

**SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA:** I can only say, we may sit up to 9-0' clock and you may give all the time to the hon. Member (*Interruption*)

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** For Clause-by clause consideration three hours are there. Now, it was made perfectly clear. I can extend it by half an hour. But we will restrict our discussion to that time-schedule.

**SHRI S. KUNDU:** My first constitutional point is this. Clause 2 (b) gives the definition of strike. This violates Article 14 which says that the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

This point was very ably raised by Shri Umanath when he spoke earlier. What does it say? 'Strike' means. . .

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** I have already given my thought to it and given my ruling. It is like 'reasonable restrictions'. The Chair is not competent to decide that.

**SHRI S. KUNDU:** It is not a question of reasonable restrictions; that comes in a different way. When a body of persons employed resort to a strike, this Bill comes in. But if another group of persons or individuals who run the industry cease work, declare a lockout, what is the protection?

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** He can continue tomorrow. We shall take up the half-an-hour discussion now.

**SHRI K. RAMANI:** All the time has so far been taken up only in points of order, not on the clause discussion.

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** We will come to that.

18.32 hrs.

## HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

### CIRCULAR RAILWAY IN CALCUTTA

**SHRI BENI SHANKER SHARMA (Banka):** Through the medium of this discussion, I want to focus the attention of this House in general and the Government in

particular to the most vexed problem of traffic congestion in Calcutta.

[**SHRI GADILINGANA GOWD** *in the Chair*]

Calcutta was once described by the late Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, as a city of processions. It is so because it is a city of problems. There are so many problems afflicting the city which have baffled all attempts of the West Bengal Government in solving them. There is the problem of drainage. Even an inch of rain there floods the streets where one can do boating and fishing, if one would like. There is the problem of housing and other things. I am not going into them now. I am confining my remarks to the most burning question of congestion of traffic in Calcutta.

Calcutta is not only the responsibility of the Government of West Bengal. It is a cosmopolitan city where people from all the four corners of India flock to earn their living. Out of the present 7 million population, about 35 per cent do not speak Bengali but speak the other languages enshrined in our Constitution. It is therefore the Centre's responsibility also to solve Calcutta's problems, by lending it a generous helping hand.

So far as traffic congestion is concerned, it had a population of 4 million in 1947 which has risen to 7 million now. The traffic problem has increased. About 4 lakh people flow into Calcutta via Sealdah and Howrah stations daily. Between the hours of 9 and 10, you will find there a sea of human heads coming out of these stations like tidal waves. All these people have to go to their offices by boarding buses or trams which are the common man's transport. But those trams and buses are not standing for them empty. They are already overcrowded, because about ten lakhs of people are carried in trams every day and about 15 lakhs by buses. In peak hours a tram with a capacity of 65 persons carries more than 200 persons, and a bus with a capacity of 45 has to carry more than 100 passengers. These numbers, though ascertained through a survey, I do not think, include those unfortunate few who have got to perch themselves on the footboards and the back bumpers of the vehicles which is responsible for so many accidents every day, every month and every year.

The accidents are increasing. In 1965 the number of traffic accidents was 17,504 as against 14,454 in 1961. The number of trams at present is only 459 in the city, out of which 415 are pressed into service. The number of buses is 886 out of which 360 are double-deckers and the average number of buses pressed into service daily is approximately 700, but unfortunately, though the population is increasing in geometrical progression the number of buses and trams is not being increased even in arithmetical progression. On the other hand, there is a shrinkage of these trams and buses, thanks to the chivalry of our students and other political agitators. The other day, when Mr. Mc Namara visited Calcutta, we saw how three valuable trams were burnt to ashes. By "valuable" I do not mean their value in rupees, annas and pies, but the valuable service rendered by them. I think that about 20,000 people every day are being deprived of transport facilities by the absence of these three trams on the streets every day.

Sir, It is not a fact that the West Bengal Government has been sitting idle over the issue. They have been alive to it since 1947, and they appointed the Ginwala Committee so far back as 1947 which recommended the construction of a circular railway. This was followed by another committee, namely the Roy Committee, in 1953 which also endorsed the views of the Ginwala Committee further pointing out that the Port Commissioners' Railway Line may be utilised for the purpose. Thereafter, in 1956 there was the Saranganpani Committee which was appointed for working out the details of electrification. This Committee also recommended a circular railway in Phase II of the programme chalked out by them. Then there was the Freiling Committee in 1954 which recommended the aero-rail system for Calcutta. In 1966 Mr. Paul E. Garbutt of the London Transport Board undertook a study of this problem at the instance of the West Bengal Government and recommended an underground railway system. Some French experts were also invited by the late Dr. B. C. Roy, and they advised the construction of a tube railway in Calcutta.

Mr. Chairmam, Sir, it is not possible to ease the traffic situation in Calcutta by increasing the number of vehicles on the streets as increasing the number of vehicles

is difficult if not impossible. In Calcutta we have more or less the same roads which were constructed at the time of Lord Hastings or Clive. The roads which had the capacity to carry 100 vehicles per hour are now carrying more than 1,000 vehicles within the same period with the result that there are frequent traffic jams in the city so much so that a doctor is unable to attend his patient before he leaves for the other world, and a passenger is unable to reach Howrah Station before the train has reached Burdwan.

There is no land available for construction of further roads in Calcutta. On a survey it was found that 5.1 per cent out of the land area in the Calcutta Metropolitan District has been assigned to transportation and traffic uses against 15 per cent in Bombay and 22 per cent in Delhi and 30 per cent in the cities of Europe and America which is considered the minimum for a modern city.

Therefore, Sir, according to the experts the only solution of easing this traffic problem in Calcutta is either the construction of a circular railway or a tube railway or an aero rail system. But it is said that these schemes are very costly and we have not got the resources to finance them. I do not understand when the Government, as stated by some member in the morning, that the Prime Minister had spent Rs. 5 crores in her journey to Latin America and other countries.

**SHRI RANDHIR SINGH (Rohtak):** It is a fantastic figure. It should be Rs. 5 lakhs.

**SHRI BENI SHANKER SHARMA:** We have got sufficient money to build luxurious hotels with revolving towers to enable its customers to see Delhi while sitting and eating in the restaurant. We have got money to waste on so many other worthless schemes but we have no money for this most essential service which is to benefit lakhs of people in Calcutta. If we have got a tube railway system or an aero rail system, it is all the more good. But I do not think, with our scanty resources, we can have this luxurious means of travel. But certainly we can construct a circular railway. We have got the Port Commissioner's rail-line on the western side of the city which could be suitably remodelled to suit the needs of the circular rail-

[Shri Beni Shanker Sharma]

way, and with the least possible cost. But, then, Sir we have got to take another precaution. We are going to have a second bridge on the river Hooghly towards the south of the present bridge. I will suggest that this bridge should also contain a provision for a railway track so that the circular railway may be taken to the Howrah side and the trains leaving from the heart of the city namely, the High Court terminals or the Dalhousie Square terminus may directly be taken to Burdwan. Mr. Chairman, Sir, this circular system will have another advantage. Calcutta is one of the most beautiful cities second only to Tokyo or New York or Washington and to-day it is the dirtiest city with its stinking smell of accumulated filth and garbage and it is impossible for you to walk a few yards in any street. If you have a circular railway, we shall be able to remove all this filth and garbage overnight and take them to their destination. It has been suggested that this garbage can be utilised for production of most valuable fertilisers. This is possible only if it can be swiftly removed to the factory and this circular railway working in the nights could serve that purpose. . . .

I will mention one thing more, Sir, before I finish. Our late Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, once said, 'Calcutta's problems are national problems quite apart from problems of West Bengal and it is necessary that something special should be done.' Let the Government whose Ministers day in and day out, swear by his name do something special and start with something special by taking in hand the construction of this circular railway and let the hon. Minister announce it here and now in this House that he will do it. Calcutta has all along got a step-motherly treatment at the hands of the Centre. Now, I would request the Government most earnestly that as it is a cosmopolitan town, and as it belongs not only to West Bengal but to the whole of India, the Centre should come to the rescue and succour of the West Bengal Government and help them in solving its vital problems.

**SHRI S. KUNDU (Balasore):** It is an unforgettable sight to see people huddled up in the buses at Calcutta, and it is a pity to find that even women have to travel miles

and miles in a bus just holding by their finger-tips the fringe portion of the bus; sometimes accidents do occur, and one accident occurred just before my very eyes. The sight is indeed agonising and the picture will indeed become horrible when, in the year 1986, the population is estimated to reach 13 million. I do not know what will happen. The need for a circular railway or a tube railway has been talked about by different committees and different people from time to time.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Please come to the question; it seems your introduction itself will take a long time!

**SHRI S. KUNDU:** I am coming to the question which needs elaboration on its background so that the question will be a penetrating one and the Government would be able to give an effective answer. About half a dozen committees had been appointed, as you know, for this purpose and lakhs of rupees have been spent but nothing has been done. I would like to know what the hon. Minister is going to do positively so far as the communication aspect of the city is concerned; to raise the city from the city of despair to a city of hope, because it is a vital problem which really touches the middle-classes and the lower sections of the people, the lowly, low-income group of society. *(Interruption)* I do not want to make any speech. I want to pinpoint one thing. Two Committees, in the main, have made some important recommendations. One was the Garbutt Report. It had suggested the construction of a high capacity, urban, elevated transit railway. The other committee, the French Company (the Frieling Report), had suggested an underground electric transportation network, and it had suggested also a scheme to connect Howrah and Sealdah and also Paikpura and Kalighat. What exactly is the Minister going to do, I do not know. He must announce here and now today what action he is going to take; let him take the suggestion of the French Company's report which says that an underground or circular railway could be built from Howrah to Sealdah.

I would also draw your attention to a statement made by Shri C. M. Poonacha in Naini Tal. I have got a letter from a friend

of mine which says that Shri Poonacha, in October last, addressing a press conference in Naini Tal, had said that Calcutta will soon have an underground railway system. I do not know what is the meaning and definition of the word "soon." I think "soon" means "today", "this hour". Shri Parimal Ghosh is here, a young, dynamic man. Let him do something about it.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE (Calcutta North East): Sir, in spite of overwhelming problems which Calcutta is faced with on account of its being not merely a State capital but India's city as the former Registrar-General described her, Calcutta has been fobbed off with a number of promises, and performances have hardly ever been forthcoming. This question of the circular railway has been hanging fire since Mr. S. K. Patil's time. I know that apart from technical problems, the problem of finance in regard to the acquisition of lands for the purposes of the railway would be very formidable, particularly on account of the Supreme Court's judgment which relates to article 31. I want to know, therefore, is it to be dangled for sometime more and then dropped, or, is Government ready and willing to get on with the job in spite of whatever financial cost might be involved?

I want also to repeat the question asked by my friend Shri S. Kundu in regard to the underground railway, because the French experts made tests in Dr. B. C. Roy's time, and if Leningrad which is situated on a swamp can have an underground Metro, there is no reason why Calcutta cannot. Bombay also wants it. But I want to have an assurance from the Minister, that in view of Calcutta's demands being of a particularly pressing and excruciating character, Calcutta would have priority and the definition of "soon" in the speech of Mr. Poonacha would be objectified in a manner that people would be able to see that the tube railway is beginning to be constructed in the near future.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY (Cooch-Bihar): The problems of Calcutta are manifold. I do not want to repeat the points mentioned by Mr. Beni Shanker Sharma. It is known that for a long time this Government has been saying that it is proposing to construct a circular or tube railway for Calcutta. During the last budget discussion,

when I raised this matter, Mr. Poonacha said on 4th March, 1968:

"I may inform the hon. member that West Bengal Government and Planning Commission have constituted an expert committee to go into the question of circular railway. The services of an officer of the Railway were also lent to the committee for giving technical advice. The committee has gone into the subject and has recently given a preliminary report."

On further persuasion, he said:

"It came to us only a week or ten days ago."

This was said on 4th March, 1968. Ten days ago would mean the latter part of February. Now we are on 16th December and ten months have elapsed. I would like to know whether Government have chalked out any final report for implementation of the circular railway project in Calcutta.

In August 1967, Mr. Parimal Ghosh made a statement in Calcutta stating very clearly that the circular railway project would be ready for implementation very soon. My hon. friend, Mr. Kundu, has referred to the Nainital statement of Mr. Poonacha. We cannot understand how long this "very soon" will take.

The question of paucity of funds and financial trouble baffles the minds of the minister. But he should remember that in Calcutta are concentrated 15 per cent of the nation's manufacturers. Calcutta handles 30 per cent of India's bank clearances. The port receives 42 per cent of the total exports and 25 per cent of the total imports of the country. Therefore, in all aspects, Calcutta's problem is really the problem of India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said at one time that if Calcutta city faces this tragedy from time to time, it will be a tragic day for the whole of India. From all these points of view, I want a straight answer from the minister when the circular railway project will be implemented and what is really the import and meaning of "very soon" beginning from August 1967 to the recent Nainital statement of Mr. Poonacha.

SHRIMATI ILA PALCHOU DHURI (Krishnagar): Mr. Chairman, Sir, May

I bring some facts to the notice of this House. Sir, I have no objection to Bombay being served very well by the suburban railways. But if you look at the figures, it is really disheartening as far as Calcutta is concerned. In Bombay, the railways have been expanded to this extent that whereas they carried 29.04 crore people in 1950-51, in 1960-61 this figure rose to 40 crores. But what is the position in Calcutta? 3.09 crores of people were carried in 1950-51 by the suburban railways and by 1960-61 it has increased to 6 crores. It is a fair amount and I do not object to that. But, surely, a greater increase should have been there, as far as Calcutta is concerned. As far as the activities of Calcutta city go, surely you are aware that there are 5,300 enterprises which function in that city. Although in 1967 the United Front Government succeeded in getting rid of some of them, still it is one of the busiest centres in India and practically 50 per cent of the industrial activity centres round Calcutta. That it is cosmopolitan is undoubtedly so. Because, it is very illuminating to note that from Calcutta every year Rs. 276 million is sent out by money orders, while the corresponding figures for Bombay and Delhi are Rs. 231 million and Rs. 77 million. The cosmopolitan nature of Calcutta can be seen from these figures. It has often been promised that the Calcutta circular railways would come into being. The French experts have said that the tube railways is a practicable proposition. Shri Poonacha himself has often made statements to this effect, once in Nainital, and Shri Parimal Ghosh has made a statement in Calcutta—I do not know the exact wording—where he did say that it will be taken up “very soon” if I am not mistaken. I want to know whether it will come about very soon. I know that in the case of a government a delay of one year or a year and a half is not too much because there may be other pressing things to be attended to. For instance, there is defence which has to be given first priority. Even then, . . .

**SHRI J. M. BISWAS (Bankaura):** If you defend the Minister, then there will be no circular railways.

**SHRIMATI ILA PALCHOUDHURI:** My question is this. When the French experts have said that a tube railways is possible, when the Sarangapani report has also said

that a circular railways is possible, when does the government think that it can be made possible so that the acute transport problem of Calcutta can be eased to a certain extent?

**SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU (Diamond Harbour):** Sir, I am sure you will appreciate the anxiety of a person coming from Calcutta on this problem. Let the hon. Minister tell us clearly today whether they are going to include the circular railway project in the Fourth Plan or not.

**SHRI J. M. BISWAS:** I do not want to repeat what other members have said. It is a fact that the Railway Ministers have been giving dry promises everywhere. But one thing is proved, that they also feel that Calcutta requires circular railways. They cannot deny this fact. Without going into the details, I want to know by a very clear and straight reply whether they are going to implement this decision given by various committees and their various promises and have the circular railways in Calcutta within a year.

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH):** Mr. Chairman, I am very grateful to the hon. Members for bringing out this burning issue which is agitating the minds of the people of Calcutta.

**SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU:** Wonderful lip service the hon. Minister does!

**SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH:** At the very beginning I must say that there is no dispute or difference of opinion on the points that have been raised. This question of circular railways has been discussed before and various committees have also gone into that and submitted various reports. This is a matter which is hanging on for a very long time.

Recently, in the year 1966, the Metropolitan Transport Team, an organisation set up by the Planning Commission, taking up the cue from all these things, has started investigation whether a railway link starting from Dum Dum and ending up at Kedar-pur could again be revived. On this matter they had discussions and deliberations with the railways, with the Government of West Bengal, with the Port Commissioners and in

that meeting it has been suggested that a committee should be formed and a feasibility engineering survey should be made in regard to the circular railways starting from Dum Dum and ending at Princep Ghat.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE: Which means, it is hypothetical. 'Feasibility' means it is hypothetical.

19 hrs.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: You cannot take up any positive thing without. . . (Interruption)

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE: We have been waiting for six years now.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: What has happened in the last 20 years, it is no use discussing and going into.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE: It has a lot of use.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: I am just pointing out to hon. Members what is now happening. Everybody knows what has happened in the last 20 years. . . (Interruption). I am just trying to give what is the exact position today.

Accordingly, the Metropolitan Transport Team contracted the Railways and the Railways agreed to bear all the staff cost. They have provided the services of a very senior engineer to undertake this survey.

This survey was sanctioned in the month of May 1967 and the field work was taken up in the month of June 1967. In February 1968 this committee has submitted an interim report in which they have suggested that a line could be taken up from the existing electrified section of the Eastern Railway between Baranagar and Dum Dum. This line will pass through Jessore Road, Lake Town, Ulta Danga, Belgachia, Shobha Bazar, Burra Bazar, Fairlie Place and will ultimately end at Princep Ghat near Kidderpore.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU: Nothing for south Calcutta.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: There was another suggestion also, that another leg

should also be taken into consideration that will pass through Salt Lake and will end up at Ballygunge area. This interim report could not survey that part and they have suggested an interim report on these lines.

In that report they have also suggested certain changes, that the terminus, instead of being at Princep Ghat if it could be taken up to Kidderpore Road, that will facilitate the dispersal of traffic and also the station could be nearer the Park Street-Theatre Road-Lower Circular Road area.

SHRI S. KUNDU: We are not discussing the report. Come to the brass tacks.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: Had it been so easy, perhaps you would have got the circular railway by now. It is a difficult job. . . (Interruption)

SHRI S. KUNDU: What action are you going to take on the report?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: So many factors have to be taken into consideration because the line will pass through a very congested area which is already built up. In order to avoid extensive land acquisition the engineer has taken positive care. Also, we had to consult with the River Institute in order to find out the suitability of the river bank. The Refugee Rehabilitation Department has also to be consulted because some of the refugee rehabilitation land will also come in the way.

A report with the financial aspect has not been received as yet. The financial aspect of the report is likely to be received in January 1969. This part is one aspect of the circular railway.

The Railway is also quite aware of the transport problem which is now facing Calcutta. The Railways, in spite of their capacity, are trying their best to increase the capacity within the existing set-up. Even then, whatever may be the increase, compared to the magnitude of the demand it is very marginal. As you all know, any extension of surface line or of an underground or elevated one, is a very expensive affair not only to construct but also to maintain. In that, one point we must consider that it will never be possible, if it is only left to the Railways,

[Shri Parimal Ghosh]

that a project like that could be taken up by the Railways. I want to make it very clear that we have submitted the entire report and we are now taking up the matter with the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has also suggested that this point has to be taken into consideration and, I am very sure, the matter would be taken up in the Fourth Plan period.

Besides the question of having a circular railway that we are discussing—the approximate cost may be Rs. 36 crores—that is also not going to solve the entire problem that Calcutta city is facing today. In addition to that, it is absolutely necessary that either we must think in terms of an underground or an elevated railway line. Without that, the problem faced by Calcutta will not be solved. If we try to consider what would be the cost of an underground railway, today, the per mile cost will work out to about Rs. 5 to 10 crores. Even if we want to construct about 15 miles of underground railway in Calcutta, it might cost about Rs. 100 crores. So, under the circumstances, it is essential that in a

project like that, a conventional approach that dividend has to be paid on the Capital investment will have to be revised. That is what we are now stressing with the Planning Commission. I have no doubt in my mind that the Planning Commission has considered that this is a point which needs immediate attention. So, all these factors will, certainly, be taken into consideration.

Sir, this is a project in which the State Government, the Railways and the Central Government must come forward to pool their resources and constitute a separate body which could take up this project and run it. I can assure you that the Railways will positively do their best, within the limitations of the physical capacity and the resources. But a project like that needs nationwide assistance. I have no doubt about it. We are stressing with the Planning Commission that this matter may be included in the Fourth Plan.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, December 17, 1968/Agrahayana 26, 1890 (Saka).*