

13.35 hrs.

REPRESENTATION OF RAILWAY BUDGET

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum): We have not been told but the papers have reported that the Railway Budget is being presented at 5 P.M. It is shifted because of the metropolitan elections in Bombay. We want to be clear about it.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Why has it been altered? Who decided that? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to you for permitting me to raise this question on the very first day. I have already written to you in this regard and spoken to you because we Members of Parliament were told formally by a Bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha that the Railway Budget will be presented to the House on the 25th, immediately after the Question Hour. This was a formal communication dated the 12th of this month.

Subsequently, seven days later, on the 19th, another Bulletin was sent to us, that in modification of the earlier Bulletin, it has now been decided that the Railway Budget will be presented on the 25th at Five O'Clock. It intrigued me because otherwise I know that if the Railway Budget had been presented even on the 26th or the 27th, there would have been no breach of any kind of tradition and in Parliament just as rules are important, tradition and convention are also important. So much so, I would draw your attention to the fact that because it is a convention that the General Budget is presented on the last day of February, this happens to be a leap year, so even though the 29th of February is not a working day, it is a Saturday on which we generally close, but in order to adhere to the tradition you rightly decided that the General Budget would be presented on the 29th at Five O'Clock and we will assemble in the House

only at Five O'Clock and we will not be assembling for any other business. But in this particular case I understand that it is the Government that has requested you that instead of Twelve O'Clock it should be presented at Five O'Clock.

I see no reason why it is shifted. The only reason that strikes to me— or the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs can enlighten me, I am willing to be corrected - but on the face of it nothing appears to me except electoral considerations pertaining to Bombay and to the State of Maharashtra. This is something we cannot reconcile with the traditions of the House. They are parliamentary traditions and parliamentary traditions must be adhered to and we look upon you as the custodian of these traditions. Only because the Government has requested for the sake of political and electoral expediency to change the timing from Twelve O'Clock to Five O'Clock, this should not be agreed to.

Though a communication has already been sent to us, I would plead with you to review your decision and to ask the Government to present the Budget immediately at 12 O'Clock tomorrow as they have decided earlier and conform to it... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAM KAPSE (Thane): The Railway Minister has give a hint that there will be a hike in the freight... (*Interruptions*)

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO): At 12 noon, immediately after Question Hour. Okay... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Why was the change made? Sir, you owe an explanation to the House. Why was it changed?... (*Interruptions*) It is their sweet will to change it as and when they change their mind?... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat. I will explain it to you.