

for our development and providing jobs to us and who is responsible for giving direction to us. So far as we are concerned, we try to reason with them so as to pacify them and to mollify their feelings. But all our efforts and reasoning will not be successful till the Centre and the Planning Commission do not adopt special policy in regard to the development of hill areas so as to bring development there.

15.00 hrs.

With these words, I just thank the hon. Minister as a formality that he replied to my Resolution because I cannot thank him from heart.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Mr. Mool Chand Daga, are you withdrawing your Amendment ?

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) : Yes, Sir. I want to withdraw my Amendment.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Has the Hon. Member the leave of the House to withdraw his amendment ?

MANY HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

*Amendment No. 1 was, by leave,
withdrawn*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Mr. Harish Rawat, are you withdrawing your Resolution?

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : Yes, Sir. I want to withdraw my Resolution.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Has the Hon. Member the leave of the House to withdraw his Resolution ?

MANY HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

*The Resolution was, by leave,
withdrawn*

RESOLUTION RE: ELECTORAL REFORMS

[English]

SHRI D. N. REDDY (Cuddapah) : I beg to move :

“This House is of the opinion that there is an urgent need for electoral reforms so as to cleanse public life, and ensure free and fair elections which are now vitiated by the corrupt and unhealthy influence of power, money, caste, religion and other forms of corrupt practices and, therefore, recommends to Government to initiate wide-ranging discussions with all political parties, so as to arrive at a consensus for immediate implementation of poll reforms, which may reflect the popular will of the People in a truly democratic manner.”

Before I speak on this Resolution, I would like to inform the House through you, Sir, regarding the malpractices that have been practiced in the elections. Sir, I have been a victim to all the malpractices adopted by other candidates in my own constituency. A candidate belonging to the other side of the Party spent nearly Rs. 1.5 crores in my own constituency for the purpose of election campaign, that too in the Rayalaseema District which is one of the backward regions. So, you may well imagine how much money would have been spent in other parts of country by adopting all sorts of malpractices. Not only that. Other activities like throwing of bombs, fire-arms, etc. were indulged in during the election. Money power, muscle power and booth-capturing had all become part of the election in my own constituency, by the candidate belonging to other side. So, Sir, having been a victim to these malpractices I thought it fit to bring forward a Resolution before this House to prevent such malpractices. I am certain that, as I happened to be the victim to these malpractices, there are many candidates here who have become the victims to these malpractices, in the elections in their constituencies. Therefore, I thought it fit to bring forward a Resolution regarding Electoral Reforms, as early as possible. Sir, about a week ago, a question was put to the Hon. Law Minister in this House and he informed

[Shri D. N. Reddy]

this House that consensus had to be taken from many persons. This kind of answer we have been hearing from the Government day-in and day-out. This is the reason why I have brought forward this Resolution in this House.

Sir, all of us know that free and fair elections are the basis for a working democracy in any country. Many discussions have taken place inside and outside this House. Suggestions have been given by eminent publicmen and the Election Commission from time to time, in view of the past experience in each election. The Election Commission has also remarked that grave irregularities are increasing with each election—some detected and many undetected—and I would like the Government to introduce Electoral Reforms as early as possible. Statesmen of our country like the late Shri Rajagopalachari and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan warned the country of the need to 'rescue democracy from money power'. Long back they had given this warning to the whole country. Yet the Government has been very slow to introduce Electoral Reforms except the Anti-Defection Bill, last year. Assurances have been given on the floor of this House again and again that the Government is examining the various aspects of the reforms recommended, but did not take action, in spite of the President's mention in his Address to the joint Session in 1985 that sweeping electoral reforms are round the corner. We all expected that after the President's Address immediately the Government would take action, but nothing was done.

Let me say at the outset that no amount of legislative measures can ensure complete purity of elections. Election reforms is only a partial remedy; it can only minimise at least the easily identified evils, namely money power and muscle power and booth capturing.

Mounting expenditure on elections is incurred both by the Government on organising them and by the parties and candidates on fighting them. Barring a few very rich individuals or a few first rank cinema stars, nobody can finance the elections from his

own resources. The political parties have therefore, come increasingly to rely on business sources drawing on unaccounted money. Another source is gangs of anti-social elements, smugglers, dacoits and industrial mafias. Still a third source now increasingly important is the cuts received by the ruling party for awarding huge contracts, licences, permits etc. That is why the Election Commission suggested that the Government should have an election fund on which the candidates of recognised parties have a legal claim to draw from. How this is worked is a question of sound thought and consultations, but anyway this is of a paramount importance. Hon. Members from both the sides of this House will agree that the expenditure on elections has reached such proportions that it is a rich man's game, and many deserving persons and useful public talent will be pushed out of the electoral fields and the elections will lose credibility in the public mind.

There must be an independent audit appointed by the Election Commission to examine the election expenditure of candidates and that of parties accounts; they must be made accountable for the funds they receive, but there is a possibility that the parties may not disclose the names of their patrons to prevent them from being harassed.

Even more than money power, the factor that vitiates the elections is the muscle power acting in aid of the candidates. With the aggravation of caste and communal conflict, eclipse of idealism and ideology in public life, the evil of booth capturing and rigging has virtually made a mockery of fair and free elections. The evil that started in one State—I need not mention the name, I hope everybody knows it—has spread to all States, and in fact there are candidates who do not canvass at all, and they depend upon the use of money power and muscle power for victory. It is this factor, combination of money and muscle power that is becoming a menace to the country, making the elections practically a private enterprises with a large capital investment, and a close nexus between a moral political leadership and organised crime. It is this which we should prevent at all costs.

The remedies have been suggested quite

often by the Election Commission and by eminent men in public life and can be listed on a priority basis.

Firstly, elections for Assembly and Parliament should be held simultaneously. There is absolutely no reason no justification to have separate elections, except political expediency. The practice for having separate elections for the Assembly and the Parliament should be given up. Why should we hold elections separately for Assembly and Parliament? I do not think that a poor country like ours can afford the luxury of two elections in the course of just one or two years. As a matter of fact, in our State we had two to three elections in one year. We can ill afford this practice and this problem should immediately be attended to because it is in the power of the Government to hold elections at the same time. Experience has shown us that the administration comes to a standstill for nearly six months before the elections. And then after the elections, they take another two to three months to settle down. In this way, we are not only wasting huge amounts of the poor man's money, but also wasting a lot of time in looking after the arrangement for elections. Thus it is a loss in many ways to the country. What was good in the previous years i. e. in the early elections of post independence era cannot be bad now and that practice should be followed immediately from now.

I am just mentioning some points in brief which will help us to introduce electoral reforms.

A law controlling party funding and election finances should be enacted. A special funding agency from the Election Commission should administer the funds. Unaccounted black money should be prevented from flowing in.

More powers should be given to the Election Commission. They should appoint their own observers in each State to inspect the conduct of elections. They should have independent powers and they should be accountable to the Election Commission only.

Several election offences which are non-cognizable should now be made cognizable.

Government should compulsorily be a care-taker government from the date of the announcement of elections. They should not announce any new policies and they should not undertake any new projects or grant any loans or hold Bank melas as was done before the last elections by the ruling party. There should not be any official functions also during this time.

If any case of booth-capturing is proved, the election in the whole assembly segment should be held invalid by the Election Commission and the Election Commission should have the powers to order a repoll in the whole assembly segment.

Mobile election booths may be introduced for the weaker sections. There have been many instances where the weaker sections had not been allowed to go to the polls. Some of the weaker sections in many parts of our country have not voted even once in their life. It is also very necessary to provide due protection to the mobile election booths.

The deposit amount should be increased because the amount prescribed now is very small. This will prevent many frivolous candidates from filing their nominations. For example in my constituency there were as many as 18 candidates. Because of so many candidates, the ballot paper becomes very lengthy and people have to search a lot to find a particular symbol that they want to vote.

There should be identification cards along with photographs for each of the voters. I think that this has been announced in many States. These cards should be given to all so as to prevent malpractices. Then equal broadcasting facilities to all recognised political parties. It was our sad experience to see that the ruling party was given a lion's share in the broadcasting, whereas the other political parties are not given their due share. The Election Commission should be consulted and they should see that all the parties are treated equally and for this also, we have been clamouring. The public relay system should be independent so that all parties are treated in an equal manner. I must again impress upon the Government that it is a matter which does not brook any delay. The Election Commission itself has

[Shri D. N. Reddy]

recorded that the number of irregularities and mal-practices have been increasing election after election. So, there is every need to take immediate steps to introduce electoral reforms. In my own constituency, as I mentioned in the beginning, so much amount was spent and no action was taken to find out where the money came from. In the same way, in almost every constituency, there were candidates who spend crores and crores of rupees and the Government or the Income Tax people never questioned them where the money came from. In similar manner booth capturing has been so rampant.....

(Interruptions)

15.17 hrs.

[SHRI SHARAD DIGHE *in the Chair*]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) : You know there is a limit ..

(Interruptions)

SHRI D.N. REDDY : Evidently you are not here for the first time, you must have spent a lot of money.

(Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER : He is asking how much money you have spent ?

SHRI D.N REDDY : Go and see the election account.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Don't put such questions and please do not reply also.

(Interruptions)

SHRI D.N. REDDY : I am ready to have a debate with them on this.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : You make your own point.

SHRI D.N. REDDY : It is very important that audit should be made by the Election by appointing an independent agency which is only answerable to them and see that the limit under which the Government allows to spend the election fund is followed. Unfortunately, it is about 1½ lakhs or so now for the Parliament and it is a pity that the Government does not take notice. They should increase the amount instead of filing false accounts. As such also, the deposit amounts should be increased to prevent frivolous applications and those candidates who get below 25 per cent of the votes. The deposits should be forfeited and that would be a very-very good step to prevent unnecessary increase of candidates in number. It is very difficult for voters also to find out their symbols. Let them not take the elections lightly. The Election Commission should be made independent and share all powers, and the final say should be with them and not with the Government. In many cases, the observers have been sent to the States, but unfortunately in some of the States, the observers were under their influence, and had no powers at all. So, the Election Commission can appoint their own observers, either from the particular State or from the Centre or from wherever they like. They will be answerable to the Election Commission and they can take steps then and there immediately. This will also mitigate and lessen the delay when they go to the courts. Sometimes, it takes a year or two or even more. The election offences should be immediately attended to so that it will be deterrent to other parties in the next elections also. Election offences which are non-cognisable now should be made cognisable. So, I plead with the Government that this should be taken very seriously and reforms introduced as early as possible as was mentioned in the President's Address last year.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now Amendments are tabled by Shri Shantaram Naik. Is he present ? He is not present. Shri Mool Chand Daga. Are you moving ?

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA ; Yes.

I beg to move

'That in the resolution,—

after "religion" insert, "character assassination" (2)

That in the resolution,—

after "so as to" insert—

"frame a code of conduct with their consent and" (3)

That in the resolution,—

for "immediate implementation of poll reforms"

substitute "implementation of poll reforms this very year" (4)

That in the resolution,—

after "poll reforms" insert—

"by amending the existing laws and bringing forward new legislation, wherever necessary, in the House during this very year." (5)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Dharam Pal Singh Malik.

[Translation]

SHRI DHARAM PAL SINGH MALIK (Sonepat) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I want to speak on the Resolution of Shri D. N. Reddy. The Hon. Member while speaking on the Resolution expressed his views like an Opposition Member. I think there are certain practices which are unfair and there is need to enact a law to remove those malpractices. But there are several evils which can be got rid of by the political parties also.

The election process starts with the registration of voters and from this point till the counting of votes there are many shortcomings in the process. We should remove these shortcomings by enacting a new legislation. Our Prime Minister has already tried in the first session itself to effect electoral reforms. For this he has, by bringing the anti-defection bill, eradicated an old evil of 'Aya Ram, Gaya Ram'. The bungling starts from the registration of the voters itself. Several minors who are less than 21 years of age are registered as voters and in this manipulation, village patwaris

and other people also play their role. In this way, bogus polling takes place and many absentee or dead voters are shown to have voted. In this way not only the elections but our democratic set up also is affected.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I submit that three or four things are necessary to make the election process foolproof and to effect electoral reforms. First, in an area where a particular party has a strong base it indulges booth capturing or rigging and does not allow people of weaker sections to use their franchise freely. Therefore, I submit that at the time of elections, in the interest of free and fair polls and to sustain the faith of the people in the democratic set up, booth capturing by such parties should be checked.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, my second submission is that there is provision in the law that for Harijans there will be separate booths but there is a lacuna in this provision and that is, that though the booths for Harijans are provided separately, yet the polling agents in those booths do not belong to these communities. They belong to those communities who do not allow free and fair polls to be held. The Harijans who come to cast their votes there are afraid of those men. I, therefore, suggest that the rules and the Act should be so amended that it provides that in the Harijan booths, polling agents will also be Harijans and that too from the same village or the same area so that the people may know that the person sitting as polling agent is one of them and the polling agent may also be able to verify that the people coming to cast their votes are genuine voters and belong to the same village. Usually, outsiders and goondas are hired and are posted as polling agents in Harijan booths because of which the Harijans of the area are unable to cast their votes in a free and fair manner.

Sir, I want to give one more suggestion also. On this aspect Shri Reddy also spoke, while moving the Resolution and that is about identity cards. Earlier also, this topic of issuing identity cards was discussed. I, therefore, suggest that cards should be provided for identification. Unless you introduce this card system, the evil of booth capturing or bogus polling cannot be remedied.

[Shri Dharam Pal Singh Malik]

Besides, I would like to submit that there are many Presiding officers who have direct or indirect connections with some candidate or a party and they encourage malpractices during elections. They encourage bogus-polling and it has been observed many times that even booth capturing is done in connivance with them. No action is initiated against them in this regard. I would request provision should be made for stringent punishment against anyone who indulges in election malpractices, whether he be an officer, voter, candidate or agent. It should be a cognizable offence.

According to the existing provisions, anybody can file a nomination by depositing Rs. 500 as security. A time may come when any person or a party, if they so desire, can throw a spanner in the democratic system. It is possible that a party with the help of capitalists can file nominations for such a large number of candidates that the system may break down. For example, if as many as 100 candidates file their nomination for each of the 544 seats in the country, I feel that according to the existing provisions the democratic set up will collapse. I would, therefore, request the Government to check the increase in the number of the candidates in elections. Provision should be made to avoid entry of such candidates in the elections as have no intention to contest the elections seriously or have no definite policy but have merely jumped in the fray to defeat a particular candidate.

I would also like to draw Governments attention to the malpractices during counting of votes. There are people on duty who can play any dirty trick. They even mark the ballots for the opposite party candidate. Therefore, measures should be taken to ensure a fool proof election system so that the people's will is clearly reflected and the representatives they support should succeed.

Besides, I would like to point out the election returns are filed by all of us who are elected to Parliament. I feel that all of us know the way these are filed. We boast of clean politics and vouch by truth but we know that the seeds of falsehood are sown

when we file our returns. Attention should be paid to it. We just observe a formality just to meet the legal obligation. If we spend Rs. 1 lakh we would file a return for Rs. 60,000 and if provision for Rs. 2 lakhs is made we would file return of Rs. 1.50 lakhs only. If we are ourselves law makers, can we not enact legislation wherein there is no need to take recourse to falsehood.

I would also suggest that there should be a strict check at the time of finalising voters lists i.e registration of voters. As I said earlier, it is at this stage itself that bogus voting starts. Fictitious names and absentees are registered in the voter's list and those votes are cast in the elections. Such registration is done at a place where the candidate wields considerable personal influence outsiders are brought to cast the votes. I would, therefore, request the Government to check registration of bogus, absentee or dead voters. A close watch should be kept on officers on registration duty. Firm action should be taken against those indulging in unfair practices in registration. I have myself seen that boys and girls aged 15-16 years are registered as voters and they cast their votes. At least 15 to 20 per cent voters in the country are such who are registered at three or even four places and at times they are able to cast votes at all these places thereby frustrating the will of the people and enabling unscrupulous candidates to use unfair means and win the elections. I, therefore, urge the Government to lay down certain conditions and qualifications for the candidates in order to reduce the malpractices because if this is not done it can prove harmful to us.

During the Punjab Elections, our Government took a thoughtful step by issuing an ordinance that even if an independent candidate dies prior to the commencement of elections' the elections to that particular constituency will not be countermanded. There were elements who used to take undue advantage of such provisions and filed the nomination of candidates who either met natural death or were liquidated in a bid to countermand the elections. If some take recourse to this method in a planned manner the entire electoral process can collapse. It is now time to take steps to improve the electoral system so that free and fair elections are held and the confidence of people in the

democratic set up is restored. Otherwise what happens is that the will of the people is frustrated. This would result in erosion in the faith of the people in the system and thereby cause extensive damage to it.

With these words I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Resolution moved by Shri Reddy regarding electoral reforms is an important one. The Member who was just now speaking, it is his party which indulges in election malpractices in West Bengal. Therefore, there is an urgent need for electoral reforms in the country. Muscle power is generally used in the elections held in West Bengal. It is, therefore, necessary to check this situation immediately. Booth capturing is done at various places through muscle power and people are forced to cast their votes. Besides in the name of casteism.....

[English]

SHRI AMAL DATTA (Diamond Harbour) : Then you spend money and do not get the vote...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : Mr. Chairman, Sir, whatever I have said is true and the Hon. Minister will bear me out that maximum election malpractices are done in West Bengal. This is absolutely true.

[English]

SHRI AMAL DATTA : Are these all going on record ? What is the proof that he has for booth-capturing in West Bengal ? Is he quoting from the report of the Election Commission ? Let him say that. Booth-capturing has gone in favour of the Congress in Bihar. This has come out in newspapers. ... (Interruptions) This has come out in newspapers, and openly it was mentioned that booth-capturing was going on in Bihar. .. (Interruptions)

How can you allow these remarks ? Either you expunge all these . (Interruptions).

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : The modus operandi adopted in the Panchayat Elections in West Bengal. What to speak of elections to Parliament and Assembly, they adopted the same tactics even in the Panchayat Elections. Our candidates were locked up at different places and in this way they won all the seats. I would, therefore, submit to the Hon Minister that this suggestion is quite suitable.

[English]

SHRI AMAL DATTA : His statement is based on nothing at all. What is his proof ? He has no proof at all. Let him cite from the Election Commission's document any proof. And he goes on saying whatever he likes.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Instead of making any allegation against any political party, speak on the subject.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : I am telling the truth.

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI A. K. SEN) : Why is the Hon. Member so much touchy ?

SHRI AMAL DATTA : I am not touchy at all. In that case, I must be allowed to put forth my point of view immediately; otherwise, this subject will come up again after two weeks and in the meantime he says all these things. You know, Mr. Sen that there was no allegation of booth capturing in West Bengal.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : Even in Panchayat Elections in West Bengal, this method was employed. There have been a number of such instances in the Assembly and Parliament elections, but you employed this technique even in Panchayat Elections and resorted to booth capturing.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to submit that his suggestion is quite

[Shri Girdhari Lal Vyas]

appropriate and should be accepted. Wherever anyone talks of securing votes through muscle power stern action should be taken against him and the entire election so held should be countermanded. This was the first point which I wanted to raise.

The second point that I want to make is that the political parties which seek votes on the basis of casteism, put up their candidates on cast basis and want to mislead the people belonging to that particular caste... (Interruptions).. I have not named any party. What I have said is that this was how elections were held in West Bengal. I do not know why do you develop cold feet the moment I mention the name of West Bengal? ... (Interruptions).. My submission is that no party should be allowed to fight elections on the basis of caste. Today, some people in the country are trying to mislead the people by seeking votes on caste lives at different places whereas they do not have any policy or programme of their own. In fact, votes should be sought on the basis of policies and programmes of the party. (Interruptions) What I was saying was that today at many places it so happens that a Jat seeks votes in the name of Jats, a Gujar seeks votes in the name of Gujars, Brahmin secures votes in the name of Brahmins and a Rajput in the name of Rajputs. In this way efforts are made to mislead the votes. Therefore, this aspect should also be taken care of in the elections. If some people try to secure votes on caste lives by misleading the people of the dominant community in a particular constituency, they should be effectively checked from doing so, because casteism fans communal passions and such a situation would prove to be disastrous for the country. Communal passions tend to disintegrate the country and as such no party should get votes on this basis and such practice should be effectively checked.

My third point concerns those who get votes on the basis of their money power. The capitalists who do not have any link with the people and have nothing to do with the common people contest elections in this country. They file their nominations as independent candidates and spend enormous money in the elections. I would go to the extent of requesting the

Law Minister that the provision of independent candidates contesting the election should be done away with. No person should be allowed to contest an election as an independent candidate. The elections should be contested and votes sought on party basis.

SHRI KALI PRASAD PANDEY (Gopalganj) : I am on a point of order. The Hon. Member is talking of dispensing with the system of independent candidates.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : He has a right to express his opinion.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : My suggestion is very appropriate. The Hon. Member who spoke prior to me has also said rich people file their nominations in many constituencies and they also make another forty persons file their nominations by giving them Rs. 500/- each. If each one of them secures 200 votes on the basis of caste, many thousand votes go waste. The person losing with a thin margin suffers heavily on this account. Many times, the nomination of a person on death bed is filed simply to see that the election is countermanded in the event of his death. Now, a law has been enacted that in the event of the death of such a candidate, the election would not be countermanded. But the provision regarding independent candidates should certainly be done away with. Neither in the interest of the country nor the democratic set up.

Shri Reddy has rightly said that a lot of money is spent on the elections and the poor people like me do not have money. We contest election with the funds provided by our party. But the people who have huge funds at their disposal, the landlords who have black money, spend crores of rupees in the election in addition to what they get from their party. Under such circumstances, the elections become unfair. Therefore, in my view government should meet the entire expenditure and election should be contested on the basis of that money, so that the right candidate is elected and this democratic set up is strengthened.

Another submission which I want to make is that the present method of canvassing in which clashes take place, the bombs are thrown, should be stopped forthwith. Take the instance of England or other countries. A party releases its manifesto and its candidate delivers his speech over the radio. On the basis of that speech the people make up their mind about their favourite candidate. If the candidates are elected through this process, the clashes in the elections and lakhs of rupees that are spent, can be avoided and the process will work smoothly. Therefore, there is a dire need to introduce this procedure urgently. Our democracy will become stronger when such a system is adopted. Today, we see how the election funds are raised. No political party can contest elections without accepting money from the big capitalists. No party, whether it is the Congress Party or the Socialist Party or the Communist Party, can fight election without money. In election, it is only the big capitalists who can provide money and in lieu thereof that they get their work worth thousands of rupees done through us. Sometimes, even their unjust demands have to be met. The Government is forced to give in to their demands. Even the political parties have to lobby for them irrespective of their ideology. But the parties try to give them the benefit in lieu of the money received from them. Hence, it must be stopped effectively. You have made a provision that the political parties will have the right to accept donations. Earlier, accepting of donations by the political parties had been banned, but now it has again been permitted. Now when it has been permitted again, the ruling party or the parties which wield political influence, the parties which control the trade unions and can harm the industry through strikes or agitations will get money from the capitalists and the businessmen. As such, you will be forced to work for them. Therefore, this system needs to be changed.

One of the suggestions is that the political parties should raise their funds from among the people. Contesting an election funded by the big capitalists should not be treated as a respectable as it certainly leads to corruption because the political parties will have to meet their demands. Therefore, a provision should be made under which no political party should be allowed to accept such funds.

Similarly, I would also like to say that each and every party in the country gets funds and many of them get donations not only within the country but from abroad also. This needs to be looked into. Government should identify the political parties which get funds from abroad. This money is being used to destabilize democracy and to plant another system in this country. You must have seen what happened when elections were held in 1977. Crores of rupees flowed into the country through the organisations which used to be known as constructive Associations prior to 1977 and were said to be engaged in constructive programmes and that money was used by the political parties to vitiate the atmosphere in the country. They tried to impose a system in this country which might lead to the end of democracy in the country. Therefore, this also needs to be checked. We must keep a watch on the foreign powers and these so called constructive organisations who want to engineer political turmoil in the country through their power and introduce their own system of Government. Be it C.I.A. or any other organisation, they are certainly trying to upset our democratic set up by pumping money into our country. I would like to request the Hon. Minister, through you, that such funds should be effectively checked from entering into the country, otherwise you know what happened in 1977. Whenever such a system is imposed on this country, the atmosphere would be totally vitiated. Such powers try to create disturbances in the country by exercising control over the political parties through their money power. Today you see what type of environment is emerging in the country. Communal clashes and riots are being engineered at different places and an effort is being made to vitiate the political atmosphere. Who are these people out to create disorder in the country. Who is behind it and which are these powers who are out to vitiate the atmosphere? These powers will have to be identified. It should be checked. A special vigil needs to be kept, especially when the elections are at hand, so that no one can create disturbance and our system may function smoothly.

I have yet another submission to make. Just now, it was said that the political parties should get money from the Government and that elections should be fought on the basis of money so given by the Government. Like-

[Shri Girdari Lal Vyas]

wise, time should be allotted to each political party on Radio and Television on the basis of the strength of their members. Apart from this, all candidates, whether they are contesting Assembly Elections or Parliament Elections, should be given time on A.I.R. or Doordarshan in their respective states so that they could project their policies and programmes before the electorate. Their constituents should know what they want to do in their constituency. Therefore, an arrangement should be made whereby the message of each political party may reach each the voter. It will prove very useful if time is allotted for this purpose. A system should be developed under which clashes, use of weapons and bombs and all such things which cause enormous loss are stopped.

Similarly, bogus voting takes place on a very large scale. Identity cards should be issued to check this bogus voting. At a number of places women voters, whose identity is not known, cast their votes. This spoils the chances of the winning candidate. It also undermines the chances of the candidate who is very popular in that area. This fraudulent practice must be put to an end. It is very necessary to issue identity cards for this purpose. I admit that it is not an easy task. There are 35 to 40 crore voters in our country and it is really a tremendous problem to issue identity cards to all. If the Government tackles this problem it will definitely have a healthy effect and would go a long way in checking bogus voting.

Similarly, there is the problem of booth capturing and people are prevented from casting their votes. This should also be dealt with sternly. Only then our electoral process would function smoothly.

I would like to express my views regarding booths meant for Harijans. At a place where there is dominance of a particular caste, the Harijans are not allowed to cast their votes. There the Harijans are told to remain in their homes and they should presume that they have cast their votes. The dominant community of any area does not allow the Harijans to cast their votes. That community does not allow Harijans to come out of their homes just to benefit their candi-

date. Harijans do not go to the polling booths to cast their votes out of fear of the dominant community. It is very necessary to check these people sternly who do not allow Harijans to cast their votes by intimidating them and thus obstruct the electoral process.

I would also like to submit that at present it is difficult for anyone to contest election within the limit laid down by law for incurring expenditure on elections. This limit on expenditure in elections should be enhanced and the a limit should be such as may be sufficient for any candidate to contest election for Parliament or Assembly. If a reasonable limit is fixed on the election expenses, the candidate would file correct returns and not otherwise. The limit on election expenses should be enhanced further to improve the system.

Earlier, in our country and particularly in Rajasthan, the princes used to rule the country. They still wield great influence over the people. This is not because they serve the people but it is because of the glamour of their royal grandeur, wealth and power. Even today they try to mislead the innocent people. Even now they put up their own candidates and use their influence in the favour of their candidates. The Office of Profit Act should also be made applicable to these rulers. Previously, these people used to get privy purses. Even now these rulers have palaces, jagirs and other kind of property. They had acquired this wealth by exploiting the people. All these jagirs etc have been given to them by the princely states. These jagirs and properties should be brought under the Office of Profit Act. The former rulers should be covered under the Office of Profit Act. They have acquired the wealth worth crores of rupees by exploiting the poor and now they use the same wealth to get themselves elected as the representatives of the people in this democratic set up. This should be checked. A legislation to this effect should be enacted so that right candidates come forward and contribute their mite in strengthening the democratic system.

During elections, complaints about use of muscle power come from a number of places. The situation cannot be controlled by one or two policeman posted there. Men belonging to some political parties have infil-

trated into the police force. The political parties use every kind of tactics to induct their men into the police force. When they use their muscle power, or weapons the police do not take action against them. The arrangement of police should be made in an independent manner so as to ensure that no malpractices take place during elections and no political party secures votes by using muscle power or by exploiting caste feelings.

At certain places, where candidates contest elections on caste basis, the presiding officer belonging to that caste should not be posted there because they encourage castism and influence the polling. It should, therefore, be ensured that in case a candidate belonging to a predominant community in a particular area is contesting election the presiding officer belonging to the same community should not be posted there as there is great likelihood of malpractices there. There is great need to improve this system. These are some of my suggestion.

With these words I request the Hon. Minister to bring about electoral reforms so as to conduct fair elections in the country and strengthen the country by electing the right candidates.

15.58 hrs.

STATEMENT RE : RAILWAY INCIDENT BETWEEN TELLICHERRY AND MAHE STATIONS.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT (SHRI BANSI LAL) ; I deeply regret to apprise the House of an unfortunate incident which occurred at 5.35 hrs. on 28.2.1986 between Tellicherry and Mahe Stations on the Cannanore-Shoranur Broad Gauge single line section of Palghat Division of Southern Railway. While 310 Cannanore-Errakulam Express was running between Tellicherry and Mahe Stations, large crowds, which were attending the annual festival at Jagannath temple, suddenly rushed on to the track. It is reported that there were a lot of fire works in the festival and some crackers fell on to the crowd and the crowd out of panic rushed

towards the track. Consequently, the train ran over a number of persons of whom, 26 were killed on the spot while 9 sustained injuries. The injured have been admitted in the hospitals at Tellicherry and Calicut.

My colleague Shri Madhavrao Scindia and Member Traffic have proceeded to the site and will be visiting the injured in the hospitals. General Manager, Southern Railway and Chief Security Officer have rushed to the spot. Divisional Railway Manager, Palghat and other officers have also rushed to the spot.

This incident will be enquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety.

16.00 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE : ELECTORAL REFORMS—Contd.

[Translation]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, Hon. Members have expressed their views on the electoral reforms. All the Eight Elections to the Lok Sabha held since 1952 have been free and fair.

16.01 hrs.

[SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN in the Chair]

Allegations are often made against the party in power that they won the elections because media was in their favour or because of some other unfair practices and these allegations are made by the party which has lost. The Hon. Member, who moved the Resolution, has said that crores of rupees have been spent in h.s constituency. Reddy Sahib has won the election despite crores of rupees spent by the other party in the elections. The people elected the man in whose merit and intelligence they had faith. In the year 1977, the people of India gave a verdict against the Congress party and we accepted it. The electoral process has been functioning since 1952. The winning candidates say that