

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY
(Midnapore) : And also excuse those who
have taken huge loans.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The question
is :

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Now, we
will go to the next item—Indian Post Office
(Second Amendment) Bill.

17.43 hrs.

INDIAN POST OFFICE (SECOND
AMENDMENT) BILL, 1986

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
(SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : MR.
Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move :

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

Section 7 of the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 provides that the Central Government may by notification in the official Gazette fix the rate of postage and other sums to be charged in respect of postal articles. The highest rate of postage when pre-paid cannot, however exceed the rates set forth in the 1st Schedule to the Act. The proposed Bill is intended to revise the tariff rates of some of the items included in the 1st Schedule to the Act namely letters, printed post cards, book-pattern and sample packets, registered newspapers and parcels. The last amendment of the rates mentioned in the 1st Schedule was made in June, 1982. As has already been brought to the notice of the House, the Department of Posts is incurring recurring losses in running its various services. The deficit which stood at Rs. 136 crores in 1984-85 rose to Rs. 136 crores in 1985-86. With a further increase in the cost of operations due to implementa-

tion of the Fourth Pay Commission's recommendations as also the allround increase, in other operational costs such as air freight, rail freight etc. the deficit is expected to be of the order of Rs. 400 crores during 1986-87. Since the deficit is quite heavy, we have no other alternative except to increase the tariff of some of the items of postal services.

Briefly the proposal is to increase the rates presently being charged for envelopes from the existing 55 paise comprising 50 paise on account of stamps and 5 paise on account of stationery charges to 70 paise comprising of 60 paise for stamps and 10 paise for stationery. The 10 paise to be charged on account of stationery, however, does not form part of this Bill, but falls under the Rule making powers of the Government. Members would be glad to note that it is not, however, proposed to increase the rates presently being charged for ordinary post cards and letter cards, i. e., inland letters, which continue to be 15 paise and 35 paise respectively. The rates presently being charged for book pattern and sample packets for weights upto 50 grams is proposed to be revised from existing 30 paise to 50 paise. As regards packets weighing above 50 gms. instead of the present rate of 15 paise for every 25 gms. in excess of 50 gms., it is proposed to charge 50 paise for every 50 gms. in excess of 50 gms. Likewise, it is also proposed to increase the rates charged for single copy of registered newspapers by 10 paise for weights upto 50 gms. and those between 50 gms. and 100 gms. The rates in respect of single copy weighing more than 100 gms. will, however, remain unchanged. Similarly in the case of multiple copies of registered newspapers upto 100gms., the existing rates of 15 paise is proposed to be increased by 10 paise. However, the rates for multiple copies weighing in excess of 100 gms., will continue to be the same. As regards parcels as against the existing rate of Rs. 3/- per 500 gms., it is proposed to increase it to Rs. 4/- for 500 gms.

As the Hon. Members will appreciate the nature of postal operations are such that the major portion of the expenditure is on staff which constitutes 83 per cent. Members are also aware that in order to provide facilities for the rural areas, often post offices have to be opened in remote parts of the

[Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev]

country even though they are not economically viable. Nevertheless, we are taking and will continue to take steps for cutting down expenses by streamlining procedures and thereby cutting down waiting time at counters.

In the circumstances, I am sure, Members will appreciate the compulsions under which we have had the unavoidable necessity of increasing tariff rates of some of the items. Even then, we have not proposed to increase the rates of the ordinary post card and the inland letters which are the more commonly used postal articles. Further since generally speaking, an average person has occasion to use envelopes not more than about 4 to 5 times a month, the impact of the increase in the tariff rates of envelopes will be less than a rupee or so per month per person.

The revised tariff rates as incorporated in the revised 1st Schedule annexed to the Bill is expected to yield an additional revenue of about Rs. 86 crores in a full year. The increase in the stationery charges from the existing 5 paise to 10 paise which is within the rule making powers of the Government, is expected to yield an additional revenue of about Rs. 8 crores in a full year.

Hon. Members may recall that I had made an announcement in this House and also laid a statement on the Table of the House on 28-11-1986 regarding the increase in the tariff rates of certain other items which are within the rule making power of the Government. The present proposals are in addition to the announcement already made. It was indicated at that time that those proposals were expected to yield an additional revenue of about Rs. 79 crores during a full year. The total additional revenue from all these proposals including the earlier announcement is expected to be in the region of about Rs. 173 crores.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Motion moved :

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

I want to inform the House that we are having very short time to go through many Bills. As the Business Advisory Committee accepted, I want to stick on to that time factor. One hour is allotted by the BAC and already 10 minutes are over. Therefore, we are going to have only 50 minutes. Therefore, 10 Members wanted to speak.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Only one hour on such a Bill ?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : What to do ? You accepted the allotment of one hour in the Business Advisory Committee. Why did you not say there ? You require more time now. After introducing the Bill, you want more time.

Tomorrow is the last day. We are having many Bills—Child Labour Bill etc.—and we have to discuss.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS (Mavelikara) : I would like to make one point to you. Even the Press has carried the news that we were irresponsible in the House.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : No, no. They cannot say.

No. They cannot say that. We are responsible. The press can say so many things. Why are you bothering ? We are responsible for everything that we are doing. Why do you worry about the press ? You need not worry about the press. We have to think about what we are doing. When the Business Advisory Committee has recommended one hour, the House has also accepted it. Now once again, you go on dragging it. How can we pass other Bills ?

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : How much time it takes ?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : If we are having time, we can adjust and more Members can speak. I have no objection. But when the time is not there, I request Members to be brief. Take 5 minutes maximum and finish. Every one will be given 5 minutes. That is all.

[Translation]

*SHRI MANIK REDDY (Medak) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Hon. Minister has introduced The Indian Post Office (Second Amendment) Bill 1986 to amend the Indian Post Office Act of 1898. I oppose this amendment Bill.

Sir, this Amendment Bill which is intended to further increase the postal tariff is going to become an additional burden for the common man of this country. The Government proposes to collect approximately Rs. 86 crores by increasing the tariff through the amendment Bill. This burden of Rs. 86 crores is going to fall on the common people of the country. I want the Hon. Minister not to forget this simple fact. Only last week, the Government imposed a burden of Rs. 454 crores on the people. It is most unfortunate that the Government is trying to impose increased taxes and tariffs on the people. The Government professes faith in the democracy. But what it practices is quite contrary to it. The policy of increasing tariffs and levying new taxes is against the will of the people. It is against their interests. The Hon. Minister just now said that Government is going to incur additional expenditure by implementing the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission. It is true and I do not want to deny that fact. Sir, the salaried class of people constitute only a small percentage. In order to satisfy them, if the Government proposes to appoint Commission to pay higher and higher wages and decides to raise the resources to meet the increased expenditure by enhancing the rates of tariffs, then it would not be a correct policy.* People in the country are too poor to pay the increased tariffs. They are in no position to withstand the additional burden and are against this policy. In order to satisfy the organised lot, the back of unorganised sector is being broken. It is unfortunate Sir, the presentation of the next general budget is not very far off. Heavens would not have fallen had the Government waited for a few days more. I fail to understand the urgency of rushing through this Amendment Bill. People are becoming suspicious about the motives of the Government. Perhaps the Government want to avoid the embarrassment of raising the tariffs at the

time of the budget. In order to avoid the backlash of the people, the Government are resorting to this backdoor method of increasing the tariff in instalment through amendment to the Bill. Now, the persons employed far away from their homes have to pay more for communicating with their relations or for sending parcels to them. A sorry state of affairs, indeed ! I feel very sorry about it. Not only that. Sir, the Government propose to increase tariff rates on newspapers. It is yet another unfortunate increase. Sir, the newspapers are the only medium of communication for the people living in remote and inaccessible areas. Only through newspapers our people will come to know about the world around them. They come in contact with the day today developments around the world. By increasing the postal tariffs on parcels containing newspapers the Government would now cut off the only link between the people in remote areas with a rest of the world. Sir, I take this opportunity to plead with the Hon. Minister to withdraw the proposed increase in postal tariffs and particularly on newspapers.

Sir, mere increase in the tariffs on various items every now and then will not satisfy any one. The Government employees should be asked to work more sincerely and efficiently, corruption in the departments has to be eliminated. If the Government machinery is honest and efficient I don't think there will be any need to resort to increase the tariffs every now and then. People in the country can thus be saved from additional levies or taxes or tariffs.

Sir, I conclude my speech thanking you for asking me to initiate the debate on this amending bill.

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD YADAV (Madhipura) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I support the Bill introduced in the House. The hike in the postal rates should be supported. But I want to draw the attention of the Hon Minister to two or three points.

First, money orders are not delivered in time in the villages. In certain post offices, the postmasters keep the money of money orders with them and the payees get their money after several months. The Department

*The Speech was originally delivered in Telugu.

[Shri Mahabir Prasad Yadav]

of Posts and Telegraphs must look into this type of corruption in the delivery of money orders. Why is it not monitored whether the money-orders have been delivered in time or not? There should be more vigilance and such things should not be allowed to continue.

Secondly, the telephones in the rural areas remain out of order generally because there is a lack of maintenance. At some places telephone poles are uprooted and at others, the telephone wires are damaged. Is the Hon. Minister of Communications aware of it? Has he been informed about it? Should the Postal authorities not look after these telephones?

Thirdly, what is the number of default cases in the various Post Offices? Is it ever checked? My question was regarding Patna General Post Office where thousands of rupees are in default. For the recovery of the same, instalments were fixed but the recovery has not been effected. The Government was not able to recover the money by instalments. This money belongs to common people. It is unfortunate that enough efforts have not been made for its recovery.

I would make one more point and then take my seat. In certain Post offices, employees are harassed due to caste considerations. Promotions and transfers are also made on this basis. It should be checked. I do not want to embarrass the Hon. Minister by citing a particular example. But the Postal authorities should ensure that nobody is wrongly harassed. Every one should get justice; no one should be favoured in any way.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The Minister.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA (Tamluk) : Sir, there is no quorum in the House. We are discussing a very important Bill and you are going to extend the time of the House ..

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I want to know the feeling of the House.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : How can the House discuss when there is no quorum?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : If the Hon. Members is insisting, then I will ask for the quorum bell to be rung, but now it is 6 O' Clock...

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : You can adjourn the House. It is now 6 O' Clock.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur) : What do you gain by this?

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : We do not want that this Bill should be passed today.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : The House should be adjourned. It is now 6 O' Clock.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I want to know the feeling of the House. I have not extended the time of the House now. I want to know from the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs whether the time of the House should be extended or not.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : How can you do so when there is no quorum in the House?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : If you insist on that, what can I do?

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : If you do not adjourn, then I will insist on quorum.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I will ask for the quorum bell to be rung if you insist on quorum, but before that...

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : How can the Minister speak without there being quorum in the House?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Madam, do you want the quorum bell to be rung?

SHRI C. JANGA, REDDY (Hanamkonda) : You cannot ask her.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I am only asking her whether she wants the time of the House to be extended or not. That is all.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : Without quorum in the House, how can she speak ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT) : I have only one submission to make. The Hon. Members will please listen to me for a minute. We have a lot of business to be transacted. So, I would request the Hon. Members to bear with us and if you agree, we can extend the time so that we can continue with the business... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : Why was it not placed before the Business Advisory Committee ?

SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT : In the Business Advisory Committee we did make this point that, whenever we required the time of the House to be extended beyond 6 O' Clock, we should be allowed and it was agreed upon. You will recall this.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : That recommendation did not come to the House.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN (Idukki) : It can be extended with the consensus of the House.

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : That recommendation was not placed before the House.

SHRIMATI SHEILA KAUL : It was.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : He is insisting on quorum. Let the quorum bell be rung. Now there is quorum.

SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT : I would propose that we extend the sitting of the House upto 7 p. m.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I hope that the House agrees to extend the time by one hour.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It is agreed that the time of the House is extended upto 7 p. m.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Sir, I oppose the Indian Post Office (Second Amendment) Bill.

This is the second instalment of increase in the postal rate. A few days back telephone rates were increased. Government have increased the rental rate of telephone. There also has been an increase in the rate of shifting of telephones and the number of free calls have been reduced. There also has been increase in the MO commission and in the telegram rate. Without improving the efficiency, you now resort to increase the rates, thereby you are increasing the burden of the common people.

PROF. N. G. RANGA (Guntur) : It depends upon your cooperation.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : We are always cooperative. If you do good work, definitely we will cooperate with you.

Sir, this Amendment Bill has been brought to increase the postal rates of certain articles excluding post-cards and inland-letters. The postal system is really in shambles. When you write a letter, you don't know as to when that letter would reach the addressee. It takes more than 15 days and even more than a month.

(*Interruptions*)

There are some parts of our country where it takes more than a month for a letter to reach. Now this system of sending mail is an age-old one. The mail is sent by road transport where there is no rail link and this mail is sent once or twice a week.

18.11 hrs.

[SHRI SOMNATH RATH *in the Chair*]

For the last four years not a single branch post office has been opened in rural areas. He has stated just now that branch post offices are opened. I would like to say that for the last four years not a single branch post office has been opened in rural

[Shri Basudeb Acharia]

areas. There are some inaccessible areas in our country where there is no branch post office. Sir, not a single extra departmental staff has been recruited. This extra departmental employee gets only Rs. 150. Nowhere in the world a man has to work for only Rs. 150 and they are to work like slaves.

Sir, he wants to increase rates on envelopes. The existing rate is 50 paise plus 5 paise for stationery. Now it will cost 70 paise—60 paise plus 10 paise for the stationery. There is more than 16 per cent increase in the rate. Then for books and packets the existing rate is 30 paise. Now it will be increased to 50 paise and for additional 50 grams from 15 paise to 30 paise. That is 100 per cent increase.

Sir, already the price of newspaper has been increased. Now you are increasing the rates for the Registered newspapers from 5 paise to 15 paise. That is 200 per cent increase in the rates and for weight exceeding 50 grams from 15 paise to 25 paise. This will definitely affect the price of newspapers. There is an increase in parcel rates. Railway parcel rate has already been increased by 15 per cent. Now you are increasing it from 15 paise to 25 paise. This will affect the prices of the articles which are brought to postal service. The reason advanced by the Minister is that it is due to implementation of the Fourth Pay Commission recommendations that you are increasing the rates of these postal articles. By increasing the rates of postal articles, you will earn only Rs. 173 crores. Your net deficit is Rs. 400 crores. So, without increasing the efficiency in the postal service, you are increasing the rates of the postal articles. You are increasing the burden of the common man by saying that you have implemented the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission and that you have enhanced the pay-scales of the postal employees.

Sir, I oppose this increase in the rates of postal articles and I oppose this Bill.

[Translation]

SHRI KEYUR BHUSHAN (Raipur):
Mr. Chairman Sir, the Indian Post

Office (Second Amendment) Bill is under the consideration of the House. I support this Bill because it is an important public utility service. The poor and the small man mostly use postcards to communicate their feelings and it is good that their prices have not been increased. I want to congratulate the Hon. Minister for it. On the other hand, I want to draw your attention to the proposed heavy increase in the rates of registered newspapers, and I would request you to reconsider it. After postcards, it is the newspaper which is used by the common people very extensively. When the rates were increased earlier also from 2 paise to 5 paise, the people felt hurt because they had to pay extra amount for reading the newspaper. This increase will not affect the newspaper owners. Yesterday, I was present in a meeting of the All India Small Newspaper Association at Lucknow. There I observed that they were apprehensive of the increased levy, as they felt that it would adversely affect them. Whatever it may be, I want to request you on behalf of all the small newspaper owners that the postage rates of the registered newspapers should not increase. As in the case of the postcards, the cost of registered post for sending newspapers should remain 5 paise and not increased at all. At least for the initial weight you must let it remain at 5 paise, and whatever charges you want to levy on the extra-weight depends on you.

Besides, the rates of parcels have also been increased. Many of our Hon. Friends have highlighted this hike. In your statement of objects and reasons you have said that to meet partially the paucity in working expenditure and increase in expenditure due to the implementation of the Fourth Pay Commission's Report, the postal rates have been increased. But I would request you to tap some other sources to meet the enhanced expenditure instead of affecting the public utility services provided to the common man. It would be better not to touch the services which increase the burden of the poor people. If at all it is very necessary, the prices of other items can be increased. Hence, I would request you to reconsider the proposed hike and reduce the same as far as possible. The large heartedness and understanding which has been displayed in regard to the employees and their welfare, must be shown in relation to the facilities

provided to the common people. It should also be ensured that the letters reach early in remote and far flung areas and also in the villages which are located in the hill areas.

The people working in small places face a number of difficulties. The postman working in the rural areas are paid very meagre emoluments. They do not get Dearness Allowance also. They cannot make their both ends meet on such a small salary. On account of the small area covered by them, they are treated as part time employees.

Hence, I would request you to consider them as full time employees and increase their salaries accordingly.

We fully support the Bill, which is being brought with a view to enhance the pay-scales of the employees by increasing the rates of the postal articles. The common man will also be contributing for this purpose. But along with it, we also demand that attention should be paid to the welfare of the employees.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to request the Hon. Minister once again that the newspapers especially the small newspapers have been affected by this increase. I was a special invitee at the All India Newspapers Conference and I was told that in my capacity as a representative of the people and Chairman of the small newspapers Association, I must be aware of their problems. They have full faith in you, but I would request you not to raise the postal-tariff as it would affect the small newspapers. I am hopeful that you would accept my suggestion. With this request, I support the Bill.

[English]

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS (Malvelikara) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, at the outset, I would like to state that we have no doubt that we cannot support this Bill. If anybody thinks, that we are going to support this, I want to declare on the top of my voice that the whole opposition opposes it tooth and nail, because this is a surreptitious method of this Government for circumventing the budgetary provisions which have been adopted by the Parliament and the parliamentary system.

By these two methods, one the tariff declaration and the other amendment of this Bill, the total earnings of the Postal Department are going to be Rs. 461 crores. And for this income of Rs. 461 crores, the Government has resorted to these two methods in piecemeal. Now, the postal rates are being increased and you are going to tax the consumers and burdening them. You are doing it without their knowledge and in fact, pickpocketing the poor people in a subtle manner. Therefore, we cannot at all agree to this.

I know the intention behind this. It is that when you come forward with the next Budget before this Parliament, you want to have a zero based budget or something like that. You want to administer the prices now and the cost of living of the people is being increased. And when you come with the Budget in March or April, you will say that there is not much increase. It is especially in view of the coming elections in certain States and in a very very subtle political manner, you are taking this opportunity to do this. I am levelling this charge against the Government and I have no hesitation in doing that.

There is no reason for increase in the postal charges and the present amendment is going to affect the newspaper industry as a whole very badly. People who want to read some newspapers will not be able to do that. I get from my State certain newspapers by post and these are printed there. Now, if I want to get that, they will have to pay double the postal charges. Under these circumstances, the most affected industry will be the newspaper industry and there will be communication gap between the various people in this country. The burden will be felt very badly because you are having a very great hike in the postal charges of printing matter from ten paise to fifty paise or something like that. You are increasing it without any proportion. We cannot agree to it. In a very subtle manner, they say that they are not increasing the charges on post card. It may be a post card, an inland letter, or the newspapers, all these are the concern of the common people; these are not the concern of the rich people of this country. You are directly hitting the poor people. I cannot agree to these proposals. May I ask one simple question Sir ?

[Shri Thampan Thomas]

This is about the way, we the members of Parliament are treated here in this country. In other countries, Members of Parliament have got the facility of free postal service. I represent nearly 1.5 million people, and every day I have to correspond a lot on various public matters of importance. But the Postal Department does not provide any service to us in this regard. I have seen in Canada, America and many other countries, where parliamentarians are having free postal service.

DR. PHULRENU GUHA (Contai) :
What about State Assemblies ?

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : Yes. They should also do it. I say this because we do a lot of public work. We should be given this service so that we are in a better position to communicate with our voters with regard to the problems concerning our constituencies. After all this is a public affair. We are not asking it for our private purpose or for sending any love letters.

MR. CHAIRMAN : If you are given this free service, then you will not be worried about the hike in the rates.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : No Sir. I am not saying that. I am saying that with this sort of a facilities, we can really have an effective dialogue with our people and to communicate with them about their problems. I have raised this point only to find out whether they are having any such policy as regards public men such as Members of Parliament. Are the Government going to do it or not ?

I do not want to say much except for one point. There were certain apprehensions expressed by the newspaper people about this. When the Bill was introduced in the House in Friday, we could not participate in the debate because you know the situation on that day, with all the gates locked and all that. But the newspapers had taken the issue the other way round and they observed that there was no opposition to this Bill. They have written that there was nobody to oppose the Bill. Therefore Sir, I once again oppose the Bill strongly. In fact, I oppose it tooth and nail.

[Translation]

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to you for giving me time to speak. The Bill seeks to increase the postal rates. I would request the Hon. Minister that keeping in view the miserable condition of the poor and the rural people, it would be desirable to tax them with the least burden, and the situation should be reviewed with the above in view.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands are remote areas. Postal Services are not upto the mark. Letters take 20 to 25 days to reach the destination. Letters do not reach in time even in Port Blair. In those areas, mail is sent by ships. And if a ship is not available for a month, letters are not delivered. Second-class mail remain undelivered. Hence, I would request the Hon. Minister, who is my friend as well, that second class mail should kindly be sent by air to those areas in order to improve the postal services.

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) :
Mr. Chairman Sir, by calling the Hon. Minister his friend, he wants to take undue advantage.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Mr. Chairman Sir, he belongs to a well linked area. How can he know about the difficulties of those Islands ?

Along with it, Postal authorities should be instructed to ensure quick delivery of mail there and a Director of Post Offices should also be appointed in these Islands, so that the situation could be remedied.

[English]

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Mr. Chairman Sir, I oppose this Bill lock, stock and barrel. Sir, the question is that there are some services, which cannot be made self-paying services. In a welfare state, especially as a Government who call themselves a welfare state, they must understand that postal services is one of those services which cannot be a self-paying service. It has to be paid from other source by taxing the rich. But you have

taken the other way round. I would like to point out several things with regard to hikes in case of letters.

For weight not exceeding ten grams— 60 paise

For every ten grams or fraction thereof— 40 paise

Mr. Thomas was telling about the letters which we write, but I am raising the other question. The letters that come to us. Prof. Ranga, the veteran freedom-fighter who is here, let me tell him, through you, that for each freedom-fighter's case, they have to send 11-12 annexures in one instance. But here it is not possible, because the Ministers will go on changing. I myself know at least 40 sets of annexures which was to be sent by one freedom-fighter and yet the case could not be solved. What would be the increase in this case, just imagine.

Then Sir, let us take the question of unemployed people, 2,60,000 are under registration. So, they have not bothered about these people, who are in the register. Every time, they will have to send an application with annexures and what not for example, birth certificate, Photographs and other things. What will be the increase, that you should look at very carefully.

Through cumulative burden on the question of letter on very common people will be much more than it is being shown here. These things, the common people cannot avoid in today's condition. Even very poor and ordinary people cannot avoid using these envelopes which will weigh quite a lot due to the peculiar bureaucratic and inefficient system that the ruling party has taken up in itself to force on us.

I would not go into the elections. Here they have not increased the rate of inland letters and post cards because of elections. My friend Mr. Thomas was absolutely correct and those things, will be done after the elections.

Coming to books and the registered newspapers, I particularly raised the question of registered newspapers. This especially acts as the deterrant on the small newspapers.

Take for example, weight not exceeding 50 gms, there is an increase of 200 per cent. All right. But not only that, any newspaper, however small today will naturally exceed 50 gms at least. 50 gms newspaper is something which does not exist these days. After that for a weight not exceeding 10 gms, it will be 25 paise. In the case of 15 paise, now it has been increased to 25 paise. There are of course big newspapers these days with lakhs of advertisements which are controlled by the monopolists. They have got a source, through advertisements, etc. I would like to know from the Minister, there are very many small newspapers, who work for certain principles, what will be their position, in this regard? They will have to close down and that will really affect the voice of ordinary common people in a very big way.

Sir coming to books, their charges have been increased and it will be really very difficult for the smaller book establishments to gain anything.

The other day, I had pointed out that from the Pay Commission's recommendation, the Government as a whole, not our Dev's Department, will get back @10 per cent as P.F. in its kitty. Then, also, they will get back something through Income Tax. You calculate those things and pay from the general revenues to the Postal Department. No burden should be imposed on the ordinary consumers.

Then another very interesting thing is that Government itself comes out with a statement, saying that since freight charges have been raised, they were raising Postal charges. You raised the other things yourself; and use that as the very reason for raising other taxes further. This is mentioned in the Statement of Objects and Reasons. Therefore, I have said that I oppose this Bill.

Lastly, I would like to say that you are denying any benefit to the extra-departmental employees who are really bearing the very heavy burden of the Postal system that you have, which is in a shambles. Their case should be remembered by Government, and their grievances must be remedied; and the money for it has to come from the general kitty. That is my submission.

In view of the above, I oppose the Bill, as I said, lock, stock and barrel.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : I am strongly in favour of this Bill, and of this announcement. It is very easy for my friends of the opposition to go on talking as they do; but then they cannot talk so all the time, and blow hot and cold.

You want the extra-departmental employees to get the same salary as the regular whole-timers.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : Yes; are they going to give it to them from this money ?

PROF. N. G. RANGA : It will mean more expenditure. *(Interruptions)***

MR. CHAIRMAN : No arguments, please. It will not go on record.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : They want extra provident fund and all these things. It has been the usual thing for the Opposition in any parliamentary debate always to oppose any additional taxation. I have got that experience also. But at the same time, I also had the experience of...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : What all others say will not go on record. I have called Prof. Ranga. What he speaks will alone go on record.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : You cannot have it both ways. *(Interruptions)***

MR. CHAIRMAN : Prof. Ranga, kindly address the Chair.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : Because of the Pay Commission's recommendations, the whole thing, i.e. the deficit has gone up. Now the Postal Department has got to pay its own way. *(Interruptions)***

It need not yield any profits to Government; but it should not all the time be a drain on the general resources.

*(Interruptions)***

**Not recorded.

We want money for 101 things, for developmental purposes. We are not going to ask from the General Revenues, in order to finance the Postal deficit also..
*(Interruptions)***

What hits the common man ? I am also a common man. Out of 100 letters that I write, 90 letters are on post cards. I may not be a common man, as you say. Ordinary folk can certainly take advantage of the post cards, the rest of them being in business. Business in this country has grown, as you know. After we became free, it has grown many times.. *(Interruptions)***

MR. CHAIRMAN : Whatever other Members speak while sitting, will not go on record. It will not form part of the record.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : It has grown like anything. It is these people who have got to pay. For how long are you going to subsidize them ?

*(Interruptions)***

MR. CHAIRMAN : What is what the rule says. I am only quoting the rule of the House.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : How long are we going to subsidize these urban elite, industrial elite and the proletarian elite also ? We have been doing it till now.

The only defect I find in this Bill is the increase they have made in the weekly newspapers, small newspapers. That is the only direction in which I would like my Hon. friend the Minister concerned, and also the Government to have some second thoughts. With regard to all the rest of it, what is the position, Sir, in rural India ? All these friends come from rural India. Mr. Thampan Thomas must be coming from rural India, although he practises in a city. Now about the fees that he charges from his clients—it will be ten times, 20 times of what it was earlier. And these people begrudge this kind of an enhancement.

**Not recorded.

Taxation procedure is another matter. If all this increase had been included in the Budget, you would not have had this kind of a special discussion. This is an advantage for us. When they had come specially with a Railway Budget, we were able to express our views. Now they have come before us for Postal enhancement. We are able to have this special discussion. Otherwise, my Hon. friends would not have been able to devote so much of time in the House also. Therefore, I do not think it is reasonable for any responsible person, especially the Members of Parliament, to take the stand that lock, stock and barrel they are going to oppose it. It is the easiest thing to say, like that. But it is not easy to go to the workers and ask them not to ask for higher salaries and higher allowances.

There you ask for all these things more and more. Take everything you like. Don't put anything at all into the coffers of the government. Then this government will go the way they like. After the last war what had happened in Germany, the same thing would have happened here. The whole country would go bankrupt. Therefore, I support these taxation proposals except the little thing I said. I wish to congratulate the government and thank them also for not enhancing the post-card price. But I would like them to spare more money for the development of postal services in the villages, in the rural areas. I want to congratulate the Postal Department as one of the best departments that we have in the way in which the Indian departments work. They are the most efficient people. But, certainly, I would like them to be more efficient, more satisfactory. *(Interruptions)* Inefficiency, fighting shy of hard work are the common diseases of all of us including some of our own members. You have to ring a bell for quorum in this House. That should not be the way. The industrialists also work in the same way. Is it befitting us to complain of the poor postman who carries a packet to you and to me in all seasons.

[*Translation*]

SHRI C. JANGA REDDY (Hanamkonda): Mr. Chairman Sir, I am unable to support this Bill. It has been argued that postal rates are being increased an account of increased salaries of the employees.

Because salaries have been revised, the postal tariff had to be increased and consequent upon increases in postal rates, salaries will have to be increased once again. Will you continue to do like this? What is this way of functioning? Two cats were quarrelling for a piece of bread. A monkey came along and proposed to distribute it equally for them. He divided the piece and kept the pieces on a weighing scale and began nibbling at the heavier piece in order to make them equal. In this manner, he ate up the whole piece. You are also doing the same thing. Following pay revision of employees, the postal rates have been increased and consequent upon increase in the postal rates, another commission will have to be set up to increase the pay and allowances of the employees. Are we here to do this sort of exercise? You cannot increase the postal tariff merely on this basis. Are you giving more facilities? As has been pointed out by Shri Ranga, what facilities have been provided in the rural areas. Three years have passed since B. P. M. was sanctioned, and it was stated during its inauguration that it would be opened on 2nd October, 1984, and an order to this effect was also issued. But the Finance Department has expressed its inability to provide the funds. I will cite an example to show how inefficiency has increased in the Postal Department, I sent a registered letter to the Inspector, Railway Protection Force, Secundrabad, from Parliament House Post Office. But it never reached its destination. I raised this issue even in the Consultative Committee...

[*English*]

MR. CHAIRMAN: You had wrongly addressed.

[*Translation*]

SHRI C. JANGA REDDY: There also I was told that the address on the letter was wrong. But how did it reach me by an ordinary post when I had spent Rs. 3.50 for sending it by registered post from the Parliament House Post Office? I ought to have come by registered post. I addressed to "Inspector, Railway Protection Force, Secundrabad." Is this address wrong? Perhaps the name of the road has not been mentioned, the name of the building has not been mentioned, and I am prepared to accept the lapse. But I want to know why the letter

[Prof. C. Janga Reddy]

was not sent by registered post when I had spent Rs. 3.50 for it.

Sometimes we read in the newspapers that a post card has reached its destination after a whole year had passed. However, these are exceptional cases and let us not discuss them. But how will you remedy the situation? When a letter is sent by registered post, it ought to come back by registered post, itself. Two years have passed when Rajiv Gandhi Government came to power, but how many post offices have been opened during this period? I think it has not opened a single post office. On the contrary the number of post offices are being reduced. The postmen in the villages have been dispensed with, and a ban has been put on fresh recruitment on the grounds that it is uneconomic to maintain them. In the villages they are bound to be uneconomic. Postal Services are not run on commercial lines. The situation needs to be reviewed.

So far as the telegrams are concerned, they are delayed for as long as 3 days, even for a distance from Delhi to Hyderabad. You have said that there is a system for satellite transmission of telegrams. When I filed a complaint, I was told that the telegram was delayed due to snag in the satellite. The telegrams service is not proper. It should be improved. Letters should be sent by air to all the capitals, so that they reach the villages within 2 or 3 days. Telephone facilities which were to be provided in the villages and which were sanctioned as well, have not yet been provided because the Finance Ministry has not cleared the proposal. Hence, I oppose this Bill.

[English]

DR. PHULRENU GUHA : I would like to know whether the Minister will give us a better service in the Postal Department and whether they are going to open Post Offices in the villages and whether they are thinking of setting up a committee to review why the services of the Postal Department are deteriorating.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is a ban on recruitment, Madam.

[Translation]

DR. G. S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I shall not take more than a minute. I want to ask the Hon. Minister as to why the newspaper tariff has been increased so much? Has there been a three times increase in the rates anywhere in the world?

(Interruptions)

[English]

As a present administrator of the Small Newspapers Organisation, I want the Hon. Minister to note the point ..(Interruptions)

[Translation]

Secondly, I want to submit that the prices of envelopes have been increased from 50 paise to 60 paise. If you go to the villages, you will find that there is a shortage of small coins. As a result, one has to pay one rupee for an envelope. Hence, I would request the Government to reduce the price of the envelope to 50 paise. There are other methods of mobilising the resources. A realistic picture should be presented; a Bill which is passed hurriedly cannot serve any purpose. I have been pained on reading this Bill which is not in the interest of the poor people in any way.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to the Hon. Members of this august House who have participated in the debate. I am fully aware of the concern of the Members and the constructive criticism which has been made and the suggestions advanced by the Hon. Members. As a student of Commerce, I would say, that I would only consider the customer to be right. As such, I would not go into any debate on this point, as a Minister of this department. I also firmly believe that a lot has to be done in these matters for giving a better service. Mrs. Guha has asked whether we are prepared to give better service and whether monitoring of the work of the Department is done. I feel that the Department should not only

give better service but it should give quick service also. We are at it. I can say that no less a person than the Prime Minister himself feels that this Department needs much improvement. And if I cannot improve the functioning of this Department, my service will be at stake. I can assure the Hon. Members that we will try our utmost to do as much as possible. But it will be wrong to say that the Departmental employees are not working well. To some extent, there may be some lacuna in the working of the Departmental employees. The Government is also to be blamed for that because it has not been able to give the proper atmosphere. The functioning of the Department depends on the transportation of letters from the point of origin to the point of destination. For all that, we are depending on the railways, airlines, road sector and the private sector. But the point is, when in the past we were getting much better service, why should it deteriorate now ?

Some Members have advanced criticism with regard to the increase in postal rates. I would like to put on record certain facts which are not known to many of us. A major part of this criticism is coming because of our not knowing the facts. And I feel that our Department is also at fault because it has not apprised the whole country as well as the Hon. Members of Parliament about the present position of this Department.

As I said in my opening speech, in 1982 was the last hike of postal tariff. Of course, Mr. Thampan Thomas and other Members of the opposition have criticised the Government for this hike in the mid year and not waiting for the Budget. Probably you will recall that the rate of post card was revised from 10 paise to 15 paise in the Budget of 1979 because that was necessary. When I place the financial position of the Department vis-a-vis the service we are rendering, I think, most of the Members will be satisfied that what we have done and what we are trying to do is not that bad and that we do not deserve criticism the way we are being criticised both in the press as well as in the House.

I request Mr. Thampan Thomas not to take as gospel truth whatever he reads in the newspapers. That day, it is not that we in-

roduced the Bill at the closing hours of the House. But we introduced it at 12.45 p.m. when many Members were present in the House. Probably, it has escaped his attention.

In future, I will give notice before I introduce any Bill so that he at least can know from the Press.

After 1982 when the last hike was effected, this Department in 1982-83 incurred a deficit of Rs. 90.93 crores, in 1983-84 Rs. 82.30 crores, in 1984-85 Rs. 136.09 crores and in 1985-86 Rs. 163.55 crores. If we had not raised this tariff now, our projected loss in 1986-87 would have been Rs. 401 crores. Today we are raising Rs 86 crores plus Rs. 8 crores. In the past we have raised Rs. 79 crores: The total comes to Rs. 173 crores. Even after this hike, we will still have a budgetary deficit of Rs. 228 crores. Mrs. Guha has asked as to what the Government is doing. This is the only public utility Department where Government is giving budgetary support to the extent of Rs. 228 crores for public utility services. Now, the question arises as to why did we increase the price of envelope and why did we not increase the price of postcard and inland letter. Is it due to the fact that we are not making any loss in postcards and inland letters ? No. I fully agree with the Members that most of the seventy crores people of this country, of which 75 per cent live in rural areas, or those in the urban areas who are economically backward, or even the middle-class people who are very much burdened economically, use inland letters and postcards. Now, let us see what will be the position even after we raise the tariff. Every year we handle 9,968 lakh postcards and the cost of production of a postcard as well as its handling—when I say handling, that means the operational staff, transportation, sorting and delivery at your doorstep—as on today is 65.17 paise. As against that, we are charging only fifteen paise, and if you take the last year's figure, even after increasing the price from ten paise to fifteen paise, we shall be losing to the extent of Rs. 46 92 in the whole year. Can you say that this Government is not looking to the interests of the common people and the down-trodden people ? As regards inland letters, we are handling 9,738 lakh inland letters and the

[Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev]

cost of printing and handling per inland letter—including all the operational costs—is 70.60 paise. The price of an inland letter is now 35 paise and we have not increased it. We shall be incurring an annual loss of Rs. 34.70 crores on inland letters.

Many Members have very rightly criticised about the hike in the postage on newspapers. One thing I must bring to the attention of the House that this hike in the tariff was supposed to take place a year back. For full one year the Government has been making different exercises as to in how best a manner it could be done so that we could cover our loss, we could put less burden on the poorest of the poor and, at the same time, we could also look after the interests of the six lakhs employees in this Department—three lakhs working as permanent and three lakhs as Extra-Departmental employees. The Savor Committee had submitted its recommendations. Many Members have drawn our attention to it and they wanted to know what we are going to do about those recommendations. We are not going to accept them *in toto*, I assure the House. We are not going to do it in a manner which affects the rural areas. Prof. Ranga Ji has rightly said that we should not try to abolish the post offices in the rural areas; rather we should try to increase their number. So far as our Department is concerned, we are totally with him and we also feel that by making some exercise, we should also look after the scales of those employees who are working as Extra-Departmental. We are quite sympathetic about it and we are fully with the Members. We are examining it. The Savor Committee had recommended that they should be paid at least on the prorata basis on which the permanent staff is paid. We are giving a sympathetic consideration to it and I can assure the Members that keeping in view the feeling which has been ventilated by the Hon. Members, both in Lok Sabha and in Rajya Sabha, we shall certainly consider this very sympathetically and we shall come to the House with our decision very soon.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS : What about the postage on newspapers ?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Dr. Rajhans has raised this point regarding hike

in the postage on newspapers. Almost all the Members have raised this point. Shri Keyur Bhushan has also mentioned it. The Government of India is always willing to encourage small newspapers. Madam Gandhi wanted it. Jawaharlal Nehru Ji also wanted it. Even during the Janata period, they also encouraged it. Recently also I have seen that the Prime Minister has taken enough care to see that the newspapers are not affected. But what is the present position ? The number of small newspapers handled per year is 2,425 lakhs. The average cost of operation per newspaper is 77.81 paise. The revenue collected per newspaper is only 10.28 paise on an average. That is our present position. The deficit to the Government on account of these newspapers is Rs. 19 crores. That means, we are trying to help the newspapers to the extent of Rs. 19 crores per year. Please do not take it for granted that we have shifted. Yes. When the preference came to us between the post card, inland letter, envelopes, newspapers and parcel, we have shifted the burden to those who can bear. Government also has encouraged small newspapers with advertisement to give them papers at a cheaper rate. There may be some lacuna here or there. But we are not in a position. Whatever we have increased even now, we will incur loss. But we are also subsidising.

Members have pointed out book, pattern and sample packets. Number handled is 2864 lakhs per year. The cost of operation is 82.4 paise on average per item and the revenue realised is 44.08 paise on average per item and our annual loss is Rs. 11 crores. This picture I project before the Hon. Members.

I think most of the criticism has been levelled against the Department, against the employees or against the system. You will certainly appreciate that this Department is working under a very serious strain. But at the same time I will not go back to promise before the House or to admit before the House that what in the past could have been done, why it cannot be done; why it should take such a long time. Yes, it is a fact. But again if you take the figures,—I will not take much of the time. We have 831 Head Post Offices, Departmental Sub Offices 25,649, Extra-Depart-

mental Sub-Offices 3,931, Extra-Departmental Branch Offices 1,13,446.

It is a fact, we are not opening any new Branch Post Office or Extra Departmental Branch Offices in the rural areas. Not that there is an absolute ban in opening. The ban can be relaxed in exceptional cases. This ban we are also...

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : The ban has been withdrawn now.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Not withdrawn. Recently, the ban on recruitment it has been relaxed. If a person retires, if he goes on promotion to another post, or there is death, then only we can. We are examining it. We have gone to the Planning Commission. Planning Commission has agreed to 1100. I am subject to correction. We are doing an exercise. We are trying to give preference to those areas where there is no post office. That is our first preference. I shall definitely try to see that those areas where there are no post offices, those are covered.

As I said, I do not want to go much in details in the Bill.

The Hon. Members have given a lot of suggestions. The main point that has been raised is that of Extra Departmental Post offices. Second point is that the services must be improved. The third point, which has been raised, in that regard I cannot do anything. You can speak to Shrimati Sheila Dikshit or Shir H. K. L. Bhagat for remedy. If you get it, I will be very much happy. That is not within the jurisdiction of my Ministry.

One important point which the Hon. Members has raised is money orders which are being sent the rural post offices. These are not being delivered for months together. This is one of the complaints we are getting.

DR. PHULRENU GUHA : Not that these are not delivered for months together. These are not delivered at all.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS : I have also written to the Hon. Minister. I have not received any reply.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : I am sorry if no reply has come. This is one area where we must look very carefully. If you go through the records—Rs. 200 crores worth of money order is being handled by us yearly. The defaulcation is to the tune of Rs. 10 to 15 lakhs. Payment is made immediately if there is a complaint. But I agree with you, it is not the non-payment, it is the late delivery. I have got some letters recently from the Members of Parliament and some organisations—specially in rural post offices the money is drawn in such a way that the beneficiary does not get time and certain money is being kept in the post offices by certain unscrupulous post masters. We shall certainly look into it and see that action is taken against the erring official.

Shri Manoranjan Bhakta has raised a point.

One point is that it is a fact that the second-class mail for North-Eastern region and Andamans goes very very late, sometimes spanning from two to three weeks. We are examining whether we can avail the air service and what will be the cost structure for it and if it is not too much, we will try to see that we avail of it for those remote areas.

As regards the opening of a Director's office, I will definitely examine it and we will try to do it.

With these words, Sir, I will request you...

AN HON. MEMBER : What about door-to-door delivery ?

(Interruptions)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : About the door-to-door, we will also look into it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

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

The motion was adopted.

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

The question is :

"That clause 2 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

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

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, I beg to move :

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

19.05 hrs.

(At this stage, Shri Basudeb Acharia and some other Hon. Members left the House)

19.06 hrs.

MESSAGES FROM RAJYA SABHA

[English]

SECRETARY-GENERAL : Sir, I have to report the following messages received from the Secretary-General of Rajya Sabha :

- (i) I am directed to inform the Lok Sabha that the Delhi Apartment Ownership Bill, 1986, which was passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 30th April, 1986, has been passed by the

Rajya Sabha at its sitting held on the 8th December, 1986, with the following amendment :

Clause 24

That at page 18, after line 26, the following proviso be inserted, namely :

"Provided that nothing contained in this sub-section shall affect the right, title or interest acquired by any allottee or other person in common areas and facilities from any promoter on or before the 28th day of February, 1986."

2. I am, therefore, to return herewith the said Bill in accordance with the provisions of rule 128 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha with the request that the concurrence of the Lok Sabha to the said amendment be communicated to this House.'

- (ii) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 128 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, I am directed to inform the Lok Sabha that the Rajya Sabha, at its sitting held on the 8th December, 1986, agreed without any amendment to the Atomic Energy (Amendment) Bill, 1986, which was passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 27th November, 1986."

DELHI APARTMENT OWNERSHIP BILL, 1986 AS AMENDED BY RAJYA SABHA

[English]

SECRETARY-GENERAL : Sir, I lay on the Table the Delhi Apartment Ownership Bill, 1986, which has been returned by Rajya Sabha with an amendment.

19.07 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, December 9, 1986/Agrahayana 18, 1908 (Saka)