

12.31 hrs.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

FIFTY-FOURTH REPORT

Shri R. R. Morarka (Jhunjhunu): I beg to present the Fifty-fourth Report of Public Accounts Committee on Appropriation Accounts (Civil), 1963-64, Audit Report (Civil), 1965 and Audit Report (Commercial, 1965 and Finance Accounts, 1963-64 relating to the Ministries of Finance (including Planning Commission), Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Cooperation (Department of Agriculture) and Home Affairs (relating to Andaman Administration), Industry, Iron and Steel, Mines and Metals, Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation (Department of Rehabilitation), Department of Social Welfare, Ministries of Supply and Technical Development, Transport and Aviation and Works, Housing and Urban Development.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): On a point of information and clarification. I believe this is the first report by the new Public Accounts Committee constituted for this year. When these parliamentary committees were constituted for this year, 1966-67, we had, many of us, looked forward with hope and confidence, nay, many of us were almost sanguine that in consonance with the highest traditions of the best parliaments of the world, you who have set up new precedents in the Lok Sabha, would also set up a newer one by appointing a Member of the Opposition as the Chairman of one of the parliamentary committees at least.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Barrackpore): Never, never.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: We would have been happy if you had done so, but I am constrained to say that you have not thought it fit to appoint one of the Members of the Opposition as Chairman of one of the parliamentary committees. We would

be grateful if you would kindly let us know your point of view on this question.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta Central): Since Mr. Kamath has brought this up, I would like to add that it really is depressing for us to find certain conventions, the appropriateness of which has been recognised by everybody even in this House, are not being sought to be pursued.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Not one. We have raised it several times.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: The Public Accounts Committee story has already been related by Mr. Kamath. This kind of thing goes on being done from year to year.

In the case of the Public Undertakings Committee, I was stunned one day to discover that on the Committee there was a leader of a particular group in the opposition, but at the same time, when there was a vacancy, the appointment of the chairmanship was made quite disregarding the claims of a very important member of the opposition who happened to be there, and who was also in possession of much administrative experience. A Congress Member was again put up as Chairman.

It is entirely in your discretion. We are unfortunately not in a position to question that discretion, it would not be right for us to do so, but in spite of these discretionary powers and authorities, surely certain conventions have got to grow in this country, or this facade of parliamentary activity had better be said good-bye to altogether. Either we try to work the parliamentary system in the proper spirit, or we call a spade a spade and carry on what Mr. Setalvad and his friends call a dictatorship functioning under the garb of a Constitution in this country.

I am sorry to have to say this, but Mr. Kamath has brought this up, and

he has done it very rightly, and all of us react in the same way, and we do feel very aggrieved that in regard to these committees of Parliament, the demands of the Opposition which are not exorbitant, which are not unreasonable, which are entirely in conformity with parliamentary practice and the spirit of the working of Parliament, continue to be disregarded.

Shri Banga (Chittoor): I wish to endorse all that my two hon. friends have said on this occasion and on this matter.

I have no complaint so far as the present Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee is concerned. He did very good work last year, we all bear testimony to that. The Committee's reports under his chairmanship in regard to the Bharat Sevak Samaj and the Khadi Commission met with general approval in the country and appreciation in this House also. But the main point remains there.

Is the Speaker to be functioning as the Governor or the President does, or is he to exercise his own individual discretion and judgment in regard to this matter? That is one point. That I would like the Speaker to keep in mind, because we do not find that he has had the opportunity of exercising his own judgment from the manner in which these things have happened till now.

Secondly, many of the States, I am sure on the advice of the Speaker here, either yourself or your predecessor, have chosen to follow the British practice of inviting some one or other of the leaders of the Opposition to become the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. Only the other day they all met you, and you must have seen how it is that quite a number of them belong to the Opposition. And yet in this House consistently, for good or bad reasons, according to me bad reasons, Speaker after Speaker has been accepting the advice tendered formally or infor-

mally either by the ruling party or the Government—it is not for me to distinguish between them. Anyhow, the result is that although the House has brought into existence three committees—not one or two, a third one also has been added—and there were opportunities for the Speaker to have invited one or two of the leaders of the Opposition or their prominent colleagues to become the Chairman of one or two of these committees, the opportunity has not been availed of by the Speaker, and I hope that the Speaker would consider it high time, I would not say to follow the example of the States but to act up to the advice that the Speaker himself has been giving to the Speakers in the States—I do not know whether I should call it advice, because these Speakers are completely independent—and the practice that the Speakers at the State level have set up in such a healthy and wholesome parliamentary manner.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi (Jodhpur): I have only briefly to submit that perhaps there is need for you to appoint a committee, or seek the assistance of a committee, to advise you on a thorough reform and review of the conventions, procedures and certain methods in the working of the House. I think it is very important that this House, which has functioned relatively efficiently even in turbulent times under your speakership, should be able to make a beginning for devising more efficient methods of parliamentary control in an over-all way, and it is in this context that I would also like to make a plea that the opposition should be given a certain definite recognition embodied in conventions and practices of this House. It would be proper for you to consider certain appointments to be given to Members of the Opposition, because this secures better participation, greater confidence in the Opposition, in the whole enterprise of Government. I should like very much to mention here that in this respect, even some of the State legislatures happen to have a lead

[Dr. L. M. Singhvi]

over us. They have certain committees which are presided over by the leaders in the opposition and I would like to make a plea in this context that this should be considered and also the question of a committee for undertaking a reform and review of the various conventions and procedures of this House should be considered by you.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): I find myself entirely in agreement with Prof. Mukerjee and Prof. Ranga. I think that here we have got a sizeable opposition. Even if the opposition were not so numerous as it is here, even then I think the opposition must have something to do with parliamentary committees and set-up. It should not only be the business of the ruling party that they should monopolise all offices; they should believe in the socialist pattern of society and distribute some of the offices among Members of the opposition. Moreover I think the opposition is already quite responsible but if they are asked to do some work in the line of chairmanship of these committees I think they will become more responsible. You know sometimes the person who wants to wreck a ship is made the captain of the ship. I do not say they want to wreck any ship. I believe they should be given a chance in these committees. Thirdly, this is a wholesome practice which is being followed in other democracies of the world. Our democracy is called the biggest democracy. If this biggest democracy in this world does not set up such good precedents. I do not know what the people will think of it; I think our democracy will become a kind of reactionary democracy. Therefore, I want our democracy to be progressive. More and more chances should be given to the opposition in these things. One thing more. The Congress Party appoints the Khadi commission and this body and that body; it is they who spend the money. Now a person who spends

the money cannot be asked to audit the performance in terms of spending; somebody outside, an outside agency should be called upon to do that. Therefore, I support Prof. Mukerjee and Prof. Ranga.

श्री प्रकाशबीर शास्त्री (बिजनौर) :

अध्यक्ष महोदय, जहाँ तक परम्परा और सिद्धान्त का सम्बन्ध है मैं श्री होरेन मुकर्जी और प्रोफेसर रंगा से पूर्णतया सहमत हूँ लेकिन व्यवहारिक दृष्टि से मैं अपना एक अनुभव आपसे प्रवश्य कहना चाहूँगा इस नाते से कि मैं पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी का गत वर्ष भी एक सदस्य था और इस समय भी सदस्य हूँ, अपने अनुभव की दृष्टि से निष्पक्ष रूप से विरोधी दल का सदस्य होने के नाते यह कह सकता हूँ कि जहाँ तक उसके वर्तमान चैयरमैन का सम्बन्ध है जितनी दृढ़ता से जितनी गम्भीरता से जितना निष्पक्ष होकर उन्होंने अपने कार्य को निबाहा है उतना हर एक नहीं कर सकता इसलिए नहीं कि वह इस समय सदन में बैठे हुए हैं बल्कि मैं उनकी पीठ के पीछे भी इस बात को निवेदन कर चुका हूँ और मैं ने इस सम्बन्ध में प्रधान मंत्री को एक पत्र भी लिखा है।

दूसरी बात जो मैं सिद्धान्त के रूप में कहना चाहता हूँ वह यह कि इतना प्रवश्य ध्यान रखा जाय कि पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी पार्लियामेंट का एक भाग है और जो काम पार्लियामेंट समय की तंगी होने के कारण नहीं कर पाती उस को वह पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी को सौंपती है। पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी के जो निर्णय होते हैं उन पर जो उस के सुझाव होते हैं वे साधारण सुझाव नहीं होते। पिछली बार भारत सेवक समाज के बारे में पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी के चैयरमैन ने और पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी ने निर्णय लिया वह बड़े साहस और हिम्मत की बात थी और मैं इस बात को जानता हूँ कि उसके लिए कितनी कठिनाई से होकर उन को शायद निकसना पड़ा। बिल्कुल उसी प्रकार की स्थिति धादी

कमिशन और दूसरे संगठनों की है। कुछ निर्णय तो इस प्रकार के होते हैं जो कमेटी के सुझावों को व्यावहारिक रूप देने के लिए अधिकारियों को या मंत्रालय को प्राप सौंप देते हैं या जिन लोगों ने गड़बड़ी की है उनके ऊपर कार्यवाही करने के लिए वर्ष के अन्त में भेजते हैं। मैं अपने निजी अनुभव के आधार पर मैं आपसे निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि 5, 5 और 6, 6 वर्ष कमेटी को अपने निर्णय लिये हुए हो गये हैं लेकिन कोई उस के ऊपर किसी तरह की कार्यवाही नहीं हो पाती है।

दूसरी सब से बड़ी चीज यह कि जो जिम्मेदार सेक्रेटरी या ज्वाइंट सेक्रेटरी हैं और उनके ऊपर गम्भीर आरोप पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी ने किये हैं जिसमें कि करोड़ों रुपये का सवाल है, न केवल सेक्रेटरी और ज्वाइंट सेक्रेटरी बल्कि मिनिस्टर भी उनमें शामिल हैं। इस बार जो स्टील की रिपोर्ट आई है

अध्यक्ष महोदय : प्राप रिपोर्टों को डिस्कस करने लग जायेंगे ?

श्री उकाशचौर शास्त्री : मैं डिस्कस नहीं कर रहा मैं तो आपसे यह निवेदन कर रहा था कि परम्परा की दृष्टि से प्राप उसके लिए कोई एक ऐसी परम्परा स्थापित करें कि पब्लिक एकाउंट्स कमेटी जिस प्रकार से निर्णय लेती है वह उस के निर्णय केवल सुझाव बन कर किताबों में न रह जाए बल्कि उनके आधार पर कार्यवाही होनी चाहिए।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ठीक बात है।
Enough has been said.

Shrimati Benu Chakravarty: We do not want to say anything personal. The present incumbent has done good work. All the other previous chairmen have done good work. But it is not a personal matter.

Mr. Speaker: I have followed that. I have heard all the hon. Members on this side as well as on that side. I mean the Congress side also, in my front. Therefore, certainly I shall keep that in mind. At this moment, I can only say that; nothing further at this moment.

Now, the statement by the Finance Minister.

12.44 hrs.

STATEMENT RE : RELEASE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE TO BUSINESSMEN FOR TRAVEL ABROAD LAID ON THE TABLE

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat): With your permission, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Finance Minister.

Mr. Speaker: The statement might be laid on the Table of the House.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Let it be read out.

Mr. Speaker: Already 45 minutes is over; it is long; so it may be laid. If it is necessary certainly I will allow one or two questions. It may be laid on the Table of the House.

[The statement was laid on the Table—Placed in Library. See No. LT-6287/88].

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): Does it contain information with regard to what you on that day—I do not say, complained, but said about your own case?

Mr. Speaker: I have to correct that. It was brought to my notice that besides the amount that I was entitled to as a Member of Parliament, I had asked something for my medical check-up and some little amount, it was £ 10 or 12, was given to me. Then, I did not press for more; I remained silent and therefore, it was understood that probably I was satisfied and therefore no further action was taken.