

matter up through proper channels in good time so that timely consultations are held and it is seen to that these people are not given this kind of raw deal?

Suddenly if it is found that these contemplated measures are aimed at only Commonwealth citizens who are coloured people and do not extend to everybody, I think our Government should be justified in registering a very strong protest about it.

SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN

Let us not speculate on matters and say anything prematurely about it. At the present moment, my only point is that the whole question is being studied by the British Government, so the question of consultation or our getting information has not arisen yet. At the same time, we did make informal enquiries after the news report appeared, whether they have taken any decision in this matter. They have told us that they have not taken any decision so far. (Interruptions). I cannot rule out and say that they will not take that decision. When we are talking here among ourselves, I should be somewhat clear in regard to this matter. We have seen this trend in 1962 and from that year onwards, in the first Immigration Act to restrict the entry of Indians and since then whenever there was any revision, the revision was stricter and stricter. If a further revision takes place, in what form it will take place, it is difficult to say at the present moment. Therefore, I have in my statement expressed our concern about it, and expressed our strong desire that our people should be treated with dignity and human consideration because they are making their own contribution to the British community life as well.

Naturally they are a sovereign country and they have certainly authority to pass whatever law they want, we should try to get information I do not know whether they will concede the right of consultation to us about

any law. I cannot say that. Certainly we should try to get information and let them know our views in this matter; we will certainly continue to do so. I agree with him that if at all any law is made if there is any distinction between white immigration and black immigration, certainly it will smack of racialism and that certainly is a matter which will need our voice to be raised against. That is all I can say at the present moment.

12.13 hrs.

FINANCE BILL, 1976—contd.

MR. SPEAKER. The House will now take up further consideration of the following motion moved by Shri C. Subramaniam on the 12th May, 1976, namely:—

“That the Bill to give effect to the financial proposals of the Central Government for the financial year 1976-77 be taken into consideration”

SHRI SUKDEO PRASAD VERMA:

May now continue his speech.

श्री सुखदेव प्रसाद वर्मा (नवादा) :
प्रध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं दिनांक 12 मई को वित्त विधेयक का समर्थन करने हुए माननीय वित्त मंत्री और उन के सहयोगियों को बधाई दे रहा था, और फिर उसे दोहराते हुए मैं यह निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि वास्तव में वित्त मंत्री महोदय ने जो बजट इस साल प्रस्तुत किया है यह लोक सभा के इतिहास में प्रथम बजट है जिस के द्वारा तमाम लोगों को खास कर समाज के ऐसे कमजोर वर्ग जिस की चिन्ता प्रधान मंत्री को है, भारत सरकार को है और देश के अन्य लोगों को है कि देश के अन्दर कमजोर वर्गों की बढ़ती हुई संख्या, विषमता की जो खाई है उसे ध्यान में रख कर देश को समृद्धिशाली नहीं बनाया जा सकता है, इस साल के बजट में ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि सरकार खास कर ऐसे वर्गों को ऊंचा उठाने और