

for having published material prejudicial to the defence of India; and

(b) if so, the names of such newspapers?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Shri Datar): (a) and (b). In consultation with the Central Press Advisory Committee appointed by the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference, Government have issued warnings to the editors, printers and publishers of "The Current", an English weekly of Bombay; "Organiser" an English weekly of Delhi; "Hindusthan", an Urdu daily of Bombay; and "Panchjanya", a Hindi weekly of Lucknow.

12.07 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES IN TUSKER PROJECT

Dr. I. M. Singhvi (Jodhpur): Under Rule 197, I call the attention of the Minister of Defence to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

The alleged irregularities in the Tusker Project.

The Minister of Defence (Shri Y. B. Chavan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, in May 1960, a Chief Engineer's Organisation ("Project Tusker") was set up with Headquarters at Tezpur for planning and execution of projects in NEFA and Assam as approved by the Border Roads Development Board from time to time.

2. These projects are executed departmentally. For this purpose, the Board has raised General Reserve Engineer Force composed of civilians recruited from the open market and organised on Army pattern. They are subject to the Army Act for purposes of discipline only. Some Army officers and other ranks are employed to

stiffen the supervisory cadre of General Reserve Engineer Force units. Some units of Army were also obtained on loan for expeditious execution of these projects. Casual personnel (mainly unskilled) are employed on as required basis to supplement the General Reserve Engineer Force and Army personnel.

3. No contractors are employed on road construction projects in the forward areas. It may, however, become necessary or expedient to enter into contract for the supply of stores and materials or the construction of bridges or ancillary buildings such as offices, workshop etc. or for transporting men and materials. In all such cases, contract is concluded by Chief Engineers or Superintending Engineers in accordance with rules prescribed.

4. From information available, it appears that contracts for supplies etc. have been entered into only with Indian nationals. I may add that no foreign nationals can enter the NEFA area, where the works are in progress, without obtaining a permit from the NEFA Administration.

5. No report of failure on the part of the Chief Engineer's Organisation to perform the tasks assigned to them during the Chinese invasion of NEFA has been received so far, but, shortly after the 20th November 1962, some complaints regarding behaviour and conduct of the personnel employed under Chief Engineer, Project Tusker came to the notice of Government. The main allegations against them are:—

- (i) These personnel fled from the project sites and behaved in a panicky way. This demoralised the civilians;
- (ii) There was considerable destruction of machinery and equipment. This was not justified. Some stores were "looted";

[Shri Y. B. Chavan]

(iii) There was lack of integrity in financial matters; and

(iv) The construction of roads was defective.

The above allegations are being investigated.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi: Are the Government aware of the reports appearing in various newspapers to the effect that certain contracts were granted to the Chinese nationals? If these reports are incorrect, as the hon. Minister has stated they are, has the Government been able to trace out the basis of this information and the sources of this information? If the sources have been traced out, would the Government be willing to place before the House an indication as to what these sources are?

Shri Y. B. Chavan: We have not been able to trace these sources. So, there is no question of communicating them.

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): In view of the fact that the allegations against these Tuskers are of a very grave nature—they amount to a sort of treasonable activity, and even if you shoot down the whole lot, the country would not be adequately compensated—may I know what steps Government propose to take against them, pending the present enquiry which the Defence Minister has promised us? May I know whether the Defence of India Act can embrace them or not, or whether the Minister contemplates it?

Shri Y. B. Chavan: Investigations and enquiries have been ordered about the different allegations, and I think we must wait for the conclusions of these investigations.

Shri Hem Barua: May I submit that my question was different? I know that he has instituted an enquiry into the charges I know that. I just want to know what is proposed to be done

in the meantime against these people. Will you allow them to behave in the irresponsible way they have been behaving, when the charges are so serious and they have been read out by the Defence Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Because the charges are so serious, investigation is going on. Should they be punished before it is completed?

Shri Hem Barua: There is the Defence of India Act which can embrace them. Put them in prison. Why not?

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Papers to be laid on the Table.

Some Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members know that in a Calling Attention only those are called whose names appear. Therefore, others need not rise. Papers to be laid. Hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Atomic Energy (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru) rose—(Cheers).

Shri Ram Sewak Jadav (Barabanki): Sir, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member wants to say the clapping was inopportune, I agree with him. He should sit down.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

WHITE PAPER NO. VIII

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Atomic Energy (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of White Paper No. VIII containing Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China between October, 1962 and January, 1963.

[Placed in Library, see No. LT-693/63].