

12 hrs.

### QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE AGAINST THE "FINANCIAL EXPRESS", BOMBAY

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & CHEMICALS AND MINES & METALS (DR. TRIGUNA SEN): While raising a question of privilege on April 11, 1969, in respect of the article "Success story of Trombay Fertilizer" published in the *Financial Express* dated the 1st April, 1969, Shri George Fernandes had alleged on the basis of some passages in the article that there was active collaboration between the author and the officers of the Trombay Unit of the Fertilizer Corporation of India. He moved that the part played by the officers in casting serious reflections on a Parliamentary Committee should be looked into by the Privileges Committee. I then undertook to ascertain the facts and report to the House.

My enquiries have revealed the following facts. The Industrial Correspondent of the *Financial Express* visited the Trombay Factory on March 24, 1969 along with 24 other press correspondents and 11 members of the United States Information Service as part of a group sponsored by the latter. The group visited the different plants, and had a brief talk with the General Manager for about 15 minutes. They were entertained at lunch where some senior officers of the plant were present. A few days later, on March 31, the General Manager held a press conference which was attended by the representatives of 18 papers including the *Financial Express*. The purpose of the conference was to publicise the achievements of the Trombay Unit during the year 1968-69. Accordingly a hand-out containing relevant background information was given to the correspondents. I have gone through this hand-out carefully and I find it contains no reference to the twenty-sixth Report of the Committee on Public Undertakings. Besides, I have obtained reports from the General Manager, Trombay and the Chairman and Managing Director, Fertilizer Corporation of India on this matter. The General Manager has categorically denied that he ever discussed the Report of the Committee on Public Undertaking with the Correspondents of the *Financial Express* on March 24 or 31 or at any other time. The Chairman and Managing Director of the Corporation is positive that in view of the

well-known views held by the General Manager and his officers in regard to the conduct and performance of the erstwhile contractors of the plant, the statements to which objection has been taken could not have been made by them. On the basis of these reports I am convinced that neither the General Manager nor his officers had collaborated in the writing of the article or had made any statement which could be construed as casting aspersions on the Hon'ble Members of the Committee on Public Undertakings.

Now, I shall briefly deal with the specific passages which Shri Fernandes has referred to in his notice, dated April 2, 1969 :—

- (i) A senior official of the plant is alleged to have told the correspondent of the *Financial Express* that C.O.P.U. must have been confused about the various foreign contractors in the plant. The C.O.P.U. report nowhere states that Chemico were an inexperienced firm. The reference to the inexperience of the contractor in the Committee on Public Undertakings report relates to the Chemical and Industrial Corporation that were the contractors for the Nitro-phosphate plant and not to Chemical Construction Corporation (Chemico) who were the contractors for the Ammonia and urea plants. There is thus no confusion in the Committee on Public Undertakings report and it is inconceivable that a senior officer of the Trombay unit could ever make such a statement.
- (ii) The General Manager, Trombay is reported to have told the press correspondent that the plant would exceed the rated capacity of production during the year 1969-70. The General Manager has categorically denied having made any such statement. He did tell the press correspondents about the production of ammonia and urea plants being more, by 30% than the production in the previous two years. At the same time he drew attention to the design deficiencies in the plants and corrective steps taken for improving

[Dr. Triguna Sen]

production since the plants were taken over from the contractors.

- (iii) The statement reported to have been made by the General Manager that U.S.A. is in the fore-front in the fertilizer technology, and that we will learn from our experience is substantially correct. There is no question of casting a serious reflection on the Committee through such a statement.
- (iv) The statements that many in the plant felt disgusted at the ill-timed report of the Committee on Public Undertakings and that one of them said that "the report has brought back the dirty linen for a second wash in the public" are baseless. The General Manager Trombay and his officers have categorically denied having made such statements.

On the basis of the facts narrated above, I would submit to the House that no question of breach of privilege or contempt of the House can arise against the General Manager or any officer of the Trombay Fertilizer Plant.

श्री रविराय (पुरी) : अफसरों के बयानों पर मंत्री महोदय ने निर्भर किया है और यह वक्तव्य दे दिया है।

MR. SPEAKER: Let me understand the matter. It is not a question of the officers alone. Here is a paper. It published something as regards Public Undertakings Committee, which is a body of the House. Whether apart from the officers the paper is also involved is one thing. I would like to know something from the Chairman of the Public Undertakings Committee.

SHRI G. S. DHILLON (Taran Taran): I have seen the report as it appeared in the various papers and also in the *Financial Express*. Sir, I have also received a letter from the Vice President of chemco recently. The same letter was sent to the other Members of CPU by the Vice-President of Chemco and after going through the contents of that letter, I find that the criticism in the *Financial Express* and also one of the posters that appeared in the

*Indian Express* are based practically on the same view. The wording is almost common. But, as to why they should have made this specific and categorical reference about the observations made by the officers of the undertaking, is rather inexplicable. And I think, Sir, when we refer this to the Privileges Committee, all these matters can be examined on merits. (*Interruption*)

MR. SPEAKER: There is no need for further discussion. If the House agrees we shall refer it to the Committee of Privileges. It is not against officers or anybody. A motion has to be made.

श्री जार्ज फरनेडीज (बम्बई दक्षिण) : मैं प्रस्ताव करता हूँ कि इस पूरे मामले को प्रिविलेज कमेटी के पास भेज दिया जाए।

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the question of privilege in respect of the article entitled 'Success Story of Trombay Fertilizer' published in the *Financial Express*, Bombay, dated the 1st April, 1969, be referred to the Committee of Privileges for investigation and Report."

*The motion was adopted.*

#### PAPER LAID ON THE TABLE

#### NOTIFICATION RE : INDUSTRIES (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) ACT

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND SUPPLY (SHRI CHOWDHARY RAM SEWAK): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of Notification No. S.O 922 (Hindi and English versions) published in Gazette of India, dated the 3rd March, 1969, under sub-section (2) of section 18A of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951 regarding management of the Pratap Spinning, Weaving and Manufacturing Company Limited, Amalner (Maharashtra). [*Placed in Library. See No. LT-762/69.*]