

[Shri D. C. Sharma]

Now Madam, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said that you should do the right thing at the right time, and if you do not do it at the right time, even a right thing appears wrong. I am sure I did the right thing, but perhaps I did not choose the right time for it. I should have judged the pulse of the House much more correctly than I did.

An hon. Member: What did Mohammed Bin Tughlak do?

Mr. Chairman: No interruptions now.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Mohammed Bin Tughlak was a good king.

Since the House has been more or less not in conformity with my views, I would seek leave of the House to withdraw the Bill.

Mr. Chairman: Has the hon. Member the leave of the House to withdraw the Bill?

Several Hon. Members: Yes, yes.

Shri Nambiar: No.

Mr. Chairman: Is he pressing it?

Shri Nambiar: Pressing it to a voice vote.

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

"That leave be granted to withdraw the Bill further to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951".

The motion was adopted.

Shri D. C. Sharma: I am a democrat. After listening to my party members who have not been sympathetic to me, I withdraw the Bill.

The Bill was, by leave, withdrawn.

16.45 hrs.

RE: POLITICAL SUFFERERS AID
BILL

Mr. Chairman: The President has not recommended the consideration of the Political Sufferers Aid Bill of Shri

S. C. Samanta under article 117(3). Hence, the motion for the consideration of the Bill cannot be allowed to be moved.

I request Shri Kamath to move his Bill.

Shri S. C. Samanta (Tamluk): I am not moving the motion, but let me put some facts before the House.

Mr. Chairman: When it is not recommended at all, how can the hon. Member put the facts before the House?

Shri S. C. Samanta: I would request the Minister to reconsider their decision.

Mr. Chairman: That is a different thing.

16.46 hrs.

SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES OF
MINISTERS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): Madam Chairman, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Act, 1952, be taken into consideration."

The Bill has been long overdue. This question started agitating the minds of the Members of this House, as well as of other people, not to say of the vast millions outside, when last year sometime in March or April, certain stunning figures were laid on the Table of the House by the Minister of Works, Housing and Rehabilitation, Shri Mehr Chand Khanna, with regard to the payments made on account of the consumption of water and electricity by each Minister. Subsequently, a statement was laid on the Table of the House giving figures with regard to the cost incurred in supplying additional furniture to every Minister, whether a member of the Cabinet, or a Minister of State, or a Deputy Minister.

The House is well aware, and so are you, that the present Cabinet of Ministers is, if I am not mistaken, if my memory does not betray me, 53 strong—15 Cabinet Ministers, 16 Ministers of State and 22 Deputy Ministers. I am not including Parliamentary Secretaries in this, because, I believe, they are not Members of the Council of Ministers. Fifty-three in all. I do not wish to draw any analogies, far be it from my mind, but every hon. Member is aware that it somehow coincides with the number in the usual pack of cards, 52 plus one joker. I leave it to the House to go into the mystery of this matter and judge who is what. I leave the matter at that. They are more than the required quorum in the House anyway; 51 is the quorum required, and they are two more than the quorum required under the Constitution.

The Act, which I seek to amend, provides for various things free, and our Ministers, bred and brought up and nurtured as they are on the fine ideals, the inspiring ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and other teachers who have gone before, are serving the people day and night, sleepless nights and sleepy days, and are making the best of their bad jobs. I agree, so does every hon. Member here, that they are entitled to a modicum, more than a modicum, of comfort. I am equally sure they will themselves agree that they do not want any luxuries; nor do they want to draw upon the public exchequer needlessly, and my Bill, therefore, seeks to serve the purpose.

As the Statement of Objects and Reasons makes it quite clear, I do not want to read it because I believe every hon. Member has got a copy of the Bill, the figures given by the Minister of Works and Housing, and then Rehabilitation also, Shri Mehr Chand Kanna, were revealing. In March 1963, he laid a statement on the Table of the House which provoked an angry

rejoinder by the Law Minister who retorted that the CPWD needed a thorough overhaul and he said that the statement should not have been made and figures should not have been revealed without consultation with the other colleagues and in any case payments of his bills should not have been made without their being brought to his notice. So did the Minister without portfolio, earlier Home Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, now the Prime Minister. Then, there were certain developments.

Before I go to those developments, let me make it clear once for all that the Ministers, maybe deliberately, maybe unwittingly, have sought to build, not what has been called by some socialist thinkers, acquisitive society but a perquisitive society. So many perquisites, 1, 2, 3; it may be more. Tawney, a socialist thinker, coined the phrase 'acquisitive society', and our Ministers—all glory to them—have sought to build in the country of Lokmanya Tilak, Mahayogi Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Pramahansa, Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, with all the energy at their command, a perquisitive society, and many are following their illustrious example today. And we should not blame the others, if others follow the example set by them. As the Geeta rightly says:

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्त देवेभ्यो जनः

You know it very well, Madam Chairman, you are a Sanskrit scholar and you know the Gita; another poet has said it differently:

महाजनी येन गतः स पंथाः

These are 'Mahajans' sitting on the Treasury Benches. But we want them to set a better example if they can, and I am sure they can do it if they have the will. Times are such today, in this Emergency, when you are facing a mortal enemy China with all its embattled cohorts on the Himalayan border, that they should set an exam-

[Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath]

ple. They ask the people to sacrifice and to tighten their belts, whatever they may be, the hackneyed phrases which I need not reiterate now. It is time that they set an example.

Now, before I go to other matters, lest I forget what the perquisites are—free furniture, free electricity—some modification has been there very recently but it was free electricity till then—sumptuary allowance which is more sumptuous than sumptuary. I doubt seriously how many Ministers have actually spent and utilised the sumptuary allowance for the purpose for which it was intended.

Shri Kapur Singh (Ludhiana): They eat it.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: I may not say anything of that kind, but I doubt whether they have utilised it for the purpose for which it is intended. There have been reports in the papers, also reports in the country outside and floating in the Capital, that sumptuary allowances with most Ministers and some Governors are like additional pocket money, more or less. Here, according to the old Act, Rs. 500 were provided for every Minister other than the Deputy Minister—poor deputy ministers, they have not got this allowance. But the Minister of State or of the Cabinet gets this allowance according to the rules framed by Government. I do not know what rules they have framed; they might have been laid on the Table, and we might have lost sight of them. I do not know whether it caught your vigilant eye, Madam Chairman, you study papers very carefully. The Central Government recently issued a notification which has been reproduced in a responsible journal called *Indian Finance*. It is to the effect that Cabinet Ministers to whom a sumptuary allowance of Rs. 500 per month is admissible—they must have drawn it or must be drawing it, but I do not know how they spend it—were permitted to draw the same with retrospective effect, that is, with effect from

the 12th August, 1952. This, I say in all humility, but with all earnestness, is planned plunder of the public exchequer; it is nothing short of a planned plunder of the public exchequer. If this has been done,—I do not know how much has been drawn by those who are Cabinet Ministers now—it works out to a lump sum of Rs. 72,000, with effect from the 12th August, 1952. This is only one of the items. I am coming to the other perquisites later on. It is a long list of things of which no Gandhian can be proud, and they are all well-trained Gandhians, well-bred Gandhians; at least they take the name of Mahatma Gandhi often.

Dr. M. S. Aney (Nagpur): Well-placed Gandhians.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: I accept the hon. Member's amendment—also well-placed Gandhians. Before I proceed further, I would appeal to them to consider thoughtfully, give this matter their earnest attention, and ask themselves, with their hands on their hearts whether this is the way that Gandhiji expected them to do or the nation expects them to do, this poor nation, this poor country. The official figures of the bills on account of electricity and water alone every month ranged like this: in one case it was nearly Rs. 500 a month and in another case it was Rs. 600 per month. These relate to electricity and water only. These have been paid by Government—I do not know for how many years—until this came to the notice, the vigilant eye of Parliament, I notice Shrimati Lakshmikanthamma; she is trying to say something—

Shrimati Lakshmikanthamma (Khammam): I wonder whether they drank all that water.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: I am coming to that. There is some sort of telepathic communication! I was touring last year after these figures were laid on the Table, and in one of the remote villages in my constituency, some illiterate villagers had

been told, मिनिस्ट्रों के लिये बिजली और पानी पर पांच सौ, छः सौ और सात सौ रुपये तक खर्च हुए हैं।

Some of them asked me: "क्या वे बिजली पीते हैं। इतनी बिजली कैसे खर्च होती है?"

That is to say, do they drink electricity. I had to disabuse their minds of such a wrong notion: electricity cannot be drunk; it cannot even be seen, it is not a visible thing except its effect; and therefore there was no question of drinking electricity. I suppose Shrimati Lakshmikanthamma will now be convinced that Ministers, though they are in a different category from us, even they cannot drink electricity; they can drink only water.

Shri Nambiar (Tiruchirapalli): Not so much!

Shrimati Lakshmikanthamma: Nor electricity.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: I said they cannot. I do not know whether the acoustics are all right in the House. I said "I suppose she will be convinced."

The Bill that I am moving for consideration seeks to do away with these perquisites and make the Ministers and the Government—the Finance Minister is here and he would be happy—give an honest, straight account. The Auditor-General,—not the present one but one of the former incumbents—is reported to have made a computation which came in the papers some two years or so ago that with all these perquisites and what not—car allowance, electricity and water, sumptuary allowance and furniture—if all these are included, the salary of a Cabinet Minister easily comes to Rs. 6,000, the expenditure incurred on his account by the Government.

The Minister of Finance (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): Did he calculate it after 6 O'clock in the evening?

17 hrs.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: I do not know. I think the Finance Minister would be more competent to enquire whether it was at 6 O'clock or at 12 midnight, because he knows the Auditor-General better. I do not know him so, well. I would request the Finance Minister to carry out a searching inquiry, in fact a raid—not a raid in the real sense of the term—for further information, an informational raid. He has conducted very good raids in the recent past. Let him raid some of the files and give us the information. We shall be happy to know how and when the Auditor General came to this conclusion.

Is the House really of the view that the Ministers should be allowed to spend so much on water, electricity and other things. I recall there was a storm in the House when the figures were laid on the Table last year and I am sure the same mood persists today. Now they have restricted the amount so far as electricity and water are concerned.

Mr. Chairman: Can he conclude in a minute or two, or does he want more time?

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath: I am sorry I cannot conclude in a minute or two. I want some more time.

Mr. Chairman: Then, he can continue on the next day.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: He will come fortified again with fresh facts.

17.02 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, December 21, 1964/Agrahayana 30, 1886 (Saka).