

representatives of the leading banks are there. Therefore, through these schemes we are trying to have some experiment to see in what manner we can improve the quality of production, we can ensure the marketability of these products and improve the rating of the jute which they produce.

Cases against Hindustan Lever for marketing soaps below standard weight

*454. SHRI K. A. RAJAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE, RURAL RECONSTRUCTION, IRRIGATION AND CIVIL SUPPLY be pleased to state:

(a) whether several cases are in progress in various States against Hindustan Lever which is a subsidiary of Uni-Lever of U.K. for marketing soaps below the declared weight; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI BRAJA MOHAN MOHANTY): (a) No, Sir, No case has been instituted on behalf of the Government of India against M/s. Hindustan Lever under the relevant provisions of the Standards of Weights & Measure Act, 1976.

(b) The question does not arise.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: The Government can either very well say that they are not having the information or they can very well cleverly say that they want to collect the information. I say with all the information I have that regarding the under-weight of the soaps, certain enquiries and cases had been instituted in Uttar Pradesh at Aligarh Sikohabad and Kotdwar and in Himachal Pradesh at Hamirpur. Sir, about this short weight, the original weight, the reduced weight and the date of weight reduction I would just, specify for the information of the Minister the dates on which the particular products reduced in weight.

For Lifebuoy, the original weight is 170 grams, reduced weight is 165 grams and the date of weight reduction was 5-8-1968.

About Sunlight, the original weight is 165 grams, the reduced weight is 150 grams and the date of weight reduction was 6-8-1970.

Again, about Lifebuoy, the original weight is 165 grams, reduced weight is 150 grams and the date of weight reduction was 6-8-1970.

About Vim, the original weight is 610 grams, reduced weight is 600 grams and the date of weight reduction was 1-1-1969.

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask the question now.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: These are the specific dates on which the soaps were marketed with reduced weight and naturally, you know the prices have not been reduced. So, while these specific cases of reduction in weight are there, it is a clear case of cheating and a fraud on the Government. I would like to know whether the multinationals are managing the Government or the Government is managing the multinationals. I would also like to know from the Minister, on these specific charges whether they are going to constitute an inquiry into the matter.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL RECONSTRUCTION, IRRIGATION AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (RAO BIRENDRA SINGH): I would like the hon. Member to understand the working of this Act. The implementation of the Act is through the States. But in the case of manufacturers who have a large network for retail sales all over the country in different States, it would not be proper to allow the States to launch prosecutions because of the danger that there might be different pronouncements by different courts in different places with regard to the same charges against the same manufacturer. Therefore, the authority has been retained under the Act by the Centre in case of manufacturers whose products are sold in interstate trade all over the country and this is one of the companies. There is no provision by which we can determine whether the shrinkage is there after the manu-

facture over a period of time in case of a particular commodity the weight of which reduces and the size of which also shrinks. The extent cannot be known and it is very difficult to determine it specifically. Therefore, for a basis for prosecution the net weight of a commodity will have to be checked at the manufacturing point. That weight is stated on the package of a particular commodity just as in the case of soaps. It is the State agency the Director of weights and measures in a State who authorises his inspectors and various other officers to check the weights of all these manufactured items at the stage of manufacturing or packaging. Therefore, it would be wrong to say that enquires are not going on and the Centre has not been able to do anything. We have received some complaints in the Directorate at the Centre from various States. We have asked for further information to judge whether prosecution can successfully be launched against the Company.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: Why is Shri Rao answering the question? We formally know nothing. We know that Shri Shukla is the Minister. We cannot take notice of what we read in the newspapers. Can we have official information as to what has happened?

MR. SPEAKER: Official information is at my desk.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: Officially we have not been informed.

MR. SPEAKER: You will inform.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: Congratulations are due for him also.

MR. SPEAKER: You can even host a party, I do not mind.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: I am not at all convinced. In this particular case the shrinkage is upto 15 grams. So,

the argument given by the hon. Minister is not at all convincing. It is a very important thing. I would like to enlighten the Minister that another fraud is being committed. The licenced capacity plus permitted liberalisation in 1979 of soap manufacturing is 87635 tonnes in the case of Hindustan Levers. In the Reports and Accounts of 1979 the production has been shown as 1,63,774. The difference is quite clear between the two. The difference is in thousands of tonnes of the same commodity in that particular firm. I would like to know the explanation from the Minister. These multi-nationals are having a heyday under you. You have no control. You have no explanation on this account. (Interruptions) It is a fraud committed on the people. I am very sorry to say that. I would like to know what is the position?

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: Abusing the multinationals just for the sake of abusing will not serve any purpose. I can also do the same if it can bring any results. I have already stated that we have asked for specific information from the States from where the complaints have been received. Unless we are sure that the prosecutions can be launched on account of reduced weight or shortage in weight at the manufacturing level, nothing can be done in my view. But if the hon. Member has any particular complaint against any retailer specifically, I shall certainly like to hold an enquiry

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: I want your protection. My question was the licenced capacity of Hindustan Lever for soap manufacturing for 1979 was so much, the actual production has gone to so much... (Interruptions)

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: I would require separate notice to go into that question.

What I mean to say is that unless we know that at a particular retail point the commodity was found short in weight, we cannot go back and enquire into it.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: I seek your protection.

MR. SPEAKER: He is asking about certain unauthorised increases in production.

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: That does not come under the Ministry of Civil Supplies. He will have to give notice to the Minister of Industries.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: I am not sure whether I should put this question to Shri Rao at this stage or not. The prices of soaps including the soaps manufactured by this Company and other important companies are rising like anything.

Is there any check in his Ministry or in any other Ministry? Is there any statutory control? If not, why not? Is the Government considering to take some statutory steps to ensure proper weight and proper price?

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: Prices are controlled under the Essential Commodities Act. So far there is no price control on these commodities.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: Will you please look into it?

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: It is a suggestion. We shall look into it.

Improvement of design and quality of leather products

+

*455. **SHRI HARIHAR SOREN:**

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Trade Development Authority (TDA) has undertaken a programme to help Indian firms to improve design and quality of their leather products; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Trade Development Authority so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KHURSHED ALAM KHAN): (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

The Trade Development Authority has recently undertaken a programme to assist the Indian firms manufacturing leather travel goods, small leather goods and ladies fashion bags for improving the designs and quality of these products. For this purpose, TDA has obtained the services of a product adviser with a view to:

- (i) assess the existing methods of production in the Indian Industry and discussing product development measures with the officials in TDA and other promotional organisations connected with the exports of finished leather and leather products;
- (ii) visit selected manufacturing units to study the designs, techniques and quality of and products;
- (iii) work with the technical personnel in the units and advise on the product development requirements;
- (iv) advise on plant lay-out, suitable modifications in the production processes, techniques to improve quality and suggest steps for cost reduction;
- (v) advise on the requirement and procurement sources of additional equipment for processing and finishing;
- (vi) advise on quality control and testing methods; and
- (vii) advise on the use of right quality of raw material.