

12:58½ hrs.

PETITION RE: GOLD (CONTROL) BILL

Shri Tulshidas Jadhav (Nanded): I beg to present a petition signed by Shri Nabhi Ram Joshi and others, relating to the Gold (Control) Bill, 1963, as reported by the Joint Committee.

I may also state, Sir, that the petition has been signed by 20 lakhs of people.

Mr. Speaker: I have ordered that the petition shall be circulated to the Members of this House.

12:59 hrs.

RE: POINT OF ORDER

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Sir, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: He raised that point of order yesterday.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Yesterday, at that time, you were not in the Chair, and the hon. Deputy-Speaker, who was in the Chair, rejected the point of order that I raised then. I say this with due respect to the Chair. (*Interruption*)

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Let all these talks that are going on stop first. Then I shall proceed.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: My point of order is this. Even today a petition has been received asking this Government to drop or amend the Gold Control Bill which has come out of the Joint Committee. Yesterday, when I pressed my point of order, the reply from the hon. Deputy-Speaker was that action has been taken by the Petitions Committee and both the petitions submitted by me and by Mr. Surendranath Dwivedy have been circulated. I relied on the observations of Mr. Ayyangar, the then Speaker and also on rule 307(3). Later on, I also referred to the *Directions by the Speaker*.

13 hrs.

The Deputy-Speaker asked me whe-

ther I could quote any definite ruling on this. I consulted the *May's Parliamentary Practice* also and I found that there was no parallel case. But there is a case of something pending before a Joint Select Committee and not before the Petitions Committee and the House can ask for the discontinuance of that particular thing. I want to draw an analogy from that. That Petitions Committee is also a committee of the House appointed by you. According to rule 307(3), which you know better than me, Sir, they have not only to circulate the petition, but they have to fulfil certain other things also. Yesterday it was pleaded that circulation was the only job.

I would like to remind you, Sir, of another petition which was presented in this House signed by the employees of Howrah-Amra Light Railway. That petition was referred to the Petitions Committee, which was then headed by Shri A. C. Guha. The committee not only circulated it to the members, but also recommended nationalisation of that railway. It was not accepted by the House.

I now refer to Direction No. 94, which says:

"After the presentation of a petition to the House, the Committee on Petitions shall meet to consider it as early as possible."

A petition has just now been presented. The other petitions might have been disposed according to the Deputy Speaker's ruling, but this petition has just been presented and you, in your wisdom, have said that it shall be circulated. That is good. But the Petitions Committee has not yet met to consider this petition. The Direction further says:

"Provided that in the case of a petition on a Bill pending before the House, it shall meet as soon as possible after it has been presented to the House and submit its report to the House or direct the circulation of the petition to the members as the case may be, well

[Shri S. M. Banerjee]

in advance of the Bill being taken up in the House.

Provided further that in case of a petition received on a Bill already under discussion in the House, the Committee shall meet to consider it immediately on its presentation after its receipt and submit its report or direct the circulation of the petition to the members, as the case may be, well in advance of the Bill being disposed of by the House."

My submission is that the committee has not met. This petition pertains particularly to the Bill which is under discussion. So, unless the committee meets and decides what course of action should be taken on this petition, my humble submission is that the Bill cannot be proceeded with.

Mr. Speaker: The only function of the committee is to look into that petition, see whether it is according to the rules and then subsequently to report that it might be circulated to the members. It has not to make a recommendation as to what should be done by the House.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: But it should meet first and then only the Bill can be proceeded with.

Mr. Speaker: That is not necessary and that is not required. I have also held earlier that in the case of a petition on Bills or on other matters connected with the business pending before the House, the committee, as a rule, shall not make a separate enquiry or submit their own recommendations to the House. If the petition complies with the rules, they direct that it may be circulated to the Members *in extenso* or in a summary form. That is what is being done. That is the function of the committee. Because the business is before the House, I have already directed that it might be circulated.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I have referred to rule 307(3).

Mr. Speaker: I have looked into it. So far as the Deputy-Speaker ruling is concerned, that is final and I cannot go into it. There is no appeal.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I am raising a point of order on this petition which has just been presented.

Mr. Speaker: That is what I have said before. This is the petition that has come and I have already asked that it might be circulated to the Members. That was the business of the Petitions Committee.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Circulation for what?

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the Members, so that they might use it when they are arguing their case. There is nothing more to be done in the Petitions Committee. It is only for the information of the Members that the text or substance of the petition is given, so that they might use it when they are participating in the debate.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I agree with your ruling, Sir. Rule 307(3) reads:

"It shall also be the duty of the Committee to report to the House on specific complaints made in the petition referred to it after taking such evidence as it deems fit and to suggest remedial measures either in a concrete form applicable to the case under review or to prevent such cases in future."

Are we supposed to tell the Committee what they have to do? You have asked for circulation. But the committee should have a right to do its duty. It is also a committee of the House. They should be free to take any decision. Otherwise, we will be curbing their right.

Mr. Speaker: I have heard the hon. Member. There is no curbing of the rights. It is not essential that they should make a recommendation. If the course as has been conceived by Shri Banerjee is adopted, as we pro-

ceed, a new petition comes and we hold it up. We proceed further, another petition comes and again we should stop. That cannot be done. That is not the reasonable construction that can be put upon it.

13.09 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. OIL CONCESSIONS IN IRAN

The Minister of Petroleum and Chemicals (Shri Humayun Kabir): The National Iranian Oil Company offered early in 1963 a large off-shore area in the Persian Gulf for oil exploration and production to interested parties. A number of Companies and organisations from different countries registered themselves as bidders for rights in this area. India did not originally register itself for bidding, but subsequently in May 1964 decided to do so in cooperation with E.N.I. of Italy and Phillips Petroleum Company of U.S.A. The National Iranian Oil Company, acting on behalf of the Government of Iran, declared October 31, 1964 as the last date for receiving the bids and allowed O.N.G.C. to make a bid jointly with AGIP, which is a subsidiary unit of E.N.I., and Phillips, although O.N.G.C. had not registered itself for the purpose within the due date.

2. A joint bid of O.N.G.C., AGIP and Phillips was submitted on October 28, 1964. According to available information, there were several other bidders who had offered much better terms than ONGC-AGIP-Phillips. The NIOC however reopened the bids and gave all bidders a chance of submitting fresh offers. Accordingly, ONGC-AGIP-Phillips made a revised bid for a larger number of structures and I am happy to say that our revised bid has been accepted by NIOC.

3. Under the terms of the agreement with AGIP and Phillips, O.N.G.C. will be an equal partner with them and share equally in the cost of exploration and development. It will also obtain an equal share of the oil produced and have an equal voice in the management of operations. The

entire seismic data of the off-shore area was obtained from NIOC at a cost of \$704,000, of which O.N.G.C. has paid one-third as its share. The total risk for the revised bid we have made involves an outlay estimated at a maximum of \$58 million of which our share will be one third.

4. All oil exploration even in the most prolific oil-bearing regions in the world carries a certain amount of risk, but our partners, who have both long and varied experience in the field of oil exploration and production, are of the view that the structures for which we have bid are likely to contain large reserves of oil. I may add that we have arranged with another party, to cover our entire risk money in case the area does not produce oil. O.N.G.C. will therefore incur hardly any expenditure if the structures prove barren. If on the other hand we strike oil, as we have every hope we shall, we will pay to our insurer with interest the monies he is advancing and a small commission for covering the risk.

5. Sometime ago we have decided to collaborate with NIOC and AIOC in the establishment of a Refinery at Madras which is scheduled to come into operation in the latter half of 1967. This decision along with the acceptance by the Iranian authorities of our bid for exploration and production of oil in the off-shore areas of the Persian Gulf opens out a new chapter in the oil industry of India. Simultaneously it begins a new chapter of close economic collaboration with Iran with which country we have had friendly relations from pre-historic times. I would like to pay a special tribute to the interest that His Imperial Majesty the Shah of Iran and His Excellency Dr. Mohd. Eghbal, Chairman of NIOC and a former Prime Minister of Iran, have taken in these negotiations. I am sure the House will join with me in wishing every success to this new chapter of collaboration between Iran and India and share my hope that this will lead to a much closer cooperation between our two countries in many fields.