

question of procedure is this. When an adjournment motion is raised here and no reply is forthcoming from the Government, I want to know whether you, Sir, in the Chair, automatically accept the adjournment motion. Or, what do you do?

Mr. Speaker: I do not accept or I do not reject. I do as I on the facts placed before me. An adjournment motion is tabled. The answer may not be forthcoming for the reason that they are not able to answer, in which case, if it is serious, I will allow the adjournment motion. Or, they may not like to answer because it is such a trivial matter and I myself will dispose of it or reject it. Therefore, the mere absence of an answer does not force me to decide one way or another. I have to decide myself. There is no doubt that this is a serious matter. In all these matters, the hon. Members never seem to be very short I have rejected a number of motions for adjournment which were merely based on some newspaper report. The only difference between them and this is that this relates to a very serious matter; if it is true, it will affect the entire fabric of our country at this critical juncture when we are threatened about our security on various sides. The question is whether, that rumour is true and whether we should not pursue that matter and try to rectify it, if it is true, before it is too late. Certainly I appreciate the difficulty. All the same it is a newspaper report. The hon. Minister does not want to avoid in this House. The Prime Minister would be the first here even in regard to matters relating to others on account of the serious responsibility that he holds as the Prime Minister. There is a joint responsibility. As a matter of fact, it is he who distributes the portfolios to various Ministers. He is responsible to this House as much as the others. We take not any individual Minister to task but the Cabinet as a whole to task.

The hon. Members are very particular and it is also a serious matter. I would request the hon. Prime Minister to come to the House tomorrow

and tell us... (Interruptions.) Order, order. I cannot allow this. We have done this sort of thing very often. The Prime Minister is absent here. If I adjourn this House, I am adjourning this House till 4 o'clock, if I accept this suggestion. How can I accept it without any further information as to how far it is in the public interest to decide this matter here? We are merely proceeding on a report. Is it a report from one of the Ministers of the Cabinet? I am really surprised that I should be forced to come to a conclusion based merely on a newspaper report, and if we go on discussing, it may be too late to repair the damage... (Interruptions.) Order, order. I think the hon. Prime Minister's request through the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is a reasonable one. Under normal circumstances, if the hon. Prime Minister has said 'I will look into this question; I am not yet apprised of it', I would hold over the motion. So, this will stand over till tomorrow. Let the hon. Prime Minister and also the Defence Minister come and let us hear further as to what should be done. I will take a decision tomorrow regarding the adjournment motion. It will stand adjourned till tomorrow.

Acharya Kripalani: Sir, I accept your ruling but the country is entitled to know today what is happening in the Army.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry I cannot force him to do so. Now, the House will proceed with its other business.

FOOD SITUATION

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: Sir, we have tabled some adjournment motions. It is a question affecting the people of Bengal. There is a huge mass upsurge and three lakhs of people are affected. They have been demanding that the food policy should be changed. 500 people are in jails. We should like to know whether we can discuss these matters.

Mr. Speaker: Some hon. Members have tabled adjournment motion on the food situation in Bengal or the food situation in the country.....

[Mr. Speaker]

(Interruptions.) They want that the food policy should be discussed. It is only two or three days ago, last week, a speech was made by the previous Minister of Food and he said that it was his last speech and he resigned. I have rejected this adjournment motion on the ground that it is only a few days ago that this problem was discussed in this House.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: The situation has changed.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister has changed, the situation has changed. I shall treat it as a calling attention notice and request the hon. Minister to make a statement regarding this matter tomorrow. Let us see what arises out of that. If anything more is to be done, I shall consider that.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Will you kindly allow us to put certain question?

Mr. Speaker: Very well.

12.29 hrs.

RE: PROCEDURE FOR DISPOSAL OF ADJOURNMENT MOTIONS

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): Sir, today Bulletin—Part II, paragraph 2916—had been circulated to us and it deals with the procedure for the disposal of adjournment motions. We are really grateful for the many directives that are given here. But my submission is that those points that have been mentioned are more in the nature of amending the Rules of Procedure. There are also some 41 points given. I want to know whether this will be referred to the Rules Committee... (Interruptions.) I also want to know whether the House will have an occasion to discuss it because the matter is very important. It has also been stated that the grounds mentioned or given there are typical and not exhaustive. My submission is that this matter should be referred to the Rules Committee and a comprehensive amendment to the rule made in the

Rules Committee and submitted to this House.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members come with a number of adjournment motions from time to time as they find there are certain important matters which ought to be brought to the notice of this House. During the course of our parliamentary life both after 1947 and before 1947 a number of adjournment motions have been tabled. There are also decisions of the Chair. I have been asked from time to time to give the reasons how I have disposed of an adjournment motion. Therefore, I thought that instead of writing out the reasons each time I may give all the things that I generally take into consideration. I need not have issued this bulletin, I could have kept all those things to myself. This does not require any change of rule. The rule is already there vesting jurisdiction with the Speaker to dispose of an adjournment motion or to give consent. Only after the Speaker has given his consent an adjournment motion will be brought before the House for discussion.

Generally the four broad considerations are whether it is a definite matter of urgent public importance. It also must relate to this House and the House must be responsible for that matter. I have noted down as to how I have exercised this power. If any hon. Member wants to make any suggestions regarding the points enumerated in the bulletin—I am only inviting suggestions—I shall receive all those suggestions and consider them. If I consider that any change in the rule is necessary, I shall try to place it before the Rules Committee. As it is, rules are sufficient. In working out the rules these are the conventions that have been established so far. As I said, it will be open to hon. Members to write to me, and, if necessary, I shall have a discussion in the Rules Committee later on. I would not rush this through. In the meanwhile, hon. Members can write to me in what