

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He has been admitted to hospital; so far as the news is concerned, it is not a question of sub judice; if it is sub judice, I will take notice of it. It does not arise.

जी मधु लिखते : इस में सबजुबिस का सवाल नहीं आता है। फेक्ट्स के बारे में धगर बयान प्राये ती क्या हुई है। उपाध्यक्ष महोदय यह प्राप ही ने बताया है कल सबजुबिस का काम लेकर प्रापने मेरा एक पत्र काट दिया प्रापको जरा सोच-समझकर करना चाहिये।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I will not allow you to refer to that. (Interruptions).

An hon. Member: It is a matter of life and death.

Shri Sheo Narain: You yourself might have read in the papers. The man is on his dying bed. He is in the hospital.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The Minister has already said that he would communicate the feelings of the House and in due course information would be placed on the Table of the House. Call attention notice.

12.20 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED HUNGER STRIKE BY EMPLOYEES OF FOOD DEPARTMENT

Shri Samar Ghuba (Contal): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

Reported hunger strike on the 20th June, 1967 by Eighteen thousand employees of the Food

Department all over India in protest against non-implementation of long standing demands.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Before he makes a statement, I have a submission to make. Telegrams were received on the 19th that the hunger strike was to take place on the 20th. Today the Minister takes the opportunity to answer, when the information has become a story. Such important call attention notices lose their significance if they are not answered in time. You should tell the Ministers to deal with them urgently.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: You should realise that 100 notices are received every day. We have to shift them and determine priority on account of the urgency of each notice. In that process sometimes it is not possible to answer them the next day. Every day we take one notice. I fully appreciate what you say but this cannot be helped.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Cooperation (Shri Annsahib Shinde): It is not correct to say that 18,000 food employees all over India went on a mass hunger strike on the 20th June, 1967. The actual position is that the All India Food Employees' Association issued a directive to the employees of the Food Department numbering about 17,000 (of whom about 6,000 are already on deputation with the Food Corporation of India) to observe a fast only on the 20th June, 1967 to get their grievances redressed. Exact information about the number of employees who actually observed the fast on that day is not available. It has, however, been reported that the fast was observed peacefully and without detriment to normal work anywhere.

2. The demands of the Association are:—

(a) Effecting total regional integration of the functions and

[Shri Anasahib Shide]

employees of the Food Department with the Food Corporation of India;

(b) Settling the terms and conditions of transfer of the employees of the Food Department to the Food Corporation by amending the Food Corporations Act, 1964; and

(c) departmentalisation of clearance, stevedoring, transport, etc. works of the Central Food Department in all the ports in India.

3. The position about these demands is seriatim as follows:—

(a) Since the Food Corporation was established on the 1st January, 1965 nearly one third of the work of the Food Department has already been transferred to the Corporation. The depots in the Southern Region were transferred on 1-4-1965 and the depots in the Punjab, Delhi and U.P. were transferred during the period 1-4-1966 to 1-11-1966. A few other sectors of work have also been transferred to the Food Corporation. Along with the work transferred so far, 6,000 gazetted and non-gazetted officers of the Food Department have been transferred on deputation to the Food Corporation. The transfer of other work of the Food Department to the Corporation has had to be deliberately slowed down on account of the extremely difficult food situation in the country for the past several months and particularly the very heavy imports during the last two years. The operations of handling of foodgrains at the ports and its distribution among the various States have become extremely complicated and full of difficult administrative problems requiring close coordination between different Governmental agencies concerned. Considering that the Food Corporation is still in the process of establishing itself, it was not thought desirable to burden it immediately with the entire work of

clearance and distribution of foodgrains all over the country. However, the policy of Government has not undergone any change and it is proposed to transfer the remaining items of work to the Corporation as early as it is practicable.

(b) Government have already decided to provide for the terms and conditions for the transfer of the employees of the Food Department to the Food Corporation of India by proposing a suitable amendment to the Food Corporations Act, 1964. A Bill for this purpose is likely to be introduced during the current session of the Parliament.

(c) The departmentalisation of the various aspects of operations relating to handling of foodgrains at the ports is being gradually implemented. At the same time, however, the necessity for avoiding any dislocation at the ports in the midst of heavy imports of foodgrains and the extremely difficult task of speedy movement of foodgrains to various distribution centres have to be kept in view. Already certain major aspects of these operations have been departmentalised at Bombay, Kandla, Madras and Visakhapatnam. This process is continuing and we may be in a position to departmentalise certain aspects of foodgrain operations even at the Calcutta port in the near future.

Shri Samar Guha: Sir, this is a peculiar statement which is full of contradictions, confusion, indecision, hesitation and half-hearted admission of the legitimacy of the demands of employees. The first sentence says that it is not correct to say that 18,000 food employees went on a mass hunger strike but in the same para they say that exact information about the number of employees who actually observed the fast on that day is not available. If it is not available, how can they say in the first sentence that it is not correct, etc.? Again, in

the third para, they say, one third of the work of the food department has already been transferred to the Corporation. In the same para they say that the officers have been transferred on deputation. Then again they say that the transfer of other work had to be slowed down and for that reason they are not now proposing to departmentalise and absorb the food workers in the department. In the same para they say that they are bringing a Bill to amend the Food Corporation Act of 1964. They say that the departmentalisation of the various aspects of operations relating to handling of foodgrains at the ports is being gradually implemented.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Put the question.

Shri Samar Guha: It is a peculiar statement. How can there be such a statement full of so many contradictions? Would the hon. Minister make a specific statement saying that all the employees would be absorbed in the Food Corporation? Secondly, what is the exact time when that Act of 1964 will be amended? (c) They say that they will be in a position to departmentalise certain aspects of foodgrain operations at the Calcutta port in the near future. What does that 'near future' mean? and (d)...

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Do not follow Mr. Hem Barua.

Shri Samar Guha: In view of the fact that the hunger strike was admittedly observed peacefully and without detriment to the normal work will the Government be kind enough to invite the spokesmen of that association to have a full and free talk with them so that the matter could be settled to the satisfaction of the food employees?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: The hon. Member has raised a number of queries. I am not prepared to agree that there is any inconsistency in the statement... (Interruptions.) Please hear with me. The point is this. We

have contacted the different regional directorates. We have said that all the 18,000 were not on hunger strike. The regional directors say: we are not in a position to say how many employees in our office were on hunger strike because... (Interruptions) they say that they did not know whether on one day the employees took their meals in their houses or not. They have no information.

Shri Hem Barua (Mangaldai): That is unfair.

Shri Umanath (Pudukkattai): If you do not have the actual figures, do not malign them. After all they are our countrymen.

Shri Hem Barua: That is the Congress way of fasting. I am sorry the Minister is adding insult to injury.

Shri Umanath: He should not cast reflection on the bona fides of these employees. If he cannot verify the figures, that is different.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: The Food Department does not have 18000 employees.

Shri Umanath: That is a different matter.

Shri Ranga (Srikakulam): On a point of order, Sir. On this point which has been brought to your notice, we expected you to give some ruling. But you do not give it. The minister also is not decent enough to withdraw his indecent remark. What are we to do in this House? Here is a minister who says, we all know how these fasts are being conducted; people eat at home and come over here. Another hon member from this side says, that may be the Congress way of fasting. That is not fair. Let it be clearly understood that whoever fasts, he undergoes a certain amount of sacrifice and suffering. It would be improper for anybody on that side, especially a minister, or for any of us to attribute

[Shri Ranga].

motives to those people who go on fasts. May I request you to ask the minister to say that he is sorry to have made that slip of the tongue and he did not mean that those people were really not fasting?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: I was only mentioning on the basis of the information of the officers concerned under whom they are working. I am not casting any aspersion nor am I suggesting that they did not observe fast. I am really sorry if that sort of impression is created in the minds of hon. members.

Coming to the question, I will be too happy to discuss the problems of the employees with their association.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy (Kendrapara): You have discussed ump-ten times with them.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: About the legal position, I have already written to the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs that in this session we should be allowed time to take up this legislation. I hope it will be possible for the Business Advisory Committee to find time for it. We are as eager as the hon. member to see that the employees are not dissatisfied on account of the non-existence of legislation. We wish to extend all necessary protection regarding their service conditions, etc.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: Has the Bill been introduced?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: The Bill is ready with me. I have written for permission that it may be taken up in this session.

Shri Hema Barua: A young man like you should do it immediately.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: Thank you. About transferring all the work to the Food Corporation, we are passing through a very difficult time. The Food Corporation has come into

existence only 2 years earlier. We think that this work should be transferred to it by stages. Even the Foodgrains Policy Committee which went into this problem has suggested that Food Corporation should try to consolidate its position and not diversify its activities very early. It will take some time. But the Government is firm on the policy. We have built up a very strategic sort of institution to control the public sector foodgrains trade. We wish that the foodgrains trade—handling, etc.—is transferred to the Food Corporation as early as possible.

Shri A. K. Gopalan (Kasergod): I understand that all the employees of the old Food Department are not absorbed in the Food Corporation, and the Food Corporation is recruiting persons newly. One of the demands of these employees is that when recruitment is made, preference must be given to those old Food Department employees who are sent away and who are without job. Why is it that this simple and reasonable demand is not considered? Why is it that these facilities are not given to them? May I know whether the hon. Minister will see to it that at least this demand, that hereafter when recruitment is made first preference should be given to those employees of the old Food Department and only after that others should be considered, is acceded to?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: We have made the position very clear. We have all sympathy for the employees who have served for a number of years in the Food Department. After all, the Food Corporation is a sort of commercial organisation and the officers of the Food Department are free to apply for the posts there. There is a selection committee and selection takes place on merit.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: What about continuity of service?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: That is assured. The question which the hon. Member has referred to is altogether different. As far as continuity of service is concerned there is no difficulty. Apart from that, the scales of pay offered by the Food Corporation are slightly higher. Therefore, if a particular employee joins the Food Corporation he gets other advantages also. As far as the existing position is concerned, that is not affected. Shri Gopalan has raised the point about new posts that are created. When they are advertised, these officers are free to apply. I think all will agree that selection should take place on the basis of merit.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: The Minister said that they can apply. May I ask why preference cannot be given to these old employees of the Food Department who have been retrenched? Cannot the Government say that they must be given preference? They had been working for so many years. Now they have been retrenched. The Government should say that first preference should be given to those employees.

Shri Anna sahib Shinde: Without fettering the right to select on merit, I am prepared to suggest that the Food Corporation should give preference to these employees.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: Were they taken without any merit before and then they were allowed to continue in service so long?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: The hon. Member's question was about higher posts.

Shri A. K. Gopalan: For the same posts.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: For the same posts there is no difficulty.

Shri Usasahib: From the statement I understand that about 6000 employees, both gazetted and non-gazetted, are deputationists. One of 205 (A) LST-8.

the important demands, which does not find a place in the statement, is that these deputationists must be called back. Their number is 6000, and the Corporation is making new recruitment also. May I know from the Government whether this demand has been considered, whether the deputationists will be called back and, if they are not going to call back the deputationists, the reasons for not calling them back?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: We are contemplating to transfer their services to the Food Corporation of India. When those posts have been abolished, when the work has been transferred to the Food Corporation of India and the Food Department has been disbanded, naturally, we are thinking of giving statutory protection as and when the services of these employees are transferred. The principal demand of the employees was that statutory protection should be given to the transfer. We are enacting the legislation with that particular problem in mind.

Shrimati Suseela Gopalan (Amba-apuzha): The hon. Minister said that he will be bringing forward legislation very soon. I would like to know whether the provisions of that legislation will be the same as was proposed by the Government in the draft amendment which they placed before the employees and which was rejected by them or will it be the provisions which the employees had suggested in the draft amendment which they presented to the Government? I would like to know whether the proposed legislation will contain the provisions suggested by the employees; if not, may I know the reasons and what is the difference between the two, the amendment proposed by the Government and the draft amendment presented by the employees?

Shri Annasahib Shinde: The two main demands of the employees were; firstly, that statutory recogni-

[Shri Annasahib Shinde]

tion should be given to transfer of service from the Food Department to the Food Corporation and, secondly, protection and privileges which the Central Government servants enjoy under article 311 of the Constitution should be incorporated in the amending Bill. As I have already explained, legislation is being brought in order to safeguard the interests of employees when their services are transferred and also to give them the rights and privileges under article 311.

Shri Umanath: Sir, I rise to a point of order. The hon. lady Member, Shrimati Suseela Gopalan, said that the Government proposed an amendment which the employees rejected and the employees proposed a draft amendment which they said would protect their interests. That has been with the Government for nearly a year now. She wanted to know whether the Bill that the Minister is bringing forward will contain those very provisions which the employees rejected or it will contain the provisions which the employees proposed in their draft amendment. The Minister may kindly make that position clear.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: I have already made it clear. As far as the wording etc. is concerned, we have to be guided by the advice of the Law Ministry, but the two important demands of the employees have been incorporated in the Bill.

Shri Umanath: He has not replied to it whether it was the one that was rejected by the employees. Let him categorically say whether it was once rejected by them.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: Hon. Member will have an opportunity when we discuss the Bill.

Shri Umanath: He said that he and the Bill ready and that he was waiting for the clearance of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. When the

Bill is ready he can categorically say whether the provisions in the Bill are the same which were rejected by the employees or it is the other way about.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: I am not prepared to say that word by word it is the same.

Shri Umanath: Not word by word, but essentially.

Shri Annasahib Shinde: What I am submitting is that the two important demands of the employees have been incorporated in the Bill.

Shri Umanath: He is evading the issue.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Minister has said that the important provisions have been incorporated. Beyond that what do you want?

Shri Umanath: Important provisions of what?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Demand of the workers.

Shri Umanath: My point is very specific. When a question is put, he can say that he wants notice; he cannot say that he cannot answer it. Let him reply to the question categorically. There is no difficulty here at all. The point is whether the provisions he has in the Bill on hand are the same that were rejected by the employees.

Shri Krishna Kumar Chatterji (Howrah): On a point of order, Sir. Can he ask for the contents of the Bill before it is introduced in the House?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The Bill has not yet come before the House but he has said that the demands have been incorporated.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: Sir, it is a very simple point. I do not think he will have any objection to

say whether the Bill which they propose to introduce is modified according to the new representation made by the workers or whether they have some other proposal. He can say whether it is the same or in a modified form.

Shri Ananashib Shinde: I have explained the position that there were two main demands. There were a number of other minor points which can be governed not by the Bill but by regulations. The first main demand was that their transfer from the Food Department to the Food Corporation should be statutorily governed. That has been acceded to and incorporated in the Bill which is to be introduced in the House. The second demand is about the rights and privileges which are at present enjoyed by the employees under article 311 of the Constitution. That also has been incorporated in the present Bill. If the hon. Member is kind enough to ask me a specific question whether a particular demand is there or not I shall be in a position to answer it.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: The question is very specific. After considering the demands they had sent a draft to the employees which they had rejected. Is the Bill which he proposes to introduce the same which the employees had rejected or is it a modified Bill?

Shri Ananashib Shinde: We referred these points to the Law Ministry and as drafted by the Law Ministry the Bill has been finalised.

Shri Jyotirmoy Basu (Diamond Harbour): In the statement the hon. Minister has stated:—

“Already certain major aspects of these operations have been departmentalised at Bombay, Kandla, Madras and Visakhapatnam. This process is continuing and we may be in a position to departmentalise certain aspects

of foodgrain operations even at the Calcutta port in the near future.”

Has a date been fixed; if so, what is it?

Shri Ananashib Shinde: I will again submit humbly that there is no contradiction in these two. On the previous occasion it was mentioned that the Calcutta port operations would be departmentalised. Then the economics of it was examined. At that time the cost per tonne was about 40 paise when it was being carried on the basis of contracts. When the Finance Ministry and others examined it, it was found that the cost may go up to 66 paise per tonne if it is departmentalised immediately. They took some time to examine it and the Finance Ministry advised us that if the costs are likely to go around about 50 p. per ton, then we may think of departmentalising... (Interruption).

Shri Jyotirmoy Basu: I only very innocently asked what is meant by 'near future'. He says that the costs will go up and all that. He is misleading the House. He always gives cock and bull stories; we are not fools. He says that because the costs will go up... (Interruption).

Shri Tukaldas Jadhav (Baramati): When the Minister is answering a question, he should not be interrupted like this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He is seeking further explanation. Mr. Basu, you ought to realise that he is giving as much information as possible. If you are not satisfied, you put a specific question.

Shri Jyotirmoy Basu: This 'near future' is to be defined. It is a very good self-contradiction. He says that all this will cost more if it is departmentalised. Here is the statement of the hon. Minister which says 'near future' and I have the right to know from the hon. Minister what is meant by 'near future'.

Shri Anasambh Shinde: Had the hon. Member been a little patient, I would have been able to satisfy him. I was going to reply to that but he interrupted me and was explaining the background. If all this goes right, we are thinking of departmentalising it within the next three or four months.

12.47 hrs.

MESSAGE FROM RAJYA SABHA

Secretary: Sir, I have to report the following message received from the Secretary of Rajya Sabha:—

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 127 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, I am directed to inform the Lok Sabha that the Rajya Sabha, at its sitting held on the 22nd June, 1967, agreed without any amendment to the Anti-Corruption Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1967, which was passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 16th June, 1967."

12.47½ hrs.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

FIRST AND SECOND REPORTS

Shri P. Venkatasubbalah (Nandyal): I beg to present the following Reports of the Estimates Committee:—

- (1) First Report on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting—Film Institute of India, Poona.
- (2) Second Report on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting—Board of Film Censors, Bombay.

12.48 hrs.

SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES OF MINISTERS (AMENDMENT) BILL*

The Minister of Labour and Rehabilitation (Shri Nathi): On behalf of Shri Y. B. Chavan, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Act, 1952.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:—

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Sir, I wish to oppose the Bill.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: At the introduction stage?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Yes; I want only a minute.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: You have not written to me about it. According to the Rules, you have to give notice that you want to oppose it at the introduction stage. You have not done so. I will not permit you.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I want a clarification from the hon. Minister.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Not at this stage.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Act, 1952."

The motion was adopted.

Shri Nathi: I introduce the Bill.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: What is the difference between a Member and Minister? After death, you and I will be affected.

12.48 hrs.

TEA DISTRICTS EMIGRANT LABOUR (REPEAL) BILL*

The Minister of Labour and Rehabilitation (Shri Nathi): I beg to

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