

12.18 hrs.

RE. RULING ON QUESTION OF
PRIVILEGE

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Shyamnandan Mishra—you wanted to say something.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Begusarai): You have been pleased to give a ruling on the issue of privilege raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

May I ask for your clarification whether it is your view that when we give notice of any Bill, the discussion on that Bill may be delayed by any reference by the executive to any court? This is my privilege to give notice of the Bill and it is the privilege of the House to discuss that. Now, the government may well refer the subject matter of the Bill for opinion to any authority that it likes or even the House can get the services of the Attorney-General for the elucidation of certain points. But on that account we cannot be a party to any decision that the Bill that we have sought to move would be delayed.

MR. SPEAKER: I have not decided that.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: The point that was raised so far as I can see it is whether any Bill, the notice of which has been given to the House and on which it is the committee on Bills which can decide when the Bill would come up for discussion, can be delayed by any reference by the executive to any authority in the country.

MR. SPEAKER: I will examine that question. You please send it to me.

Now, we take up call attention.

Dr. Ramji Singh.

SHRI KANWAR LAL GUPTA (Delhi Sadar): May I make a submission?

MR. SPEAKER: No, no. Dr. Ramji Singh.

12-20 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

CONTINUING ARTIFICIAL SHORTAGE OF
SODA ASH

डा० रामजी सिंह (भागलपुर): मैं अविलम्बनोय लोक महत्व के निम्न विषय की पैट्रोलियम, रसायन और उर्वरक मंत्री का ध्यान दि लाता हूँ और प्रार्थना करता हूँ कि वह इस विषय में वक्तव्य दें :

“ सोडा-राख की निरन्तर कृत्रिम कमी ”

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA): It had recently come to the notice of Government that consequent on difficulties in the availability of Soda Ash, some Soda Ash consuming industries, including sodium silicate, soap and detergent powder in the small scale sector, were unable to obtain their full requirements of Soda Ash. It was also reported that some dealers, taking advantage of the scarcity conditions, had increased the prices of Soda Ash.

According to the Soda Ash manufacturers, the major bottleneck was the shortage of railway wagons for the transport of raw materials (coal and salt) to the factory sites and for the movement of the finished product from the factory.

The All India Glass Manufacturers Federation in April 1978 mentioned this difficulty as being one of the reasons for the shortage. In July 1978, the Tamil Nadu Non-Power Soap Manufacturers' Association complained that for about 3 months railway wagons to transport soda ash from Saurashtra to South India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular were not available.

Department of Chemicals and Fertilizers has taken up the matter at the highest level with the Railway Board and has pressed for arrangements for adequate supply of wagons/rakes. The Department has also requested Soda Ash manufacturers to arrange for the movement of Soda Ash by road wherever possible if the purchasers are ready to bear the cost.

Other factors responsible for the shortage were reported by the manufacturers to be: (I) inadequate availability of boiler feed water (in the case of M/s Tata Chemicals) and (II) compressor break-down (in the case of M/s Saurashtra Chemicals).

There is no statutory control over the prices and distribution of Soda Ash.

So far as the indigenous production and requirements of Soda Ash are concerned, there are 4 manufacturers in the country with a total installed capacity of 6.32 lakh tonnes per annum. As against an estimated demand of 6 lakh tonnes during 1978-79, the production during the first 6 months of this year was 2.95 lakh tonnes. Taking into consideration an opening stock of 31,000 tonnes as on 1st January, 1978, the reason for the recent shortages appears to be a sudden spurt in demand for this chemical.

श्री कृष्णलाल हेमराज जैन : मंत्री महोदय क्या बोल रहे हैं हमें सुनाई नहीं पड़ रहा है क्योंकि हिन्दी में ट्रांसलेशन नहीं आ रहा है।

MR. SPEAKER: There are two questions—one in Hindi and the other in English.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: While no additional capacity is expected to materialise during this year, an addition of 1,40,000 tonnes to existing capacity is expected to materialise during the first quarter of 1979-80. This is likely to lead to additional pro-

duction of 60-70 thousand tonnes during 1979-80.

श्री राम प्रबोधन सिंह : हिन्दी का जवाब हिन्दी में होना चाहिये।

MR. SPEAKER: I have ordered re-checking of the whole matter.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: To give immediate relief to the consumers of Soda Ash, this Department, in consultation with the DGTD, have asked the State Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Corporation of India Ltd. (CPC) to make immediate arrangements for the import of 20,000 tonnes of Soda Ash, with a view to regulating the supply and bringing down prices of Soda Ash. The import of Soda Ash has also been canalised since, to enable imports by CPC. Customs duty has also been waived in respect of these imports, with a view to keeping the price of the imported material roughly on par with the indigenous (manufacturers') prices.

The actual users of Soda Ash can now register their requirements with the State Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Corporation of India Ltd. so as to secure allocations from the quantities proposed to be imported. The CPC have already issued a Press Note asking for the demand to be registered with them by the Actual Users. In this connection, an Advisory Committee consisting of representatives of the Department of Chemicals and Fertilizers, DGTD and DC(SS)I has been constituted on 7-8-1978 to help the CPC in making allocations from imports to genuine consumers of Soda Ash. The Advisory Committee would welcome the help of the representative of the Users' Associations in this behalf.

With a view to ensuring that the prices charged by the manufacturers, are reasonable and fair, this Department has also requested the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices to con-

[Shri H. N. Bahuguna]

duct a quick study into the cost of production of Soda Ash.

To consider the overall position regarding the availability of Soda Ash to various consuming industries, particularly small-scale industries like silicate etc., I held an emergent meeting of the Soda Ash manufacturers and the representatives of the Associations of the consumer industries on 24th July, 1978. In this meeting it was impressed upon the manufacturers that the Government was keenly interested in ensuring the smooth flow and adequate availability of Soda Ash to various consuming industries, particularly small-scale units, at fair prices. The manufacturers were also directed to furnish complete data in respect of their projected month-wise production for the rest of the year, along with data on supplies to the trade as well as direct to various consumers, prices etc. during the last three years. The Associations were also asked to furnish the DGTD and the Department of Chemicals and Fertilizers with complete lists of their Members along with authentic data on capacity etc.

A Standing Committee on Soda Ash consisting of officials and the representatives of the manufacturers as well as the Users' Associations has also been constituted on 7-8-1978 with a view to eliminating possibilities of a similar crisis in the future and streamlining procedures for the movement and supply of Soda Ash. The Committee consists of representatives of the Department of Chemicals and Fertilizers, DGTD, DC(SSI), CCI&E, Railway Board and Transport and Shipping as well as a representative of each of the manufacturers and the 3 Associations of users—viz. glass, silicate and chemicals.

The All India Silicate Manufacturers' Association have also, vide their letter of August 9, 1978, stated *inter alia* that the prices of Soda Ash

in the market have already started declining because of the present quick exercises on the part of the Government.

डा० रामजी सिंह : मैं मंत्री महोदय को धन्यवाद देता हूँ कि उन्होंने कार्यवाही की है। अंतः में उन्होंने यह स्वीकार किया है कि बाजार में सोडा-एश के मूल्य घटने शुरू हो गए हैं। यह इस बात को प्रमाणित करता है कि सोडा-एश की कीमतें बहुत बढ़ गई थीं। इसकी कीमत 1 रुपए 20 पैसे किलो से बढ़ कर 4 रुपए किलो हो गई थीं। पिछले चार महीनों में 10 लाख कपड़ा धोने वालों को, 20 करोड़ कपड़ा पहनने वालों को बहुत तकलीफ हुई। साबुन सामग्री बगैरहफ जो सोडा-एश से तैयार की होती है, उन पर भी इसका कुप्रभाव पड़ा और 400 छोटी फैक्टरियों पर इसका कुप्रभाव पड़ा। लेकिन इसका लाभ केवल चार बड़े घराने, टाटा कैमिकल्स जो 56 प्रतिशत उत्पादन करते हैं, सौराष्ट्र कैमिकल्स, जो बिड़ला का है और 33 प्रतिशत उत्पादन करता है, जैन जो 7 प्रतिशत उत्पादन करता है और साहू जैन जो 4 प्रतिशत उत्पादन करते हैं, उनको हुआ। इन चार महीनों में सोडा-एश से 10 करोड़ का काला-धन पैदा हुआ है। शायद मंत्री महोदय को मालूम है कि सोडा-एश केवल 900 रुपए टन में मिलना चाहिए और उसका दाम बाजार में 2 और ढाई हजार रुपए टन है।

मैंने मंत्री जी से 1 अगस्त को ही अनारक्षित प्रश्न इस बारे में पूछा था और राज्य-सभा में भी इस पर बहस हुई थी, इस बार तो कुछ सुधरा हुआ जवाब आया है, लेकिन जो जवाब मंत्रालय से मिलता है, मुझे अफसोस है कि इनने सक्षम और कुशल प्रशासक भी जो गलत जवाब मंत्रालय से आता है, वह सदन में रख देते हैं। पहला उत्तर जो इस अभाव का आया, उसमें वह कहते हैं कि टाटा कैमिकल्स की मीटिंग बुलाई थी, उसमें उन्होंने कहा कि अच्छे कोयले की प्रपयार्ण प्राप्त है, काम में प्रबन्ध दोष रहा है, गार्टेज ग्राफ स्वीट वाटर था और इससे भी ज्यादा वह कहते हैं कि रेलवे वैगन्ज की कमी थी।

अध्यक्ष महोदय, यह बहुत बड़ा धोखा है, रेलवे बोर्ड का मेरे पास पत्र है, इसमें उन्होंने कहा है कि कभी इस तरह की कोई कमी नहीं हुई थी। फिर भी कहा जाता है कि रेलवे वैगन्ज की कमी थी। यह उद्योगपतियों की धोखे की बात है। रेलवे बोर्ड के पत्र में स्पष्ट है कि वैगन्ज की कमी शिकायत नहीं हुई।

दूसरी बात यह है कि अग्रर वैगन्ज की कमी थी तो इनके स्टॉक पहले की अपेक्षा क्यों ज्यादा था। इस तरह से यह कहना कि वैगन्ज की कमी थी, बिल्कुल गलत बात है।

दूसरे यह कह रहे हैं कि टोटल प्रोडक्शन कम हो रहा है, उत्पादन में कमी हो रही है, यह भी बिल्कुल गलत है। टोटल प्रोडक्शन 1977-78 में 5 लाख 80 हजार टन था और टोटल डिमांड थी 5 लाख 20 हजार टन की। कंपैसिटी थी 6 लाख टन की और इन्स्टाल्ड कंपैसिटी थी 6 लाख 32 हजार टन की।

तो न तो उत्पादन में कमी थी, न रेलवे बैगन में कमी थी। ये केवल लूटते थे क्योंकि जो दाम था वह 950 रुपए टन था और हर टन पर बिन्की में 2 हजार या ढाई हजार रुपया लिया जाता था। कहते हैं कि रेलवे बैगन की कमी थी तो सौराष्ट्र में जहाँ 90 प्रतिशत सोडा-ऐश तैयार होता है वहाँ तो परिवहन के माध्यम से डिस्ट्रिब्यूट हो सकता था, वहाँ क्या हुआ? यह निश्चित बात है कि इन चार उद्योगपतियों ने हिन्दुस्तान की जनता का दस करोड़ रुपया लूटा है और इसलिए हम प्रश्न करना चाहते हैं अपने कुशल मंत्री महोदय से। पहला प्रश्न है यह कि इन चार उद्योगपतियों ने जो दस करोड़ काला रुपया जमा किया है जिस पर टैक्स नहीं दिया है, उसकी क्या आप जांच करायेंगे? दूसरी बात यह है कि अगर आप उनको देते हैं वितरण करने के लिए तो वे इसी प्रकार की गड़बड़ करते हैं, तो क्या आप एक नेशनल डिस्ट्रिब्यूशन पालिसी बनायेंगे या उन्हीं उद्योगपतियों को मर्जों पर छोड़ देंगे कि वे जनता को लूटते रहें तीसरी बात यह है कि आपने कहा है कि सोडा-ऐश के दाम का कोई कानूनी प्रावधान नहीं है उसके वितरण पर कोई कानूनी नियंत्रण नहीं है। यह सरकार का समर्पण है उद्योगपतियों को। इसलिए आप एक स्ट्रेच्यूटरी प्राइस कंट्रोल सिस्टम कायम करेंगे, नहीं तो ये देश को लूटते रहेंगे। तो क्या आप कोई नेशनल प्राइस कंट्रोल स्थापित करेंगे।

तीसरा प्रश्न यह है मंत्री महोदय जानते हैं कि बहुत सारी कंपनियों को यह कहा गया, बिरला को जब कहा गया, जब टाटा को शिकायत की गई तो इन लोगों ने कहा कि हम तुम्हारा सफाई बन्द कर देंगे, पेट्रो-कैमिकल्स एवं हिन्दू कैमिकल्स और दूसरी कंपनियों को सोडा-ऐश की आपूर्ति इन्होंने बन्द कर दी, तो क्या इस तरह के विक्टिमाइजेशन को आप ने देखा है और उसकी जांच की है?

एक चीज और कहना चाहता हूँ कि विभाग ने आपके साथ गलतबयानी की है, यह स्पष्ट है। कहते हैं कि सोडा ऐश की कमी नहीं है। हमारे उद्योग मंत्री जाज फर्नांडीज 30 तारीख के फाइनेंसियल टाइम्स में कहा है कि यह आर्टिफिशियल शार्टेज है। उद्योग मंत्री कहते हैं कि आर्टिफिशियल शार्टेज है और डायरेक्टर जनरल टेक्निकल कहते

हैं कि सरप्लस है। आपके मंत्रालय को कहा है कि यह सब बहानेबाजी है। उद्योगपतियों ने जो बर्षान दिया है वही हमारे सामने रखा जाता है। डी0जी0टी ने यह कहा था--

"Apropos declsion taken in the meeting chaired by Minister of Petroleum, your association was to furnish by 31st July a list of your members along with requirements of soda ash between August 1978 and March 1979.."

क्या 31 जुलाई तक आपको उद्योगपतियों से यह सूची मिली है और नहीं मिली है तो आपने क्या कार्यवाही की है। इसलिए यह सब मैनियुलेशन है और जो छोटे छोटे बनाने वालों के संगठन हैं उनको ये नष्ट झूठ करना चाहते हैं तथा अपने मनमाने ढंग से पैसा प्राप्त करना चाहते हैं।

मोनोपलीज एंड रेस्ट्रिक्टिव ट्रेड प्रैक्टिसेज ऐक्ट के मुताबिक अगर इस क्षेत्र में प्रतियोगिता के लिए आपने कोई जगह नहीं छोड़ी है और ये चार लोग टाटा, बिरला, जैन और साहू जैन हिन्दुस्तान को लूट रहे हैं तो क्या एकाधिकार समिति के सम्बन्ध में आप कोई ऐसा कानून बनायेंगे ताकि इसकी स्वस्थ प्रतियोगिता देश में हो और जनता को राहत मिले।

श्री हेमवती नंदन बहुगुणा : मान्यवर, माननीय डा० रामजी सिंह ने जो अपने प्रश्न किए हैं उस में कुछ सलाह है कंपनी ला मिनिस्टर के लिए, उन तक मैं उन की भावना पटुचा दूंगा और कुछ है वित्त मंत्रालय के लिए, उन तक भी मैं उन की भावना पटुचा दूंगा।

जहाँ तक मेरे विभाग का संबंध है उस में यह कहा गया है कि कुछ एसोसिएशन के लोगों को जिन्होंने प्रावाज उठायी बढ़ते हुए दामों के खिलाफ उन के खिलाफ जो कुछ कार्यवाही टाटा कैमिकल्स और बिरला कैमिकल्स ने की, उस के बाबत स्पष्ट है, जिस दिन मीटिंग हुई उस दिन इन लोगों की उपस्थिति में मैंने अपना मत स्पष्ट कर दिया था, और एसोसिएशन के लोग बहुत प्रसन्न थे, मैंने उन से कह दिया कि आप इस तरह किसी को विक्टिमाइज नहीं कर सकते और करेंगे तो बहुत सीरियस व्यू गवर्नमेंट लेती। क्या सीरियस व्यू हो सकता है? वह यह हो सकता है कि कंट्रोल में ले जाएं सारे के सारे डिस्ट्रिब्यूशन सिस्टम को या कोई और काम करें। उस के बाद हमारे पास खबर आ गई कि सब को माल मिलना शुरू हो गया।

[डा० रामजी सिंह]

(स्ववधान).....मुझे तो जो बिट्टी मिली है मैं उस की बात बता रहा हूँ। जहाँ तक मेरा संबंध है, अगर माल नहीं मिला तो मैं उस बात की जांच कर सकता हूँ, जैसा कि मैंने कहा, हमारे पास सूचना है कि मिलना शुरू हो गया है। अगर नहीं मिला तो यह बात गलत है और इसको देखना पड़ेगा।

जहाँ तक शार्टेज का तात्पर्य है, शार्टेज के क्या कारण हैं उसके मूल में जाने की हम कोशिश कर रहे हैं लेकिन स्पष्ट कारण दीखते नहीं हैं।

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY (Calcutta South): Efforts had been made to show as if this scarcity was genuine, and efforts are being made to show that the Tatas and Birlas are genuinely respectable persons. How respectable are they? I would only like to draw the attention of the Minister, through you, to the Restrictive Trade Practices Enquiry No. 22 of 1974 under the MRTP Commission. This was where the applicant was the Registrar of Restrictive Trade Agreements, New Delhi and the respondents were Messrs. Tata Chemicals Ltd. I would submit this for the consideration of the House viz. that on 4 counts, the decision went against the very honourable Messrs Tata Chemicals, and strictures were issued, directions were given and decision were given with costs. And they were asked to modify the agreements, which again they failed to do. This is for the information of the Minister. I can submit it as an exhibit before this House.

These Tatas are very respectable persons, undoubtedly. We are told that they have a very hoary tradition—I do not know what it is. I would like to make a distinction between profiteering and profitability. There cannot be anything wrong if a business has profitability. But everybody, including these monopoly houses, including Tata Chemicals have indulged in profiteering. I would cite another example:

“Messrs B. M. Ahuja & Co., of Delhi were the consignee distributors of Tata for 40 years. With the change

in the outlook in policy of Tata (i.e. to try for black-marketing), this firm was unceremoniously removed, unilaterally without any letter of termination of distributorship”

MR. SPEAKER: Where are we going? What has it got to do with the present topic?

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: It has I read again. “This firm was unceremoniously removed, simply because this firm did not agree to act as a hoarder and black-marketeer as per their new plan. In fact, every high-up in Tata Chemicals wanted a trusted and tried friend in black-marketing trade to replace that firm.”

To save time, I am not reading further. (Interruptions) Please don't interrupt me. I cannot be treated like this.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR (Quilon): There are many who are paid by Tatas here.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: I am trying for the last 3 weeks to raise this issue, in the House. Having failed to raise it, I raised it at a Press conference, giving them an opportunity to use me in a court of law, if they had the courage to do it. I have received many letters, including two from Bombay and Hyderabad. I am quoting from the letter of one of the friends from Bombay. Here is the letter. He writes:

“They had a meeting (i.e. the silicate manufactures) Mr. Sheth Darbari was at his wits' end trying to explain his messing up of the situation....” Again in the same letter it is said:

“Shri M. P. Birla is likely to grant us an interview ...”

The great Mr. Birla has condescended to grant the interview, we are told.

His agent is already upset because he has indulged in large scale blackmarketing. These are the letters for your reference. My friend Dr. Ramji Singh has already referred to the reply of the Minister to his unstarred question 2354 regarding bottleneck due to wagon shortage, etc. This theory of wagon shortage is being built up by the bureaucracy behind. I am aware of the attitude and the forthright manner in which the Minister of Petro-Chemicals, the Minister of Industries and the Minister of Commerce—the three ministries which are concerned with soda ash — are trying to resolve the question but the bureaucracy from behind are trying to build up the theory of wagon shortage. As a matter of fact shortage is not due to wagons, it is due to change in the distribution channel. I drew the pointed attention of the hon. Minister that the shortage that is created since April 1978 is due to change in the distribution channel. I would quote one para only from my own press conference which I held sometime back.

MR. SPEAKER: Do not say so. You can read out.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: The distribution channel system was changed from ex-stock deliveries to ex-factory despatches, thus maintaining about 20 per cent of production in transit. That has resulted in a scarcity phobia of maintaining a shortage which was sought to be built up. This is the situation about shortage. Now I shall quote some figures which the hon. Minister himself gave to the other House and the figures which he told us here in his statement, they will show that there has been an increase both in production and despatch. I am quoting from his figures. The total annual production for 1977 was 5,48,676 tonnes, the average monthly production came to 45,723 metric tonnes. From January to June the production figure as given by the Minister himself was 2,95,000, the monthly average comes to 49,000 tonnes, from January to June. This

means that there has been increase in production of soda ash, monthly, increase to the tune of 4,000 tonnes. Opening stocks on 1st January 1977 was to the tune of 31,000 metric tonnes. Closing stock as on 30 June 1978 was to the tune of 4,000 metric tonnes. It means that there has been extra despatch of 8,500 tonnes per month over last years' monthly average production and inspite of this there has been this shortage. This is a matter which must be enquired into.

In respect of the wagon shortage, I should like to quote a letter addressed by the Railway Board to the President of the Silicate Manufacturers Association, the Railway Board has given certain figures about allocation of wagons and they say: "It will be observed from these figures that the demands are met in full and no demands are outstanding". The Petro Chemical Minister says: wagon shortage. That is not his view, the views are prepared by the bureaucrats behind. The Railway Board says: no wagon shortage, every wagon asked for was allotted. It is not for us how the two ministries sort this out. I shall give only nine more illustration how in March, April, in Delhi itself, the capital of India, the distribution was affected. In March Delhi received 40 wagons of soda ash. How was it distributed? 8,400 bags went to trade and 4300 bags went to industries. I am concerned presently with small and tiny industries whose main ingredient, raw material is soda ash. In April Delhi received 46 wagons of soda ash. A lion's share of it, 36,000 bags went to trade and 2400 bags went to industry. This is how persons who do not agree to dance to the tune of Tata Chemicals or Birlas are removed from distributorship. This is the reason why shortage was created. About the meeting which Shri Bahuguna initiated on 24th July, I congratulate him on taking a very quick and expeditious decision in holding the meeting. Something really came out and the manufacturers also were afraid. But in the meeting of the 24th July which has

[Prof. Dilip Chakravarty]

been mentioned by the Minister in page 3, para 11 of his statement last sentence—"The Association were also asked to furnish ..." etc.—this never happened. This was not the decision. This was incorporated in the proceeding—you—by the bureaucrate who were interested to support the cause of Tatas and Birlas. I know it for certain, and as a result, out of context the Silicate Manufacturers' Association received a telegram which they were not to receive at all. They were to receive a telegram of a different type. What was the telegram they received?

"Apropos decisions taken in the meeting chaired by Minister. Petroleum Chemicals and Fertilizers (.). Your association was to furnish by 31st July a list of your members along with requirements of soda ash between August 1978 and March 1979."

It is an association having a membership of 400 units—tiny and small—distributed all over India. About its membership and composition, the monopoly producers would very much like to know to pressurise the small and tiny producers and to frighten them. That is exactly the reason why the Silicate Manufacturers' Association were unwilling to supply it.

MR. SPEAKER: You have taken 10 minutes. You should conclude now.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: I have taken only 9 minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: Between 9 and 10 minutes, there is not much difference. Under the rules, it is only 2 minutes!

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: In view of all that has been stated here and outside, I would like to know whether the Minister would be kind enough to institute a public probe? Further, is the hon. Minister aware that a new process has been invented in Canada to manufac-

ture soda ash by a new technology which can be easily operated in the small scale, say 10 tonnes per day, and that we also have the expertise? Like my friend, Dr. Subramaniam Swamy I am not an expert in Chinese language but I tried to know the details of this matter before wasting the time of the House. Will the Minister take steps to counter the move of the monopolists and get this small scale process established?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I must repudiate with all the emphasis at my command the insinuation part of the hon. member's speech—because it was hardly a question, it was a long speech. So far as the minutes of the meeting of that day are concerned, they have been approved by me and it is a hard fact that we had asked the Association to give us a list of their members and also to give us how much they had received all these years because we wanted that when the companies send us the details, we can cross-check whether the companies were telling the truth or not. (Interruptions) They have to send us the list and the particulars. Will you accept what the companies say? This is in defence of an association obviously. What I am saying is more in defence of the Association than the other thing, because I want to juxtapose facts given by them against the other.

So far as the other things are concerned, I do not have to say anything because my only mistake is that I called the manufacturers and the Association, something which I need not have done because I was not obliged, there were no restrictions on movement. I was not responsible for distribution. I was not responsible for any of these things, Having done that I am being called up on to answer what has happened to the Rs. 10 crores pocketed by the management. I have referred it to the Finance Minister who should be able to say what has happened to the money, if at all.

So far as the last question is concerned, if the hon. Member comes forward with a proposal we have hardly anything to do with it. Anybody who wants to put up a ten tonne plant is welcome, he can do so. He does not even need a licence for it.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: So many Ministries are involved in this. I do not expect everything from him.

PETITION RE. TEHRI DAM PROJECT IN U.P.

डा० रामजी सिंह (भागलपुर) अध्यक्ष महोदय,
श्री उत्तर प्रदेश की टहरी बांध परियोजना के संबंध में,
टहरी बांध विरोधी संघर्ष समिति के प्रधान श्री बीरेन्द्र
दत्त सकलानी तथा अन्य आठ हजार व्यक्तियों
द्वारा हस्ताक्षरित याचिका प्रस्तुत करता हूँ।

12.47 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. REPORT OF EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF MATHURA REFINERY

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA):
Mr. Speaker, Sir, A petroleum refinery with a capacity of 6 million tonnes per annum is being set up by the Indian Oil Corporation at Mathura in Uttar Pradesh to meet the growing demands for petroleum products in the north-west region. The refinery is expected to be completed by December, 1979 and commissioned in April, 1980. Apprehensions have been expressed in certain quarters about the possible pollution hazards resulting from this refinery. In particular, fears have been expressed about the effect of gaseous effluents on the Taj Mahal and other historical monuments in and around Agra.

The House is aware that Government had constituted a Committee in July, 1974 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Varadarajan, Chairman, Indian

Petrochemicals Corporation Limited, to advise the project authorities on the measures to be taken for keeping the pollution effects to the minimum. Representatives of the Ministry of Petroleum, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur, Office of the Environmental Planning and Coordination of the Department of Science and Technology, Indian Institute of Petroleum, India Meteorological Department, Indian Oil Corporation and Government of Uttar Pradesh were also included in the Committee. A representative of the Archaeological Survey of India joined the Committee in December, 1975. The Committee submitted an unanimous report in December, 1977 in which it has viewed the steps which are being taken by the project authorities for the prevention of pollution and has made a number of important recommendations on the additional measures to be taken to keep the pollution levels in the Agra region to the absolute minimum.

The report of the Committee is still under examination in consultation with the concerned Departments of Government. As soon as the views of Government on this matter are finalised I would place them before the House. Since this will take some more time I would seek the permission of the House to lay a copy of the report on the Table. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-2642-A/78].

I would request the Hon. Members to note that the Committee has not only studied the environmental impact of Mathura Refinery but has also identified the existing levels of pollution in the Agra region and has recommended steps to reduce them to the extent possible.

Since the translation of the report into Hindi will take some time, I regret I am not able to lay on the Table the Hindi version of the report simultaneously. I crave the indulgence of the House for this.