

[Shri S. Xavier]

unemployed engineers. It is a very pathetic sight of unemployed engineers. Those who have passed with first-class in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and civil engineering are begging in the streets in the South. I do know what is the state of affairs in North India. Perhaps they are absorbed more here because the North is more industrialised. Joblessness in engineering graduates is an unanswerable indictment of our planning. Expansion of consumer industries in the corporate sector and establishment of agro-based industries is the only satisfactory answer to the problem.

Modern technology, if applied to small units of production so that every house is converted into a workshop, can compete to meet the problem but it needs close and effective coordination between the big and the small sectors of industry. Japan sports an inspiring example of a country surmounting all obstacles of industrial growth by adopting an economic technique adapted to its conditions. The Soviet type of planning pursued in India today will continue to compel the lower and middle class families to shoulder heavy burdens in the form of punitive taxes on personal incomes as well as excise duties on essential items of consumption while their savings will continue to be mopped up so that they cannot enjoy themselves in productive activities.

The All India Manufacturers' Organisation has recommended to the Government a seven-pillar strategy for rapid and intensive economic development.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He may continue tomorrow.

18.30 hrs.

#### HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

##### ACQUISITION OF LAND BY OIL AND NATURAL GAS COMMISSION FOR DRILLING IN ASSAM

SHRI BISWANARAYAN SHASTRI (Lakhimpur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, while speaking on the Demands of the Ministry of Petroleum and Chemicals, I had raised some of

the points which I propose to raise just now. I am glad that the hon. Minister was good enough to assure the House that he would ask for a probe by the C. B. I. I am thankful to him and, I hope, this will be done very quickly. The purpose of raising this discussion has been served to some extent. Therefore, I shall be very brief.

Sir, the public sector industries in our country do suffer from certain defects. First of all, all the powers are arrogated by the Chairmen or the General Managers or the Managing Directors, by whatever term they are designated, the Board of Directors, generally, does not function adequately and the Ministry here is some what shy to give proper leadership. The Parliament is kept in darkness. That is the condition which is partially true in respect of other public sector industries and which is fully true in respect of the petroleum and chemical industry.

I do not understand why the retired military Generals, Brigadiers and Captains are posted as the Chairmen or the General Managers or in some other capacity in public sector oil industry. Are they posted to fight the labour or to fight the people or to fight the masses? What is the reason? They are to fight whom? Are they specialised in oil technology because of their military training? Have they got some knowledge of oil technology? I do not understand. Perhaps; the hon. Minister will be able to answer this question.

Coming to the subject proper of acquiring land by the ONGC from Lakwa Tea estate, a total sum of Rs. 27,94,000 was paid as compensation for permanent acquisition of 360 bighas, 0 kotha and 8 locha of land which is roughly about 100 acres. Again, 2,17,512 numbers of tea bushes and 2,528 shade trees were also taken by paying compensation.

Here, I would like to point out a simple fact that one complete tea garden, lock stock and barrel, a big garden, say, 7 or 8 acres with plantation, factories, machines, buildings, labour lines, bungalows, fencing, etc. is purchased in recent times at a price of Rs. 15 to 16 lakhs. If you make an inquiry of the recent sale of tea gardens in Assam, it will reveal that the amount does not exceed Rs. 15 or 16 lakhs.

Here, about 100 acres of land with tea bushes was acquired at a price of Rs. 27,94,000. The reason I am told by some of my friends just now—I do not know definitely—that the particular tea garden is owned by an industrial magnate of Kanpur.

In reply to my Question 115 the reply given was as follows :

"The price of land and tea bushes was mutually negotiated by the ONGC with the Lakwa tea company."

And the second part is :

"On the advice of the local S. D. O. (Civil) the commission paid for the tea bushes...."

This is only a half truth. The so-called advice of the S.D.O. I would say is a misleading one on 9.5.67 S. D. O. (Civil) advised them quoting rates which was not followed. The question of mutual negotiation does not arise here. Generally, the procedure is, when a party is carrying on mutual negotiation and if that negotiation fails, then the acquiring party approaches for an award. Here, an award was sought for and the Government gave an award. But that award was refused. Previously, the Lakwa tea company agreed to accept the award at the rate which was paid by the N. F. Railway for acquiring land at North Lakhimpur and the rate which was approved by the Indian Tea association. Later on, they refused to accept it.

On 24.4. 1967—I quote—this is what the General Manager ONGC Eastern Region wrote to the General Manager of the Lakwa Tea Company.

"In the course of our discussion it was indicated by you (that is the Manager, Lakwa Tea company) that the rates that were admitted by the NF Railway in connection with acquisition of land for their Railway line in North Lakhimpur would be accepted by you."

The rate given by NF Railway ranged

between Rs. 3.96 paise and Rs. 6.90 paise per tea bush.

Again on 26.10.1967, the General Manager, ONGC Eastern Region wrote to the Management of Lakwa Tea estate.

"On 19.10.67..it was agreed that the compensation for the tea bushes etc. will be paid by the ONGC on the basis of the rates approved by the Indian Tea Association."

It is their commitment. Later on they refused to accept it. The compensation paid to other tea estates like Sarumathurapur, Nabarhabhi and Gelek tea estates; was much lower than what was paid for Lakwa Tea Company. Again compensation was paid for diversion of a road not required by the ONGC. It was done for the benefit of the tea garden. On that account Rs. 50,000 was paid. ONGC was so much compassionate to that tea garden owners that they provided fencing at both sides of the garden road. On his account the ONGC incurred an expenditure, I think, of about Rs. 70,000.

Again I would like to say that ONGC required a plot of land of about 500 acres as near as possible to the oil fields of Sibsagar and Lakwa. Against this 184 acres of land was purchased at Nazira from Assam Tea Company at a cost of Rs. 24 lakhs. Now there are three sites in Sibsagar. In Sibsagar town the workshop and colony, etc. In Nazira at a distance of 10 miles there is the headquarters and in Lakwa there are some offices and quarters. According to their estimates, the recurring expenditure for plying vehicles for bringing the staff to these places of work it would cost Rs. 4 lakhs annually. In this way the ONGC indulges in wasteful expenditure of not less than Rs. 50 lakhs.

Again they are prompt in giving compensation to big tea garden owners but they are not ready to give compensation to small cultivators. Often land is acquired for temporary drilling and it is a condition that when they surrender or relinquish the land, it has to be restored to its original condition. That is also not done. I will give a concrete instance. In Salapathar

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[Shri Biswanarayan Shastri]

where there is a Buddhist monastery land was acquired for temporary drilling by the ONGC but the drilling was not successful. They gave it up but the land was not restored to its original condition. Therefore, I would like to say that there is something wrong going on in the Eastern Region of ONGC and I hope the hon. Minister who has some intimate knowledge and experience in this line will set the matter right and do the needful so that the persons who are involved in wasteful expenditure are brought to book.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND MINES AND METALS (DR. TRIGUNA SEN): The hon. Member has made many charges against the ONGC regarding the purchase of a property of Lakwa Tea estate. While discussing the Budget Demands of my Ministry I mentioned that one of the hon. Members of the House gave me certain papers regarding this purchase deal during a meeting of the Consultative Committee and I assured him at that time that I would look into the matter personally and take necessary steps. I also mentioned on the floor of the House the other day that going through the papers I was not satisfied. I have some doubts. I have already referred it to the C. B. I. When the C. B. I. is enquiring into this matter, into these alleged charges, it would be wrong on my part to say anything which may interfere in their findings. I seek your protection in this regard. I have already mentioned that I have referred it to the C.B.I. who are enquiring into the matter and my hon. friend, Mr. Shastri, raised certain other points, and I have taken note of the charges he has made. I will also send those charges as alleged by him to the C. B. I. for necessary enquiry. This is all that I can say at this moment.

श्री रामाबल्लार शास्त्री (पटना) : सभापति जी, ऐसा लगता है कि जब किसानों की जमीन का अर्जन किया जाता है और मुआवजा देने की बात आती है तो सरकार बहुत कंजूसी से काम लेती है। लेकिन जब पूंजीपतियों को, या लकुवा टी स्टेट जैसा टी गार्डन वाले बड़े लोगों को मुआवजा देने की बात आती है तो सरकार

का दिल दरिया बन जाता है और बहुत उदारता से मुआवजा देती है। ऐसा ही इस लकुवा टी ऐस्टेट के मामले में हुआ है। इस बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए मैं तीन सवाल मंत्री महोदय से करना चाहता हूँ।

(1) आपने मुआवजा देने का जो फैसला किया वह किन-किन बातों को दिमाग में रख करके किस आधार पर किया ?

(2) प्रत्येक चाय की झाड़ी से कितना उत्पादन चाय का होता है। साथ ही यह भी मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि टी बुश की औसत आयु कितनी होती है ? और क्या यह बात सच है कि जितनी भी टी बुश के लिये आपने मुआवजा दिया है उसमें से अधिकांश झाड़ियों की अवस्था या एज 70 वर्ष की पायी गयी है ?

(3) जैसा माननीय बी० एन० शास्त्री ने बतलाया था कि प्रत्येक झाड़ी के लिये, जिसकी अवस्था तीन से पांच वर्ष है, पांच रु० की दर से इन्होंने मुआवजा दिया है। और जिस झाड़ी की अवस्था इनके मुताबिक 5 से 50 वर्ष पायी गयी है उसको 11 रु० प्रति झाड़ी दिया है। लेकिन जब एन० एफ० रेलवे ने जमीन ली थी तो उसने एक झाड़ी के लिये 3.96 से 6.90 रु० के हिसाब से पैसा दिया था। तो इन दोनों में अन्तर पाया जाता है। इसलिये मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि इन दोनों अन्तर के कारण क्या हैं ? इतना अन्तर क्यों हो गया ? किन आधारों पर आपने इतना ज्यादा पैसा इस लकुवा टी ऐस्टेट को दिया ?

SHRI HEM BARUA (Mangaldai) : Sir, the O. N. G. C. suffers from certain defects and set-backs, there are some allegations against this institution.

I am very happy to note that the hon. Minister has ordered a C. B. I. enquiry into it. But, at the same time, the Government should not fall a voluntary victim to the conspiracy hatched by the oil India held through the

B.O.C. who is a substantial shareholder. There is a conspiracy also against this because this is the only public sector undertaking there.

During the Question Hour I just wanted to know one thing to which the hon. Minister said that he did not have that information at that moment. I just wanted to know if it was a fact that the Government of Assam had stopped or threatened to stop giving licences to the company. If so, what are the reasons for that.

Secondly, after the Prime Minister made a statement on the 5th December, 1969 and during the visit to Assam of Dr. Triguna Sen, it is reported that Dr. Sen said in Gauhati that the crude oil that was available from the oil fields in Assam was sufficient not only for one more refinery but for many more refineries.

If so, I want to know whether the Government has taken this particular aspect into account and proposes to establish a second refinery in the public sector as soon as possible on the basis of the crude oil finds.

**SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA (Kaliabor) :** I am glad about the announcement of the hon. Minister for a C. B. I. enquiry into this matter. I still wish to draw his attention to the magnitude of swindling that has taken place in this case. Because I am associated with tea gardens, I know more about the tea gardens and their purchases. And I make bold to say that the area measuring 120 acres usually would cost about Rs. 2 to 2½ lakhs. They are paying for the bushes which are fifty years old when actually the plucking gets reduced even after 20 years. I do not, therefore, know how a garden in Assam measuring about five acres is being sold for about Rs. 10 to 12 lakhs. A hundred acre tea garden with a factory and everything could be sold for Rs. 2½ lakhs. From whatever angle you may look at, it cannot cost more than Rs. 3 lakhs. I do not know how they have purchased that at double the cost.

As far as the purchases made by the O. N. G. C. are concerned, they are hopelessly bad. At present something more than the

C. B. I. enquiry is called for. May I therefore know what steps are being taken to prevent this type of collusion between the O. N. G. C. officials and other people? What positive steps are being taken in this regard? There is no other way except by starting the acquisition proceedings for acquiring such gardens instead of paying such a fantastic price of Rs. 25 lakhs.

My other question is this. There are complaints received from the common people about the delays in getting compensation and all that. May I know whether in the oil drilling of the O.N.G.C. areas, some wells were closed for some time and then resumed? About the recruitment policy followed by them, it seems that the people through favouritism at the higher echelon, even if they are simple graduates, are taken in. I heard the Minister saying that for posts upto Rs. 500/- only local people are being employed.

**MR. CHAIRMAN :** Mr. Barua, all these are irrelevant. This relates only to compensation. You may therefore raise these points on some other occasion.

**SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA :** I want to know whether the Government would follow a policy so far as employment is concerned of employing only people with capabilities and that they do not appoint any one in a haphazard manner.

**DR. TRIGUNA SEN :** Mr. Chairman, Sir, my friend Shri Shastri's question is this: he said that Government usually does not pay the legitimate compensation when it comes to the poor people. Am I correct?

**SHRI RAMAVATAR SHASTRI :** Yes, you are correct.

**DR. TRIGUNA SEN :** The hon. Members must understand that so far as tea estates are concerned, it is not the Government which purchases them. The property has been purchased by a public sector undertaking, namely, the O. N. G. C. According to the rules and regulations, I think they are not obliged to take the previous sanction of the Government.

**AN HON. MEMBER :** Very bad.

SHRI RAMAVATAR SHASTRI : Government should at least intervene.

DR. TRIGUNA SEN : Now I am intervening because it was made known to me by some hon. Members of the House.

SHRI RAMAVATAR SHASTRI : Why is there difference in the rate of compensation ?

DR. TRIGUNA SEN : I found that there was a difference, I was not happy about it and so, I have referred the matter to CBI.

Shri Hem Barua has asked if the Government of Assam has granted any licence to ONGC to exploit the wells they have drilled, and secondly whether we are going to have a second refinery on the basis of the oil that would be found. I think these two points do not come under the purview of this question. He has also mentioned that BOC which is connected with Oil India may also be involved in the purchase of this tea garden, but it is not correct. The Lakwa Tea Estate belongs to some other private company and purchase was made by negotiation between ONGC and the proprietor of the Estate. Oil India has nothing to do with this deal.

My young friend Shri Bedabrata Barua has his doubts about the cost of bushes paid as compensation to the tea gardens. I agree with him that there are some anomalies, I was not satisfied. He has also asked me what positive steps I intend to take against the officers or whoever is concerned with this deal. Unless I get a report from the CBI I cannot say off-hand what positive steps I will take, but I mentioned during the debate that I was not going to shield anybody however high he might be placed, and that if he was found guilty he would be punished.

So far as this case is concerned, I did not receive any complaint about delay in the payment of compensation. I do not know anything about it.

About the recruitment policy, I mentioned the other day. That also does not come under the purview of this discussion.

**18.55 hrs.**

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the clock on Thursday, April 23, 1970|Vaisakha 3, 1892 (Saka)*