

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

operate the broadcasting media in the country."

The motion was negatived.

RESOLUTION RE SEPARATION
OF POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS
FINANCE

Shri S. C. Samanta (Tamluk): I beg to move:

"This House is opinion that Posts and Telegraphs Finance should be separated from the General Finance."

This is not the first time that I am bringing this subject before the House and the Ministry. Last year and the year before last during the Budget discussions on the Demands for Grants of the Communications Ministry I put this matter before the House and the Ministry. The replies of the hon. Minister and the hon. Deputy Minister in those two years could not satisfy me.

[PANDIT THAKUR DAS BHARGAVA in the Chair]

They touched all the other points referred to by me, but on the point of separation, they were silent.

The Deputy Minister of Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): I did say a few words about that also, so far as I remember.

Shri S. C. Samanta: I want a categorical reply from the Communications Minister, from the Finance Minister and the Cabinet as to whether they are ready to accept this resolution, the purport of which has been put forward for more than two years.

My demand is based on the ground which I have mentioned before also, viz., that this department is not only a public utility concern, but also a commercial one as is the present Indian Railways. Why has Railway finance been separated by a Convention in 1924? Why has it been ratified in 1949 and ratified again in December last? Where is the answer?

Both the hon. Ministers admitted in answer to my question and in answer to the question put by my friend Mr. Mukerjee that the Posts and Telegraphs Department is not only a public utility concern, but also a commercial one. Then, where is the difficulty? Is the Cabinet, is the Government not willing to accept it? On what ground should it not be separated? We must be clear.

It has been moved since 1924. The then Legislature moved it. Then it was not accepted simply because it was a losing concern and nothing else. Now, it is not a losing concern. You will see that till now the Posts and Telegraphs department was a losing concern, but this year Rs. 70 lakhs is the net surplus. So, that argument will not stand. Why is this discrimination made against this Ministry? Perhaps, they think: united we stand, divided we fall. Then, why have you separated Railway finance? Did not the Railway finance being separated work so well that in the present budget discussion all of my friends commended the department? Why should there not be that much commendation for this department also if its finance is separated? By separation, it should not be meant that it is going away. No. It is within the administration as the Railway is. The whole finance is there, but for management and other things we should have this Posts and Telegraphs finance separated, for its good running as the Railway is running. The Railway has a finance of Rs. 800 crores as capital, while the Posts and Telegraphs now has Rs. 84 crores capital. In its own way, the Posts and Telegraphs department can run it.

In spite of so much money accumulated with the General Finance, why is it that the employees of this department spread over all corners of India are not getting accommodation to live in? Because, the Posts and Telegraphs Department has no management of its own to give accommoda-

tion to its employees, whereas the Railway has its engineering department of its own. It has not got to depend upon the P. W. D. which is regarded as the worst by all Ministries. This is the only department which has the onerous task of constructing accommodation for all of us. The Railway has its own engineering department, and why not this sister organisation, the Posts and Telegraphs Department follow the same? My request to the Government, to the Cabinet, is: let us know where lies the difficulty in separating this finance. Let us be satisfied. What are the difficulties? Why is not Government coming forward with the difficulties that lie in its way?

The Railway has a Depreciation Reserve Fund, a Development Fund and a Revenue Reserve Fund. The Posts and Telegraphs Department has the Depreciation Fund. But you will be astonished to hear that during 1955-56, as has been shown in the Demands for Grants, gross receipts of the Posts and Telegraphs Department were Rs. 47.72 crores, working expenses Rs. 44.65 crores and net receipt Rs. 3.06 crores. Out of this remaining Rs. 3.06 crores, you will be astonished to hear, only Rs. 70 lakhs are left with the Posts and Telegraphs Department. The rest, Rs. 2.36 crores, will go to the General Fund. That will be kept as a reserve. The Department will get interest for this. As I said before, if the Postal Department wants to carry out some improvement or give more facilities to its employees, it has to beg of the general revenue. I am using the word "begging" in the sense that they have to approach the General Finance. I would not have used this word if the General Finance readily sanctioned the amount which had been asked for. That is not the case. The General Finance will give the interest that is due on the Reserve Fund, and any further sums asked for by the Posts and Telegraphs Department will be considered in conjunction with the demands of the other Ministries.

3 P.M.

I would not have tabled my Resolution but for the fact that it has been admitted that the Posts and Telegraphs Department is a utility cum commercial service, as the Railways are. So, I am not in a position to understand why Rs. 2 crores should go this way.

Now, taking the case of the Railways, the overall gross traffic receipts in 1955-56 is estimated at Rs. 292.54 crores; ordinary working expenses: 206.59 crores; surplus Rs. 85.91 crores. The break up of the surplus is as follows: Depreciation Reserve Fund Rs. 35 crores; payment to General Revenues at 4 per cent. Rs. 36.7 crores; payment to worked lines .21 crores; miscellaneous expenditure Rs. 7.49 crores; net surplus Rs. 7.14 crores—that will go to the Development Fund. That is the Railways have to pay Rs. 36.7 crores in all and the rest they can spend for the improvement or extension of lines or in any other manner they think fit. Why should it not be the same in regard to these Rs. 2 crores?

The capital of the Posts and Telegraphs Department is Rs. 84 crores. Contribution to Renewal Reserve Fund is Rs. 1.35 crores. The total of the Renewal and Reserve Fund as on 31st March 1955 is about Rs. 17 crores. This amount is with the Government. Have the Posts and Telegraphs Department thought for a while of establishing or constructing a hospital with at least two hundred beds for those of its employees who are suffering from T. B.? Last year the hon. Minister said that he was trying to get some beds reserved in some hospitals. Did he succeed in it? Every department, and the people in general, need hospitals. There are general hospitals for the public, and there are departmental hospitals for employees. Just see what the Railways have done. The Railways have their own hospitals, good hospitals—by 'good' I mean as good hospitals as can be seen in

[S. C. Samanta]

the great cities of India. If the employees are given certain amenities and facilities in time of need, then the Department will run efficiently and economically. If the Department is permitted to utilise its surplus, we can extend the postal services to the farthest corners of the country. We are crying for amenities to be given to passengers, the users of railways. But what has the Posts and Telegraphs Department done for the users of communications? Is there even a bench in a post office for a visitor to sit on? Is there any bench in a Telegraph Office, for a consumer who is giving so much to the Department? Are the post offices provided with the furniture they should have? No.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy (Mysore): They have got mother earth.

Shri S. C. Samanta: Why? Where is the difficulty? The reason is that though the Department has the money with it, it has no flexibility. Railway finance, for the matter of that, is General Finance, in one sense. But the Department has the flexibility to utilise the money to the best advantage of itself as well as of the public. The same amount of flexibility should be afforded to the Posts and Telegraphs Department, so that it may work efficiently and become popular. In fact, in spite of all its handicaps this is the most popular department. There is less corruption in this department—it is an admitted fact. But still we must try to improve even those defects which now exist.

We have taken to extra departmental system. The hon. Minister said that it is prevalent in other countries as well. It may be so. But should we not look to the standards of our country and that of other countries, how they are living, what is their income etc. Here, if we give employment to a man on a lower pay, many hon. Members are pleased. But if you make a survey of it, you will find that most of them take to

this, because they are out of employment. To those who take to such employment, why should not Government give proper facilities to improve themselves and to improve the Department? Why cannot the department entrust an extra-departmental postmaster with more than Rs. 250? It is because such men have been drawn from such a cadre, that they cannot be trusted. If only these men had been given the necessary training, they could have been trusted upon. But there is no arrangement for their training. How many research organisations are there in the railways? There are so many. But for doing research on anything in the Posts and Telegraphs Department, we have to depend upon other research stations in the country or research stations outside India. Now why should that be so? Why should not this department have its own research organisation? A research organisation can be established by this department, if only it is given freedom, and it can be made to feel that it has some power to execute things, and to do the best it can.

So, my request to the hon. Members present here is to give vent to their feelings on this question of separation of postal finance from general finance.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Hoshiarpur): All separation is painful.

Shri Heda (Nizamabad): But we have passed the law relating to divorce.

The Minister of Communications (Shri Jagjivan Ram): That was for special marriage.

Shri S. C. Samanta: During the last four years, nearly Rs. 2 crores had been allowed to lapse, under the head 'Buildings' because the buildings could not be constructed. When I raised this matter here the hon. Minister of Communications and the hon. Minister of Works, Housing and Supply, said that a liaison will be created, and let us see whether we can

improve. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what has been done by this liaison. Has it worked efficiently? I as a member of the regional Postal Advisory Committee of the West Bengal Circle moved a resolution there to the effect that a sum of about Rs. 20,000 should be placed at the disposal of the General Manager for construction of buildings. You will be astonished to hear that formerly the limit was Rs. 500, but later on, it has been increased to Rs. 5,000. I moved a resolution in that committee that this limit should be increased at least to Rs. 20,000 and if possible to Rs. 25,000. There are so many places in the mofussil, where buildings have been taken on rent for housing post offices, while just by their side, there is enough land belonging to the department, which is lying idle, and on which buildings could easily be constructed. In spite of the fact that there is the necessary finance available for the purpose in the coffers of the department, the grants have been allowed to lapse.

My earnest desire is that a Development Fund should at once be created, and after deducting the sum which will be required to pay to general finance a four per cent. return on the capital-at-charge, the rest of the amount should go to the Development Fund. And this Development Fund should be at the disposal of the Ministry, so that they can spend it for expanding the amenities required by the P. & T. Department.

Even though the department has it in view that there should be no police station which will not have a telegraph office in the near future, yet we find that telegraph offices are not being opened in several places. For the running of a good administration, a telegraph office is a necessity. But the State Governments are not coming forward to the extent they should. So, the P. & T. Department themselves have to open telegraph offices at all police stations. This is a

thing which has been accepted by the hon. Minister already. But what do we find? In West Bengal, 131 telegraph offices were to be opened in police stations, and this matter was referred to the West Bengal Government. The West Bengal Government said that they needed telegraph offices only at five or ten places. So, the others have to be opened by the department themselves. In fact, it is the duty of the department to open these telegraph offices. This much of flexibility should be given to the department. For, who will get the benefit ultimately? It is the Central Government and the State Government that will benefit. They want only this benefit, but they are not prepared to help this department. If they want benefit, should they not help this department to be more flexible?

My contention is that this sort of flexibility should be given to this department. My demand is that if Government are not willing to separate postal finance from general finance, they should integrate railway finance also with general finance. Why should there be any discrimination in a democratic State? Let Government integrate railway finance with general finance, or let postal finance also be separated from general finance, on the lines of the railway finance. This is my demand.

Mr. Chairman: Resolution moved:

"This House is of opinion that Posts and Telegraphs Finance should be separated from the General Finance."

Shri Deheswar Sarmah (Golaghat—Jorhat): May I submit that it will be useful if we could have at this stage an idea as to the attitude that our hon. Minister takes in respect of this matter?

Mr. Chairman: It is not fair to force the hon. Minister at this stage to make a speech. He will have his own time. He will certainly speak, and then the hon. Member would be able to know his attitude.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta North-East): I have heard with great interest the speech which was made very earnestly and with much vehemence by my hon. friend **Shri S. C. Samanta** in introducing his Resolution. I very much appreciate the reasons why he has brought this Resolution.

I am quite sure that it is his sympathy for the workers in the Posts and Telegraphs Department that has impelled him to bring before this House this specific proposal. I regret, however, to say that, as formulated, I cannot support the Resolution which **Shri S. C. Samanta** has moved. I know very well that there is something wrong perhaps with the system of financing in the Posts and Telegraphs Department and in this House I have heard from time to time the demand being voiced that there should be a thoroughgoing inquiry into the financial working of this department. In connection with this, I wish also to refer to what was said last year during the discussion of the Demands for Grants for the Communications Ministry by my hon. friend, the Deputy Minister, **Shri Raj Bahadur**. This question of separation of finance has come up from time to time and **Shri S. C. Samanta** has consistently brought it up before this House, and on this question **Shri Raj Bahadur** remarked—I am quoting from column 3866 of the proceedings of the House dated 1st April 1954:

“We definitely feel that the present financial system, in certain cases, causes delays. We work under a parliamentary system, we work under a democratic system and, as such, we have to take the greatest precaution in regard to the checks and counter-checks for all financial expenditure.”

And later, he goes on to say at column 3868:

“I will not dilate upon this subject, but I will say that while

there is a case for the reconsideration of the whole thing, we cannot say that the separation of finances, as such, is a possibility in an absolute way.”

At that point of time, **Shri S. C. Samanta** interjected:

“May I put a question about separation?”,

and **Shri Raj Bahadur** replied:

“There is no difference of opinion. I have simply explained the position”.

I take it that the Deputy Minister meant that there is a very plausible case, there is a very reasonable case, for an examination of the whole position, particularly because this demand for a Parliamentary Commission to go into this whole matter has been voiced from time to time in this House

I fear that the proposal which **Shri S. C. Samanta** has made by means of this Resolution will not help matters, will not really bring about the results which he desires. The trouble today is that the worker in the Posts and Telegraphs Department suffers under a double disability. He gets the worst of both worlds. The department is neither a public utility concern nor a commercial undertaking—it is a cross between the two—and the result is that the employees do not get those advantages which might appertain to them if it was either a thoroughgoing public utility concern or a thorough-going commercial concern. But I take it that must be an axiom that the requirements of the people and the exigencies of the common weal are paramount. That means that the size of the revenue is of secondary importance and that deficits incurred by the Administration would have to be met, if the common weal requires it, by subsidies from the Central funds. Whatever that might be, the position today is that from time to time the matter crops up in this way, that when the depart-

ment does not have a surplus, naturally the workers are in a very nervous situation. They fear the worst, they fear all kinds of things happening. If what Shri S. C. Samanta desires to take place takes place, namely, if there is a separation of the Posts and Telegraphs Finance here and now from the General Finance without a through-going investigation regarding the real position of the Posts and Telegraphs Department in the times to follow, then naturally the commercialists will be on top and naturally whenever there is a loss in the working of the Posts and Telegraphs Department, that loss will have to be borne by the employees. So I fear that the way in which Shri S. C. Samanta has formulated his Resolution is not going to assist the employees of the Posts and Telegraphs Department. From time to time, the Posts and Telegraphs Department has made profits; but again, from time to time, it has not been able to make profits. And then in a time of expansion, particularly when an imaginative policy has got to be pursued, it is not a question of formal profits. But once the whole idea is that the department has to be run on a purely commercial basis, then profits would play a very important role, and I am sure Shri S. C. Samanta does not want that.

I know, however, that there are some very serious reasons why it is important that the finances of the Posts and Telegraphs Department should be controlled more effectively, more directly by the Ministry itself. I know, of course, that the Finance Ministry must have a finger in every pie; that perhaps cannot be avoided in the present context of things. But there must be a *via media* worked out so that the Ministry of Communications can directly administer its finances in a way which would redound to the interests of the staff. I do not mean to imply that there is any difference between the hon. Minister of Communications and the hon. Minister of Finance. But certain differences arise because the hon.

Minister of Communications is directly in touch with his employees. He has to face the music if something goes wrong, if the grievances of the employees become very serious. Therefore, it is necessary that the finances are controlled more directly and more immediately by the Minister of Communications.

Now, to make my point a little more clear, I would refer to one instance of how things happen from time to time. I understand that for security purposes a wireless station was opened at a place called Kylong, near the Tibetan border. Now, this place is at a very high elevation and it remains covered with snow during the major part of the year. Now, the official appointed by the Communications Ministry, who was posted there, had to be provided with snow kit etc. But the Ministry of Finance, which does not bother about the human element in the situation—it is too much bothered about the arithmetical aspects of it—did not approve of the provision of snow kit to this particular official. So the whole amount had to be recovered. As a result, the official did not get any pay for six months in that far away place. Now, I understand that the department is finding it difficult to replace that man, who is suffering, because nobody else was prepared to spend about a thousand rupees on requirements like snow kit and all that kind of winter outfit. But the Ministry of Finance is still sitting tight over this kind of thing. I mean to say, if this kind of thing could be tackled directly and immediately by the Minister of Communications, possibly a better result would have ensued.

Now, I wish again to make an appeal to Shri S. C. Samanta, to remember that there is a separation of the budgets concerned in the manner that he has suggested, then there would be difficulties when the Posts and Telegraphs Department is in deficit. Then again, the prices may be increased by the Administration on the basis that it has to be run on a

[Shri H. N. Mukerjee]

commercial criterion. Naturally, the result of that would be that the people would suffer, wages of workers may be frozen, there might be labour unrest and dissatisfaction and the working of an industry, which is of great importance for defence and for peaceful construction would be in jeopardy.

'So my point is that the present fiscal policy itself is defective. It is not clear, it is in some ways paradoxical. For example, the P. & T. does some work on an agency basis on behalf of other departments, even the railways. Now the rates charged are not rational. The rates charged could be higher from the railways, for example, in regard to telegraphic operations. Then again, we find that the P. & T. has to pay more to the airlines for the dak carried than private persons would have to pay—I speak subject to correction. But there is a kind of anomaly, there is a kind of paradox, in the financial position of the P. & T.

Now, in the United States, some time ago there was an investigation into the financial working of their Posts and Telegraphs Department. An Inquiry Committee was appointed in 1948 and it listed a very large number of defects in the operation of the Administration. This was in 1948 in the United States. There it was said that the reasons for the defects of the Administration were as follows:

“An out-of-date and over centralised administrative system;

Out of date rules and regulations which restrict the normal development of the service;

Insufficient independence and adaptability;

Leading positions in the service were not being filled according to ability and efficiency but according to political motives;

The Accounts branch was responsible to the Treasury; misuse of the post to subsidise private airline com-

panies, the mail order firms and the Press; and

An unsound financial policy”.

These are the findings of the Committee appointed in the U.S.A. in 1948.

I was quoting from the report presented by the Postal, Telegraphic and Telephone International in its bulletin of March-April 1954. In our country there is something of a similar situation, but I am doubtful if the separation of the finances alone can solve all the problems. The public interest has got to be protected; the workers' rights and demands have got to be conceded wherever they are reasonable and just, and, therefore, I should say that we ought to reiterate the earlier demand, which was made by wide sections of this House, regarding a Parliamentary Commission which shall go into the entire structure of the finances of the Posts and Telegraphs and then recommend certain steps, but as the Resolution stands, I am afraid it will not accomplish the purpose which, I am sure, Shri Samanta has in view. I shall make an appeal to the Minister to come forward and make a gesture in this regard. Last year, Shri Raj Bahadur said very definitely that as far as the financial structure is concerned, it should be re-examined. It ought to be examined. He said “Of course, I cannot say that there should be an absolute separation”. That is to say, he had a hunch, he had a fear that after investigation, financial separation may be decided upon. I say nothing about the rights or wrongs of absolute separation. As far as I am concerned, I do not want the separation here and now in the context of today, but I want a real, serious investigation of the position so that the interests of the public as well as the interests of the employees are properly protected, and at the same time our P. & T. service, for which we have the greatest admiration, develops in that efficient manner in which we want it to develop.

श्री भक्त दर्शन (जिला गढ़वाल—पूर्व व जिला मुरादाबाद—उत्तर-पूर्व) : श्री सामन्त ने जो यहाँ पर संकल्प प्रस्तुत किया है वही समझता हूँ कि किसी का विरोध उस मूल भावना से नहीं हो सकता है, जिसको लेकर कि उन्होंने यह संकल्प रखा है ; लेकिन मेरा अपना ख्याल है कि जिस उद्देश्य से उन्होंने उसे उपस्थित किया है वह इससे पूरा नहीं हो सकता है। कम से कम मेरी तो अपनी यह आशंका है कि यदि उनका यह संकल्प मान लिया जाय तो जो हमारे देश के पिछड़े हुए भाग हैं उनको इससे घक्का पहुंचने की आशंका है वह इस कारण से कि अगर इसके हिस्साव को बिल्कुल अलग रखा जायगा तो इसके व्यवसायिक ढंग पर, एक कर्माधिकार ढंग पर चलाया जायगा तो जो आज पिछड़े हुए इलाके हैं और जिनकी ओर आज भी डाक और तार विभाग पूरी तरह से ध्यान नहीं दे रहा है उन्हें और भी अधिक हानि इससे होगी। मैं उदाहरण देकर आपको समझाऊँ।

इस समय हमारे डाक और तार विभाग ने पहले के नियमों में तबदीली कर के काफी उदारता दिखलायी है और काफी संशोधन कर दिया है और इसके लिये मैं डाक और तार मंत्रालय को हार्दिक बधाई देता हूँ और देश भर की सारी जनता इसके लिये उनकी आभारी है। पहले वह अमाना भी था जब कि एक नया डाक घर खोलने के लिए ज़मानत तलब की जाती थी और रुपये लिये जाते थे तब जाकर कहीं डाकखाना खुल पाता था ; लेकिन स्वराज्य प्राप्ति के बाद से हमारे मंत्रालय ने यह उदारता दिखलाई है कि जिस डाक घर में वर्ष में ७५० रुपये तक की भी हानि हो, तो भी वहाँ पर डाक घर खुल सकता है और विशेष तौर से पिछड़े वर्ग के जो इलाके हैं वहाँ पर एक हजार रुपये तक का नुकसान होने पर भी डाक घर खोले जा रहे हैं लेकिन इस अवसर पर मैं मंत्री महोदय के ध्यान में यह बात लाना

चाहता हूँ कि इस उदारता के बावजूद भी कुछ ऐसे इलाके बच जाते हैं जो कि यह जो एक हजार रुपये की हानि की सीमा रखी गयी है उससे भी 'कवर' नहीं हो पाते और जहाँ हानि उससे भी ज्यादा होती है। इसलिये मुझे इस बात की गहरी आशंका है कि श्री सामन्त का उद्देश्य बहुत सुन्दर होते भी कैसे पूरा हो सकेगा ? मैं निवेदन करूँगा कि हम सब को मिल कर मंत्री महोदय से जोरदार अनुरोध करना चाहिए कि उन नियमों में और अधिक उदारता के साथ संशोधन कर दिया जाय, ताकि उन पिछड़े और 'बैंकवर्ब' इलाकों में भी डाक और तार का विस्तार किया जा सके जिससे कि सैकड़ों मील दूर बँठी हुई जनता, हिमालय की कंदराओं में रहने वाली जनता और रेगिस्तानों और जंगलों में रहने वाले लोग भी इस नई योजना से लाभ उठा सकें।

—चूंकि इस के बारे में मेरा अधिक अध्ययन नहीं है इसलिये टैनिनकरल ढंग से तो मैं इस पर बोल नहीं सकता, लेकिन इतना जरूर निवेदन करना चाहूँगा कि यदि श्री सामन्त अपने इस वर्तमान संकल्प को वापिस ले लें तो मुझे विश्वास है कि उनका उद्देश्य भी सफल हो जायगा और मंत्री महोदय भी और अधिक उदारता के साथ इन बातों पर विचार करेंगे, ऐसी मैं आशा करता हूँ।

Shri Debeswar Sarmah: I rise to support the Resolution moved by my friend, Shri Samanta, because it is, to my mind, a perfectly reasonable proposal. I was listening the speeches delivered by my hon. friend Shri Mukerjee and also Shri Baakt Darshan with rapt attention and I was trying to follow the points they were seeking to make, but I am sorry to have to confess that I could not follow them. The point that Shri Mukerjee sought to make was that separation of finance only will not be to the benefit of the workers as is

[Shri Debeswar Sarmah]

sought by my friend, Shri Samanta. I would submit that this separation is necessary, but along with it the policy has to be laid down whether the Posts and Telegraphs Department is to be worked as a public utility concern or it is to be run on a commercial basis. I suppose—and I hope I am not wrong—that if and when this principle of separation of P. & T. Finance from the general finance is accepted, the policy will also be accepted one way or the other. My friend, Shri Bhakt Darshan, had a fear that if the P. & T. Finance is separated from the General Finance, perhaps it will be worked as a commercial venture and then the expansion of the Department will be retarded, because the Department is now opening up post offices where there is a loss to the extent of Rs. 750 or Rs. 1,000. I do not see why we should have that fear. After all, ours is a welfare State and the Government is determined to push on public utility undertakings even with deficit financing. Therefore, the fear that if finance is separated, we will just try to follow it more as a commercial undertaking, is without basis. If we can trust ourselves and if we can trust our Government and I do not see why we should not—we need not have any such fear. What is the effect of the P. & T. Finance being incorporated in the General Finance? By and large—the analogy can be applied, rather loosely—it is like my inability to manage my own household. For instance, certain very important works cannot be undertaken for want of finance as was enumerated by my friend, Shri Samanta, on the one hand, but on the other hand, we have a sum Rs. 17 crores to the *pro forma* credit of the Department. We all know that learning confined only to the book and one's money with other people are of no utility.

I have heard certain remarks being rather lightheartedly made by some friend here when Shri Samanta was delivering his speech on the subject. I beg of hon. Members to think of the position deeply and also the implication of this resolution on the workers

in the P. & T. Department. Let me give an oft-quoted and hackneyed illustration. The overall cost of a post-card, including paper, printing and other services taken together, is 13 pies, but it is sold at 9 pies. When the conditions of the workers are sought to be ameliorated, the plea is trotted out that there is not sufficient money to go round.

The public should be served. There is no doubt about it, and we all desire that the public should be served and better served. I also desire that the workers in the Posts and Telegraphs Department should enhance their efficiency and give better service to the public. After all, we all want to serve the public, that is, our mother India. But at whose cost are the services being offered. At one time, there was deficit in the Posts and Telegraphs Department, and then, certain allowances were reduced. Now, workers are crying in certain parts of the country, for instance, in Assam, for compensatory allowance, but it is said it cannot be given, though the cost of living there is much greater than that in other parts of the country. But we cannot do it, because we are not the masters of our own household. When Shri S. C. Samanta said that the Posts and Telegraphs finance is to be separated from the General Finance, I understood him to have said that it need not be done now and here, in this year's budget. Perhaps what he meant to say was—I understood him that way—that this principle should be accepted, that is, the general principle of separating the Posts and Telegraphs finance from the General Finance should be accepted. Let a committee or Commission sit, as Shri H. N. Mukerjee suggested. Let them find out the consolidated amount that the Posts and Telegraphs Department should contribute to the General Revenues.

I now take up the other point—Shri H. N. Mukerjee's point—that if the department suffers a loss, it will be bad for the department and we shall find ourselves in strait-jackets in

respect of the expansion of the department. I submit for the consideration of the House, of the Minister and of my hon. Colleagues, that we have arrived at a stage when we should realise that the apprehension regarding the finances is more imaginary than actual. For example, at the present moment—I am subject to correction—the Postal arm is incurring a loss while the Telegraph and Telephone arms are having a profit. With more development and with better working, it can be reasonably expected that the income will be better and there is no apprehension of loss. I can say from my own personal experience in my part of India that if the telephone system is improved and if the telegraph system would be better than what it is now, the income of the department will be very much greater.

In respect of the Postal Department, I would submit with all seriousness, since we are having the first Five Year Plan and the second Five Year Plan, since we are seeking to develop the country all round, if the Posts and Telegraphs Department seeks to develop communications and opens up post offices with a view to give service to the people in areas where there are no post offices, what reason is there that it should not be a charge on the general revenue under the Planning Department? Just as we are finding money for our river valley projects, as we are finding money for our development of the railways, as we are finding money for our hydro-electric works, roads and so many other things, why should not the rapid expansion of the Postal Department be a charge on the Planning Department? After all, it is part of the all-round development of the country. Why should the burden be thrown on the Posts and Telegraphs Department alone? Is there any reason for it? Is there any justification for it? If money can be found—if Rs. 2,000 and odd crores—can be found for all-round development of India in the first Five Year Plan with the second Five Year Plan being still more ambitious, why should we not find money for expansion of

the Posts and Telegraphs Department in far away places? If it is left to the Postal Department as commercial undertaking, perhaps they may not care to open post offices in places where these are not paying. Can I ask the department to open a post office in a place where the monthly income will not be more than Rs. 20? I cannot, and I know it. But, all the same, I am asking for it, because we are seeking all-round development of India.

I submit that this part of the expenditure should specially fall on the Five Year Plan even if normally it would be under the P.&T. Budget. This will help also to ameliorate the conditions of the workers of this department. The department should give better service to public and its workers should be contented. It is time that we treated our workers well. The time is past, perhaps, to continue to appeal to our workers in the name of their spirit of service and sacrifice, because they are beginning to feel that sacrifice has not been shared equally or even proportionately by all sections. Therefore, the appeal for sacrifice on the part of our workers alone can no longer work effectively. I submit, therefore, that when we expect the workers to work more efficiently and to give better service, they have also to be kept contented within certain limits, of course, considering the national income and expenses of India and such other things. But the Posts and Telegraphs Department not being able to manage its own household, not being the master of its own finances, the surplus money going to *pro forma* credit of the department—which is neither here nor there—how can they develop the department?

I will give you another instance. My friend Shri S. C. Samanta gave details, and I shall be very brief. In my part of the State, where the post offices were accommodating two or three clerks perhaps fifty years or sixty years back, they have now to accommodate six or seven clerks. The money is there but not to the extent of covering all the necessaries, not to

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a considerable extent. The work has to be executed by the Central P.W.D. I gather that there is a Central P.W.D. officer somewhere in Gangtok. I am not perfectly certain about the place where it is. Year after year, the schemes are forwarded and the department too, is willing to spend money, but the schemes can not be put into effect because these are not, perhaps, approved in time. They do not materialise and in the offices, the workers have to work hard with scanty accommodation. Scarcity of living accommodation is still more acute. It is strange but true when Shri Raj Bahadur, two years back, was pleased to pay a visit to Nowgong, Assam, there were only six chairs in the post office to accommodate seven clerks. When the Deputy Minister went there, a chair was borrowed from the neighbouring Marwari shop. The workers whispered to the Deputy Minister's ears and he was pleased to ask if it was a fact. The matter was faulted out. Of course, it is no fault of any officers. I do not cast any reflection on anybody, but things are such and have not changed to fit into changed circumstances. That part of the country was not developed till the other day. It was till recently some sort of a police raj for keeping law and order and collecting tax. But after Independence, that area has been developed and rightly so, because it is a frontier area. But if P. and T. arrangements or set-up are not tuned or geared up, how can they be improved? So, I request my hon. friends to shed their apprehensions and accept this Resolution. By this Resolution, we do not want that the thing has to be accomplished now and here. It will take some time. I hope that the hon. Minister of Communications will show a gesture of accepting this Resolution.

Shri Heda: The only point in this Resolution that I think we should discuss is, when does a public utility concern become a commercial one. The P. & T. Department is a public utility concern. There is no doubt about it. We have started feel-

ing that it is a commercial one. A concern can be commercial and a public utility concern at the same time as in the case of the Railways, but to my mind, a concern can be called fully a commercial one only when it starts giving yield or dividend or profit, what-over you may call it, of say about four per cent. This is the percentage that we have fixed so far as the railways are concerned. The hon. Mover of the Resolution Shri Samanta, whose gusto was very welcome in this House, when he delivered his speech, also referred to this percentage. So, the real point is whether the Posts and Telegraphs Department is able to give us 4 per cent. In the last so many years never did it give us 4 per cent. revenue. All other points are rather academic because whether finance is separated or not, it all depends upon the policy of the Government and the services would be rendered accordingly.

Shri Debeshwar Sharmah: Why should it be 4 per cent. with the expansion programme in hand?

Shri Heda: This is the percentage we have fixed for the railways and when we are issuing National Plan loans we give as much as 3½ per cent. interest and in certain cases 4 per cent. Therefore, I am giving my own opinion, that when a public utility concern gives a profit of 4 per cent.—my friend may not agree; others also may not agree and I do not know the reaction of the Minister—then only to my mind that concern becomes a commercial one.

I was clearing another point. I know there are certain commercial concerns which the Government runs not because they are giving profit, but because they are quite necessary. Moreover, profits and other things are sometimes manipulated. There are concerns after concerns which do not give us even one per cent. Therefore, even after the separation of the finance of the Posts and Telegraphs Department from the general finance, it is quite possible that the concern may be run as a commercial concern which may render us all the ammi-

ties. It may give us the same cheap and economic service as it is doing to-day and yet it may remain a commercial concern.

Now I come to the expansion programme that this department has undertaken. My friend Shri Samanta referred to the targets, for example, the opening of a telegraph office wherever there is a police station. In fact these targets are very big. They are laudable. But, I think, in their zeal, few years before, late Shri Rafi Ahmed Kidwai when he was Minister, he made a huge expansion programme and the pace with which the programme was undertaken was not according to the target. Though we may appear to be far behind the targets, yet the progress that is made is really wonderful and we can be rightly proud of it. There are places after places where we are not able to get even Rs. 250 a year and yet there are post offices opened. There are places where a P. C. O. is opened though there is no such demand commercially. But, all this was found necessary.

I would request the hon. Minister to compare the conditions in India with the conditions, so far as posts and telegraphs are concerned, with our small neighbour country Ceylon. Proportionately they have got many more P. C. O's, and many more telegraph offices. I think there is no village in Ceylon where there is no post office. Therefore, the progress they have made is really very much.

We may find that there is a loss in the first one or two years, but after a passage of some three or four years' time we find that practically there is no loss and every post office becomes a paying concern. Of course, there may be some exceptions. I do not say that there cannot be other reasons. There may be security reasons, law and order, integrity of our country, development of backward and ignored areas, and other reasons for the demand that this expansion programme should be undertaken.

Then I come back to my point, namely, whether this Posts and Telegraphs Finance should be separated

or not. I think the time has not yet arrived when this separation should take place because we are not yet earning 4 per cent. and we need still greater investment in the sector. Already Rs. 84 crores have been invested. Just imagine, 5 or 10 years before, if these finances were separated from the general finance, I doubt whether in spite of the zeal of the Ministers in charge of this Department, so much money would have been invested or not. If you just look at the railways which are giving good profit and compare the pace of investment, I feel that we are not making that much investment, in the railways as we are making in the Posts and Telegraphs. This is made more possible because the finances are not separated.

Therefore, my feeling is that the time has not yet come. But, I am quite confident that very soon, say within the course of 4 or 5 years when we would have invested in this department more than Rs. 150 crores and this department would give us more than 4 per cent. Then, I think, it would be the proper time to separate these finances.

Shri Raj Bahadar: I deeply appreciate the anxiety of the Mover of the Resolution in respect of extension of P. & T. facilities, in respect of better amenities for staff, and in respect of general development of the P. & T. Department and I know that in moving this Resolution he has been actuated only by these motives.

I think, to begin with, an analysis may be made of the constitutional position, because, more often than not, an analogy is drawn between the arrangements that exist in respect of the railway administration and the arrangements that should exist, according to the Mover of the Resolution, in regard to the P. & T. administration. As was pointed out last year on the floor of this House in connection with the debate on the Budget proposals, I may again repeat that separation of finance as such is a misnomer or a mis-description of what is desired. I pointed out and I may again humbly emphasise the same

[Shri Raj Bahadur]

point, that according to article 112 the entire revenues and expenditure and accounts thereof of the Government of India have to be presented to the Parliament in one consolidated form of an annual financial statement and as such even the railway receipts and expenditure are shown in the Budget presented by the Finance Minister every year. Some reference was made to my speech by the hon. Member, Shri Mukerjee. He said that I conceded certain points raised in the motion which according to him entitles him to draw certain conclusion in support of the setting up of a Parliamentary Commission to go into the entire structure of P. & T. finance. I think that my remarks were rather torn from their context and I would like to repeat what I said because it will also help me to state my point of view. Apart from the remarks quoted by the hon. Member, this is what I said further:

"Some reference has been made to the Railway finances and it is said that the Railway finances have been kept separate. We know the provisions of article 112 which lay down clearly that the finances and the accounting of the Railways are a part and parcel of the receipts and expenditure of the Government of India. The whole revenues and expenditure of the accounting thereof are one and indivisible and thus whatever revenue and expenditure fall within the ambit of the Railway Budget, are shown to be included in the Central Budget also. As such, the term 'separation of finances' in the sense that the Railway finances are completely independent of the Central Budget, is a misnomer or a misdescription of the whole position. Even about the Railway finances, we know that they have got three Funds; one is the Depreciation Reserve Fund, the second is the Revenue Reserve Fund and the third is the Development Fund. In the P.&T. also, we have got the Depreciation Reserve Fund, but we do

not have the other two funds, namely, the Revenue Reserve and the Development Fund. It may be said that whereas the Railway Ministry does enjoy some amount of flexibility in this matter for the purpose of development, but then the question becomes very limited and restricted one, namely whether we should have in the P. & T. also a Development Fund and—I think nobody can deny the necessity that we should have a Development Fund and for that purpose, a proper consideration of the whole subject can be entered into. Another thing is whether they are completely autonomous or completely independent of the Central finances in the matter of arrangements and organisation. In the case of the Railway Board, the Financial Commissioner is technically speaking supposed to be under the control of the Railway Minister, but even so he enjoys certain powers and for certain purposes he is also under the control of the Finance Minister. In the ultimate analysis of things, the Financial Commissioner has also got to see that any proposal, scheme or project which the Railways, as such, want to embark upon are kept within the four corners of the ways and means position of the entire Central Budget."

After these remarks I said:

4 P.M.

"I will not dilate upon this subject, but I will say that while there is a case for the reconsideration of the whole thing, we cannot say that the separation of finances as such is a possibility in an absolutely way."

So this was what I meant, and I maintain again that whatever allotments are made in any year for expansion or development work, depend entirely upon the overall financial position of the country and the monetary resources available in the Plan period. That is so far as the

actual constitutional position is concerned.

I will now refer to certain points which have been made out by the hon. Member Shri Samanta. He has said that the accommodation problem has been acute with the P. & T. Department, and we have not been able to construct as many buildings as we require for P. & T. offices as also for the staff quarters, etc. I would say that to a certain extent he is right that we have not been able to go ahead with the speed which we could have desired. For that purpose also we have been trying our level best to cut down the various processes and procedural stages which are there. But let us remember that for any project, for building or for that matter for any new project, for building particularly, we have got first to find out what are the requirements of accommodation. Then there has to be a preliminary plan which has to be drawn up, then the approval of the plan, then the administrative sanction for it, then the detailed estimate etc. There are a number of stages through which we have to pass, and whether we ourselves become responsible for the construction of our own buildings or whether they are constructed by the Central Public Works Department these stages which are necessary as checks and counter-check—to which I referred to in my last Budget speech also—cannot be eliminated. In the very interest of the purity of administration and in the very interest of the necessary safeguards that have to be provided, it cannot be done. That being so, the question arises how best we can cut down the delays. As may be known to hon. Members, for maintenance work and for new works also up to certain monetary limits, our Divisional Engineers and departmental officers are entitled to give sanction. We are, at present in consultation with the Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply, trying to raise these limits, so that a larger and larger number of items of building works may be taken up by the Department itself.

In regard to the creation of a separate unit for the P. & T. organisation for building purposes, the position was also examined. But as is well known the works with us are not large enough in number and value to justify the creation of separate unit for the purpose. I hope, however, that with the new arrangements that are under consideration we shall get over the present difficulties and in course of the building work will also go apace and all the delays that we are experiencing now may be cut down considerably.

The next point which was made by Mr. Samanta was about this year's Budget. He said that out of a surplus of Rs. 3 crores we have contributed Rs. 230 lakhs to the General Revenues. I have not been able to understand these remarks, because I find from the Demands for Grants for 1955-56 that the position is as follows:

Revenue:	Rs. 47.72 crores.
Working Expenses:	Rs. 44.65 crores.
Interest on Capital	Outlay: Rs. 2.37 crores.
Total Expenditure:	Rs. 47.02 crores.

The net surplus is Rs. 70 lakhs. Outright contribution to General Revenues has been shown here only as Rs. 35 lakhs and the P. & T. share is Rs. 35 lakhs. As such I think I will do well in inviting the attention of hon. Members as to what has been the position of the surpluses in the past from year to year, and how these have come out. I will start from 1951-52.

In 1951-52 we had a surplus of Rs. 3,43,36,000. In 1952-53 we had a surplus of Rs. 1,87,23,000. In 1953-54 we had a surplus of Rs. 2,40,24,000. In 1954-55 (revised estimates) we had a surplus of Rs. 1,40,00,000. And in 1955-56 the surplus is estimated at Rs. 70 lakhs. Therefore it will be seen that on account of the growing activities of the Department...

Shri Hada: Is not this surplus after paying interest?

Shri Raj Bahadur: Yes, that is so. It is after paying interest, and I will presently come to the hon. Member Shri Hada's point and will tell him that whereas the railways are giving 4 per cent. on the capital outlay we are giving only 3½ per cent. as interest and in that manner we are also running on a commercial basis. But as is very well known, our Department is commercial-cum-public utility. We also serve the needs of the people and expansion work must go on. That is why we see that from year to year the volume of surplus is not going up; instead of that it is coming down.

Shri Nambiar (Mayuram): If in the railways we are paying dividend, do you mean to say that we must pay the same sort of dividend here?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: You have not caught the point.

Shri Raj Bahadur: The point made was that on the capital outlay the railways are giving something like 4 per cent. while we are giving only 3½ per cent. Their capital outlay is as much as Rs. 800 crores. Our capital outlay is about Rs. 80 crores and we are giving 3½ per cent. though the rate varies from year to year. I have given the figures for this year from which it will be seen that the interest charges come to about Rs. 2.37 crores. So I have made out that point with a view to show that the question of separation of finances, even if it were to be taken as such, will not, I think, be an unmixed blessing, because we very well know that for capital works in the First Five Year Plan Rs. 50 crores have been provided and while we hope to spend a large part of the amount—I think forty-two or forty-three crores—it may be said that whatever we wanted for expansion we got from the Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry. Further we must also take note of the fact that we have laid down certain principles and rules for opening new post offices, new telephone exchanges, new public call offices, and new telegraph offices. For post offices the Finance Ministry has

recognised that we should go on with our expansion work in spite of losses or of the fact that they may be unremunerative. And for telephone exchanges to be opened in district headquarters also we may have to incur some loss. But even that has been accepted. We went to the Finance Ministry saying that they should accept the principle that we should open public call offices at sub-divisional headquarters. That point has also been accepted.

A new demand has now come before us. The demand is that at the headquarters of the Community Projects and National Extension Blocks we should have post and telegraph offices. That demand will be considered.

So with our growing needs of expansion the Finance Ministry has been able to meet our requirements. I may, however, say that what I said in respect of the creation of the Development Fund that, there is a case for examination for it still holds good. Because there may be odd cases where we could utilise the amount, and that question of creation of a separate Development Fund on the lines of what is obtaining in the Railway Ministry is engaging our consideration. We hope that in consultation with the Ministry of Finance that question may be settled, or at least the opinion of the Government as a whole will be made known to Parliament.

The next point that was made by my hon. friend Shri H. N. Mukerjee was about a particular case on the Tibetan border. I was surprised at the information that he has got, because I am told that 75 per cent. of this official pay was granted to him as allowance. To begin with the Finance Ministry, because it was a queer and unique case, did not agree. But afterwards they agreed. About the snow-kit also, it was supplied by the P.M.G. I would request Mr. Mukerjee to check up his facts. And in case there is still any scope for him to think that the amounts are being realised for the cost of the snow-kit, we shall

definitely look into the matter and see that the recoveries are not made for such a purpose as the provision of a snow-kit.

Shri Nambiar: The P. & T. gave it, but Finance has not approved of it.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: The point is whether the employee has been asked to reimburse it or not. If he has been asked, I am prepared to examine it and see that he is not asked to reimburse it.

Shri Nambiar: Money has been deducted. If it is not so we are prepared to accept it.

Shri Raj Bahadur: I have obtained the facts which I may repeat for the information of the hon. Member. He must, however, appreciate that one swallow does not make a summer. It might be that in some odd case in far off Tibetan border, it might not have come to the notice of the P. & T. authorities and a particular officer might have passed some orders which might not be just to the official concerned. I have obtained the facts and I say that 75 per cent of the pay was eventually sanctioned by the Finance Ministry for the wireless operator working at—I shall also mention the place—Kylong. I also say that the snow-kit was also provided by the P. & T. department. It cannot be said that recoveries have been made. Even then, as the hon. Minister has given the assurance, if recoveries have been made, the amount recovered will be refunded.

The next question was about the higher rates for air mails which was taken up by Shri H. N. Mukerjee. We know that our aircrafts do carry our mails. They do so for the expeditious conveyance and delivery of mails. We have got to give that facility to the people. We also know that we have got our accommodation for the conveyance of mails reserved in the aircrafts. If we pay a little higher rates, firstly, they are carried by air and secondly that space is reserved for the mails. It has got to be there. The Air Lines Corporation cannot refuse the mails. They may refuse booking of a seat to

a passenger; they cannot refuse to give space for the conveyance of mails. The rates are fixed by the A.T.L. Board and after the creation of the Air Transport Council, the rates will be fixed by the Air Transport Council. As such, I do not think there can be any objection on that account.

I think we have sufficiently dealt with the question of Parliamentary Commission. About the workers, a plea has been forcibly made by my hon. friend Shri Debeswar Sarmah. I will humbly point out to him that our workers are getting the same scales of pay, the same emoluments, the same allowances, and the same service conditions as the rest of the workers under the Central Government. I do not know whether Shri Debeswar Sarmah would like us to mete out a treatment to them which will be special to the P. & T. employees only, a treatment which may not be available to the other workers. He said that compensatory allowances should have been given in Assam. I do not know whether the Assam Government is giving it. I do not also know whether the Railway Ministry is giving it or whether any other Central Government employees are getting it. He also said that any further appeal for sacrifice will no longer touch our workers. I say it has always touched our workers and it will continue to do so in future. The P. & T. Department can take pride in it, all our workers have been exceedingly patriotic and they have put up with difficult working conditions and put up with all sacrifices that they were called upon to make in any given situation. I am sure that every appeal from us will always have an enthusiastic and lasting response from them and they also know that they are getting the same treatment as their other fellow workers in the Central Government are getting. There need not be any apprehension on that account.

Shri Dhulekar (Jhansi Distt.—South): What about special hospital facilities? **Shri S. C. Samanta** referred to it.

Shri Raj Bahadur: I will come to that also.

My learned friend **Shri Debeswar Sarmah** reminded me of some incident which I do not remember. He said that there were six chairs in Nowgong post office for seven employees.

Shri Debeswar Sarmah: That is a small affair.

Shri Raj Bahadur: Yes. But, I would point out that the P. & T. employees are wide awake and they are conscious of their rights and I am sure that they would have fought out and got a seventh chair for themselves and for their President the hon. Member also.

About Hospital arrangements, my hon. friend **Shri S. C. Samanta** has drawn our attention to the fact that we want more T.B. beds. The number of T.B. beds that we have got is given in the annual report and at present that is 41. He said that the Railways have got their own hospitals. I would like to point out to him that railway colonies are sizable enough; they are populous enough. In all big junctions, they cannot do without a separate hospital. But for ourselves even in a big town we hardly require a full-fledged hospital. Even if we had one in a place like Calcutta, how will it help workers in Barrackpore or any postal worker who is at a distance of 12 miles or 15 miles away from it. The railwaymen are concentrated in colonies. A hospital can work well there. For our purposes, where our post offices are scattered and the number of employees in a particular post office is not large enough, it will hardly be reasonable for us to say that we should have a separate hospital for the P. & T. employees in each and every town or even in bigger towns, unless there are big colonies of P. & T. employees. When such colonies, which are in our programme, spring up, the provision of a dispensary for each one of them will also be borne in mind.

Shri Dhulekar: They can be clubbed with R.M.S. people.

Shri Raj Bahadur: As a matter of fact, they are the guests of the railway people. They get accommodation from the railway people and other facilities.

Shri Nambiar: By paying more.

Shri Raj Bahadur: The Health Ministry is examining the question of coordination of hospital facilities.

Then comes the question of E.D. agents. It was asked why we should not give them full-fledged treatment as government employees. As I said, the principle is equal pay for equal work. The E.D. agents and E.D. post masters have got hardly work for an hour or two. It is never more than 5 hours. If the principle is accepted by this august Parliament that even if a man has less work, he should get the same pay as a full time employee, then that would be a very vital orientation and departure in our accepted principles of policy. It will mean that whatever the amount of work, he will get full wage. Apart from that, an E.D. job is not a whole time employment. It is only an allowed job. Some of them are even anxious to contest in the Panchayat elections; and cases have come to us where they have done so. We can very well recognise the fact that the practice which obtains in other countries has been adopted by us also as it is suitable to our conditions in respect of expansion of postal facilities.

The question of research organisation was raised. For day to day problems, we have got our Technical Development Circle at Jubbulpore, which looks after small things. I do recognise the need for a research organisation as such. We have also taken some steps in this direction. We have put ourselves in touch with the National Physical Laboratory to see whether they can help us in this matter. To begin with, we may create a nucleus there. This matter is engaging our attention. The question of availability of finances, I think, will not stand in the way of the creation of such an organisation.

Then, the question of West Bengal was referred to by my hon. friend Shri S. C. Samanta, and he said that 131 telegraph offices had been ordered to be opened and they have not been opened. Anyhow, this is not for want of finances. For opening telegraph offices, we require stores, equipment, etc. We know that the capacity of our workshops is limited and the capacity for the supply of wagons also is limited. All these factors do account for certain delays in the establishment of these telegraph offices. Our programme was, of course, announced as early as in the Budget session of 1953. We have made good headway. I think in Punjab, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and in the Central circle they have completed this programme. The number of tehsils is less than the number of thanas. In Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, we have no tehsils; we have got only thanas. Because their number is far bigger, it will take a longer time in Bengal, Bihar or Orissa to complete the whole programme as compared with the completion of the programme in other circles. I think at least that finances will not stand in the way. We will, I think, be able to fulfil our commitments.

The hon. Member Shri Bhakt Darshan said that the upper limit of losses should be raised for the purposes of extension.

Pandit D. N. Tiwary (Saran South): Not for all regions.

Shri Raj Bahadur: For certain areas: as he himself pointed out, Rs. 1,000 as against 750 for backward areas.

Shri D. C. Sharma: What about Hoshiarpur?

Shri Raj Bahadur: Hoshiarpur is a forward area and Shri D. C. Sharma, at least is the least backward of all. For Shri Bhakt Darshan's suggestion I would say that we shall bear it in mind while drawing up our plans for the Second Five Year Plan and we will see how far this limit can be raised keeping in view the other factors which have necessarily to be borne in mind.

With these words, I would request the hon. Mover of this Resolution kindly to withdraw the Resolution.

As I have said, every effort will be made to see that the question of the creation of a separate Development Fund is settled, and that the delays that are occurring in the construction of buildings are also minimised. I can assure him that all the valuable suggestions that he has given to us will be gratefully examined.

Shri Nambiar: May I know whether the Government are prepared to appoint a Commission to go into the question of the finances of the Posts and Telegraphs Department as indicated in the speech of the hon. Deputy Minister last year?

Shri Raj Bahadur: I then gave a categorical reply that we do not contemplate the setting up of any Parliamentary Commission to go into the question of Posts and Telegraphs finances. I said so categorically last year and I repeat that, because there are no cogent reasons in support of that proposal.

Shri S. C. Samanta: I am thankful to the hon. friends, most of whom have opposed my resolution. They are of opinion that the time is not ripe for accepting this resolution. But at the same time I am glad that the Minister of Communications has taken so much burden upon himself to request me to withdraw the resolution.

Shri Nambiar: But.....

Shri Jagjivan Ram: No "but".

Shri S. C. Samanta: One thing I would like to mention. My hon. friend, the Deputy Minister was dealing with the separation of finance. We are not enamoured of the words "separation of finance". I also made it clear that the words will not do, we want the things which should be done. The Railway Convention in its wording also used the words "separation of Railway finance from General Finance". So, knowingly I put those words. But, when the Department has come forward to look into the matters as best as it can, before I

[Shri S. C. Samanta]

withdraw the Resolution, I would like to state that for the accommodation problem, though a liaison committee has been formed and the Ministers are hoping that the result will be very good. I am not so hopeful. I would request them to expand the engineering department in the different circles. We have pressed for Rs. 20,000. Let them try for at least Rs. 30,000 to be spent from the department for the present, and let them experiment with the Works, Housing and Supply Department and see whether they can extort something from them.

I spoke about the interest on Rs. 2.36 crores. Perhaps this is interest on capital.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: Yes, that is right.

Shri S. C. Samanta: That is at 4 per cent.

Shri Raj Bahadur: 3½ per cent.

Shri S. C. Samanta: After that also, we have Rs. 70 lakhs on our hands. So, we are not bankrupt.

Shri K. K. Basu (Diamond Harbour): Let us also hear. You are only addressing the Minister. (*Interruptions*).

Shri S. C. Samanta: As regards the hospitals I mentioned, I meant that there should be some two or three big hospitals in the big cities so that employees suffering from serious diseases such as T.B. may be brought from other places. That was my suggestion. I know that employees are spread over the length and breadth of the country. That is true. It is our fault that we are not able to give them accommodation like the Railways. We should take the utmost responsibility for these employees who are suffering from T.B. and other serious diseases because we have not yet been able to give them accommodation, comfort and other things. So, at least in some big cities some hospitals of the Government should be opened for the Posts and Telegraphs Department employees over and above the beds that have been reserved in other hospitals.

I would also request the Department to look to the amenities of the employees and expand them, because if we want them to work hard, if we want their service, we should not make them feel that they are not receiving the same amenities that the employees of another public utility department, viz., the Railways, are getting.

I mentioned also about the research stations. At least one research station we must have, since we have so many mechanical things. I would draw the attention of the Minister to this also.

Lastly, I am thankful that the demand has been kindly conceded by the whole House and the Government, and I hope that in the near future my hope will be fulfilled. With that desire in mind, I beg the leave of the House to withdraw my resolution.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: May I say a few words?

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: He cannot reply to the reply.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: Just one or two points.

About the hospitals and medical facilities, I will frankly admit that I am not satisfied with the facilities that we provide to our employees, and I am examining the question how to eliminate the various processes which come in the way of reimbursement of the medical expenditure incurred by employees. We have reserved a number of beds for T.B. patients in sanatoria and the scheme is to have a larger number of beds, and if necessary to have Government sanatoria also.

Pandit D. N. Tiwary: May I know whether there are large number of attacks of T.B. among postal employees?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: As the number of employees is very large, though the incidence may not be high, the number of patients suffering from T.B. becomes sizable. Therefore, we have a scheme to provide larger number of T.B. beds in different

sanatoria or to have Central sanatoria to serve one or two circles together.

About the general medical facilities, the Health Minister is examining the question of co-ordinating the hospital facilities of the various Central Government Departments and State Government Departments, and I think when that scheme is finalised, the employees of the Posts and Telegraphs Department will also have better hospital facilities. But, in case it does not materialise, we will certainly see that we provide greater facilities to the employees of the Posts and Telegraphs Department.

About a research section—some time back I set up an advisory committee of some of the renowned Tele-communication scientists of this country. The idea was to create a nucleus of research centre, especially in tele-communications, with a view to its development and adaptation to suit the weather and climatic conditions obtaining in our country. The centre would advise our officers who will be working in the National Physical Laboratory. This organisation will of course expand gradually. It is our idea to have a research section, statistical section and other sections in the Posts and Telegraphs Department. In the end, I must thank my hon. friend for his offer to withdraw the resolution.

The resolution was, by leave, withdrawn.

RESOLUTION RE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BY WORKERS

Shri K. K. Basu (Diamond Harbour): I beg to move:

"This House is of opinion that suitable legislation should be immediately enacted to guarantee rights of workers for collective bargaining, by providing the following:

- (a) Workers shall have the right to join any trade union of their own choice and the employer shall recognise such

trade unions, if there are more than one in his establishment or industry, and enter into collective agreements with the trade union or trade unions, as the case may be;

- (b) In cases of differences between trade unions, the opinions of the majority of workers in the establishment or industry shall be ascertained through a general body meeting of all the workers belonging to the establishment or industry concerned."

This resolution has been moved with a specific purpose. We want the principle of the recognition of unions to be accepted by Government. The other day there was a discussion on this very subject in connection with an amending Bill. I feel and I hope the House will agree with me that today we want to give labour certain specific rights. We have adopted a Constitution which says that our country will be a welfare State. That presupposes that all the constituents of the productive process should have their due share in the administration and the building up of the nation.

We all know that labour plays a very vital and important role in our productive machinery, and it is but natural that they should be given a proper deal. The labour laws which were enacted in 1926 when the British Government were ruling our country had a specific object in view. After the end of the First World War when the economic crisis set in and there was widespread labour unrest the Government of the day thought it necessary to meet the situation by canalising the energy and of the great force of organised labour. But since then things have changed. We have seen in the different countries of the world development of a new type of relationship between the employers and the employees, affecting the whole social structure.

Here in our country in 1947 a piece of legislation was passed wherein a specific provision was made giving