

Shri B. R. Bhagat: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Motion moved:

"That the Bill be passed."

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Sir, I have not the foggiest hope of ever being able to persuade my hon. friend, the Minister of State as long as he holds to the kind of doctrines which he propounded and the portfolio to which he clings, but at least I am grateful for small mercies, and I notice that he was good enough to recognise that economic matters do get tinged with political overtones. That was exactly why I wanted to sound a note of warning. He does not heed to any warning. I do not know what particular paradise he wishes to inhabit. But if he is unaware of the kind of objective with which President Johnson's dramatic announcement took place, which was followed up by so many other things, I am very sorry for my country. I would like only to add one thing, that I am not at all convinced about his explanation of voting rights. He tried to say how this might help India. It might conceivably help India from the statistics, which he gives us, but he told us that 20 per cent is to be equally for all the constituents and 80 per cent to share capital. I should have thought, if he was going to have any kind of sound democratic composition the proportion would have been very different, but India does seem to have agreed to this kind of thing. I am very sorry he has not found his way to accept some of the modifications. I am very sorry he is presenting this Bill as something which the country ought to accept as a very good thing and he disregarded the many points which I have brought out.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

16.59 hrs.

DELHI ADMINISTRATION BILL—
Contd.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Minister of Defence Supplies in the Ministry of Defence (Shri Hathi): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to provide for the administration of the Union territory of Delhi and for matters connected therewith, as reported by the Joint Committee, be taken into consideration."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Minister may continue on the next day. The House will take up the Half-hour-discussion now.

17 hrs.

URBANISATION OF AREAS*

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta Central): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am raising this discussion on account of the unsatisfactory nature of the answers which were given by Government to Starred Question No. 1109 on the 14th April, 1966. This had relation to the urbanisation of areas and Government had been asked if it had studied the reports prepared by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation on India's urbanisation and what were its salient features. Government gave us the benefit of a note prepared by somebody in the CMPO and almost left it at that.

The Minister of Planning, in answering supplementaries, could only say that there already is a plan for Calcutta which the Government of India had started during the Third Plan and that they had still to decide what should be the programme for the Fourth Plan. When it was pointed to him that the note on urbanisation

*Half-An-Hour Discussion.

which Parliament was given included some rather objectionable statement, for instance, that there is a strong anti-Calcutta sentiment outside of West Bengal because it symbolises Bengal and the Bengalis, he answers that he had no views on the subject. He said, "I do not need to have any views on the report which is drawn up by an odd individual somewhere". So, Parliament was given only a report of an odd individual in the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation and we were left more or less hanging in mid-air unaware of what, if anything, Government was doing about the multifarious problems of Calcutta. That is the reason why I have brought up this short discussion in order that we might have some little satisfaction in respect of the extremely unsatisfactory replies which we had got.

It was rather astounding to find in this note which was supplied to Parliament this reference to Calcutta as a sort of place about which the rest of India has a strong, antagonistic sentiment, because, after all, Calcutta has been the headquarters of Indian nationalism for many years. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whose centenary we are celebrating at the moment, said very long ago that what Calcutta is thinking today India is thinking tomorrow. I am not saying this in the Bengali chauvinistic way, but Calcutta has been like that. Calcutta, even today, is India's city as the former Registrar General has said in a compilation that an average of 61 per cent in all factories in 1960 and a little over 50 per cent in commercial and other non-factory establishments in Calcutta region are non-Bengalis.

Of course, Calcutta has so many problems. It is a chance-erected, chance-directed city, as Rudyard Kipling said a long time ago, with many contradictions—palaces, bastis, hovels developing side by side—and the result is that in Calcutta there is a terrific combination of circumstances where life has become almost impossible and much of the tension which takes place

in the region is due to the fact that life is really and truly impossible.

The Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation was set up some time ago but the original sin of its having been set up, perhaps I could put it that way, was some anti-Communist motivation about which the American agencies setting up this organisation made no bones. I can understand their worry because in this House, for instance, for one Congress Member from Calcutta we have three Members representing the Communist Party. If concern about Calcutta going Communist produced some good results, that would have been very very pleasant, a very happy result; but, unfortunately, nothing of that sort has taken place.

The Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation has produced a few things, like some reports—a traffic study of the city of Calcutta, a scheme for a second bridge over the River Hoogly which is still in the offing and many problems are unsettled. It has brought up some urban renewal plans, removal of factories and godowns from either side of the Bhagirathi River and a scheme for garden cities all over. It is a very beautiful picture, but it is almost a joke if one compares it with what actually is the state of affairs in Calcutta at this present moment.

In answering the supplementaries the other day the Minister of Planning could only say that as between the Centre and the State the responsibility is there and we are trying to do what we can. He did not seem to know more about it. I did not blame him at that time because the question was formed in that way. But there are many other things which need to be elucidated. Rs. 6 crores have been given by the Centre to the West Bengal Government for improvement of bastis, slum areas, in Calcutta. But the State Government, it appears, was not able to spend it.

Then, 72-inch water pipes were put up for the improvement of water supply. But after the water pipes were

[Shri H. N. Mukerjee]

put up, it was discovered that water availability was not there. The setelite town scheme was given by the C.M.P.O. But in the mean time, the Birlas and the Bangurs are buying up land directly or through their *benam-dars* who include some of the more distinguished Members of the Party in power. There is no ceiling on land holding; there is no ceiling on land income.

The position of Calcutta is disturbed by the fact, as the West Bengal Finance Minister said sometime ago, that 55 lakhs of non-food producing people from other States are in West Bengal and half of that number, that is, 27½ lakhs are in the Calcutta region and, therefore, naturally the food problem gets complicated.

It has come to light—and in this Question also a reference was made to it—that while West Bengal's population had grown by 33 per cent in the last decade, Calcutta's population grew only by 8 per cent while in the case of the Greater Bombay, the growth in the same period was to the extent of 39 per cent and the reasons which retarded the growth in Calcutta were, very poor, over-worked, over-congested transport, inadequacy of water supply and sewage system, extremely high land value, higher than even in some cases in Chankayapuri in New Delhi.

The position of Calcutta is jeopardised even more by the fact that Bhagirathi river or the Hoogly river which is called in a very undesirable anglicised name, is a dying river and the port which handles 45 per cent of our export trade and 40 per cent of our imports is in a bad way. There are some long-term projects like Farraka which will be ready, heavens know when, and if it is ready, we do not know whether the results that we anticipate would actually be forthcoming. In the case of Haldia port, of course, some advance has been made. But that is again a long-term project.

In the meantime, we do not know how things will go on.

Inside Calcutta, this question of having a circular railway, in order that the difficulty experienced by the commuters who come to Calcutta everyday can be, to some extent, alleviated, continues to be just a smoking and smouldering scheme but no results follow. In Sealdah station, in Calcutta, everyday there is a congregation of 300,000 people. That is the most congested railway station in the whole world. At the Howrah station, 2000 people come everybody. The scheme for a circular railway is being put off all the time and the Railway Minister said, only the other day, that nothing very much could be done.

There was a scheme for an underground railway with which the late Dr. B. C. Roy had wanted to go ahead. I do not understand, if in Leningrad which was built on a swamp and a marsh, there could be an underground railway, why in Calcutta, an underground railway could not be built. But perhaps the expenses were found to be prohibitive or whatever other difficulties were there, we have neither an underground railway nor an over-ground circular railway nor any kind of method which would solve the present problems, traffic congestion, communication and transport, everything, being in jeopardy.

The only tangible thing which has happened recently was that a road from the Dum Dum Airport to the city has been half-completed and is still largely unlit and mostly unpaved. But, to some extent, some little progress has been made. The other Expressway between Calcutta and Asansol about which Mr. S. K. Patil when he was the Minister of Transport umpteen years ago used to say a great deal has not come into the picture.

The other thing that is making a slightly snail-like progress is the scheme of a second bridge over the river Hoogly. But it is facing all

kinds of difficulties. If we have a bridge there at the spot where it is now supposed to be, the Maidan in Calcutta, which is a lung of the city, would largely be destroyed, the people will be deprived of the access to it and traffic and other problems will also arise. The Stadium for football and other sports which Calcutta people are rather mad of, who have been aching and yearning and thirsting and hungering for so many years, would be put off for God knows how long. That kind of thing is taking place. There is no planning about it, no forethought, no effort to co-ordinate matters, no effort to do something in the short-term as well as in the long-term. I know we shall be told that we are having schemes, and the CMPO is a very expert organisation. I do not know why for the sake of computing traffic figures or for the sake of finding out how to build a bridge over the river Hoogly, we have to have foreign expertise. For everything we have to have foreign expertise! I was told in the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Committee and such organisations that even to have a Balbhavan we had to have some expert advice from other countries in order that we may learn how exactly to run the Balbhavan. For everything we want foreign expertise, and the result is that everything is pushed forward to some long-term solution. But in the long run, we shall all be dead. It is better that something is done in the short run also at the same time as you proceed with long-term projects.

We find also that in Calcutta educational problems are accumulating, and in regard to that, recently, a question was asked in the House by Shri Madhu Limaye and some other friends of ours, and it is discovered, as Mr. J. P. Nayak has pointed out in his report on primary education in Calcutta that for children in the age group 6-11, the probable enrolment in classes 1 to 5 on the 31st March, 1961 was 1,85,000 only which works out to 60.2 per cent of the total population of the children of that particular age group.

This is most shabby. Recently, we find the Deputy Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation or the chairman of its Education Committee bemoaning that children in the age group 6-11, number about 3,80,000, out of whom only 1,63,000 have schooling facilities. Less than 50 per cent of the children of school-going age are deprived. And we hear talk from foreign quarters, particularly, about this, because they dislike Calcutta as a hot-bed of communism or God knows what other kind of enormity, and they write also about it. Here is something sent to me by the External Affairs Ministry. In the US press, *The New York Times* writing a special article on 'Calcutta crisis growing', says:

"One of the world's largest cities is in crisis, overwhelmed by the runaway population, poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy."

and it gloatingly writes about how the World Health Organisation calls the city an international health hazard. It is very dangerous that this kind of propaganda goes on. It might also be true, and to a large extent, I am afraid I have to confess that it is true. But even now, Calcutta is one of the biggest places where world tourists come. The Calcutta airport is busier, far busier perhaps than even Delhi, even busier than Santa Cruz. And yet it is an international health hazard to some extent.

This article in *The New York Times* on the 5th May, only a few days ago, writes about Calcutta's educational problem as follows:

"Calcutta is the most backward city and area in India in terms of educational facilities. No school is available for half a million children. At the present rate of population growth, Calcutta would have to build one hundred schools a year for 20 years and these would have to operate on double shifts. The city has not opened a single school in the past ten years."

[Shri H. N. Mukerjee]

This might be slightly exaggerated, but it is largely true that all this kind of thing is taking place.

This perpetual tug-of-war between the Centre and the States in relation to responsibility for Calcutta should cease at some point of time, and some radical, objective and concrete and tangible relief should be given to Calcutta. The World Bank Mission had said in 1960:

"The very magnitude and challenge that Calcutta presents to the conscience and political common-sense of those in authority no doubt in part explaining the inadequacy of the response."

Everybody admits that more ought to be done about it, but nobody is ready to do it. It is very necessary to do something about Calcutta. You may feel apathetic towards Calcutta because Calcutta is left-oriented, but for that reason, do not disown a part of your country which has played and will continue to play a large part in the history of our development. Do not forget the kind of contribution which Calcutta and that region has made to the rest of India and which it still makes to the economic development of this country. Do not play with the fate of Calcutta. Do something tangible as quickly as ever that is possible. Proceed with long-term and short-term policies together and get the State Government to cooperate. Give some more thought to it so that this chronic problem which has become such a cancerous growth in our body-economic does not become insoluble. That is why I have brought in this discussion today.

The Minister of Planning and Social Welfare (Shri Asoka Mehta): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I am grateful to Prof. Hiren Mukerjee for providing us an opportunity to discuss the acute problems of Calcutta on the floor of this House.

Because I come from Bombay—or perhaps in spite of that—I am willing to concede the fact that Calcutta is our premier city industrially, commercially, culturally and in every way. The importance of Calcutta in the life of our country is so obvious that I do not think it needs to be underscored. I also readily agree to the fact that the problems of Calcutta are daunting today. Many of the things Prof. Mukerjee described in the course of his brief speech this afternoon, those facts are there and they are known to us. It is a beautiful city; but there are many ugly spots which have to be removed.

It is not because Calcutta is Left-oriented that there has been any kind of discrimination against it. I really wish Prof. Mukerjee and his colleagues were in a position to provide an effective leadership in the civic life of Calcutta. Because what is happening? If you look at the way taxes are raised in Calcutta, the amount of money spent by the Corporation in collecting taxes, the various ways in which the property-owners as well as the people of Calcutta can be induced to provide resources to solve the civic problems and to meet the civic requirements, if you look at all these things, you will find that they fall short of what is being done in Bombay city. Bombay city may not be as important as Calcutta, but as far as tackling its civic problems are concerned, it has shown greater tenacity.

I have been arguing that while the State Government should do all that it can to solve the problems of Calcutta and the Government of India should be asked to provide whatever support is possible for solving the difficult problems of Calcutta, so far as the Calcutta Corporation is concerned, the resources it can tap also need to be tapped. Only recently a study of this problem is being made; I have not still received the report. I am looking forward to a critical and significant analysis of this aspect.

Secondly, in order that the many problems of Calcutta can be tackled effectively, it is necessary either to set up different authorities or to enact different items of legislation. Some-time back, the Land Use Control Act was put on the statute-book. We now find that the Act does not go far enough. If we want to plan, if we want to see that the development of Calcutta is organised in a manner that would help us solve the problems, if not immediately, at least over a period of time, one of the things that needs to be done is to control land use.

Since 1960 it has been suggested that the Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority be set up, because, as you know, besides the Calcutta Corporation, I believe there are 20 or 30 other municipal bodies that have to be brought together; there should be some kind of umbrella under which they all work and organise themselves. Bombay had the same problem, and so created what is known as Greater Bombay, and they have all been made part of the Greater Bombay Municipal Corporation. It is not necessary that Calcutta should do the same thing, but there has got to be some authority, some umbrella which is able to organise all this and provide, as it were, a single co-ordinating initiative. This Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority, I believe, is still before a Select Committee.

It was further suggested that there should be a Busti Improvement Bill. I think this Bill is still under consideration. I suggest that Prof. Mukerjee and his colleagues are very influential in Calcutta.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: We have no power.

Shri Asoka Mehta: I would personally be very happy if I can be sure of their full and effective support in seeing that whatever authorities are involved in this, we push them forward, because I do not think the Gov-

ernment of West Bengal or my friend the Chief Minister of West Bengal and his colleagues do not want to do this. There are all kinds of difficulties and obstacles including ill-informed public opinion. To the extent we can carry public opinion, these things have to be done and I have no doubt that our progress will be faster.

As Prof. Mukerjee knows, 17 different schemes—I do not want to take up the time of the House by dilating on these schemes—have been taken up in the third plan period, and something like Rs. 23.10 crores will be spent on the schemes. What we should do during the fourth plan is very much under consideration. But here again I am clear in my mind that the resources needed are going to be tremendous, and it is not easy to find resources for our metropolitan areas because similar resources are needed in our less-developed urban and rural areas. The claims of metropolitan areas are important, but they cannot demand that these resources be made available at the expense of the development needs of other areas. Therefore, I have always argued that unless we are willing to take some far-reaching action as far as urban land values in Calcutta, Bombay, Kanpur or Delhi are concerned, we will never get the resources. Surely we must develop these cities, provide good sewage, provide adequate water, because these are human problems, they have to be tackled. I quite agree with Prof. Mukerjee that the snarling up of transport in Calcutta is something to which there is no parallel in the world. The moment you try to do this, the price of land goes up, and there are a set of people who make a profit out of it.

I am told, here again Prof. Mukerjee would be able to enlighten me, that in Calcutta there are a very large number of people who own urban land property. If that is so, if it is so distributed among *bhadra log*, then to touch the urban land values, urban land and property in Calcutta would be, as it were, eroding and undermining and exploding the very limited

[Shri Asoka Mehta]

security that the *bhadra log* has, then it is a different matter. But if as I suspect, the urban land property is more or less in the hands of a limited number of people, surely it is imperative that we take some concrete, specific, determined step to see that the unearned increment in land values is utilised for the purpose of the benefit of the people of Calcutta, that the community has over-riding claim upon the unearned income of those who own urban land property there.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty (Barrackpore): Marwaris.

Shri Asoka Mehta: Whoever they are; it is not against any particular section of our people; it is a question of who owns the land. As I said if it is a question of widows and orphans only owning urban property in Calcutta, I have nothing to say; I have the fullest of sympathies for them. If it is owned by people who are really using it as investments and making capital gains, etc. surely some determined step needs to be taken. Here again I would invite the most fruitful co-operation from my hon. friend Mr. Mukerjee and his colleagues.

Lastly, I hope Prof. Mukerjee will not be so cynical and so very caustic about all the plans that have to be drawn up, all the projects that have to be prepared as beautiful intentions drawn out and when you look at reality, what is it? I do not think that all these problems can be sorted out within five years; they may take ten or twenty years. But unless you are clear about the direction in which you are going, it will not be effective. As you said, over many decades Calcutta has grown in a pell-mell

manner. If this pell-mell growth has to be given some kind of a direction and if it is to be achieved within a certain framework, which is consciously organised, surely we must be clear about what we propose to achieve in the next 15—20 years. Let him not be so cynical about what is to be done tomorrow. We have to do all that we can to sort out the immediate problems but in order to sort out immediate problems we must have the larger picture before us. It is not enough to put all the pressure on the Government of West Bengal and the Government of India; they must play their part undoubtedly, but I think more important is that the resources that are available in Calcutta have to be tapped, in terms of raising whatever taxes that need to be raised and keeping to the minimum the expenses involved in raising these taxes and using the resources for providing amenities to the people. As Prof. Mukerjee says, what Calcutta thinks today, the rest of India thinks tomorrow; what Calcutta does today, the rest of India does tomorrow. I hope and trust that Prof. Mukerjee will see to it that as far as getting the full benefit of increase in urban land values is concerned, the initiative will come from Calcutta so that the rest of India may have the privilege of following that initiative.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The discussion is over. The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. on Monday.

17.28 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, May 16, 1966/Vaisakha 26, 1888 (Saka).