

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please continue tomorrow. There is a half-an-hour discussion to be raised by Shri Samar Guha.

17.10 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION
DECENTRALISATION OF GEOLOGICAL
SURVEY OF INDIA

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contd.): The decision to dismember the Geological Survey of India will immediately affect the future of over a thousand employees of GSI fifty per cent of them very immediately, although the hon. Minister had assured them that none of them would have to repent their being in the GSI, and that they would be in the other organisation. There is an overtone of politics in it and the scrutiny of the whole thing reveals some things. There is the possibility of many employees being declared surplus, many being demoted. There are many uncertainties. I am not arguing from that standpoint but from a much higher level. This is one of the oldest central organisations, more than a century old, built through many decades and many efforts.

The decision to dismember it is unscientific, arbitrary, irregular, detrimental to the interest of many other Ministries and it is even against the convention of parliamentary practice; probably it is unconstitutional too. I have volumes of material to justify all the accusations but unfortunately my position is like that of a lawyer who defends in the upper court a person awarded death penalty in a lower court, who has to justify that the death penalty is not correct, but who has only ten minutes to argue out his case. I used the word unscientific because of this reason.

A committee was set up, Committee on Scientific Research to go into the issue GSI and decide whether it should be retained as it is, or should be divided into two parts. Subsequently the work of that committee was taken over by another committee, the Committee on Science and Technology, known as cost which came to the conclusion that it should be divided and that a major part or at least fifty per cent of it should go to the Central Ground Water Board.

I was astonished at the composition of this committee. An engineer is a scientist; a biochemist is also a scientist. But an engineer will not be asked to preside over a

meeting to decide whether a micro-biology section of a bio-chemistry department should be divided from that body section. Though an engineer is also a scientist, he will not be asked to do it because he is not competent to take discussion in the matter.

This committee on Science and Technology was composed of two physicists and an engineer, not a single reputed geologist or geo-hydrologist nor a representative from the GSI was there. Experts who have no knowledge of geology or geo-hydrology presided over the fate of this organisation and they decided that this should be dismembered. Strangely, there was nobody from the GSI in this committee.

They prepared a draft and at the stage of final consideration of that draft the Chairman of that committee invited the Director of the GSI in a letter dated January 29, 1971 and said: "The committee at its last meeting held on 18 January 1971 decided that a small group be set up consisting Shri B. K. Subramaniya, Dr. Kidwai, Dr. Sethna and yourself to go through the final draft report of the committee on GSI and make suggestions and amendments so that the amended draft might be placed before the committee".

The Director of Geological Survey only attended the first meeting. As his opinions were against the opinions of that committee the Chairman of that committee did something extraordinary. I have got the photostat of letters. The Chairman took a most unscientific, most irregular and most fantastic decision—he requested the Director of GSI in this letter not to attend the final meetings of the committee when the final draft was to be considered and decision taken whether GSI will be dismembered or not. Here is an extraordinary step. The Director was a regular member of the sub committee and he was invited to attend the meetings of the sub-committee. But after attending one meeting, he was requested not to attend the final meetings when a final decision was to be taken. A letter was issued by the Chairman of the committee asking him not to attend the committee meetings. I quote:

"You are member of this committee. Since the committee is in its final stage and all the facts that you wanted to bring before it are in the process of

being communicated to this committee. May I suggest that this committee should discuss the GSI report and of the various viewpoints freely and without constraints. I would be very grateful if you also agree with me in this view and refrain from attending the final meetings of the committee to enable them to come to the conclusion."

It is an extraordinary letter. It is extraordinary that a letter can be written by the Chairman debaring a member from attending the meetings. If a person is hanged, if you give a verdict like that, he should have some scope to explain why he should not be hanged and argue his case. GSI is going to be dismembered. The Director is a regular member of that committee. It is extraordinary that the Chairman of the committee writes a letter to the Director saying, "You are requested not to attend so that we can have a clear and unconstrained view of the report of the committee." I place both these letters on the Table.*

MR. CHAIRMAN : They will be sent to the hon Speaker for his permission. I cannot allow it now.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : If not for any other reason, for this reason that the Chairman's conduct was unscientific, irregular, extraordinary and fantastic and on the basis of the recommendation of this committee the Cabinet took the decision that of GSI should be dismembered or divided, the very basis of it has to be challenged. Therefore, I think the minister should take into consideration that this is an impossible proposition that a member can be debarred from attending the meetings of a committee of which he was regular member.

The 126th Report of the Estimates Committee said that an expert committee should be constituted to go into the affairs of GSI and accordingly an expert committee consisting of eminent geologists, geohydrologist and geophysicist was formed. That committee categorically stated that GSI is doing a very useful work and there is no question of dismembering that body; it should be retained. I quote from the report of this technical committee :

"It is the duty of the GSI to provide the fundamental geohydrological knowledge in regard to the country in the form of appropriate maps and reports, so that in various contexts further practical actions can be taken in regard to development activities. An integrated coordinated approach among the basic geological, geophysical and geochemical surveys and geohydrological studies and engineering geology is very essential".

The report further records :

"A comprehensive approach which will take vote of basic geology and a variety of problems and uses is very essential and this responsibility the GSI must discharge effectively."

Those who suggested the dismemberment of GSI were not experts. Here is an expert committee of the Government which has suggested that it should not only be retained but it should be strengthened.

The central Irrigation Commission that was set up by this Parliament had submitted a report in the month of April 1972. At pages 285-286 they have stated :

".....we have given serious thoughts to these grounds and regret that, in our opinion, they do not bear scrutiny. The GSI is, after all, only a department of the Union Government and it is given a specific task by the Government to be completed within a specified period there is no reason to suppose that the GSI would not carry out the task, if adequate staff and funds are provided. We are of the opinion that the GSI is the most suitable organisation to handle the work involved in prospective for ground water resources. It is the highest scientific and technical organisation in the country dealing with ground water exploration as a part of its normal functions. During the past 100 years it has acquired specialised scientific and technical expertise, and has built up a large and highly qualified body of officers whose specialisation is geology. . . There is no comparable organisation in the country which has the necessary expertise in geological

*The Speaker not having subsequently accorded the necessary permission, the papers were not treated as laid on the Table.

[Shri Samar Guha]

and geophysical and other specialised equipment for groundwater prospecting. Its laboratories and libraries and sophisticated instruments are naturally available to the geologists engaged in a prospecting for any mapping ground water resources. . ."

They have categorically opposed the idea of dismemberment.

There was an international seminar in Delhi in last September in which Dr. K. L. Rao not only opposed this but he said that it will be a "scientist's sin" to dismember this organisation. Unfortunately, he could not attend the Cabinet meeting when this decision was taken.

I would also say that the Planning Cell of the Commission also opposed it. They said that the GSI should not be dismembered.

The GSI is providing data, facts, statistics, not only for the use of agricultural department but for all other Ministries like Ministry of Health, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Irrigation and Power, Departments of Shipping and Housing on flood control, dam construction and many other problems. For agricultural purposes you require data only for drilling tube wells. For that they have a special organisation, the Exploratory Tube-well Organisation for drilling purposes. If the whole of the function of survey and mapping of the hydrological structure of the country is given to Agriculture Ministry, the other Ministries will suffer because biased priority will be given to Agriculture Ministry.

Lastly, it is not only improper but it is against the constitutional provisions also. When a commission was constituted by this House, before the report of that commission was considered by this House, how could the government take the decision to dismember it when that commission categorically said that it would be wrong to dismember that body.

Lastly, it is against the provisions of the Constitution. Under article 246 and entry No. 68 of the Union List, the national survey department including the GSI comes

within the exclusive power of Parliament to make law. Without making any enactment, simply by executive order they cannot dismember it. This is also likely to be challenged.

Finally, by giving wrong information the Union Government has been misled by the Cost Committee. Therefore, my request to the Government is to stop the execution of this order and appoint a fresh reviewing committee to go into the reports of all the expert committees and make a final recommendation. Before that such an unscientific, irregular and arbitrary decision should not be taken to dismember the G.S.I. the century-old and very effective scientific body of our country.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : (Diamond Harbour) : Mr Samar Guha made a few points. He, perhaps, missed the point that Dr. B. D. Nag Chowdhury had to toe the line of *Harvors* in New Delhi. Otherwise, he would no longer be in employment. He had to take recourse to such methods.

I would like to know whether it is a fact that in so far as the question of constitution of the Committee on Science and Technology (COST) is concerned, Shri M.S. Balasundaram, Director-General, Geological Survey of India, the only scientist from the field of geology in the said Committee and who can be considered as chief scientist in the field of geology, was not present in the first meeting of COST and that he, however, attended the second meeting and gave his dissenting opinion.

I would also like to know whether it is a fact that Dr. K. L. Rao, the Union Minister of Irrigation and Power and an internationally reputed specialist in Water resources expressed his categorical views against the decision of the Cabinet.

Also, whether the Irrigation Commission set up by the Government of India to go into the irrigation aspects and into the appraisal of groundwater and surface water resources, under the chairmanship of Shri Ajit Prasad Jain, with representatives from different States categorically opposed the decision to transfer groundwater, mapping and survey from the G.S.I. to the CGWB and recom-

recommended the review of the decision and retention of the work in G.S.I. and even strengthening of the Wing.

Is it also a fact that the Panel on Water Resources of the Planning Commission on 17th September, 1971 in their Final Report to the Planning Commission had recommended that the G.S.I. should continue groundwater activities and that even for the Fourth Plan period an additional Rs. 2 crores should be allocated to the G.S.I. for expansion and intensification of the Ground Water Survey activities.

The Estimates Committee of which you, Sir, are the hon. Chairman, after making a review of the functions and performance of the G.S.I., in their 126th Report, made recommendation that a Committee of experts from outside the G.S.I. should review and examine the function, performance and achievements of G.S.I. and submit a report to the Government and the Parliament indicating suitable recommendations for further growth and development of G.S.I. in national interest.

It is also a fact that there is a deep resentment amongst the employees of G.S.I. at the decision to decentralise it? Is it also a fact that there will be many employees who will be affected by the decentralisation? It is not less than 300 employees who have wilfully opted for the Central Ground Water Board who will be affected for better or worse with implementation of the transfer with effect from 1st August, 1972?

Will the hon. Minister kindly give us a correct, truthful, reply to this? I shall be very grateful for that.

श्री ब्रजबन्धु दाता (पानी) : ज्योलोजिकल सर्वे आफ इण्डिया ने आपके सामने कौन से ऐसे अमीष्ट लक्ष्य थे जिनकी उपलब्धि नहीं की जिसके कारण यह कदम उठाना पड़ा? हमारा ऐसा कौन सा प्रावर्कट था जो फस्ट्रेट हो रहा था जिसके कारण हमने यह कदम उठाया?

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : Sir, I do not want to repeat the points which my hon. friends, Mr. Samar Guha and Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosa have raised.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that the Director-General of G. S. I., the only specialist and who was a member of the particular Committee which decided the fate of this under the chairmanship of Dr. B. D. Nag Chowdhury for whom I have got the greatest regard, was asked to refrain from attending the final meeting of the Committee to enable him to come to a conclusion. I want to know how far this is true.

Secondly, I want to know whether the hon. Minister has read the note submitted by the scientific workers of the Geological Survey of India in which they have proved that this transfer is not logical and is not necessary. These persons are scientists; they are not employees as such. They are as good scientists as anybody else. After giving certain examples, certain illustrations they have said how this decision was a wrong decision. They have said that even the decision to create the Mineral Exploration corporation is based on wrong premises and directly against the recommendations of several specialist bodies, like, the Estimates Committee, the Planning Group for Minerals other than coal and oil, Mukerjee Committee, etc.

May I know whether the hon. Minister had read these reports before taking this decision and whether there was some difference of opinion in the Cabinet also when the decision was taken. I have got certain notes which I do not want to lay on the Table of the House. Reading these notes, I feel, there was a certain difference of opinion.

My last point is this. Generally, there is a feeling created in West Bengal—this is the oldest office; the G. S. I. building is a massive one—that slowly but in a calculated manner all the important offices are being shifted from West Bengal to other places. I have nothing against it; I am a citizen of this country; I do not believe in all those things. A section of the office of DGOF has been shifted to Kanpur that is my own constituency, Sir. But the feeling is created that the Central office has been shifted. It gives the feeling to the entire country that the Centre does not want certain offices to remain in West Bengal. I

[Shri S. M. Banerjee]

want to know from the hon. Minister whether he would apply his mind *de novo* and give an opportunity to the scientists who have submitted the memorandum and also to the employees and review the whole matter objectively.

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA (Domariaganj) : Before the hon. Minister replies, I would request him to tell us how this ground water organisation is specially equipped with geo-science aspect of the hydrological programmes they have. I can understand their possessing the engineering technology aspects. But how is it better equipped for the geo-science aspect of drilling for water so far as the new organisation now being entrusted with the work is concerned?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : Mr Chairman, Sir, I must express my thanks to the hon. members who have participated in the short discussion because the problem that they have raised is one of importance. For some time past, Government had been considering the question of reorganization of the Geological Survey of India so as to make it more efficient in the discharge of its functions. The reason is that, by and large, the progress that we have made towards completing the mapping up of the geology work in the country has been at rather a slow rate and we want it to concentrate more effectively on its primary function which is really the function of mapping. That is why I will come to the procedure followed in a minute—the decision has been taken by Government not merely to take away, as it were, from the GSI the functions which are now going to be transferred to the Central Ground Water Board but also to set up a mineral exploration corporation which will do, what may be called, the intermediate work between surveying and mapping which is to be continued in the GSI and the work of actual exploitation which would be done by the public sector mining corporation. The decision in relation to the Central Ground Water Board and transferring to the Central Water Board the work of what may be called hydrological investigation, as distinct from mapping, was taken really in line with the same principle.

Some years ago the Cabinet Secretariat set up a committee to examine the working of the different scientific committees of the Government of India. This committee was known as COSR—Committee on Organisation of Scientific Research. It was this Committee that first examined the activities functions and organisational structure of the Geological Survey of India. This Committee, however, was wound up in December 1970 and the work of this Committee was transferred to the Committee of Science and Technology as was directed at that time by the Prime Minister. The Committee of Science and Technology, known as COST, set up a sub-committee to look into the draft report that was originally drafted by COSR and to make any changes that may be necessary before it was put up to the COST for final adoption. An hon. Member mentioned that the Director-General of the GSI was a member of the sub-committee that went into it and ultimately submitted its draft report. It is a fact that it was Dr. Krishnan who was originally a member of the COSR and, if I am not wrong, he died before the draft report was made, and Shri M. S. Bala-sundaram, the present Director-General of the Geological Survey of India, was a member of the sub-committee set up by COST.

Now, the Sub-Committee had discussions both with Shri Vohra who is the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and also the Chairman of the Ground Water Board as well as with the Director-General of the Geological Survey of India. One of the hon. Members has stated..

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Only one meeting he was allowed to attend

SHRI S MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : Allow me to finish. I listened to you patiently. You can have a little patience with me.

It was a fact. I do not conceal fact from the House. I think I can claim that in the past and I can claim it to-day. It is a fact that Shri Bala-sundaram attended—hon. Member, Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu said, the second meeting. He may be right. But one meeting he attended, may be the first.

I was under the impression that it was the first meeting. But that is not relevant. It is not a matter of any great importance. I want to be accurate. I may be wrong, you may be right. But that does not affect the substance of the matter. He attended one meeting of the Sub Committee and after that, the other meetings were not attended by him. It is also a fact, as hon. Member, Shri Samar Guha, read—I have not seen that letter, nor is it of any great importance that Shri Nag Choudhary did request Mr. Balasundaram at a later meeting, particularly when the report was discussed, not to attend. But I think it was because they thought it easier to do the work that Shri Nag Choudhary had elaborate discussions with Shri Balasundaram regarding the merits and demerits of this matter and it was after having an elaborate discussion with him and separately also with Mr. Vohra of the Central Ground Water Board that the other members of the Sub-Committee came to certain conclusions which were then put before the Committee on Science and Technology and finally adopted by them. The matter then came up before the Cabinet and the Cabinet took the decision which the hon. Members have mentioned a little earlier.

A mention has also been made of possible differences inside the Cabinet. Now I think that is not a very relevant matter. There are always differences on matters, but ultimately the decision of the Cabinet is the decision of the Cabinet, and the fact that one Minister took a particular view at one time or another Minister took a particular view at another time is irrelevant so far as the substance of the matter is concerned. Therefore, I think it would not be proper on my part to enter into a sort of discussion as to which Minister said what and at what time. I think that is really an irrelevant, minor matter. I am sure that hon. Members also inside their own organizations, do not always think the same way. There are differences, but, ultimately we come to a decision which we accept to be binding on all the members, whether it be the Cabinet or a committee, whatever it be. I think I can leave that question of differences aside.

The real basis for the recommendations that were made by the COST were that it

was an urgent question so far as the Government and the country are concerned, to formulate in precise and detailed terms as to what are the operations involved before starting of exploration and assessment of the mineral resources of the country in an area and assumption of responsibility for the commissioning operation by an exploiting agency. We decided let me leave 'we' for the moment—the Committee itself felt that it would be proper for the G. S. I. to concentrate the actual mapping. My friend, Mr Malaviya need not have concern of this point because the GSI will continue its work of hydrological mapping..... (*Interruptions*) It is really a question of investigation in depth of the resources which we have and ultimately the decision arrived at was that it could better be carried on by the Central Ground Water Board. In these matters I do not want to be dogmatic. Obviously, there are two views about it and I would not say that there is no substance in the other point of view. I would not like to use the expressions 'arbitrary', 'irrelevant', expressions of that character. I think there are quite a number of arguments which can be advanced in favour of the opposite view, but experience has taught us that our geological work is going on very slowly. That is a fact. If you compare the manner in which our GSI is working with other countries, whether it be China or the Soviet Union or the European countries or the Americas, we are pretty backward in that area. This is not so much a criticism of the GSI because it is a criticism of all of us, all of us who run this country. We should have been able to devote more resources and more energy to that. It is the decision of the Government and the recommendation of COST really in relation to that. Let us all try to build up the GSI much faster. There are a large number of problems we face in relation to the recruitment, in relation to the adequate use of the geologists' talents in our country and it is better to speed up the geological work on the one hand and enable the Minerals Exploration Corporation explore the minerals and the Central Ground Water Board in relation to the water resources on the other.

This is to speed up what is called the intermediate stage for really, effectively locating what are the water resources and how best they can be made use of.

[Shri S. Mohan Kumaramangalam]

I think there is no purpose in my entering into a long debate. There is not the time for it also. I can only say very genuinely to all hon. Members that we gave our most anxious consideration to the matter and we came to this conclusion and therefore we decided to implement it.

18. hrs.

Some hon. Members pointed out that there is deep resentment among the employees. I am aware of what they have stated....

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Was COST the competent body to decide over the issue, because there were the physicists and mining engineers, but there were no geologists or geo-hydrologists ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : The hon. Member will appreciate that in COST itself there are some of the leading scientists in the country. It is true that there is no actual geologist, by training.

I can assure him that persons who are Members of COST are persons with wide experience. I do not like to mention names, but I would say to illustrate what I say, that Prof. Subramaniam is a man who has wide experience not only in mining but also in geological work and as a scientist he has been very useful in many areas for instance, in Chinakuri disaster and things of that character also, where geological questions were involved.

From my experience, I find this. There is a tendency for persons belonging to a particular school to think only in a particular way. It is not necessary that when a decision is arrived at, it should be arrived at only by the geologists, even Mr. Samar Guha or myself may be able to contribute in coming to a correct decision, because what is important is the effort of getting together all the materials, thinking about them, listening to those who are experts in their field, getting their opinion, and then only coming to proper conclusions. That was the procedure that was followed. When such persons of eminence are there on the sub-committee and the Committee on Science and Technology, we could expect them to come to right decisions after going through all the facts. Of course, it is

always possible to have certain difference of opinion and argue on a matter like this.

What we did arose out of our dissatisfaction with the state of affairs. We thought this decision will help us to remedy this state of affairs and work for the speedier development of geological work. I know that there is a considerable amount of feeling among both the geologists and the scientists, and among the staff. We shall see that they are not affected in any way.

Mr. Banerjee mentioned about the shifting of the office. We have plans for the rapid expansion of the G. S. I. I don't think there is going to be any harm for the country—old office in Calcutta and it is not going to be shifted. Any way, there are large number of employees of GSI in Nagpur where we want to set up mineral exploration of the GSI, the ground-water division.....

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Dr. Rao's opinion has been completely ignored.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : May I plead with Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu, if in his party meetings, whether all his views are accepted, because there are bound to be some differences of opinion but they are resolved ultimately. There is no question of difference of opinion between Dr. Rao and Mohan Kumaramangalam. Nobody's opinion is being ignored; and therefore such arguments do not really benefit us. No opinion is ignored, including the opinion of the Director-General of GSI. The decision was arrived at after taking into consideration the opinion of the individuals directly concerned.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : How much of the adverse opinion have you overruled ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : I do not think that we have overruled that much of adverse opinion, frankly.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Except the opinion of COST. All the other commit-

tees were against it. Even the Irrigation Commission's report and the Sen Committee's report were against it.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGA-LAM : I think that it will be difficult to convince him, and, therefore, I have tried my best. If I have failed, I have failed, and I think that it is better to leave it at that. I am only here to justify and make clear why it was that Government arrived at the decision on the advice of the various persons who gave us advice. I think that

I have put the facts clearly before the House, and I would request hon. Members to appreciate the circumstances in which we came to this conclusion and to give a trial to what we are trying to do in this area.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Absolutely unscientific answer.

18.6 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, August 22 1972/ Sraavana 31. 1894 (Saka).