

[Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath]

though I am not bothered about the incorporeal rights of zamindars and talukdars.

It must be remembered that the right to property has not been abolished so far. Article 19 is clear on that point. Article 19(1) (f) gives the right to acquire, hold and dispose of property. The only restriction imposed is that it can be done "in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe". That is the only restriction that can be imposed.

Therefore, I appeal to the Joint Committee to go into this Bill very carefully. Every word and every syllable of this Bill should be carefully scrutinised so that the interests of the vast mass of people in this country, 80 or 85 per cent or more of the rural population who have small holdings, some of whom may perhaps be holding only one acre or half acre, their rights are not sought to be bartered away for a fancied socio-economic reform. Their rights should be jealously safeguarded, in this legislation itself, if possible. Otherwise, very soon after the passing of this Bill, another Bill should be brought before this House to impose restrictions upon the Government so that lands within the ceiling, within prescribed limits, shall not be acquired by the State for a public purpose, without payment of adequate compensation and that should be made justiciable. So, for the small peasants, proper safeguards must be included in this Bill itself, or in a subsequent Bill. I, therefore, give my qualified and hesitant support to this Bill.

13.07 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: STARRED QUESTION NO. 760—MINISTERS' ACCOUNTS IN FOREIGN BANKS

Mr. Speaker: I would like to interrupt the proceedings for a short while. Today morning, during the

question hour, there was a certain discussion about the disclosure of accounts held by Ministers in foreign banks. I notice that some of the Members who raised it, particularly, Shri Tyagi, Shri Banerjee and Shri Daji are not present here. It was brought to my notice by the hon. Finance Minister that there was a law prohibiting disclosure of accounts as also the traditions and that the Government was also bound by the same, shall I say inhibition which the banks had in disclosing, even though the banks had passed on that information to Government. There is one point on which I would like to get the help of the Finance Minister. Since he has said that the Minister had authorised him to disclose it, without going into the details, may I know whether there is any harm in doing that and whether he is prepared to do that. What is the position?

The Minister of Finance (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful to you for providing me an opportunity for making good what was perhaps a lapse in my answer this morning. The account referred to is not a bank account. It is an account made up of accounts with several publishers, book publishers, who collected royalties on behalf of this particular Minister for the books published by them. The total account is placed before the Reserve Bank and money withdrawn from time to time. All that the Reserve Bank does is to allow the party, the Minister concerned, to keep £50 with the publisher.

An Hon. Member: How much?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: £50. That is all and that is for purposes of expenses when he goes to Europe and England. Sir, the Minister concerned happens to be the Prime Minister of this country, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, who, as you all know, has published several books for which he gets royalties from several countries. I can assure you that in 1961 the total amount payable was £733. Since then he has not kept at any time more

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than £ 50. The moneys are drawn from time to time, accounts are rendered to the Reserve Bank and the Reserve Bank keeps a close watch on the operation of the accounts. I am sure the House will acknowledge from all sides that the Prime Minister has nothing to conceal, because all these are received only by way of royalties on the books.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): Sir, on a point of clarification, may I ask whether it is a fact that certain Swiss banks maintain accounts, not merely of Indians but of other foreigners too, which are absolutely dead secret, and the accounts of some German Nazis came to light only after the defeat of Germany in the second world war? Is it possible for the Government to enquire whether any accounts, of any persons, Ministers or otherwise, Indians, are maintained in Swiss banks, and are dead secret?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: So far as we know, no Minister has any accounts with the Swiss banks. So far as finding out these accounts in the Swiss banks is concerned, as the hon. Member knows, they are called "Number Accounts". There is no means of finding it out except by correspondence. Sir, if you will permit me to digress, in Spain they made some Government officials, who were in their confidence, to maintain accounts and, thereafter, they got from time to time intimation of the officer concerned who will come and dispose of the accounts in Spain. So, when he came, they caught him. Since then, I am told, the Swiss banks do not even correspond. Therefore these accounts must be known only to the Swiss banks and the party. I also hear, as the hon. Member has heard, that there are several persons in this country who have accounts with Swiss banks I do not know. I have not yet been able to find the method by which I can get my claws over those accounts.

13.11 hrs.

CONSTITUTION (SEVENTEENTH
AMENDMENT) BILL—contd.

Mr. Speaker: The House will resume further consideration of the motion to refer the Constitution (Seventeenth Amendment) Bill to the Joint Committee.

Shri N. Sreekantam Nair (Quilon): Sir, I am one of those who support this Bill without much reservation. Of course, there is a certain difficulty which has been pointed out by Shri Kamath, that is, the definition of the word 'estate' is so wide that it may be utilised by some State Governments against pitty landholders. Some of the genuine friends of landholders and peasants are anxious about it. Therefore I would request the Government to consider as to how best it can be avoided.

Sir, I am proud that I support the Bill in spite of the fact that my hon. friend, Shri Ranga, would condemn me as a reactionary if I support it. But I am also ashamed of the way the Bill has been brought here and is being tackled here because I fear that there is a certain amount of conspiracy behind the Bill. The Bill was presented in this House in May. Four and a half months elapsed and now this Bill is taken up towards the very fag-end of this Session. We all know through the press and other reports that another Bill is being mooted and moved in the Kerala Legislature.

The statement of objects and reasons of this Bill very definitely points out that the immediate provocation for bringing forward this Bill as has been pointed out by my hon. friend, Shri Tyagi, also, was the Supreme Court and the Kerala High Court rulings regarding the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act, 1950. When that was struck down by the Supreme Court and the High Court of Kerala, naturally, this Bill was contemplated and all the other State legislations were tagged on to it because it was thought