

*The Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.*

PROF. S. NURUAL HASAN: I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted

17.45 hrs

**ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES  
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE  
MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND  
CO-OPERATION (SHRI A. C. GEOR-  
GE): I beg to move.

"That the Bill further to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The Essential Commodities Act was passed in 1955 for the control of production, supply, distribution and pricing and of trade and commerce in certain essential commodities. At present, there are 61 declared essential commodities which include items like foodgrains, sugar, vanaspati, drugs and textiles and other such items that are basic to the daily requirements of the citizens of the country.

From 1955 onwards, on the basis of experience gained in the working of the Act, suitable amendments to the parent Act have been made to make its provisions more effective. The Act

was last amended in 1974 in the light of the recommendations made in the 47th Report of the Law Commission and by it, the penal provisions of the Act were made more deterrent, so that the Act could be a more meaningful instrument to check hoarding, profiteering and other malpractices in the trade and commerce of essential commodities.

Regional Conferences of State Ministers of Food and Civil Supplies were held during 1974 and 1975 so that a consensus could emerge in regard to the changes required in the framework of this regulatory enactment. As a result of the recommendations made in these meetings, some amendments became necessary. Certain other amendments have also to be proposed, consequent upon the striking down of control orders relating to levy on foodgrains by the High Courts of Karnataka and Orissa, which hampered the procurement of foodgrains. The amendments which have been proposed are absolutely necessary for fulfilling our social needs, underscore the disciplinary requirements of our developing economy and would contribute to greater order in the procurement, supply and distribution of essential commodities. As has already been explained in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the main provisions of the amending Bill relate to: enlarging the definition of the term "Collector" to allow other senior officers to exercise powers in the drive against hoarder and profiteers for promotion of procurement to redefine the basis on which levy orders can be passed by the State Governments; to enable the re-introduction of seized essential commodities into the public distribution system and also to debar lower Courts from interfering with the confiscation proceedings; and finally, to protect public servants functioning under the Act against malicious and vexatious complaints in the course of the performance of their duties.

\*Moved with the recommendation of the President.

I trust that hon. Members will agree with the intention of the Government to tighten the measures relating to prevention of hoarding, profiteering and other such anti-social elements. Hon. Members are aware of the various measures that Government have been taking in regard to ensuring the smooth supply of essential commodities and I am sure will fully support the proposals. The proposed amendments, I am sure, will have the support of the entire House. We are taking all measures possible and advance action to see that there is no bottleneck in the distribution of essential commodities and, specially now, on the anvil of the biggest festival season, we are overseeing the general availability and distribution of essential commodities and a prompt and alert monetary system is being smoothened. I hope, the passage of this Bill will strengthen the hands of the Government in the matter of greater awareness and alertness about the consumer protection measures.

With these words, I move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill further to amend the *Essential Commodities Act, 1955*, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We can take it up tomorrow.

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND PARLIAMETARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH): I have no objection to taking it up tomorrow.

17.51 hrs.

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND PARLIAMETARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH): I would like to make one announcement. I have talked to our friends sitting opposite as well as our friends here. Because certain Bills have to go to the Rajya Sabha, they have to be given precedence. There is the Metal Corporation (Nationalisation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill; there is the Laxmirattan and Atherton West Cotton Mills (Taking over of Management) Bill and there is also the Dhoties (Additional Excise Duty) Repeal Bill. These Bills will be taken up in the first instance tomorrow and this part-discussed Bill will be taken up afterwards. Subject to that, I have no objection to the House being adjourned now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I hope, the House agrees with the proposal made by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore): Only with the expectation that the Minister will arrange for the proper supply of essential commodities and see that the prices do not go up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 11 A.M.

17.53 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, August 25, 1976/Bhadra 3, 1898 (Saka).*