

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Friday, 2nd April, 1954

The House met at Two of the Clock
[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

3 P.M.

CALLING ATTENTION TO
MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC
IMPORTANCE

HYDROGEN BOMB TESTS

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Defence (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the other day hon. Members desired me to make a statement in regard to the hydrogen bomb. I have also received two or perhaps three short notice questions on this subject. So I propose to make a statement which, I take it, will cover the short notice questions also.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Shahabad South): The short notice questions have not been accepted?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The answer will cover all the points raised both in the motion for calling attention as also in the short notice questions.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I welcome this opportunity to state the position of the Government and, I feel sure, of the country, on the latest of all

66 P.S.D.

the dread weapons of war, the Hydrogen Bomb, and to its known and unknown consequences and horrors.

The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, we are told, possess this weapon and each of these countries has during the last two years effected test explosions unleashing impacts, which in every respect were far beyond that of any weapons of destruction known to man.

A further and more powerful explosion than the one on the 1st of March has been effected by the United States, and more are reported to have been scheduled to take place.

We know little more about the Hydrogen Bomb and its disastrous and horrible consequences than have appeared in the press or are otherwise matters of general knowledge or speculation. But even what we do know, and the very fact that the full facts of the effects of these explosions do not appear to be known or are ascertainable with any certainty even by scientists, point to certain conclusions. A new weapon of unprecedented power both in volume and intensity, with unascertained, and probably unascertainable range of destructive potential in respect to time and space, that is both as regards duration and extent of consequences, is being tested, unleashing its massive power, for use as a weapon of war. We know that its use threatens the existence of man and civilisation as we know it. We are told that there is no effective protection against the Hydrogen

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Bomb and that millions of people may be exterminated by a single explosion and that many more injured, and perhaps still many more condemned to slow death, or to live under the shadow of the fear of disease and death.

These are horrible prospects, and it affects us, nations and people everywhere, whether we are involved in wars or power blocs or not.

From diverse sides and parts of the world have come pronouncements which point to the dread features and ominous prospects of the Hydrogen Bomb era. I shall refer but to a few of them.

Some time ago, when the Hydrogen Bomb was first mentioned in public, Professor Albert Einstein said:

"The Hydrogen Bomb appears on the public horizon as a probable attainable goal.....If successful, radio active poisoning of the atmosphere, and hence an annihilation of any life on earth, has been brought within the range of technical possibilities."

This was said some time ago. That success appears now to have been achieved.

A U. S. Professor, Dr. Greenhead of the Cincinnati University, said:

"We are proceeding blindly in our atomic tests and sometimes we cannot predict the results of such blind moves." He said that "the U. S. was able to make these bombs out of relatively plentiful substances. If these are used to create an explosive chain reaction, we are nearing the point where we suddenly have enough materials to destroy ourselves."

Mr. Martin, the Defence and Scientific Adviser to the Government of Australia, is reported to have said after the explosion of the 1st of March:

"For the first time I am getting worried about the Hydrogen

Bomb.....I can say as an individual that the Hydrogen Bomb has brought things to a stage where a conference between the four World Powers in mankind's own interests can no longer be postponed."

He is reported to have added that the fission was greater than expected by the scientists and that the scientists were more worried than anyone else.

Mr. Lester Pearson, the External Affairs Minister of Canada, referred to the use of such weapons in war when he said recently that "a third World War accompanied by the possible devastation by new atomic and chemical weapons would destroy civilisation".

The House will no doubt recall the recent statement of Mr. Malenkov, the Soviet Prime Minister, on this subject, the exact words of which I have not before me, but which said in effect that modern war with such weapons in use, would mean total destruction.

There can be little doubt about the deep and widespread concern in the world, particularly among peoples, about these weapons and their dreadful consequences. But concern is not enough. Fear and dread do not lead to constructive thought or effective courses of action. Panic is no remedy against disaster of any kind, present or potential.

Mankind has to awaken itself to the reality and face the situation with determination and assert itself to avert calamity.

The general position of this country in this matter has been repeatedly stated and placed beyond all doubt. It is up to us to pursue as best as we can the objective we seek.

We have maintained that nuclear (including Thermo-nuclear), chemical and biological (bacterial) knowledge and power should not be used to forge

these weapons of mass destruction. We have advocated the prohibition of such weapons, by common consent, and immediately by agreements amongst those concerned, which latter is at present the only effective way to bring about their abandonment.

The House will so doubt recall the successive attempts made by us at the United Nations to secure the adoption of this view and approach.

At the last session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1953, as a result of amendments moved by our delegation to the Resolution on Disarmament, there were incorporated in the resolution that was adopted:

(1) An "affirmation" by the General Assembly of its "earnest desire for the elimination and prohibition of atomic, Hydrogen, bacterial, chemical and other weapons of war and mass destruction and for the attainment of these ends through effective means."

(2) A provision for setting up of a sub-committee, consisting of the Powers principally involved, to sit in private, and at places of its choosing to implement the purposes of the Disarmament Commission.

The House is aware that this latter suggestion has lately engaged the attention of the Powers principally concerned, at Berlin and elsewhere and talks have taken place and, so far as we know, are continuing.

Time, however, appears to challenge us. Destruction threatens to catch us up, if not to overtake us, on its march to its sinister goal. We must seek to arrest it and avert the dire end it threatens.

Government propose to continue to give the closest and continuous consideration to such steps as it can take in appropriate places and contexts in pursuit of our approach and the common objective.

I have stated publicly as our view that these experiments, which may have served their one only useful purpose, namely, expose the nature

of the horror and tragedy, even though but partly, should cease. I repeat that to be our considered position, and it is our hope that this view and the great concern it reflects, and which is world wide, will evoke adequate and timely responses.

Pending progress towards some solution, full or partial, in respect of the prohibition and elimination of these weapons of mass destruction, which the General Assembly has affirmed as its nearest desire, the Government would consider, among steps to be taken now and forthwith, the following:

(1) Some sort of, what may be called, "Standstill Agreement" in respect, at least, of these actual explosions, even if arrangements about the discontinuance of production and stockpiling, must await more substantial agreements amongst those principally concerned.

(2) Full publicity by those principally concerned in the production of these weapons and by the United Nations, of the extent of the destructive power and the known effects of these weapons and also adequate indication of the extent of the unknown but probable effects. Informed world public opinion is in our view the most effective factor in bringing about the results we desire.

(3) Immediate (and continuing) private meetings of the sub-committee of the Disarmament Commission to consider the "Standstill" proposal, which I have just mentioned, pending decisions on prohibitions and controls etc., to which the Disarmament Commission is asked by the General Assembly to address itself.

(4) Active steps by States and peoples of the world, who though not directly concerned with the production of these weapons, are very much concerned by the possible use of them also at present, by these experiments and their effects. They would, I venture to hope, express their concern and add their voices and influence, in as effective a manner as possible to

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arrest the progress of this destructive potential which menaces all alike.

The Government of India will use its best efforts in pursuit of these objectives.

I would conclude with an expression of the sympathy which this House and this country feels towards the victims of the recent explosions, Japanese fishermen and others, and to the people of Japan to whom it has brought much dread and concern by way of direct effects and by the fear of food contamination.

The open ocean appears no longer open, except in that those who sail on it for fishing or other legitimate purposes take the greater and unknown risks caused by these explosions. It is of great concern to us that Asia and her peoples appear to be always nearer these occurrences and experiments, and their fearsome consequences, actual and potential.

We do not yet know fully whether the continuing effects of these explosions are carried only by the media of air and water or whether they subsist in other strata of nature and how long their effects persist, or whether they set up some sort of chain reactions at which some have already hinted.

We must endeavour with faith and hope to promote all efforts that seek to bring to a halt this drift to what appears to be the menace of total destruction.

SITUATION IN GOA

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have received notices under rule 215 from Shri Kotha Raghuramaiah and Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy. Shri Raghuramaiah wants to call attention to—

“the situation arising out of the increasing number of reported assaults, house searches and arrests committed by the Portuguese authorities in respect of Indians in Goa and the general reign of repression therein.”

Shri Gurupadaswamy wants to call attention to—

“the resolution of the Portugal National Assembly giving complete support to the repressive policy pursued by the Portugal authorities in Goa and the reply of the Government of Portugal to Indian Government denying the Indian charges that Portugal is curtailing the political liberties in Goa.”

May I know what the Prime Minister has to say?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: Sir, I have just made a statement. I have got to make two more statements under this rule 215, one relating to the French Settlements and the other relating to the aerial display. May I submit, with all respect, that rule 215 might be overdone somewhat occasionally?

In regard to Goa, the situation obviously is not to our liking; but there is no new fact that I can place before the House and if I have to make a statement I have to repeat what I have said. Therefore, I submit that in this particular case at the present moment—I do not say about the future—it may be desirable if I make a statement at a later stage. In that case, I shall certainly come to the House.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I may say for the benefit of hon. Members who invoke the aid of rule 215, that hitherto we had adjournment motions. Now, in place of the adjournment motions this rule is being drawn upon. Even there, I will give consent only in cases where they are of very great public importance and are urgent, and the rules applicable generally to the admission of adjournment motions will be applied here. I will also ask the hon. Minister in charge regarding his reactions before I bring it to the House, so that I need not take up the time of the House. Once for all the hon. Minister will make a statement of his own accord or at the instance of any other hon. Member.