

[Shri Ajoy Biswas]

purposes. The top bureaucrats go round the foreign countries and enjoy at the cost of the Exchequer. Some of the officers have their vested interest and they have got some links with the traders.

Another point I would like to make. That is about the Darjeeling tea. Not only about the Darjeeling tea but also about the other varieties produced throughout the country 51 to 52 per cent bushes are about more than 50 years old. So, my main point is to develop the tea-gardens, and the tea plantations and all these things. But there is a total failure on the part of the Tea Board in this respect.

Now, I come to Tripura. There are about 40 to 45 tea gardens and most of the tea-gardens are sick. The Government have decided to take over the sick tea-gardens and to run them with the workers cooperatives. Already 10 tea-gardens have been taken over by the Government, in Tripura. What the funny thing is that our Government has approached the Tea-Board for marketing all the tea—about 1 lakh kg. of tea. But now it is not possible to sell without the help of the Tea-Board. That is lying in Tripura. My point is this. I shall request the Government not to increase the cess from Rs. 8.80 upto 50 paise because that shall have serious effect on tea industry; that shall have serious effect on the price of tea. So, our main demand is to nationalise the tea industry and without that the problem of tea industry will not be solved. I shall request the Government to withdraw the Bill and bring forward a Bill that will nationalise the tea-gardens in the country.

13.00 hrs.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned for lunch to meet again at 1400 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for lunch till Fourteen if the clock.

The Lok Sabha reassembled after lunch at Five Minutes past Fourteen of the clock

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

TEA AMENDMENT BILL—Contd.

[English]

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Idukki) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise to support this Bill which is brought forward for raising the tea cess from 8 paise to a maximum of 50 paise. Certain amount of flexibility is allowed for the Government in this Bill. The Government, by notification, can decide the quantum of cess. So, I hope the Hon. Minister will not use this flexibility to the detriment of the growers.

From 8 paise the limit is increased upto 50 paise. I hope you will increase in the first instance. Only 4 paise that is, 50% and not more than that. Since the authority is vested in the proper hands, I have no objection to the flexibility.

Coming to the new provision in the Bill that is, Clause 28 (a) which empowers the Tea Board to write off a certain amount—which may be sometimes required also—I do not object to that. But writing off any amount should be done with the prior approval of the Government. In such cases if it is so warranted, the prior approval of the Government should be obtained.

There is an additional proviso where it is said that in some cases, in individual cases, the Government can delegate the Board. That is, for writing off certain amount. They need not come to the Government at all. I beg to disagree with this. In all the cases, whatever may be the amount and whatever may be the reasons, for writing off, each individual case should be brought forward before the Government and prior sanction of the Government should be obtained. Otherwise that will lead to mis-use of funds. I hope the Minister will take note of this.

Coming to the performance of the last year—I am saying from the report of the Commerce Ministry—it is true that our export earnings have increased. The increase in export earnings is due to the higher unit value realisation in the last two years. But there is no increase in the export quantity-wise.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : It is the other way.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : I am quoting from the last year's report.

"The increase in the export earnings for the last two years was attributable mainly to rise in world prices of tea which enabled higher unit value realisation".

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : That is 1983-84.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Yes, that is for the last two years. I am coming to the current year. In the first half of the current year also there is a decrease in the quantity of export.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : In the current year the position is that we have exported 222 million kgs. as against 217 million kgs. of last year

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : That is the latest figure; I do not have the latest figure; I stand corrected. Therefore, the export earning has also increased I suppose.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : The unit value has gone down. That is why instead of Rs. 740 crores of export we earned Rs. 711.90 crores.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Thank you Sir. That is the latest figure. I stand corrected.

I am happy that quantumwise this year there is increase even though for the last two years quantumwise there was a decline.

In this connection, I have to give some suggestions for increasing of our exports further. I understand that our tea has a good market in the world, especially the Darjeeling tea. I know, it is the best in the world and we should be proud of that.

Coming to South, the Nilgiri tea is also comparatively good, but the tea gardens in the South other than the Nilgiri

gardens are producing tea of inferior quality. The South Indian tea industry is facing a crisis. The cost of production of the South Indian tea is higher. You know the obvious reasons. These are higher wages, DA linked to the cost of living, distance from the collieries, transportation of the coal etc. All these contribute to the higher cost of production, but at the same time, the quality is inferior, and that fetches a low price.

I also want to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister, that the restrictions imposed on export last year were detrimental to the South India tea industry. There are special problems for the South India tea industry, because of low quality, higher cost of production and low productivity and all that. Last year we had imposed the control of the minimum export price. Even though the minimum export price has actually been removed now, it went to the detriment of the South Indian tea industry. What happened because of this minimum export price? The South India tea, whose price is otherwise low because of the low quality, could not be exported to the traditional markets. The traditional markets are UK, the Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, Canada, Australia etc. Because of the minimum export price, we could not export tea to these countries. In this gap of our nonperformance, Sri Lanka came in and they exported tea to these countries and we lost these markets. Therefore, it is very important that we should take steps to recapture these markets. Minimum export price is, of course, removed, but the damage is already done. These markets should be recaptured by effective action from Commerce Ministry.

Again, there is a tea marketing control order. I agree with the purpose of that order. The tea marketing control order is also detrimental to the interests of the South Indian tea industry. After the imposition of this order, the blenders are mostly keeping away from the auction centres in South. These blenders also bargain in the lowest price. But the margin they get is not passed on to the consumers. Thus, buyers are at an advantage and the growers are at a disadvantage. I wanted to bring this position to your notice.

[Prof. P. J. Kurien]

With regard to the development activities of the Tea Board, one hon. Member has already mentioned that it is not satisfactory. The Tea Board is not extending its activities throughout the country. The developmental activities conducted by the Tea Board in the South are negligible. Since the inception of the various schemes the total amount sanctioned for the tea plantation scheme was Rs. 1855 lakhs and the amount spent in the South was Rs. 130 lakhs only, that is only seven per cent. For replantation also, only 14 per cent of the total amount spent is used for development in South. It is the same story for tea machinery, hire-purchase and so on. The total amount spent for development of tea by the Tea Board in South is only 14 per cent of the total amount spent. This clearly shows that the Tea Board is not functioning properly. There are so many reasons for that. One of the reasons is the distance between the Southern tea estates and the Calcutta Office of the Tea Board. Therefore a suggestion was made earlier that there should be a regional office of the Tea Board in the South and the Government of India was pleased to sanction a regional office at Coimbatore. This office was sanctioned two years ago but I am sorry to say that even today, it is a non-starter. It is not functioning.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Professor, you please conclude.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Give me some more time so that I can speak about your State.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : No, no. As the Presiding Officer, I am representing all the States here.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : As I have been saying, Coimbatore Office is still a non-starter. I would request the hon. Minister to take immediate steps in this regard. Sufficient funds should be given to the office in Coimbatore so that they can start inviting applications and processing the applications. Assistance should be decided then and there at the Coimbatore Office. Then only will it help increasing production. In south, there are a number of small tea growers. It is not

like the Northern areas and West Bengal. Out of a total of 30,000 small tea growers, 20,000 are from Kerala.

(Interruptions)

These small growers should get special assistance from the Tea Board. The Tea Board is not having a proper programme for assisting these small holders. They should chalk out special programmes for them so that the growers can be benefited.

I would like to mention one point more regarding tea research. Tea research is being conducted by the Tea Research Association in Northern India and by Upasi in the Southern India. I know that there is a proposal from the Government to change it. It should be reviewed. If they are doing it in the best and the most proper way, then they should be allowed to continue the research and it should not be taken away, just for no reason.

I have to say what some more points, but due to lack of time I have to stop and with these words I support the Bill.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI (Howrah) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Bill with some observations and suggestions. The hon. Minister is dynamic. He is also very judicious. I shall appeal to the hon. Minister that he should judiciously examine certain parts of this Bill.

First of all, this Bill seeks the sanction of the House to increase the cess from 8 paise per Kg. to look after the overall expenditure of the Tea Board. The Minister at the outset has stated that the scope of the debate on this Bill is limited. I would like to differ with him respectfully on this issue, in the sense that the scope is very large indeed when you are bringing the entire activities of the Tea Board within the scope of this cess.

As the time is short, I do not want to go into details. I will make just a few points for the consideration of the hon. Minister. The first point is with regard to powers that you would like to give to the Tea Board authorities, to write off loans. Please do not do it. I request you. If

you are thinking of making some amendments or some provisions, you do it. This same Parliament will have to debate on this issue within a year or so. There are a lot of scandals about corruption in terms of writing off the loans. Please don't do it because the composition of Tea Board is such that even if you wish judiciously, they cannot get out of the vested interests linked with it. This is my first submission.

Secondly, the cess which you like to increase to 50 paise, six times more than the usual rate, will definitely create a sensation in the tea industry circles. I would, therefore, suggest to the hon. Minister that while he imposes the cess on respective quality of the tea—I do not want to question your 50 paise, nor do I want to oppose it—please do take the tea assessee into confidence from time to time and at least they should also be given an opportunity to express their views while he imposes the cess from time to time otherwise *suo motu*, at their own discretion, if the Tea Board goes on doing it, it may not create a good atmosphere for the productivity in the industry.

I would now deal with the most important point for the benefit of the hon. Minister and for the benefit of the hon. Members of this House. This is a point for which I am keen to participate in this debate, and I came for this only.

Sir, the Tea Trading Corporation of India (TTCI) was formed with the sole objective of exporting tea outside. If the hon. Minister goes into the merits of this organisation, he will find a pathetic scene. STC is also under his Ministry and TTCI is also under his Ministry. But STC has not given for the last one year even one kilogram of export through TTCI whereas they are engaging sub-contractors from the private sector. The fate is so horrible that the TTCI is about to wind up the whole show. Why it is being done when your own organisation is there? That is what is happening.

So far as the Soviet tea is concerned, the TTCI's selling is only three per cent. Why don't you make it at least ten per cent? I do not say cent per cent because

you have many other agencies also, but the TTCI should have at least ten per cent share in it which is only three per cent. In the matter of procurement of exports, as I have said, STC is deliberately trying to see that TTCI gets killed. I know there was an inquiry about the corruption in TTCI and for that he had taken enough action against some officials. I do not want to go into those matters but the organisation as such is now dying.

I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister another important point. Under the same Government there are two public sector units. One is called Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd. It has a tea wing. Another unit is called Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd. This also has a tea wing. These are very profit earning tea wings. Balmer Lawrie is being looked after by the Ministry of Petroleum and Andrew Yule is being looked after by the Ministry of Industry because of their engineering activities. My submission is why not the tea wing of Balmer Lawrie and the tea wing of Andrew Yule be operated through TTCI under the command and jurisdiction of this Ministry? Why it is being delayed for years and years, I do not know. Those who manage the affairs, hardly understand what tea is. That is why they always give step-motherly treatment to these unit. That is my third suggestion for consideration.

In regard to the tea gardens, Bipin Pal Das Ji has rightly stated that the productivity and the general production and growth in Terai and Duars areas of North Bengal have gone up comparatively better than that of Kachhar and other areas of Assam. Factually speaking, the Tea Research Unit will have to look for new plantation programme in view of the climatic changes. Because of deforestation, in many parts the rain water is not being unlogged. The result is that in some parts of Duars and Terai—don't take it otherwise, I am not accusing any government—very soon you will find a serious crisis—of course, Tiraky Ji will also agree with me—for expansion of the plantation programmes in that area. So, if you are serious to see that tea plantation is further expanded, tea production is further increased, you have to have a corporate

[Shri Priya Ranjan Das Muni]

body with the representatives of the Ministry of Forestry or Environment, Ministry of Commerce and the NABARD. If they give a comprehensive proposal for the expansion programme taking all things into account, things will be all right. On the one hand if deforestation will continue, much more bright and sunshine will come, water will not be logged and even if it is logged, it will not go away. Then tea will not grow in that area after 5 years. I am from that area. From my boyhood, I have stayed in that area. It is very difficult to see the fate after 10 years. These two things you should take care of.

Lastly, I submit that the financing authority is not in your hand, I know. It is in the hand of the public sector banks. Why not this financial authority be a definite and a regular statutory authority? Let it be within the Finance Ministry, but in coordination with you. You know what is happening in Bengal today. I hope the hon. Members will agree. The United Bank of India is deliberately determined to see that the Tea Gardens of Bengal must go into the hand of the blackmarketeers through their third-hand channels. These poor people might have made profit in one year and loss in another year. I know at last about 10 gardens. In the boom period the machinery got broken because they were old machinery. They went to United Bank. The United Bank through their corridor, created some dalals as agents. If they are not satisfied they will not get the machinery advance in time. The result is, they could not manage the cash loss. Suddenly UBI Chairman goes from Delhi. He is posing to be the only honest man in the country and all others are thieves and decoits. He is trying to deal with them in such a manner, on the one hand he is giving them, on the other hand his dalals are waiting outside to grab the garden at throw-away price. This is a pitiable condition. I pleaded this case every time. I wrote letters. I don't represent any tea garden. I have no vested interest in it. Tea industry as a whole in Bengal will utterly collapse if this attitude goes on year after year. I am not talking in any parochial terms. Many

people have said that Tea Board should be shifted to Gauhati. Mr. Minister I humbly submit and I respectfully submit this to you, and to the other hon. Members. Calcutta is a city where people never talk of provincialism, caste, creed and religion. We have no shiv sena like Bombay. We have not got some other Sena like Ahmedabad. We have no other corporate city. Calcutta is not only for Indian people, but Calcutta is free for everybody in the world. They can go and settle there, thanks to its culture. Tea Board is in Calcutta because the port is there. Communication network is there. Tea Board should not even remotely thought of to be shifted or changed. Some of the other things you can give to somebody else. I do not mind. Tea Board's development project should be spelt out in the House. I request the Minister while replying to explain out of this, what are the new programmes of the tea Board in terms of modernisation and other development works in the Tea Gardens.

The point of rice supply was referred to by other Members. I knew it. We know the poor quality of rice; we know how it is distributed to workers. I know how horrible it is. Always third-hand dealing is going on every day. Mr. Piyus Tiraky is here; he is from a different party. You visit the place and see the things yourself. You see the condition of the workers, where they live, what they eat, and when I see the rice they take, I shed my tears. Third rate quality is supplied to them. Best quality is taken away by some others and only the third rate quality is supplied to them and they have to eat it, digest it. If the trade union leader comes to defend them, the police comes and shoots them. We always think here of the Textile labour, coalmine workers, P & T workers etc. But these conditions of the tea garden workers are always forgotten. You should go into it. Otherwise you cannot understand under what conditions they live. These are some of the points of mine. You please consider it in the right perspective and take appropriate steps.

With these words I conclude. I hope after passing the Bill the Minister will take into account and judiciously consider the

viewpoints which I have made. In the end I would request him kindly to see that the TTCI develops more and more. Please don't allow it to die.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY (Alipurduara):
 Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I cannot support this amending Bill because it is a sudden jump from 8 to 50 paise at a time. It will not hamper the Management or the Tea Board or anybody else, but it will hamper the poor labourers. Always the pressure is coming only on the labourers. Much workload is extracted from them to balance this money. What they do is not office work or desk work. It is a manual work. 8-hour duty is something very much for them. It is 8-hour manual work. How can you imagine it? He is not a machine. He has to work for 8 hours continuously. But if there is no working hours, the management will give over work-load to the labourers and it is very difficult to fulfil that also. The employment avenues will totally be stopped because these people have come. Now, the Indian planters have entered into the field for profit because tea market in the world is good. They are not actually the original planters. They have no love for the tea bushes. Some changes in the plantation and re-plantation are not being done by them. They only know plucking and selling it because it has a good market. Tea garden should get good nourishment. Manures are needed for a good growth. Irrigation is also needed. Replantation is also needed. Now, the capitalists and the Indian people have entered because the market is good. In this position, it is quite a different industry and it depends on the production and the weather also because you cannot manage irrigation everywhere. If the weather is all right, season is all right you will get better crop. But once you tax so much per kg., perhaps it is too much and you must think over it. It should not get hampered and it should not be a losing concern as other industry, as you have public sector undertakings. So, don't try to make it a losing concern. Many of the small gardeners will try to get rid of it and perhaps would think of getting money and their capital may be shifted to some other industries. If the tea garden gets sick or any sort of mishap is happened to it, the major employment

opportunity is lost to these people who are illiterate, especially the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes people. They are illiterate and they have been till now kept like slaves. There are no chances of education for them; even primary education is not there. Because they are thinking that if the labourers get education, they will not be willing to work in the tea garden. That is the motive. Now, after 40 years of our independence, you must think of equality of the people. How can they progress? The children of the labourers are given only labour work. They are not even allowed to give a chance to the office work, even if they are qualified for clerical job or maistry or such other work. For these posts, they get people from outside. There should be reservation of 80-90% for the workers' children in the offices right from tea garden to the office, and even upto the Board itself. You will not find a single person, man or woman or anybody coming from the working class, labour class, even if they are qualified, in the office of the Tea Board or in the management itself. Naturally, unemployment problem is there because they are illiterate and they do not know any other work. These tea companies are making profit. Subject to correction, in 1985, you have made Rs. 745 crores of foreign exchange and this money is coming to Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and such other cities. But why don't you look after this area for providing cottage industries measures or some other ancillary measures just to give employment to these people and to have a decentralised sector. They are giving so much money to the country. At least, you must look back to their conditions also. I am very happy that a person like Mr. Shiv Shanker has come and he is looking after it. I hope there must be some change in the conditions of tea garden workers. At least, they should live as human beings and they can come to the level of other communities. They are supposed to be most-neglected people. They are kept neglected because then only, they will be willing to work. That is the impression created by these employers. So, they are forced, because in the beginning, perhaps you know the history, they have been brought from Chhota Nagpur, Santhal Parganas, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Now, still those

[Shri Piyus Tiraky]

conditions are continuing. They are still living like that. It is the look out of nobody. They are only making profit. The management is getting pressure from the Government. The industry is itself in danger. It is in a very difficult position.

You can pass this Bill because you have a brute majority. But after passing this Bill, please see that the interest of tea labourers is served and that they are given education and other things. Earlier, Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsi has already said that the tea garden labourers should be supplied tooth-paste, soap, kerosene oil, sugar and other materials. The tea garden labourers are the only people who are not being provided with this facility of getting essential commodities. All other workers in the country are getting these facilities. What is the reason for this ?

The tea garden labourers should be provided with free education. It will take even 200 or 300 years for the present tea labourers to come up educationally to the level of the present society.

Tea industry is not a losing industry. You are making lot of profit. I wish this industry should flourish. You can earn not only Rs. 700 crores or Rs. 800 crores but a thousand hundred crores. But, at the same time, all those who are working in tea industry should also flourish. We are also thinking of having a Pay Commission for the office workers of the tea industry. You are giving them only Rs. 2/- after getting three hours work. They are also Indians and their interests must be kept in view. This is my request. Tea garden workers should be given incentive. It is the only industry which is giving you the money. These people working in the tea industry must be respected as free Indians and socialist Indians.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar) : Sir, I rise to support this Bill. Two leaves and a bud is a sweet word in our part of the country. Specially I come from that part of India where there are 113 gardens. 35 of them are sick in my Constituency and we produce 30 million Kg. of tea per year.

This Bill which has been brought today if I remember right, was recommended by the Tea Board in 1982 when I happened to represent the Parliament in the Tea Board. When Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsi raised a point regarding discussion of the Bill with industry. Tea Board is represented by consumers, trade unions, industrialists as well as the Government of India. This Bill has been duly passed and recommended by the Tea Board. This Bill has come after it has been thoroughly debated in a forum called Tea Board. I do not think there should be any objection to this 50 paise. The money should be raised by this Bill and this will be spent for the development of the tea industry, for its research as well as for raising its production.

But I would like to urge upon the hon. Minister of Commerce why is it that for the last three years the Tea Board is without a permanent Chairman ? There is ad hoc Chairman working there and no permanent Chairman has been selected as yet. The sooner the permanent Chairman is appointed, the better. I urge upon the hon. Minister to look into this particular point.

Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsi, a colleague of mine and of the same party, has objected to the demand of shifting of Tea Board to Assam. I also think that the Tea Board should be in Calcutta. But why not, an Officer from Assam should not be the Chairman of the Tea Board ? This was the demand of Assam from a long time. You are giving an Officer of UP cadre who has never seen tea bush before. Each and every district of Assam has got a tea garden. So each and every officer working as Deputy Commissioner has got an idea about tea.

I request that the present Tea Board Office in Assam should be strengthened and more powers should be given to the officers concerned so that more and more decisions can be taken at Guwahati instead of sending the proposals to the Head Office at Calcutta.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY : He can be from Scheduled Caste or from Scheduled Tribe. That you can do.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You could have said it when you were given the chance to speak.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : They should be given more powers so that decisions may be taken at the higher level for financial grants to the tea gardens from the Guwahati office than shifting to Calcutta office.

One of the aspects of this tea-board is to develop more areas. In order to develop these areas, you are gaining more and more in non-traditional areas. I would request you since you are raising more funds and in the Seventh Plan many new schemes are being taken up in the tea growing States, there are fallow lands available, and these fallow lands should be utilised first for development. There should be new schemes like re-plantation and rejuvenation. In West Bengal there is fallow land; in the South it is available; in Assam, it is available. There are fertile lands available in the tea estates. Some new schemes should be introduced so that they get financial help and the technical know-how to develop because they have better infrastructure to develop such areas.

Another thing is you are increasing the cess. When we debated in the Tea-Board meeting, one of the main reasons advanced was the welfare of the tea-garden people. Now we are giving some help for the hospitals; we are undertaking some welfare measures. Further, the people who are working in the tea-gardens in West Bengal or in Assam, they are mostly from Orissa, U.P. and Bihar. They have gone there long years back. They have settled there. Now, they do not want to go back to their respective places. There should be some scheme whereby these people who are working in the tea-gardens, after their retirement, they should get some rejuvenation scheme. The Central Government with the respective State Governments should make some scheme for such people.

In my areas, most of the tea-garden labourers have not crossed the border of my own district. They have not seen what is Calcutta; they have not seen what is Delhi;

they have not seen the various places in the country. So, in your welfare scheme, like the Nehru Yuva Kendra, organise the Bharat Darshan. Out of the cess money, when they do the welfare work, they should implement some schemes whereby the tea-garden labourers are taken from the tea-estate to other parts of the country. You can organise a trip from Bengal to Assam; Assam to Bengal; South to Bengal, etc. whereby they can know about the larger parts of our country.

Another point I would like to say about the value added tea in the world trade. In TRA and other areas, it must make more research so that we can go into the world market with better value added tea. This is the most important need today. If you want to compete in the international markets, you have to detain your market and also you have to catch more market. During the Janata Government period, suddenly they imposed excess duty and we have lost the target in the international market. In order to maintain this international market, the value added tea should be more introduced.

I would like to say one thing. That is, the Tea Marketing Control Order has been implemented. As per that order, from the Cachar area and Karimganj area we have to sell 75 per cent in the auction market and the remaining 25 per cent in the open market. We have been appealing to the Government to change this ratio to 50:50 because Cachar is definitely growing 30 million kgs. of tea. But unfortunately, Cachar tea's quality is not as good as that of Assam tea. As a result, when the buyer goes into auction, if he cannot get the price in the first auction, he has to compete in five or six auctions. It puts him into paying bank interest. So, I would request the Minister to consider this particular aspect. It is a very important thing for our survival. As I said already, 35 gardens have been closed down and some gardens are facing serious difficulties because of the auction price we are getting. Sometimes we are getting from Rs. 2 to Rs. 17 per kg. which is the highest whereas in other areas they are getting from Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 per kg. There are two tea gardens called Chargola and Sighlachera,

[Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev]

which were originally taken over by the TTCI, but for some reason, they have given up the management. The labourers in those tea gardens are actually starving. During the Prime Minister's visit in the last election, the labourers met him and submitted a memorandum to him and the Prime Minister assured that it would be thoroughly examined and something would be done to redress their grievances, but unfortunately nothing has been done. I myself have sent a memorandum to the Ministry. The INTUC, Cachar, has also submitted a memorandum. But nothing has been done so far. I would appeal to you that the TTCI should be asked to take over those tea gardens or something should be done to redress the grievances of the labourers there.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please conclude.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : I have already requested about the Tea Marketing Control Order regarding Cachar, because our tea gardens are small gardens and they are not economically viable. In our tea gardens the management is good, they are looking after the tea gardens well and the labour relations are also good. But this policy is creating a very difficult situation for us. So, I would request you to consider this. As per section 17 of the Tea Act, the Chairman, Tea Board, is entitled, the Ministry is entitled, to make changes in the ratio sale of tea; the ratio should be made fifty-fifty.

With these words, I support this Bill.

[Translation]

DR. G. S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will submit only one or two points. You may ask how people coming from Bihar can be interested in tea? As the hon. Minister has said that this is a small amendment but the speeches being delivered are quite long. I would, therefore, not deliver a lengthy speech. I would submit one or two points.

I understand that you are going to increase the cess from 8.8 paise to 50 paise which is six fold increase so far my knowledge goes during the last few years at no time six fold increase has been effected.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara) : The value of the rupee has come down to 15 paise only.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS : I have to make one more submission. All our colleagues have forgotten and no one has paid attention to this fact that during the last three or four years the prices of tea have skyrocketed. I drink a particular brand of tea, that is 'Lepchu'. Our friends from Bengal will be knowing that this tea is available in Bengal and Bihar and here it is not freely available. Four years back its rate was Rs. 15 per 100 gms, three years back its rate was Rs. 25 per 100 gms and nowadays it is available for Rs. 60 to 70 per 100 gm. and that too in the black market. I am not talking only of 'Lepchu'. You can take any variety of tea and try to find out how rates have increased during the last three or four years. Earlier even a beggar used to ask for 10 paise for having a cup of tea but now he would beg for one rupee to have a cup of tea. Today it is difficult to have a cup of tea even for one rupee. What I mean to say is that the tea prices have increased phenomenally and this imposition of cess is going to put extra burden on the consumer; no one else is going to be affected. It is true that India is the biggest exporter of tea but we are competing with East African countries. They will see how exports would be affected with the increase in price. What I want to say is that they may increase the cess and fix an upper limit but in actual practice the increase should be only that much which is proper. They can increase the efficiency of the Tea Board by reducing the expenditure on overheads. Have they constituted any committee to go into the working of the Tea Board? Tea Board consists of 30 members, in addition to the Chairman, who are tea garden owners, representatives of the tea garden employees, trade unions and also of Parliament but

only the interests of the tea garden owners are taken care of.

One thing more. Have Government noticed that during the last 3 to 5 years the prices of the tea gardens have increased steeply and certain vested interests have purchased the tea gardens. The hon. Minister must be aware of this. The purchasers include very big names. The scope for creating black money is more in the tea gardens than in any other business. I have seen the working in this field. I would, therefore, tell you about this. New machines are installed and within a year those are thrown as scrap and it is said that these machines have become useless. Government do not have any check to find out whether the machines have actually become useless or not. Machines are sold to scrap dealers and they are then re-purchased very cheaply. The scope for earning black money is maximum in tea gardens as to other lines and if I start telling about this it will take hours to give a full account. The workers are exploited. The labourers coming from Bihar, Bengal and other places are exploited. It is said in Bihar that the labourers who go to the tea gardens of Assam are converted in rams. How? People say that they are not converted into rams by tea garden owners who provide the labourers liquor for three or four days in a week and extract work from them like animals. That is why it is said that they are converted into rams.

I would submit one thing more. Other Members have also spoken on this point. Government should not give this right to the Tea Board that it can write off certain amount, may be it is Rs. 2 lakhs, without permission. This writing off business is quite a dubious one and I know the ins and outs of it. In private companies, the General Managers are not given the right to write off even 5 paise by the Board of Directors. Here if you allow to write off amount upto Rs. 2 lakhs, 5 lakhs or 10 lakhs, the management by giving one or the other excuse will write in the books that the amount is unrecoverable and as such it should be written off. On the one hand it will be written off and on the other hand, bargaining

will be made with the person from whom the amount has to be recovered. Therefore, in no condition the power of writing off should be given to the Board.

I wanted to submit many things but due to paucity of time I will conclude by saying that there is 'wheel within wheel' in the tea gardens and Government should try to find out about this. There is a big racket in it and huge amount of foreign exchange is being repatriated. I will tell the hon. Minister about this separately. The poor are very badly exploited in this field. The cess which they want to raise to 50 paise should not be in actual practice be more than 10 or 11 paise. This is my request to the hon. Minister.

[English]

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU (Gobichettipalayam): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would request the hon. Minister to recall some of my requests made at the time of discussions on the Demands of the Ministry.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Prof. Kurien has already put forth some of your demands.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: And you are supporting them, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I am neither supporting them, nor opposing them.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU: Firstly, I would like to know, why the Tea Board is not having a permanent Chairman. The post of the Chairman, Tea Board has been lying vacant for the last two years, but the Government has not come forward with a proposal to fill it up for reasons best known to it.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: He has now been selected.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU: Thank you. I would, however, like to mention that if suitable persons are not available from amongst the IAS officers, you can have non-official Chairman from the Treasury Benches.

[Shri P. Kolandaivelu]

Secondly, there is a zonal office of the Tea Board at Coimbatore, but there is not even skeleton staff for that office. The zonal office looks after three States. There is no car, no telephone facility for the Officers. The zonal office is there without any facilities. Necessary facilities therefore need to be provided to enable this office to work effectively.

You have said that you want to utilize the cess fund for developmental purposes. What are the developmental activities for which you want to use this fund? I know fully well that no developmental activities are taking place in the Tea Board. I am a Member of the Tea Board for the last one year and I know it.

AN HON. MEMBER : That means you are also partly responsible.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU : There are only two Members from this House in the Tea Board. We are raising our voice, but there are big bosses inside the Board. Already they have got vested interests in the Tea Board. They are selling their products for a very good prices, but the small growers are not able to do that. The small growers are mostly in Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south. They are suffering a lot.

This Bill seeks to amend Sections 25 and 49. You are now adding Section 25(a). By this the Central Government can collect cess at any rate from 8.8 paise per kilogram to 50 paise per kilogram. Already, the Tea Board is collecting cess, which totals up to Rs. 6 crores. If it is raised to 50 paise per kilogram, how much would be the amount. We can calculate; it would be more than Rs. 30 crores that they would be getting by way of cess. With Rs. 6 crores already available, they are not at all taking up any development work. You have, however said that the funds are not sufficient for the developmental activities, and that is why the cess has been raised from 8.8 paise to 50 paise per kilogram. I want to know what actually you are going to do with Rs. 30 crores. You are earning foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. seven

hundred crores from the export of tea. We are exporting to the tune of 220 million kilograms per year. Though we are earning so much foreign exchange in the Tea Board, the Tea Board has, however, not been streamlined in order to suit the conditions of the tea growers in the country.

15.00 hrs.

With regard to replantation also, funds which are supposed to be utilised for purposes of replantation are not utilised for the same purpose. I know about it fully well. Big companies like the Birlas, Tatas, Lipton, Brookebond, Kannan Devan, etc. are actually getting these loans and they are not utilising the loan for this purpose but for some other purposes only. This is what is happening actually in the Tea Board.

(Interruptions)

Today as 150 tomorrow, the Tea Board is having a meeting at Darjeeling. But I am unable to go over there because of this Tea (Amendment) Bill here. Otherwise, I would have gone to Darjeeling in order to enjoy the climate at least, if not to have a look at the activities of the Tea Board.

You are giving so much of powers to the Board. Even with the prior approval of the Central Government, the power to write off loans may be misused. Whether it is Rs. 2 lakhs, or Rs. 5 lakhs or Rs. 10 lakhs, they may actually write off the loan and we would not be able to know the real reason because the Minister or the officers will not be able to know about it. So, I want to say to the hon. Minister that the powers of the Board have to be curtailed.

The other point that I would like to mention is that we should have permanent Chairman and that too a non-official Chairman. He must be having the public interest in view, and not an official one. Therefore, I again request that a non-official chairman should be there on the Tea Board.

Now days, tea is not getting good prices. Even in yesterday's paper also it

was reported "Tea prices seek to lower levels". We are not getting good price. So, the Government must come forward to fix an assured price at least for the small tea growers. Then only we can save the tea growers.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I support this Bill and I would like to know from the hon. Minister that when the tax used to be 4 paise how much money was collected and how much out of that was spent on development when the tax used to be 8 paise how much money was collected and how much out of that was spent on development and now when you are going to make it 50 paise how much out of that will be spent on development? We should know about this so that people may feel assured that after this hike something would be spent on development.

All the hon. Members have stated that not a single paisa has been spent on development by the Tea Board. The Tea Board has not made any provision to increase the productivity of tea and to give relief to the poor tillers. Therefore, first of all I want to know whether the money you are going to realise will be spent on officials and Directors or will any thing be spent on the poor also? We have come to know that the Tea Board has not done any work till now. It has not done anything in the interest of the growers their development or for increasing tea production. If not, the hon. Minister tell us about this as we are not aware. We only know that the Tea Board collects money and spends it on its employees and the officers and does not do any thing worthwhile.

My next submission is that it has been provided in it that different rates will be fixed for different varieties of tea. If fixation of rates is left to the Tea Board officers, they will not look after the interests of the growers. Therefore, he should decide before hand the rates of the different varieties of tea. Otherwise, as the Tea Board is already known for corruption and if this job is left to the Board, then we can very well imagine the consequences.

Therefore, he should make this arrangement before hand after getting full details about this so that they may not get any chance to manipulate things.

My third point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the hon. Minister has stated that if the loans given by the Tea Board are not recovered in full and there are some losses, the Tea Board will have the power to write off such amounts. I request that such wide powers should not be given to the Tea Board. On the other hand, this power should remain with the Government. Because if the Tea Board is allowed write off to the loans, they will start misusing this power and will give loans to their favourites only. Later on, they will be shown as bankrupt and money will not be recovered from them. Therefore, he should reconsider this provision so that he may be able to recover full amount and utilise it on extending the activities of the Tea Board and on increasing the production of tea.

The entire country wants that tea production in India should increase and alongwith that the export of tea should also increase so that we may earn more and more foreign exchange and also the country my progress. This should be our primary aim. If we spend money for this purpose then nobody will object even if he imposes a cess of one rupee instead of 50 paise. But we must take steps to increase production and help the tea labourers and growers in a positive manner. Only then our system will be streamlined.

[SHRI V. PURUSHOTHAMAN
in the chair]

When Government realising so much money, they should pay proper attention to the welfare of the labourers also. The bigwigs are earning a lot of money from the tea estates and several new companies have entered this field. As Dr. Rajhans was telling us, many top capitalists have purchased tea gardens. Why Government do not contemplate categorising it as an industry so that tea labours are provided all facilities which are available in other industries. They should get minimum wages,

[Shri Girdhari Lal Vyas]

provident fund facility, ESI facility, bonus and gratuity etc. When Government are able to get all these facilities available to them from the tea garden owners, only then the system will function smoothly because all the capitalists who are trying to enter this industry are coming with the sole purpose of earning more and more from it. Alongwith this, it is Government's responsibility to see that the poor labourers get their rights.

Just now one hon. Member Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsii was mentioning about the Tea Trading Corporation and I also agree with him that Government have not been able to manage properly all trading corporations like the Cotton Trading Corporation, Mica Corporation, STC or for that matter any other corporation. They, in league with the capitalists, want to abort its purpose. As one hon. Member has said—I do not know how far it is true the hon. Minister should himself find out the truth—it is correct that the main aim of the setting up the Tea Trading Corporation was to export tea to the maximum to foreign markets and to ensure fair price to the growers. But what we have seen is that instead of doing that the Corporation has appointed certain agents or export is being resorted to through certain other agencies. What then is the use of the Corporation? If it is of no use then it should be wound up because the purpose for which it was set up and lakhs of rupees were spent and officers and other people are being paid, has not been achieved. We wanted to help the poor. The Hon. Minister is busy in talking. Who will then listen to us and who will pay attention to the suggestions I have given? Therefore, the Tea Trading Corporation is proving to be white elephant. My submission is that either this should be wound up or such arrangement be made so that it proves to be of some utility.

I am talking of his Department. If he wants to benefit from my suggestion he should pay attention. Otherwise he may do whatever he wants to.

My next submission is that its loaning system should also be streamlined. In

South as also in Assam, small farmers grow tea. Just now the representative of Cachar was also mentioning that there also small farmers grow tea, though now a days big capitalists are also purchasing tea gardens because they want to earn big profits. Therefore, he must improve the loaning arrangements—for this he may even increase this cess from the proposed 50 paise to even one rupee—so that the farmers are able to get loans. In the present set up they are not getting loans. I would suggest that Government should provide interest-free loans or subsidy to the farmers for development and new plantations so that they are able to increase the production and earn more profit. This will strengthen his Department and it will be in a position to spend more on their welfare as well as on increasing production. He should pay prompt attention to all these things.

I also feel that more and more representatives of the people should be included in the Tea Board. The labourers' representatives should be taken in more numbers and growers' representatives should also be included. At present certain persons have been included in the Tea Board who are either rich people or they are tea-garden owners. Labourers' representation is less. Their representation should be increased. Growers' representation should also be increased. He should also increase the representation of the Members of Parliament. The Members of the Assemblies of the States where tea is grown should also be taken so that they are able to safeguard their interests. If these things are done, the Tea Board will be strengthened and people will be benefited more and more from it.

Lastly, I would request the hon. Minister to make this Board strong and vibrant. Let us not let this Board remain weak and good-for-nothing whose only function may be to spend lavishly and send its members on foreign jaunts. This Board should ensure how production of tea can be increased, how it can be strengthened, how the growers can be helped and given all the facilities. If these things are done by the Board, that will be a welcome step. I hope that he will make this Board strong and powerful and will try to provide genuine help to the people.

With these words, I support the Bill and take my seat.

[English]

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI (Kaliabor): Thank you very much, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to participate in the Tea (Amendment) Bill, 1986. May I draw the attention of the hon. Commerce Minister that at one time the Indian tea was very famous in the world market because of its quality and that is why it has earned its reputation in the world market, but at present it has gone down. Why? Because of the inefficiency of the management and the adulteration in the tea manufacturing. And that is why it cannot compete in the world market now.

After remaining stagnant at around 560 million kgs, the production of tea in India has registered a steady increase from 581.5 million kgs. in 1983 to 645.1 million kgs. in 1984. The production level of 645.1 million kgs. which was reached in 1984, showed an increase of around eleven per cent over the previous year and that has set aside all previous records. Improved cultivation practices, application of fertilizers, adoption of pest control measures and use of high-yielding plants have all been the contributory factors for this record production.

The tea garden labourers are the most ill-paid labourers in the country. The Government has the obligation and duty to improve their socio-economic conditions in respect of the prevailing laws of the land. You are dealing with the prices of tea but what about those people who are rendering their services in the interest of the country? The workers are giving their sweat and blood in the interest of the country. But their socio-economic condition has not been improved at all. We have the obligation to see that their condition improves. If you go on increasing the prices but if you do not look into the living condition of the workers our country cannot progress. You have enacted many laws, like the Minimum Wages Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Factories Act, Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition

Act, Payment of Bonus Act, Employment of Child Labour Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Payment of Wages Act, etc. All these Acts have been made but you have never implemented these laws. In India there are 1300 tea estates. 20 lakhs of people are employed. But till today you have not made any efforts to have separate Ministry for the Tea Industry. I submit that the Minister that he should properly look into the interests of the workers of the tea industry, as well as the Tea Industry in general. Merely increasing the prices or levying a cess will not help to improve the condition of these people. I demand that Tea Board office should be shifted to Assam immediately, as it has got the highest percentage of tea production in the world. There are 775 tea estates in Assam and 10 lakhs workers are involved in it. The Chairman of the Tea Board should be from Assam. The Board's financing needs a review. We should see whether Tea Board has become a top-heavy bureaucratic machinery. This should be examined. Care must be taken to see that the increased cess does not lead to increase of prices in the domestic market. We are not inclined to support the cess as Tea Board's expenditure should be curtailed and the tea companies should not be made to suffer.

In the end I would like to say that the headquarters of the Tea Board and Head Offices of the tea companies should be shifted to Assam immediately. There should be a separate Ministry for the Tea Industry. The economic problems of the workers of the Tea Industry should be considered properly without delay. With these words I conclude.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI (Guwahati): The Chairman should be from Assam cadre; this has been the demand of everybody in this House. Everybody has subscribed to this view.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY: He should be a tribal or a scheduled caste.

15.18 hrs.

[SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN
in the Chair]

[Translation]

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV : Mr. Chairman, Sir, on this occasion I would like to make only one point that the matter regarding Provident Fund of the Tea-Estate employees has become very serious.

Shri Anjiah had assured on 7th January that Government would take stern action and would also take stringent legal action in this matter. Now the situation has become very tragic. The management of the Tea Estates is bungling with the Provident Fund accounts of the workers. Due to the carelessness of the management Rs. 14.40 crores was in arrears in 1977 in West Bengal alone which has increased to Rs. 73.70 crores in 1985. The workers' representatives have raised this matter again and again and have demanded that Government should pay attention towards it. If it is not looked into, these workers will meet the fate of the workers of Jute and other industries who were deprived of their provident fund on closure. At present there are 775 tea estates. If the total provident fund amount of the workers is taken into account, a huge amount would be found involved therein. The workers' union has also been complaining since long that the Government takes a long time to file the claims. Until the present Employees Provident Fund Act is amended and a penal provision is made to punish the offenders, this problem cannot be solved. Therefore, I request the Government to take this matter seriously and amend the Employees Provident Fund Act. The management should be sternly dealt with so that the workers may get their blocked money.

[English]

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN (Cooch Behar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to oppose this Bill. I know, Mr. Shiv Shankar is a judicious Minister in the Central Cabinet. But I am sorry and I am surprised rather, when I find that he is bringing forward this Bill. It is to increase the cess from 8.8 paise to 50 paise. It means, it is a big jump can it be justified after this budget? The prices would get pushed up in that way. *(Interruptions).*

They say, the amount of cess collected has become insufficient to meet the expenditure of the various development and other activities of the Tea Board. What are the activities of the Tea Board? This is the 31st report of the Tea Board, for the year 1984-85. The total expenditure for the year 1984-85 comes to Rs. 5,66,83,017.58 paise. Out of this, how much has been spent for the Tea Promotion in India? It is Rs. 15,67,002.65 paise only. Now, let us take the Tea Promotion outside India for which the Members of the Tea Board are very much interested, the Tea Board executives are very much interested to go abroad, to have their dinner and lurch and their dances. It is Rs. 2,81,63,378.03 paise only. The total expenditure is Rs. 5.66 crores. So, this is more than 50% of the total money which has been spent abroad, not inside India. Where will the tea grow—outside? Will it be grown in U.K., U.S.A. or some other country? Whatever it may be, let me come to that point also. Let me come to the promotion of Tea plantations.

Mr. Chairman, do you know what is the present position of the tea bushes? Upto three years, the tea bushes should be under planting position. Between 3 and 5 years, the bushes may be plucked, 5 years to 20 years is the best period of plucking when flavour, liquor, everything will be the best. During 20 years to 50 years bushes, there is plucking at the normal rate. After 50 years the bush, should be uprooted gradually and new bush should be planted. There may be tea bushes of more than 100 years and even more than that. What is the present position of the age group of tea bushes in India at present 5 to 20 years of tea bush is only 21%. More than 50 years of age tea bush is 53%. This is the condition. What have you done so far? The Tea Board did not do anything for the development of tea. Tea is earning more than Rs. 700 crores per year as foreign exchange. I do not find any justification to make more cess for this purpose.

Secondly, what is the functioning? The Darjeeling Interest Subsidy Scheme for revival of Darjeeling tea garden up to 31st October, 1985 in 31 schemes, has

given an assistance of Rs. 8.67 lakhs and NABARD Refinance has given an assistance of Rs. 7,80,00,000/-. Can you tell me when this money was allotted and sanctioned? The bargaining was going on in between the Tea Board and the tea gardens for a long period of time. Who will pay more silver tonic to the Tea Board? They did nothing.

(Interruptions)

Now I would like to draw your attention to tea auction. The entire tea produced did not come to the auction centre. In 1984, according to the Government figure, the total production is 645 million kg. But only 470 million kg. reached the auction centre. To stop black in the tea, I think the entire tea should be taken into auction.

We are earning foreign money on the label of Darjeeling tea, the best tea in the world. It may be Nilgiri tea or Assam tea or Dwars or terai tea! But on the label of Darjeeling tea, we are earning foreign money. Do you know what is the total production? It is about 13 million Kg. per year.

Will the hon. Minister tell us what is the total tea sold either in the country or abroad on the label of Darjeeling tea which was prepared either by Brooke Bond or by Liptons? It is about 100 million kg. But you do not pay much to the Darjeeling tea growers. That is the tragedy.

I cannot support this Bill.

SHRI BIPIN PAL DAS : Can I ask two questions?

MR. CHAIRMAN : When the hon. Minister speaks you can ask.

SHRI BIPIN PAL DAS : If the hon. Minister does not agree, I will sit down. Since the Bill is going to strengthen the hands of Tea Board financially, why some gardens are taking advantage of IRDP and NREP and thereby depriving other sections of kisans from getting aid?

(Interruptions)

My second question is, there are two types of tea labour. One is regular

employees of tea gardens. The other is called ex-tea labour who are very poor. What is the Government or Tea Board doing to improve the lot of these ex-tea labour?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER) : Sir, various hon. Members have been pleased to participate in the debate. I presume that the amending Bill is a very innocuous Bill. But hon. Members had expressed themselves on diverse issues. In a short time, it cannot be possible for me to answer each and every question. But I have condensed the points generally raised by the hon. Members. I will try to answer them.

I would like to deal with the provisions themselves and the various apprehensions that have been expressed by the hon. Members, so that the matter is clear. Under Section 25, the amendment that is sought is that instead of 8.8 paise per kg. the power is sought for 50 paise per kg that is upto 50 paise per kg. Now, the point is that does not necessarily mean that the cess would be fixed at 50 paise per kg.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI : You have got the power.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : To have the power is something different. The position is that we have decided to increase it to 15 paise per kg. as a result of which what would happen is.....(Interruptions) In fact, you have been pleased to see, according to the topography, climatic conditions and according to production, these figures will vary from place to place. I am not going into it because the provision itself has taken care of. One of the main arguments that has been advanced was that it will affect the price of the tea. I do not see how it affects the price of tea because today the price of the tea is at Rs. 27 per kg. Now, if from the Rs. 27/- seven paise is increased, I do not see how the price of tea will increase. In fact, my own information after going into the details—because I had asked my authorities to go and examine the whole condition

[Shri P. Shiv Shanker]

and report to me—our feeling is that this would be absorbed by the producers themselves. An increase of 7 paise per kg. where its cost is Rs. 27/- per kg. is not going to affect the market price in any form. I have gone into the statistics of it, I have been satisfied. I thought that this much power we should have and why we should have it is a different thing. I am going to answer. But I assure the hon. Members that 7 paise increase per kg. on Rs. 27/- per kg. is not going to affect the market price of tea. The point is actually, under the law, why I thought that I should go right upto 50 paise at this stage itself is that I did not want to come everytime before the Parliament for the purpose of again increasing by 5 paise or 6 paise. It was in 1953 that 8.8 paise per kg. was fixed and, from then on, quite a lot of changes have taken place and it is precisely for this reason, after going into the whole economics of it that the producers can absorb the 7 paise per kg. more than we decided that we should go up to 15 paise. I have come before the Parliament to seek power to increase it upto 50 paise per kg., in future and about the contingencies I cannot say at this stage. We should have this power to increase.

The second part of it is that a lot has been said with reference to Section 28-A.

(Interruptions)

I am just going to say why it has to be explained. Today the Tea-Board under its administrative powers has a right to write off the various claims. In fact the Committee on Subordinate Legislation of the Lok Sabha has gone into this and generally they have made a report that in all the laws, under all the laws, where the claims are written off, instead of exercising the executive power, it is desirable that a provision should be made in that regard. In fact, this provision has been made only in conformity with the views expressed by the Subordinate Legislation Committee of the Lok Sabha. Supposing if the provision is not there, even then the power was to be exercised. This power is not only being exercised under this law but there are other laws also where administratively, the authorities had written off the claim.

It was thought that it should be brought on the anvil of the law itself.

That is why, there is an addition of this section. It is nothing new. It is not as though that a new section is sought to be incorporated in order to invest the Board to exercise undue powers. That is not the point.

AN HON. MEMBER : What about the proviso ?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : Even today the Board exercises certain powers with reference to writing off of the claims. Maybe, having regard to the provision, the hon. Members might be exercised over the power that is being given to the Board—which in fact is there even today. I am aware that hon. Members have always been pleading that there should be decentralisation of power. Even with reference to the public sector undertakings where discussions had been going on, arguments have been addressed from across the House that powers should be decentralised. In a case like this what has only been done is that upto a particular level, as prescribed under the rules, to that much extent, the Board would be entitled to write off the claims. What it should be, what that amount should be, is a matter which has got to be gone into. I will take care to see that an amount is fixed in such a fashion that it does not give cause for concern or to make grievance from any quarter whatsoever. That part of it, I will take care. But otherwise the main part of the section invests the power in the Government or the other authorities for the purpose of writing off the claims. I was only trying to make this submission that what is actually happening in practice is sought to be transformed into a provision of law having regard to the recommendation of the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

Now, an argument was addressed as to what exactly are the functions of the Tea Board. With reference to the functions, I must submit that the Board regulates the production, tries to improve the quality of tea, promotes cooperative efforts, undertakes scientific, technological

and economic research, controls the pests, regulates sale and export of tea, registers the licences and the manufacturers, dealers, etc., tries to improve the marketing of tea and secures labour welfare...

SHRI AMAL DATTA (Daimond Harbour): These are the objectives for which the Tea Board has been constituted.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: These are the functions which the Tea Board is expected to discharge.

SHRI AMAL DATTA: But they are not discharging.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: The functions of the Board are these. This is what I have said. I have never said that it is discharging them to the satisfaction of at least Mr. Amal Datta.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura): Is it to your satisfaction? That is what he is asking.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: It is not to the satisfaction of Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura) Are you satisfied?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I will come to that.

When it comes to the question of labour welfare, they have got to discharge certain functions. I have information that it had been following quite a few welfare schemes which supplement those provided under the Plantation Labour Act. The schemes include educational stipends to the children of workers, ration at subsidised rates, capital grants to educational institutions and hospitals in tea plantation areas, reservation of seats in vocational, training institutions for wards of workers and reservation of beds in specialised hospitals for treatment of cancer, tuberculosis, etc. If the hon. Members are interested, I will just give the figures. During 1984-85, stipends were given

to 401 students/wards of the workers. I am giving figures so that if they are wrong, I will be grateful if you bring it to my notice. When I am supplied some figures, I cannot be at that place for the purpose of doing it. May be that you are closer, you could give me some more figures.

The daily wages of tea plantation labourers are Rs. 9.05 in Assam, Rs. 10.59 in West Bengal, Rs. 15.59 in Kerala, Rs. 16.32 in Tamil Nadu. If there is a little subsidy which has got to be given that is also taken care of.

SHRI BIPIN PAL DAS: They are trying to take advantage of the funds belonging to the 20 point programme.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER: I have said that these are the functions that this institution is expected to discharge. It is possible that there might be infirmities. Many an Hon. Member have made very wild allegations and I do not think that that is a responsible allegation--that this a den.. (Interruptions) Mr. Das, will you listen to me for a while? I am not yielding. I hold the Floor. You had been a very old Parliamentarian.

They have brushed the organisation by saying that it is a den of corruption. I am not prepared to accept this type of very wild allegations. If they were in possession of the material and if they were to say, well these are the cases I would have certainly considered. It is very difficult for me to just brush the whole organisation by saying that it is a den of corruption. I cannot proceed on this type of allegations. I do not presume that everything is perfectly all right. It is possible that there might be infirmities.

Some of the Hon. Members have very rightly said that for quite sometime the Chairman had not been there. We now see to it that the Chairman is appointed within a few days. The name has been approved. Only the notification has to take place. It will certainly take place. (Interruptions) He is an Indian Sir, that much I can say. I do

[Shri P. Shiv Shanker]

not know whether he belongs to Assam, Kerala. I am not sure about this.

Some Hon. Members were also referring to the production figures. In fact, I thought that I should correct these figures because I found that some of the Hon. Members were not quoting the correct figures. I must submit that in 1951 the production figure was 285.4 million kgs. In 1982 it was 560.7 million kgs. In 1983 it was 581.5 million kgs. In 1984 it was 645.1 million kgs. and in 1985 it was 657 million kgs. Therefore, it is a case of increasing production.

The other part of it that some of the Hon. Members were trying to say that so far as exports are concerned, they are dwindling. That is not correct. In fact, I have already intervened to submit that in the year 1985 it was 222 million kgs. of tea that was exported of the value of Rs. 711.90 crores. In 1984 it was 217 million kgs.; but the unit value at that time was more as a result of which it was Rs. 741 crores. Now the unit value has gone down; but so far as the quantum is concerned there is an increase in it.

Some of the Hon. Members have said that tea association should be taken into confidence when the cess is increased. I have already submitted that the cess has been increased to 50 paise; but not at a flat rate, subject to the conditions that have been made in the section itself which seeks an amendment. About that also as I have submitted, this decision was taken at the level of the Cabinet, after we have gone into the whole statistics. In fact, I have gone into the statistics myself and after coming to a conclusion only this decision was taken.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU : Why should you raise when there is the Cabinet decision for 15 paise? There should be an amendment for raising it to 50 paise.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : I have taken the power from the Cabinet to raise it to fifty paise so far as the amendment of the section is concerned. I have also

taken the power now that I should be permitted to raise it to 15 paise, subject to the variations that I have referred to in this section. The point is this. I may tell you that in the earlier stage also why we had to do this. The cess was around Rs. 6 crores. But what had happened was, actually it so happened that in the year 1983-84, the expenditure was Rs. 47 lakhs more than the cess. That was collected and, therefore, there was a drain. When it came to 1984-85, the expenditure exceeded Rs. 115 lakhs. Now, the point was what should be done, how to adjust this expenditure in order to help Mr. Kolandaivelu and his colleagues in the Tea Board? I have come forth with this amendment.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI : Are you satisfied that there is no possibility of cutting down the expenditure, because the allegation is that a lot of expenditure are made in areas where it is not necessary?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : The point is that there are various areas where the expenditure is made. In fact, Mr. Pradhan was right when he read out certain portions. But he only read out a small portions of it. I thought I had not been bad lawyer. He read out about the internal expenditure with reference to Tea promotion. But then the amount is also spent on labour welfare measures, not only the marketing part of it, but the production part of it also where raising the cess, taking to new areas for the purpose of plantation and all these things should be reckoned with. I also feel that when it comes to the question of expenditure, outside the country, it appears on the high side. But we have some offices also, particularly office in London and other places where we have got to promote our Tea. But whether it should be there with so much expenditure, well, it is still a question mark. I am not saying that this expenditure should be justified.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI : We are ready to go and examine this.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : I have no objection if Mr. Goswami would like to have all the papers concerning this. I am

prepared to give them to him, not in London but in Delhi. But nonetheless I would certainly look into whether Rs. 2 crores of expenditure are justified and it is a matter which all the hon. Members are concerned with and it is a case one should go into it.

Then, some points have been raised. But they were all of general arguments with reference to the so-called offices, etc. One important point made by the hon. Member is with reference to the Provident Fund. I see a very great force in that argument and I will look into it as to why the provident fund has not been paid to the Labourers. This is a matter which has to be gone into and I will take an appropriate occasion for the purpose of answering this point in this House.

I would not like to go into this further in details. I think it is an innocuous amendment. I am only making a submission that only two clauses are added substantially, that is one raising it from 8.8 paise to 50 paise per kilogram. The other is bringing a provision on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation for the purpose of writing off losses as irrecoverable.

I am sure, the hon. Members would pass this Bill and see that the powers which the Government is seeking are granted to it in the larger interests.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Are you going to increase the cess to 50 paise per kilogram for all varieties of tea ?

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : If the hon. Members are pleased to see the amendment to Section 25, the proviso says :

“Provided that different rates may be fixed for different varieties or grades of tea having regard to the location of, and the climatic conditions prevailing in, the tea estates or gardens producing such varieties or grades of tea and any other circumstances applicable to such production.”

These are the guidelines based on which

the cess will differ from place to place, from tea to tea having regard to the climatic conditions etc.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That the Bill further to amend the Tea Act, 1953 be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That Clause 2 stand part of the Bill”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

Clauses 3 and 4 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : I beg to move :

“That the Bill be passed.”

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That the Bill be passed.”

The Motion was adopted.

15.52 hrs.

COAL MINES LABOUR WELFARE FUND (REPEAL) BILL.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE) : I beg to move :

“That the Bill to repeal the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund Act, 1947 and to provide for certain matters incidental thereto, be taken into consideration”.