

[श्री भागीरथ शंकर]

होया बिल नहीं होने तो डे खेती नहीं कर पायेंगे उन के पास ट्रैक्टर या आधुनिक औजार नहीं हैं, वे लोग तो सिर्फ दो बैलों से खेती करते हैं, लेकिन जब बैलों को अभाव होगा तो किसान हाथ पर हाथ धरे बैठ रहेगा। इस लिये पास के लिये पास व्यवस्था करनी चाहिये।

हम लोग हमेशा सिन्धुई की बात करते हैं, इस लिये कृषि मंत्रालय के साथ इसका सीधा सम्बन्ध आता है। हम चाहते हैं कि सिन्धुई विभाग कृषि मंत्रालय से सम्बद्ध होना चाहिये ताकि जो समन्वय की बातें होती हैं, समन्वय न होने के कारण कोई काम ठीक से नहीं हो पाता है, इस लिये समन्वय की दृष्टि से यह विभाग कृषि मंत्रालय के हाथ सम्बद्ध होना चाहिये।

एक बात और कहना चाहता हूँ—देश का जंगल बरबाद हो रहा है—तमाम पहाड़ियां साफ हो चुकी हैं, उन में खेती भी नहीं हो सकती है। इस लिये मैं चाहता हूँ कि तमाम पहाड़ियों पर जंगल लगाये जायें। कागजी तौर पर बन-महोत्सव मनाये जाते हैं, करोंडों सपया खर्च होता है, लेकिन उस के बाद एक भी वृक्ष देखने जायें तो नहीं मिलेगा। यह कागजी खाना-पूरी नहीं होनी चाहिये। जमीन के कटाव को रोकने के लिये भी यह जरूरी है तथा सायल-कन्जर्वेशन के लिये भी जरूरी है। बन-सम्पदा की आवश्यकता को देखते हुए नये बन लगाये जायें, वास्तविक रूप से पैसा खर्च हो और उन की देखरेख हो।

18.18 hrs.

CONVICTION OF MEMBER—contd.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to inform the House that the Speaker has received the following telegram, dated

the 7th April, 1973, from the Jail Superintendent, Ujjain:—

"Shri Phool Chand Verma, Member, Lok Sabha, was sentenced to undergo simple imprisonment for five days by the Magistrate, First Class, Ujjain, on the 17th April, 1973, for violating section 3/7 of the Essential Commodities Act."

18.19 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION
IMPROPER FUNCTIONING OF CALCUTTA
TELEPHONES

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contal):
Sir, Calcutta telephone has received not only unjust and unfair but even step-motherly treatment at the hands of the Government. My short comment will be justified by the statistics given by the Government themselves. Let me give comparative figures only for Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. In 1961 Calcutta had 73,600 telephone lines while Bombay had 47,795 lines and Delhi 32,400 lines. During the Third Plan, Bombay had the privilege of getting an allotment of 58,100 lines plus 30,000 imported, making a total of 88,100. Delhi—28,700 and 13,000 imported, totalling 41,000. Calcutta—only 20,300.

In the Fourth Plan Bombay had an allotment of 92,000; Delhi 62,000 and Calcutta—68,000. In the proposed Fifth Plan, Bombay will have an allotment of 1,84,000; Delhi—1,08,000 and unfortunate Calcutta only 69,000.

If you see the comparative figures in terms of 1961 figure as the base, the allotment increase for Bombay in the First Plan was 187 per cent; Delhi—128 per cent and Calcutta—no increase in percentage. In the Fourth Plan, Bombay had 197 per cent increase; Delhi—212 per cent increase. In the proposed Fifth Plan, Bombay—391 per cent; Delhi—338 per cent. About unfortunate Calcutta, nothing should be mentioned.

At present, Bombay has 1,68,000; Calcutta—1,32,000 and Delhi 99,185. By

the end of the Fifth Plan, that is, by 1962, this will be the position. Just keep in mind the position that Bombay had much less telephone lines in 1961. But after the Fifth Plan, Bombay will be having 4.44 lakhs; Calcutta 2.69 lakhs and Delhi 278 lakhs. What about unfortunate Calcutta? Calcutta is known as the capital of industrial and commercial centre of eastern India. Compared to Bombay, its importance is no less. Calcutta is known as the biggest metropolitan city of the country. If I say Calcutta has received a step-motherly treatment, the figures justify it. The ratio between Bombay and Calcutta is 1:2; 10 years before, Calcutta had a lead over Bombay.

Now, in Calcutta, there is a load of new applications. Nearly 56,000 new applications are outstanding and some of them are 10 years old. It is not the responsibility of the present Minister. I want to know whether he will take some steps before the Fifth Plan is finalised to see that Calcutta's position should be at least at par with that of Bombay because Calcutta's importance, neither from commercial standpoint nor from the industrial standpoint, is in no way less than that of Bombay. Therefore, I hope, before the Fifth Plan is finalised, at least the position of telephone connections in Calcutta and Bombay should be at par.

I would like to draw your attention to another point. In 1964, the Government of India entered into a contract with Bell Telephone Company of Belgium for supply of 48,000 lines telephone exchange equipment and for supply of four trunk automatic exchanges for subscriber trunk dialing. You gave to Bombay—30,000; Delhi—13,000; Madras—5,000 and unfortunate Calcutta—not even one.

About your automatic trunk exchanges, by 1969, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Kanpur, even small cities have been connected. You have printed a booklet of your own. It is 322 L.S.—13

called the S.T.D.—Subscriber's Trunk Dialling. You have given a map here. In that map, unfortunate Calcutta is missing. You have connection with Madras, Bombay, Delhi, Srinagar, Lucknow, Kanpur and many other innumerable cities. But I do not know what has happened to Calcutta. Calcutta is absolutely missing even from your map. I do not know whether Calcutta will not be missing from India or you do not want to completely isolate Calcutta from trunk exchange. I want to know what steps Government will take about that.

About Calcutta, there is one complaint and that is about mechanical failure of machines. When you take up the phone, there is no tone. Cross-connections, wrong connections, are innumerable. What is the reason for that? They say that spares are not available.

Regarding internal spare parts, recently I have been told that they have been supplied. But I do not know whether there is a dearth of trained personnel. If you had the idea that you were going to supply internal spare parts, at least some planning should have been done in advance for training so that they could handle them. But that was not done.

External spare parts like receiver sets, receiver coils and transmitter sets are not at all available. You can understand what would be the result. Also, the quality of parts and equipment manufactured by the Indian Telephone Industries is very bad. Innumerable complaints are there. I would request the hon. Minister to go there at some suitable time and see that the quality of the parts and equipment manufactured in Bangalore is improved.

About human failure in services like 199, 198, 197, etc., you know what is the fact. They go on ringing for ten or 15 minutes and there is no response. What are the reasons for this? One of the major reasons is

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human failure. In Calcutta a large number of those people who handle these services—199, 198, 197, etc.—are ladies. Thousands of them come from far-off places and sometimes they cannot reach in time because of transport difficulties, and when they reach, after a great struggle, they get completely exhausted. I do not complain against them. What can they do? They are ladies. If you really want to improve their condition, I think, as in other industries, certain transport arrangements at least for the ladies should be made, so that they could reach office in time.

There is no hostel for telephone girls. With the help of Social Welfare Board, you should arrange to set up some hostels.

About staff quarters, in Calcutta, the telephone workers have no staff quarters. Government should take some steps immediately to provide the staff with quarters

Another point is this and this is a dangerous practice. The commercial and industrial concerns pick up the receiver, make the call and keep the connection on for almost the whole day—8 hours, 9 hours and sometimes even 10 hours continuously, thereby avoiding a number of calls. A meter system has to be introduced to avoid this malpractice by the industrial and commercial concerns. As I said, for 6 hours, 7 hours and even 10 hours, the same connection is kept on. Similarly at the other end also, they do the same thing. Therefore, a meter system should be introduced.

Another problem in Calcutta is that the Calcutta Tramways, the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, CMDA, the Calcutta Corporation, P.W.D., etc. frequently work on the roads of Calcutta and damage the telephone cables. These people do not care to report these, and that is creating a lot of trouble. I am a member of the Telephone Advisory Board. For about

a month my telephone was out of order. The contractors, particularly of CMDA, etc. do not care for the telephone lines and the damage is not reported. When you go to Calcutta, you should take up the matter with the Government of West Bengal. There should be some sort of a threat. If your telephone line is damaged in any way, then you will take them to task and also threaten them that you would go to court and claim damages. Only that sort of threat can do something.

About wrong billing, I will give you the figures. In 1969-70, there were 22,000 wrong billings. In 1970-71 there were 20,000 wrong billings. In 1971-72 there were more than 14,000 wrong billings. In 1972-73, upto February only, there have been 14,000 wrong billings. They say that they take very prompt action on wrong bills. But why should they be wrong first? It is just a question of taking the meter reading correctly. There is only human failure here and that should be taken care of. About this particular human failure, I think there is a vigilance organization. But the people of Calcutta or the telephone subscribers do not know about it. You have got to improve that organization and the personnel also are not enough. The number of Public Relations Officers is also meagre. People go there and they try to talk to them and express their grievances to them. I would request you that the number of PROs also should be increased.

SHRI R. S PANDEY (Rajnandgaon): Also their efficiency.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Yes, their efficiency also should improve. I think you could just introduce a simple thing a complaint box to be attached to every important post office where complaints about 199 or 198, wrong billing etc. could be lodged. A person may mention the exact time and date and mention the complaint. If you have got something about the persons handling the equipment, if you ask

for their explanation, at least in the first month, they will grudging do it, second month, the number will come down and the third month, it will still be reduced. Some such complaint box should be attached to each post-office. It is a very easy thing.

About other things, about the Own-Your-Telephone, general category telephone, special category telephone here, the industrialists are the fortunate ones—they can get any number of telephones. I would request you to see whether at least their quota could be reduced to some extent and transferred to the general quota. About the special category, my experience is that there are certain business people whose sole aim in attending the meetings of the TAC is to get a number of telephone connections sanctioned. I want that 50 per cent should be the total given to the TAC Board. Special criteria should be carefully laid down—why, how and what reasons and why a person should be given special category. I will just cite one example Any person by just enlisting a company with Rs. 300 or a co-operative of small scale industries—by paying Rs. 300 they get a licence from the West Bengal Government—they get the telephone. under special category. Special criteria and reasons should be completely laid down why and how this special category telephone should be given.

I want to conclude by saying that there are some 56,000 pending applications. Even after the Fifth Plan, you will have 50,000 pending applicants. Unless you take up the matter seriously—the Fifth Plan is yet to be finalised, I hope the hon. Minister is handling it with all earnestness and sincerity as I have seen it and I hope Calcutta will feel that touch of sincerity and earnestness and the problems that I have raised will receive your utmost attention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Ram Avtar Shastri—absent.

Shri Hukam Chand Kachwai—absent.

The hon. Minister.

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA): I am grateful to Prof Samar Guha for bringing before us the deficiencies in the Calcutta Telephone system. I admit that Calcutta has lagged behind in regard to telephone development and it is a matter of real sorrow for me that it should be so and I can assure Prof. Guha that it would be my endeavour to bring home to my Department the shortcomings pointed out by him and see that in the matter of exchange capacity and in the matter of providing Calcutta with an efficient and satisfactory system, we will do our very best during the Fifth Plan both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Prof Guha has correctly drawn out the difference or rather brought out some defects to say that Calcutta has lagged behind. There have been a number of contributory factors for this and I would not go in detail except to say that we will try to do our very best and I hope that men like Prof. Guha will help us in the matter of improving our services so far as it relates to the failure of human component of the whole telecommunication organisation.

So far as joining Calcutta on Subscriber Trunk Dial is concerned with Delhi, with Bombay and the rest of the country, I am sorry to say that in spite of my very best efforts it will not be possible to do anything before 1975. Uptil that time Calcutta would have to be denied this but in 1971 when I joined this Ministry immediately thereafter by November 1971 twenty-two no-delay trunk services were introduced to and from Calcutta and Calcutta Delhi happens to be among those links. The whole question was Calcutta is on broad band coaxial transmission system with Delhi and the entire circuits had been allotted by the time Calcutta had the

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capability to get linked to Delhi or the STD. Now, those circuits are already exhausting. We have already ordered equipment for connecting Calcutta with Delhi on broad band microwave transmission system and as soon as that equipment is installed, we are already making our preparation, which will be completed by September 1973 at the Calcutta end and at other ends also so that when that particular facility of transmission system is available Calcutta will have enough circuits to come on STD. STD will naturally require more circuits than we can presently have. The second thing about Calcutta system which I would like to point out is that in 1964 much before I happened to see the face of this august House and at a time when one of Prof. Guha's own friend was heading this Ministry here it was decided to have for Calcutta a new type of system which we call Director Type Strowger System. That is the only type of equipment we were having in the country at that point of time. It was supposed to be the latest in the field. But what has been the result? The result is subsequently in 1964 we went in for new equipment—the BTM crossbar equipment. In a way I congratulate Prof. Guha that he has been spared the troubles of crossbar. It is very sophisticated but also a very complicated system. I have often been saying jocularly to my friends that Christ alone could have carried the 'Cross' but simple and ordinary human beings like me are being called upon to share the responsibility of carrying this cross. In a way, I think, he is lucky he does not have the crossbar at Calcutta otherwise, perhaps, his troubles would be much more than the present ones which Calcutta is facing from the Director system. Now, Sir, when this system was introduced the spares thereof are produced by ITI. ITI being a business house thought why should they produce number of spares which will be needed by one system only. The result was since 1970 Calcutta system did not have any spares

supply from ITI Bangalore. In 1971 November when I went there this thing come to my notice that 25 per cent of the switches of the Director system had been completely blocked because of the lack of spares. I decided to direct the ITI and threatened them by saying that it is not possible for them to deny the spares to that particular institution and now 99 per cent of those switches have been restored back to Calcutta with the result that Calcutta could give inspite of not addition of much new equipment about 10,000 more connections during the last year and, therefore, it has been my constant endeavour to improve the working of that system. That system suffered negligence at the hands of ITI for which government will have to take responsibility and I quite concede that Calcutta system needs to be looked into rather with great care in the time to come.

So far as the present position is concerned Prof. Guha is right when he talks of billing defects but in that also most of the defects are due to human failures. Now, I cannot be my own meter reader and in that eminent persons like Prof. Guha could play a great role by trying to bring home to our workers the sense of responsibility which should bear on them while discharging their public function like this.

Now, I do not want to say rather from a higher pedestal but, unfortunately, the current trend in the country is not to take of the duties but of the rights only. So, I am great sufferer on that but with the good wishes and help from all friends it should be possible for us to improve the Calcutta system. He is quite right when he says that the Information Service 199, 197 and 198 are not responding. The absenteeism is one of our greatest curses and I am afraid in that also with all his large heartedness Prof. Guha will have to admit that ultimately in this country every government servant cannot expect the government to bring him on duty. In

order to be in time he has to start a little earlier. You know in Calcutta what it means to go to one's office. That is inbuilt in the difficulties of Calcutta. Therefore, Sir, I do not think it is possible for my department to provide all the buses. If I had one colony at one place I would have brought them.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: At least from Sealdah and Howrah—two or three points—it can be provided.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: The whole point is we have got a certain type of facility which we can afford. Presently, I do not think it will be possible for me to accept that advice

but I can assure him on housing I am keen to have houses. I have decided to purchase ready-built houses from the government of West Bengal for our co-workers in the P & T and I can assure supply of spares, maintenance effort, tightened supervision, giving Calcutta its due share in the Fifth Plan should bring about a vast and a different sort of system which will be satisfactory to Calcutta and keeping with its honour and dignity.

18.42 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, April 19, 1973/Chaitra 29, 1895 (Saka).