

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Wednesday, 16th July, 1952.

The House met at a Quarter Past Eight of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

9-15 A.M.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

USE OF FORCE BY POLICE IN CALCUTTA

Mr. Speaker: I have received notices of three adjournment motions. One is from the hon. Member Shri Gurupadaswamy. He wants adjournment of the House to discuss "the use of force, lathi and tear gas by the police of Calcutta on Tuesday, the 15th of July against the peaceful procession of citizens" which has caused, as he says, a grave threat etc. I need not discuss this. Obviously, it is not the concern of the Government of India. It is undoubtedly the concern of the West Bengal Government and I cannot give my consent to this.

FOOD POLICY re WEST BENGAL

Mr. Speaker: Then there are two adjournment motions practically dealing with the same subject. One is by the hon. Member Dr. Meghnad Saha and the other by Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri. The first reads as follows:

"The situation arising in west Bengal on account of the failure of the Government of India to take prompt and effective steps so as to get the new food policy with regard to West Bengal as announced by the hon. the Food Minister on the 13th of June last and reiterated on the floor of the House

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in the course of his reply to discussions on the Food Budget, implemented by the Government of West Bengal, leading to" etc.—with which we are not concerned—leading to, as he says, "public agitation and civil disobedience movement in the State".

The second, from Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri, reads:

"The situation arising in West Bengal by the failure of the Government of India to take prompt and effective steps so as to ensure increased food supply for the Greater Calcutta industrial area and to get the new food policy with regard to West Bengal as announced by the hon. the Food Minister on the 13th of June, 1952, and again reiterated on the floor of the House during Budget discussions, implemented by the Government of West Bengal."

Now, I should like the hon. Members who have given notices of these adjournment motions just to tell, in a few words as to what specifically, according to them, is the failure to implement the policy and what exactly that policy was. They need not take a long time. I merely want to consider the admissibility of these motions.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri (Berhampore): The new food policy announced by the hon. Mr. Kidwai with regard to West Bengal, particularly with regard to the Greater Calcutta industrial area was, briefly speaking, this: He announced that the Centre would undertake the responsibility of supplying the additional foodgrains—rice and wheat—that would be required to feed the Greater Calcutta industrial area and certain other measures would follow as a logical consequence to this policy. But it has been announced day before yesterday by the Chief Minister of the Government of West Bengal that they

[Shri T. K. Chaudhuri]

have not received any assurance from the Central Government that the additional foodgrains required would be supplied to them. As a matter of fact the Chief Minister of the Government of West Bengal came out with a lengthy statement and he also reproduced the copy of a telegram that he had sent to the hon. the Food Minister here. But we do not know what reply has been sent to that telegram of the Chief Minister of West Bengal. Now a great confusion has arisen in the public mind, and naturally panic has been created. I wanted some assurance from the hon. the Food Minister on the floor of the House during the course of the Budget discussions that the food policy with regard to West Bengal must be announced very clearly because there is a feeling amongst the public in West Bengal that the new policy which was announced with regard to West Bengal—the larger policy with regard to control and de-control—was not being implemented or there was some unwillingness on the part of the West Bengal Government to implement the hon. Mr. Kiywai's policy with regard to West Bengal. And he gave a categorical assurance that that policy would be implemented by this year and that the additional foodgrains required would be supplied. But now the Chief Minister of the Government of West Bengal has come out with a statement that the required additional foodgrains have not been supplied and that they are not in a position to implement that policy. Naturally, there is a great discontent.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member Dr. Saha wish to say anything?

Shri Meghnad Saha (Calcutta North-West): No further elucidation is necessary.

Mr. Speaker: I should like to know the position of Government in this matter.

The Minister of Rehabilitation (Shri A. P. Jain): Government is keeping a careful watch on the developments with regard to Calcutta and West Bengal. The two undertakings which the hon. Minister of Food gave with regard to Calcutta are the following: The public will get, in addition to their usual rice ration at the ration shops at the controlled price, the sale of rice at fair price shops. The price of this rice is Rs. 30 a maund which of course is higher than the price of the rice allowed in the ration shops. Fair price shops have been started in Calcutta from July 7th, 1952, so that that part of the undertaking given by the Food Minister is being implemented.

The second undertaking which was given by the Food Minister was that the Government of India will give the West Bengal Government one lakh tons of rice. Out of this 44,000 tons has already been allotted. The House will realize that the transport of rice takes some time, and so far as it was possible steps have been taken to implement the second part of the undertaking as well.

These two motions refer particularly to Calcutta. The third undertaking given by the Food Minister was with regard to the Sunderbans and the Nadia districts. He promised that 15,000 tons will be allotted for these areas at the reduced rate of Rs. 15 per maund. That is, the Government of India will bear the difference in the actual cost, and the sale will be at the subsidised rate of Rs. 15 per maund. Now, 15,000 tons of rice has already been allotted, to be sold at the rate of Rs. 15 per maund.

So, I think, all that was possible has been done in this matter. The House will realize that the changeover in the food policy takes some time to implement and within the short time that has been available at the disposal of the Government of India every possible step has been taken to implement the scheme. Of course, the situation with regard to food in Bengal is a somewhat difficult one. But on the whole, ever since the Food Minister announced his policy there has been an easing of the situation, and the House and the hon. Member should have a little patience and see how the policy is being implemented. I believe, so far as my information goes, that the situation has not worsened. In fact, a very highly placed officer of the Government of India has gone to Calcutta to make assessment of the situation, to expedite the transport and otherwise expedite the implementation of the promises given by the Food Minister.

That is all the information that I have. As soon as that officer returns I think I shall be able to place more facts before the House.

Mr. Speaker: The information that the hon. Minister has given is, in a sense, too general. Could he be specific on certain points? A statement is made that the hon. the Chief Minister of West Bengal sent a wire to the Government of India. What specific reply has the Government sent to him? That would be one of the principal points on which there should be clarification. Then, how many shops are started? From what time they are started?

Shri A. P. Jain: The time I have given, Sir. I said from the 7th July.

Mr. Speaker: But how many shops? He said that arrangements are being made. Is any consignment despatched at all? He spoke of allotment of 44,000 maunds, but the allotment of one lakh of maunds is promised. How many maunds of rice have already left the areas from which the rice has to go to Bengal? If he gives specific information on these points, it will be possible for me to come to any conclusion as to how far the implementation has been there. The Chief complaint here is that certain promises were made, and they are not being implemented, and the hon. Minister will see that time is the essence of such things. If he can give that information, if not now, tomorrow, I shall be then able to consider this point of adjournment motion further.

Dr. S. P. Mookerjee (Calcutta South-East): Would you allow me to refer to one point which has not been mentioned, but which I think is very important. The Chief Minister of West Bengal has stated that the delay in the implementation of the food policy in Bengal may be till next year on account of the failure of the Government of India to fulfil all that they said that they would be able to fulfil. That is a very important point.

Shri A. P. Jain: As I said, Sir, a senior officer of the Government of India is in Calcutta to see that these policies are implemented as quickly as possible. That officer may be returning, and I shall be in a position to supply specific facts tomorrow, I believe. I hope I shall be in a position to give information to the House on the points mentioned by the hon. Speaker tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Unless, of course, there is specific reply to these, it will be difficult to say that the motion may not be allowed, because it is a very important matter undoubtedly affecting vast areas, and we have to be specific on the point. I would request the hon. Minister to be specific in giving information on these points. So I postpone the consideration of this for the time being.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

AFTERNOON SITTINGS

Mr. Speaker: Now, there is one other matter in respect of which I would like to make an announcement. I find that the hon. Members are naturally anxious or keen to see that

this session comes to an end as originally planned, that is, 31st July, and that, in any case, it does not extend further unduly, and it is, therefore, necessary that the House should sit longer each day. I am not trying to decide the general question as to how many hours the House should sit in future, or from what hour to what hour. My remarks and the arrangements which I have considered proper after consultation with the various parties in the House including Government, are only for purposes of the present session. So, apart from carrying on the debates within reasonable limits and with as much shortness as possible and keeping to relevancy, I propose that in addition to the morning sessions that we have from 8-15 to one o'clock, the House may sit for two days in the week in the afternoon from 3-30 to 6-30. That will give us six hours in addition. That means practically one day. And if we sit on Tuesdays and Fridays, that will give some kind of time for the hon. Members also to study, for the Committees to meet and the extended time for Parliament. If necessary, we shall be sitting on more days than two in a week. Saturdays will be off days. That is necessary, I think, to relieve the over-strain on hon. Members, and there will be Committee meetings also during that period. I think it would be possible for hon. Members serving on the Committees to sit during the hours when Parliament is in session, unless some Members have urgent work in the House in connection with any Bill in the House that they cannot afford to be absent. Our rules permit that kind of thing. After all, it is our experience that all the Members are not present in the House at all times, and some of the Members might help the early disposal of work by agreeing to sit for the work of the Committees during the time when Parliament is in session, provided, of course, each Member will have the right to judge for himself as to whether his presence is necessary in the House or not.

Shri S. S. More (Sholapur): Can I make a suggestion, Sir? Instead of sitting on one and the same day from 8-15 to one o'clock, and then from 3-30 to 6-30, we may sit from 12 to six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: If I were to discuss the matter here, it means out of the time available till the end of the session, half an hour at least will be lost. Therefore, let us accept this arrangement which is generally agreed to by different sections of the House, and for the next session and the permanent arrangements, the hon. Members might