

crores per year. Every rejuvenated well will be able to sustain a family of the cultivator and one family of labour providing sustenance for at least ten members. Thus one lakh persons will be taken away from the miserable spectrum of famine. If all the fifty thousand wells are rejuvenated by spending five crores of rupees every year for five years, about 5 lakh persons in the district will be saved from the ravages of famine permanently. The State Govt. is not in a position to spend the amount.

So, it is requested that the Central Govt. without escaping from the responsibility and without showing the burden to the State Government can take a compassionate view over the misery of the famine stricken people of this area, and allot Rs. 5 crores to the Rural Irrigation Corporation of Andhra Pradesh for giving loan to agriculturists for putting in well bores in the area to rejuvenate the wells in Anantapur District.

SHRI ANADI CHARAN DAS (Jaipur) : I beg to submit that the following matters of public importance may be included in Agenda for the next week.

Rural Landless Employment Programme (RLEP) was launched during 1983-84 as it was felt that the hard-core of poverty particularly pertaining to employment opportunities for the landless needed to be tackled in a more directly and specific manner.

The basic objectives of the programme are :—

- (i) To improve and expand employment opportunities for rural landless with a view to providing employment for at least one member of every landless labour-household upto 100 days in a year ; and
- (ii) Creation of durable assets for strengthening the rural infrastructure which will lead to rapid growth.

The programme is fully funded by the Central Govt. during the 6th Plan Rs. 500/- crores was provided and outlay of Rs. 1743.78 crores has been fixed for the Seventh Plan. Employment generation as

many as 1013 million mandays are expected. During the Seventh Plan 20% of the allocated funds are to be earmarked for social forestry in the States and U. Ts. while 10% of the funds are to be earmarked for the works directly benefiting scheduled casts and scheduled tribes. The cost of road projects, however, is to be limited to 50% of the total cost. The wage component in a project should not however be less than 50% of the total cost of the project.

But most of the States and U. Ts. are not following the objectives and guide lines issued by the Central Government; they should be directed to follow these objectives and guidelines.

Hence this is an important matter. It should be discussed on the floor of the House in the next week.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT) : I am grateful to the hon. Members for having made their submissions. I shall bring them to the notice of the Business Advisory Committee.

13.25 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till twentyfive minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.*

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Thirty one minutes past Fourteen of the clock.*

[SHRI SHARAD DIGHE *in the Chair*]

#### INDIAN POST OFFICE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1986

[*English*]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Bill for consideration and passing. Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev.

[*Translation*]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) : I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman,

Sir, this Bill has been included in today's agenda. If you look at yesterday's agenda i.e. of 13th November, you will find that it was written in it that—'consideration of any item left'. This Bill was not shown in the agenda of 13 November and discussion on Supplementary Demands (General) was there. We prepared ourselves for that discussion but at 8.30 A.M. today, this Bill was supplied to us. Yesterday night we were preparing for General Demands and today the Indian Post Office Bill has been presented here. You have written that :

[English]

"Consideration of any item of Government business entered in the Revised List of Business on 13th November, 1986 and not concluded on that day."

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, Sir, if due care is not taken in the matter of Bills, we shall not be in a position to do justice to them. This item was not included in yesterday's agenda and today, all of a sudden, at 8.30 A.M. we are informed that this Bill will be brought. Yesterday night, we were preparing for General Demands and now the India Post Office (Amendment) Bill is going to be discussed. Mr. Chairman, Sir, I want your ruling on it so that in future such mistakes are not committed again and due attention is paid to this aspect.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI H.K.L. BHAGAT) : Sir, I want to tell the hon. Member, Shri Mool Chand Daga that the Bill is already listed in the week's business. It is already in the list of business for this week. It is carried over. If there is no time you do not take it. This is the Bill which is there in the week's business. The idea is not to rush through any important thing. The time is always fixed for that purpose. (*Interruptions*) So, it can be included. That is the answer. I can include it. If there were time, today, I would have insisted to be taken up. But if there is no time, today, we don't mind. We get it after some time. Sometime we change the list

of business. We go by the consensus of the House. We have high regard for Dagaji's opinion. But if he says, we cannot add any item from the week's business. there is no point in making week's business.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no point of order. The Government has got the privilege to change the order of items. Only the order has been changed. And it is the prerogative of the Government to change it. I rule out the point of order.

Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : I beg to move\* :

"That the Bill further to amend the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, be taken into consideration."

While moving the Bill to further amend the Indian Post Office Act for consideration and passing of it by the House, I wish to make the following opening remarks :—

The Indian Post Office Act, 1898 was one of the earliest legislations conceived in the 19th Century for regulating the working of the post offices in the then prevailing circumstances. In recent times, thanks to the excellent climate prevailing for rapid industrialisation of the country, there has been a phenomenal increase in commercial traffic of mail and consequent changes in the pattern of mail flow warranting modifications in the provision of the original Act.

Section 26 of the original Act, which deals with power to intercept postal articles for public good was conceived when India was a British colony. In accordance with the assurance given on the floor of the Parliament, by one of my predecessors, we have reworded this section to bring it wholly in conformity with the provisions contained in Article 19 (2) of the Constitution. Another change made in this Section is to delete Sub-Section (2) of Section 26 of the Act making it possible for an order passed under this Section open for judicial review and curb arbitrary exercise

\*Moved with the recommendation of the president.

of the power under this Section. In this connection, it is stated that the Sub-Section (2) of the Act which is now sought to be deleted provided for a certificate given by the competent authority exercising the power as final and conclusive proof about the occurrence of public emergency etc. With the deletion of this Sub-Section, courts of law will be free to review orders for interception, under Section 26, thus making such orders justiciable.

With regard to the monopoly of the Indian Post Office Act with reference to conveyance of letters, the present Bill seeks to impose stricter penalties for violation and also provides for search and seizure of letters illegally conveyed by private couriers.

The Bill also seeks to provide changes in the provision of the original Act so as to take into account the present high volume of commercial traffic and also to provide better and decentralised facilities to the common man. It also seeks to regulate mode of delivery of articles to residents of multi-storeyed buildings etc. which situation was not envisaged at the time the original Act was framed in 1898. I, therefore, commend the Bill to the hon. Members of this House for the passing of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Motion moved :

"That the Bill further to amend the Indian Post Office Act, 1898. be taken into consideration."

[Translation]

SHRI V. TULSIRAM (Nagarkurnool) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I totally oppose this Bill. If the new section 16 (old section 26) is deleted from this Bill, I will support it because this section is very dangerous. Under this section, an officer can open, read, throw away, burn or even sell a letter. I have used the word 'sell'. Suppose there is a court case and the lawyer sends some details of the case to his client through a letter. The official can sell such a letter to the other party. It means that you have opened the way for one person, for earning money unauthorisedly whereas you have marred the future of the other person. If my wife writes about some confidential domestic affairs, they can read it.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara) : Does she write love letters ?

SHRI V. TULSIRAM : It is a matter of satisfaction if Shri Vyas still receives love letters. It appears that he is still fond of it. If you do not receive love letters, people like me receive. Day before yesterday also I had told the Minister that whenever I dialled a certain number, the voice of a lady was heard from the other side. When it happened twice or thrice, she abused me. The Minister had replied that he was sorry if the number was connected by mistake but if there was some other matter, he could not do anything. If the matter was different, I would have dealt it myself and would not have brought it here.

I want to say that this section is very dangerous and if it is deleted we shall have no objection to the Bill. After that we shall fully support it. It is clear that the people in power will be able to do anything. That is why this Bill has been brought and such provision has been included in it. We belong to an Opposition Party and suppose our leader writes a letter to us which goes against you, you will not deliver that letter and will tear or burn that. Today you are in power, tomorrow some one else will be there. Whosoever is in power, will be using this provision for his benefit. It goes against the Fundamental Rights. Law Commission has given some suggestions. I would request the hon. Minister to tell us as to what are the recommendations of the Law Commission. Have you accepted them in toto or only those recommendations which suited you and those which did not suit you have been rejected, the way letters will be torn and thrown away. If you do like this, how will it do good to the country. You should think about the welfare of all the people and you should not accept only those recommendations which may save your chair. It is not a good thing. India is a free country and you should let everyone enjoy freedom. Then you can tell them that such and such things are not good and require to be abolished. You should convince the people. This provision existed earlier also during the British rule. After independence, you should have deleted or amended it, but you did not do so. Now when you are amending it, you are amending it to suit your own

interest. It is quite a wrong practice and you should not do like this. The hon. Minister should think over it. You will only tell us that we can have your say and you consider it. I have already said that you do everything for your own benefit. Had you tried to improve this Bill with good intention no opposition Member would have any objection to it. We are prepared to support your Bill fully but you should reconsider it. You are going to reduce the number of Post Offices in the country, particularly in the rural areas. Day before yesterday, I had mentioned here that the Prime Minister's letter from Delhi took 25 days to reach Shantiniketan, Calcutta. If this is the fate of the Prime Minister's letter, what will happen to people like us and to the rural people, where you propose to stop opening of new post offices. How will they receive their mail? On top of it, you are going to start interception of letters. This will delay the delivery of post by months. This is not proper. You must give serious consideration to this matter.

If Section 16 is deleted, then we will support the Bill and not oppose it. If more Post Offices are opened in the rural areas, then the postal delays can be checked, and the people can be benefited from the improvement in the situation. If you are thinking of the expenses, then it can be said that nothing can be done without it. I want to request you that for the good of the nation, and for the benefit of the poor, letters must be delivered in time. Whenever our unity or integrity is threatened, or our country is faced with any danger, we, who belong to the Opposition, always support you, and for such good measures we will continue to support you.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN (Bamer) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill, 1986 introduced by the hon. Minister. This Bill has been based on the recommendations of the 38th Report of the Law Commission and the amendment of Section 26 in the Bill has been objected to by the Members of the Opposition, who want the said amendment to be deleted. I am in favour of this amendment. First I want to state that though the Congress Party has continuously been in power in this country, yet there was a time when the Janata Party was ruling

the country. It was a coalition of several parties. I want to ask why did they not amend the laws during that time? Had these amendments been made during the Janata Party's regime, we could have understood your feelings. But it seems that you forget your responsibilities when you are in power and when you are in the Opposition you accuse the Government of being irresponsible. This is not proper. It is true that the amendments which we are going to make were long overdue. The present law was enacted in 1898, while there was British rule in our country, and it is for this reason that terms like 'United Kingdom' and 'His Majesty' were present in it. Such words, if they occur in other statutes, must be appropriately amended. The language of the legislations must not be such as to connote that we are still under the British rule. On reading those laws, it does not appear that we are an independent nation. The fact that we are going to amend these laws after so many years of independence, is a sign of our weakness. We ought to have brought the said amendments much earlier. If amendments are brought to delete such words in the other legislations, we shall welcome such amendments. We are not governed by United Kingdom any more. Therefore, words like 'His Majesty' cannot be used. I would suggest that you should examine all the laws, and wherever such amendments are required, the needful should be done. The present amendment was already long overdue and this system of functioning is not proper. None of our laws should smack of the British Raj, which may imply that we are still being Governed by the British Government.

My second submission is in regard to section 26. I wholeheartedly support the intention with which you are going to amend section 26 under the present Bill and I think it is very essential to do so. In fact, it is an essential step for any democratic Government. It has been clearly mentioned in this section that :

[English]

"The Central Government or the State Government or any officer specially authorised in this behalf by the Central or the State Government, may, if satisfied that it is necessary or expedient

so to do in the interest of public safety or tranquility, the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any offence, or on the occurrence of any public emergency, by order in writing, direct that any postal articles or class or description of Postal articles in the course of transmission by post, shall be intercepted or detained or shall be disposed of in such a manner as the authority issuing the order may direct”.

[Translation]

If there is any correspondence, which is anti-national and which incites people, then it becomes our duty to intercept such correspondence and frame necessary laws in that regard. If we do not intercept such letters, and take the required action against them, do not watch anti-national activities, these things can prove dangerous for us later on. If Pakistan indulges in activities which are dangerous for us, or if there is correspondence of such kind, then it is essential to intercept, check and keep a watch on such correspondence for security purposes and also seize it, when required. Hence, the steps taken in this regard, and the provisions made for it, are correct. Though equal rights have been granted to all in our Constitution, yet there are provisions for preventive Detention and our Government as well as the Janata Party Government have made use of it. What I want to say is that such provisions have to be made for the security of the country and because we want to maintain peace and democracy in the country, it is, therefore, essential to frame such laws. Hence, the legislation made in this connection is proper. However, the provisions relating to punishment must be made more stringent. In regard to mail theft, provision is there for 10 years punishment but I want that this punishment should be made even more stringent, as it is an essential service. Hence, whatever steps are taken for the protection of this service, are justified, but our people in the rural areas should also get the benefit of it.

Sir, an example was given here just now that the letter which was sent by

the Prime Minister was delayed considerably. The reason for this delay was that the address was wrongly written. Nowadays, in the rural areas, it takes 4 to 5 days or even a week for a letter to reach the rural areas. Therefore, I would request you to make such arrangements that the letters reach the rural areas in time and early. If air service is required for the purpose, it may be utilised. Similarly, if public road transport is available, the same may also be used. Where both these means are not available and private transport is available then the same may be utilised accordingly so that letters may reach the far-flung rural areas in time and fast.

Sir, I would like to make another submission in this connection. Earlier, mail sorting used to be done in the train itself but now these sorters have been removed, and this system done away with. Due to this, the sorting of mail is being delayed by one day and consequently, the delivery of letters is also delayed accordingly. I would like to ask you as to why was it essential to put an end to the sorting system?

Sir, our Postal services must never be delayed. The population of our desert areas is also increasing now-a-days. In view of this, the expansion these services has become essential because we are marching towards progress. The Central Government has put a ban on the opening of any new post office branch and it will create hindrance in the development of our region. Our rural economy is making good progress today. The rural areas have made considerable progress and there is a wave of awareness among the people on account of the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the nationalisation of the banks. But the Postal Department and the Ministry of Communications are still lagging behind. I would, therefore, request, not to impose any ban in respect of such services. Of course, ban should be imposed on the non-essential expenditure but if some expenditure is to be incurred for the development of the rural areas, it must not be restricted. If this is done, we shall not tolerate it. Although villages with Panchayat headquarters have become quite populous today, new Post Office branches are not being opened. In such a situation how can there be any development? If we do not

make progress and undertake development works, how can we keep pace with the modern world and enter the 21st century.

15.00 hrs.

Sir, in my Constituency of Jaisalmer district there is no office of the Superintendent of Post Offices. This is the largest district in Rajasthan and its population is also increasing. The Indra Gandhi Canal has also reached there. But as the population there is short by 0.2 per cent of the prescribed norms, they are not opening the office. They say that they cannot change the norms for it.

Can you not change the norms? The people of Jaisalmer have to come to Jodhpur to avail of this facility. These facilities are not available even in the District headquarters. These facilities should be provided there.

Therefore, what is required today is to up grade the Post Offices, where necessary. The Government should take necessary steps in this direction and also take active interest in the development of the Post Offices and render assistance in every possible manner.

[English]

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN (Kishanganj) : Sir, I approach the Bill with some mixed feelings. There are parts of the Bill which are purely technical and in a sense which update the existing law on the subject and we cannot possibly have any objection to updating the enactment.

But there is an aspect or two which I would like to place before the House and the first question that arises in my mind is this very concept of exclusiveness. We find that in many advanced countries today, the conveyance or carriage of letters or documents is being liberalised perhaps because only the government machinery cannot cope with the growing burden. Therefore, there is a tendency to allow a certain degree of privatisation of these facilities. I am sure that the hon. Minister is fully aware of the details of such facilities that are available in many European countries. And I do not see any reason why with a growing economy and with the established fact that the Postal Department is not in a position today to provide the neces-

sary services and meet the full requirements thereof, we insist on this concept of exclusiveness. That is a very basic point that I want to place before the House when we approach this Bill.

We must try to review the position. Why is it necessary; is it laid down by the heavens above; has it come down from a holy book that only the Government machinery must carry the postal articles? It is not. It is a service and there was a time when the Government and Administration alone could provide that service. Now a time has come when many private organisations—undoubtedly to be regulated strictly by the Government—are in a position to provide this service. Then why should we not open the doors?

I come from a rural constituency and if I may say this, this is my first contact with the rural India. Among the very few things that the rural folk ask for are postal facilities. They say, "You cannot do very much for us Mr. M.P.; please get us a post office." And I go on writing letters. For the last one year I have been writing to the Department, to the Minister and even at the lower levels. There is absolutely no positive response. There is a stereotyped answer that I receive, which says, "There is a ban". And that is that! Even the norms that have been laid down by the Government have not been fulfilled and are not being fulfilled with regard to rural areas. The norms have never been implemented with regard to scarcely populated regions. I now receive letters from many States other than Bihar that even the established post offices are being closed down and these include sub-post offices or whatever other categories that you may be having. All these are being closed down. May be, the Department is working on some sort of a 'super plan' of rationalisation. We have not been taken into confidence about this. So, I do not know anything about this super plan. But the fact is that some Panchayats, with a population of 10,000 have no other means of communication with the rest of the country. You are not giving them telephones. Telegrams, in any case, reach nowhere. In any case, they have to be communicated only through the postal system. So, in that case, the only means of communication available to them is the

postal system and the postal facility is being denied to such large units as Gram Panchayats with 10,000 population. I wrote a letter to find out the number of Panchayats in my constituency alone which did not have a postal facility. I thought that may be the list will run into a few lines, but Mr. Chairman, the reply listing the names of the Gram Panchayats alone covered the whole page. 1/3rd of the Panchayats simply do not have postal facility. In my view, they come fully within the purview of the existing norms, but while we have money to waste for *Tamashás*, while even the Prime Minister is supposed to take note of non-essential expenditure and give a direction to the Government, to the other Departments, to our colleagues, to cut down non-essential expenditure, but postal facilities cannot be provided because there is a ban! I cannot understand this logic. All right, if you cannot provide the facility, why do you want to keep this exclusive right to yourself? If you cannot do it, then allow others to do it.

So, Mr. Chairman, this is my first basic point.

The second basic point that I want to make is, with regard to this Clause 16, which substitutes a new Section for Section 26.

Once upon a time, when I was learning English, I was told that there are two kinds of verbs—one which require an object to have its full meaning and the other which does not require an object. Here, this Clause uses a phrase—a substantial phrase—that in certain circumstances, the Government may “direct”. It does not say “direct whom”. Who is to carry out the directions? It is an absurdity. I simply cannot understand it. Unless the Government have deliberately obscured this point I do not know what their intention are? In such a situation, are they going to direct the police authorities, or are they going to direct the army authorities or are they going to direct the postal authorities? I would suggest that the hon. Minister should make it very clear what is the urgency of interceptions. I know this, it is, happening all over the country, that even in times of peace, the police officer goes to the sorting office, stops the sorting work and takes away whatever he likes. I allege that this is

happening all over the country. You are going to regularise it; You are going to legalise it by keeping this point obscure. Let that point be made absolutely clear that the direction in such circumstances shall be given or shall be addressed only to postal authorities and to non else. I hope and I can feel the winds of fascism that is slowly blowing across our land and I also do hope that we have not yet come to the point where this sort of interception can be done by the police forces or the paramilitary forces or the army. Now what can be intercepted by the police authorities. What have you said there? Any postal article can be intercepted or any class or description of postal articles can be intercepted and there are no guidelines as to what constitutes a class.

SHRI ATAUR REHMAN (Barpeta):  
Except love letters.

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN:  
Exactly. I do not know. May be tomorrow, you may say that all letters addressed to the Janata Party can be intercepted, we know, you may do it tomorrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: Love letters can be confiscated.

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN:  
Obviously. How do you do that? This is an absurd thing. This proposition is far too general, far too overwhelming in its connotation and I am not imputing any motive at this stage to the Government, but it remains to be seen what they do in practice. All I am pointed out, Mr. Chairman, is that the loose phraseology of this section, leaves the field wide open for misuse, for an excessive use of the authority which is going to be vested by the Parliament in the postal system. Therefore, they must make it very clear, that this clause will not mean a social group, this clause will not mean a particular institution, but this will mean only a person or an individual. And it cannot possibly mean that all members of a definable group shall come under its purview. By one stick you should not beat all of them. It should be made very clear; but this power, I am afraid, is likely to be misused one time or the other, and used against the democratic rights of our people, and it is going to be yet another

step towards an authoritarian regime which, as I said, I see creeping on our land.

I have no other important points to make. I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity given to me to speak out of turn.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara) : Mr. Chairman Sir. I support the Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill introduced by the hon. Minister. The Bill is based on the Report of the Law Commission. Certain new sections have been incorporated in it. Just now an hon. Member, Shri Shahabuddin expressed his views. I think his criticism of this Bill is not justified because the provisions will be used against those persons and articles which endanger the security and tranquility of the country. This provision is to deal with such persons who send such articles from one place to another. This type of provision is especially needed in a state of emergency in the country. Presently such a situation does not exist and the Government has no intention to open the letters and parcels indiscriminately. Shri Shahabuddin should not sense any danger, nor the Janata Party people are so dangerous as to attract this provision. This provision has been made for the terrorists, secessionists and such other people who endanger the unity and integrity of the country and I find it quite justified.

I also want to repeat one point made by Shri Shahabuddin. Many officers bear personal enmity and they can misuse this power. Therefore, some provision should be made to prevent its misuse. It will be good if some provision is incorporated whereby the intention of the Government is accomplished and at the same time public is also saved from any harassment and the common man also does not sense any danger.

Shri Tulsī Ram has objected to Section 16-A and has stated that he is ready to support the Bill if this section is withdrawn but this section is very essential. It will not be correct to condemn every law framed by the British Government only because it was framed by them. The British Government was also a Government and it had enacted this law to be applied in a state of emergency. It applies to every nation and not to the

British Government alone. It is possible that a situation may arise in our country which may warrant such type of law. There should, therefore, be no objection to the enactment of this law. At the same time it is also necessary to use it properly. If the law is used properly I think no one will have any objection to it.

A provision relating to revenue has also been included in the Bill. There are many companies which make advance deposits with the Post Offices or the Department annually and then they use the franking machine for one year. But there can be people in the Department who misuse that franking machine and which can result in loss of revenue to the Department. There should, therefore, be full arrangements to prevent such a thing. Inspectors should be there to prevent this type of misuse of authority or leakage of revenue.

As regards the revenue leakage, I would submit to the hon. Minister that only three years imprisonment has been provided for this offence whereas in some other provisions life imprisonment or 10 years imprisonment has been provided. I think it is a big anomaly. You have made provision for very less punishment whereas the leakage of revenue in this Department is massive and this provision will not be effective. I think that the Department people are not so vigilant and alert as to check this leakage of revenue. In this connection I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to how many cases of revenue leakage under this law have been detected and what action has been taken? If he has got this information then the hon. Minister may tell in his reply about the action taken in this connection.

Other questions are also involved. Money-orders are sent from one place to another and several of them are sent to rural areas but there the people remain unaware of them. The labourers who go to far off places to work send money through money-orders to their families but they do not receive that money. If some complaint is lodged by them, the enquiry takes two to three years. The guilty persons are not punished because the long time involved weakens the case. Therefore, there should be some provision in this law to find out whether all the money-orders and other



costly parcels reach the addressees or not? Your Department detects only a small number of such cases and action in those cases is often delayed. Most of the guilty persons are acquitted and no action is taken against them. This system, therefore, should be properly regularised.

Similarly, there is Section 26 which is as follows and about which Shri Shahabuddin also made a mention :-

[English]

"The Central Government or the State Government or any officer specially authorised in this behalf by the Central of the State Government, may, if satisfied that it is necessary or expedient so to do in the interests of public safety or tranquility, the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or Public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any public emergency, by order in writing, direct that any postal article or class or description of postal articles in the course of transmission by post, shall be intercepted or detained or shall be disposed of in such manner as the authority issuing the order, may direct..

[Translation]

This question is very serious and you will have to think seriously over it. The Post Offices on their own, will not get the concerned information and the military or the police will not supply the information to the Postal Department. A proper search of the dangerous persons receiving such articles should be made. The Postal Department does not have its own intelligence wing to find out that such articles are reaching dangerous people who can endanger the unity and integrity of the country. Therefore, the above mentioned provision is a must. Safeguards should be provided in the Bill to allay the apprehensions of this people who think that this provision will be used against those persons who have been working for the unity, integrity, safety and independence of the country. It is necessary to provide this safeguard.

In the same way I want to say that it will not be right to take any action in the matter of money-orders, payments, letters etc. coming from foreign countries unless it is felt that they are dangerous. Similarly, you have assumed power to recover an article or valuable article under the Land Revenue Act if it is delivered without receiving payment. But your employees and officers should also be careful that the article is delivered against the payment due and if it is not done then the person who has not acted according to the law is punished. Such employees need to be supervised. You should make provisions in this connection also so that such mistakes are not repeated continuously.

I want to say one more thing. Just now an hon. Member said that you have closed down the R.M.S. Department. Previously sorting was done in the train itself but now it is not so. Now as a result of the sorting at different places it takes more time and delivery of the dak is also delayed. This step has rendered many persons unemployed. Why do you not continue the old system so that efficiency is also not affected. The previous system made letters and parcels available in time and no problem was there. The Government should, therefore, certainly reconsider this matter.

I would like to speak about the small Post Offices, started in the villages. The persons working there are not given even minimum wages by you. You give them only Rs. 130 to Rs. 135 a month whereas the minimum wage is Rs. 11 per day. If such a situation prevails in a Government Department, then others also get encouragement that when even the Government is not paying minimum wages to its employees who work for 24 hours, we should also adopt the same practice. If you go to a village, you will find that employees of the Post Office work from morning till late in the evening but get very meagre salary. Therefore, there should be some definite arrangement in this connection.

There are a number of agencies which deliver documents, bills of exchange and valuable articles from one place to another although legally they cannot do it. In spite of it, a number of transport companies carry

bills of exchange from one place to another, thereby causing loss of revenue to your Department. You have not made any provision to check the leakage so that your Department may get more revenue. I hope that the hon. Minister would give a thought to it to get the leakage plugged so that the Department may get more revenue.

There are several big villages which do not have Post Offices. Post Offices in almost all the Panchayat Headquarters have been opened but there are villages under a Panchayat which have a population of more than 2 to 3 thousand. As per your rules, you open a Post Office for a population of 2,000. There is, therefore, need to open Post Offices in big villages under a Panchayat besides the Post Office at the Headquarters. I hope you would give attention to it and provide better services to the people by regulating postal services. You should take such steps as may increase the efficiency of the postal services. To my mind, the reputation of the postal service in India has been deteriorating day by day. This is because of lack of monitoring due to which people indulge in bungling and take undue advantage of it. We should endeavour to restore the same efficiency in the postal services which was there in the past. The Postal Department is the biggest public utility organisation in the country and it should be streamlined so that it may serve the nation in a better way.

With these words, I support the Bill.

SHRI KAMMODILAL JATAV (Morena): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill, presented by the hon. Minister of Communications.

Shri Vyas has already spoken a lot on the amending Bill. He is a good orator and there is not much left to say about it. I want to give two or three suggestions. The Postmen used to get uniforms in the past but at present they do not get any uniforms. Therefore, I suggest that the employees who deliver letters should at least be given uniforms so that one can know that they are the employees of the Post Office.

Secondly, I have seen that the Post Offices situated in the rural areas are housed in rented buildings and the owners

of those buildings try to get them vacated after one or two years. I suggest that the hon. Minister of Communications should get the Post Offices housed in their own buildings.

I also request that the letters should reach the people in time. This is my suggestion.

With these words, I support this Bill.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we will go to the 'Private Members' Business. Shri Piyus Tiraky.

15.30 hrs.

#### COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

##### Twenty-Fifth Report

[English]

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY (Alipurduara): Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House do agree with the Twenty-fifth Report of the Committee on 'Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 12th November 1986."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is: "That this House do agree with the Twenty-fifth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 12th November, 1986."

*The motion was adopted*

15.31 hrs.

#### RESOLUTION RE-GROWTH OF RURAL ECONOMY—CONTD.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House will now take up further discussion of the