

PRESS COUNCIL BILL

REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE

SHRI JAGANNATH RAO (Berhampur): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Report of the Joint Committee of the Houses on the press Council Bill, 1977.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR (Gandhinagar): I am sorry, I suffer from some sort of embarrassment, I suppose, when I make this point. You will kindly see that there is a certain procedure laid down regarding the Reports of the Joint Committees to be presented before the House, and those Committees' Reports which contain minutes of dissent also. If you see the Speaker's Directions, particularly, from 85 onwards, you will find that there has been laid down a complete description as to how the minutes of dissent are to be incorporated. I would, for your benefit only read out two Directions—89 and 90. Eighty-nine says:

"A minute of dissent shall be given only after the draft report has been considered and adopted by a Committee and it shall not be conditional in any respect."

Then direction 90 says:

"A minute of dissent shall not be accepted after the report has been presented to the House."

My difficulty is this. I am sorry, I have to say this here in the House. This Joint Committee of which I was a Member did meet for passing the Report only day before yesterday, only on Saturday at 10.30 a.m. and the notice about it was given very late when some of us were in our constituencies. So, we could not come on the 15th. Now the fresh notice of 15th July further says: "After the Report has been passed, the minutes of dissent, if any, may be given at the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Room No. 26 by 10 A.M. on Monday, July 17." Now, there are two difficulties. I came yesterday from my constituency from

Ahmedabad for the session and immediately after that when I came here, I got, for the first time, the Report of the Committee of which I was a Member. I have no complaint on that, although I objected to this kind of rushing the Report. But I got the Report only yesterday. Then I read the Report carefully, went through all the points and made my minute of dissent. When I came here in the Parliament House yesterday in the late evening to put my minute of dissent on time so that it did not become timebarred, there was nobody to receive my minute of dissent.

MR. SPEAKER: That has become part of the Report.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: That is why I am saying this. There was nobody at the Parliament House to receive my minute of dissent. There was only one box outside the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. I am only mentioning this so that this may not happen in future. That is why, I mentioned that there was one box outside room no. 26 of the Parliament House, Rajya Sabha Notice Office which mentions: "Notices on Calling Attention." I enquired for 10 minutes just at about 8.15 P.M. I went round the building and nobody who was present there was able to guide me properly. So, Sir, praying to God and praying to you, I put that thing, my minute of dissent, in that box. I want to know whether that minute of dissent which I had put in that box has become part of the Report or not.

MR. SPEAKER: It had.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: Otherwise, under direction 90, my minute of dissent shall not be accepted after the report has been presented to the House.

MR. SPEAKER: It has become. All the trouble would have been avoided if you had ascertained it from the Chairman. We sympathise with your

[Mr. Speaker]

difficulty, but it has become part of the Report.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: I am grateful to you to find out that my minute of dissent has become part of the Report. But my point is that, on such occasions when the reports are drafted and are passed by the Committee and then the reports are to be presented before the House, within 24 to 48 hours, how can the Members be in a position to give their minutes of dissent? After all, there must be some time lag between the passing of the Report and the presentation of the Report before the House. I was fortunate yesterday when I came here, because I drafted my minute of dissent immediately after carefully reading the Report yesterday afternoon, and then I walked into the Parliament House and put it in the box. Now it is part of the Report. Henceforward, however, you kindly give a guidance to the Chairman of the Committees—with great respect, I am saying to my all colleagues, Members of Parliament—that time given for minute of dissent should be longer and not within 24 to 48 hours, rushing the way it had been done. I am glad that my minute of dissent has been accepted.

MR. SPEAKER: We are sorry for the inconvenience that has been caused to you. But you would have avoided the inconvenience of the House if you had taken up this matter, at the first instance, with the Chairman of the Committee.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: I wrote two letters to the Chairman.

MR. SPEAKER: So far as this Report is concerned, it has become part of the Report. The general formula is that a matter of this character must be taken up with the Chairman of the Committee at the appropriate time I cannot give direction in a general way saying, you do this. It would be appropriate to take up the matter with the Chairman.

15.45 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED SHORTAGE OF COAL IN THE COUNTRY

DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT (Rajgarh): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Energy to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:—

“Reported shortage of coal in the country affecting adversely many industries, power houses and steel plants and leading to cancellation of trains and the steps taken by the Government to overcome the shortage.”

15.46 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SIIRI P. RAMACHANDRAM): During the current year a production of 113.5 million tonnes of coal has been planned to meet the demand of the various sectors of our economy. Against this, up to the end of June we have already produced 23.3 million tonnes. The current year opened with reasonably comfortable pithead stocks which stood at 12.5 million tonnes on 1st of April 1978. We were able to despatch more than our production during the first quarter of the year. Against the production of 23.3 million tonnes, despatches to various categories of consumers were 23.6 million tonnes. Even today the pithead stocks are about 11 million tonnes.

The first quarter of the current year has been a difficult period for the coal industry. As Members may be aware there was a prolonged strike in the Singareni Collieries which led to a considerable loss of production. This also made it necessary to divert coal from other sources to meet the requirements of the traditional consumers of Singareni. There have also been continuing problems with the availability of explosives and of power which have affected coal production.

We have been keeping a close watch on the progress of coal production and