

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Friday, 20th February, 1953

The House met at Two of the Clock

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

3 P.M.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT

MINIMUM WAGE STRUCTURE IN WEST BENGAL

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have received notice of an adjournment motion regarding the action taken by the Bengal Government and the Bengal Legislature in reducing some wages.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri (Berhampore): My motion is not against the action taken by the Bengal Legislature.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: By whom was the legislation passed—I mean the legislation which has the effect of reducing the wages? Is it not the Bengal Legislature? The hon. Member will kindly give me some information which I want, and then if after that he wants to say something more and I feel not satisfied I will ask him to speak. He says—

“...the action of the Government of India in allowing the Government of West Bengal to take unilateral action by themselves in respect of the minimum wage structure...”

Now, what is the unilateral action taken by West Bengal?

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: The West Bengal Government have published a notification in their Gazette on Monday last, revising the scale of minimum-wage-cum-foodstuff concession for tea plantation workers, and this has worked to their detriment and has caused them pecuniary loss.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Under the Constitution, has the Central Government or Parliament revisional jurisdiction over what West Bengal does?

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Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: The Minimum Wages Act is a Central subject.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member apparently means a concurrent subject.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: Yes, Sir. It is a concurrent subject.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Granted that it is so, can Parliament override what the Bengal Government has done? What has the hon. Minister got to say?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Granted that **Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari):** So far as the powers of the Central Government in regard to labour matters are concerned, it is a concurrent subject and determined by the practice that obtains in such subjects. Legislation in regard to minimum wages has been enacted here, but the executive power in that regard is vested in the State Government. So far as the responsibility of the Central Government in this matter is concerned, the adjournment motion says:

“failure...to uphold the solemn assurances given on the floor of both Houses of Parliament not to take away any advantages hitherto enjoyed by the tea plantation workers...”

I think that this relates to questions asked by the Members of this and the other House in regard to the scope of the enquiry conducted by an official of the Central Board of Revenue, namely, Shri Rajaram Rao. I did mention in that connection that we had not asked this official to go into the question of wages, nor were we accepting any recommendations on this matter. All that the Government of India could do in this regard is merely to act as advisers and try to bring the parties together. That my hon. colleague the Labour Minister has done and is going to do again. The Labour Minister is going to Shillong in a few days. He will discuss this matter with the interests concerned and also with the State Governments concerned. So far as the action taken

[Shri T. T. Krishnamachari]

either by the West Bengal Government or the Assam Government in this matter is concerned, whatever may be the equities of the situation, they are entirely competent to do whatever they have done. I might also mention that while perhaps the labour has felt that it has not been properly dealt with, the action taken by these State Governments has resulted in arresting the closure of estates. This morning's newspaper tells me that certain estates are being re-opened. So, from the point of view of keeping the estates going and also providing employment for labour, their action seems to be on the right lines. I cannot go farther into the matter, because I am not competent to do so.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri rose—

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have just now heard the hon. Minister, and as for the hon. Member he has given me a very long and detailed explanation as to how this House ought to take this matter into consideration. I only wanted to make one point clear, and I have got that information now. I consider that this is a matter which is primarily the concern of the West Bengal Government. When it takes action setting out what the minimum wages concerned should be, this Parliament has no revisional jurisdiction over that action. Hon. Members may also remember that this matter has from time to time been brought up before this House in some form or other. Already, there has been a half-an-hour discussion the other day regarding minimum wages when the Labour Minister was here and said that he was going there and that he would arrange for a tripartite conference and so on.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: He would be going there next week.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: As the hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry said just now, this matter of the closure of tea plantations and gardens was also raised in this House on many occasions. If the Bengal Government, with a view to relieving or avoiding the closure of tea gardens, has to make some adjustments, that matter cannot be brought up here by way of an adjournment motion. After all, let the hon. Minister of Labour return. Then, there are also ample opportunities for hon. Members to raise this matter before the House and make further suggestions during the discussion on the Budget and the Finance Bill. Therefore, I think that

this is not a fit adjournment motion for me to give my consent.

The Secretary will now read certain messages and lay certain papers on the Table of the House.

MESSAGES FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATES

Secretary: Sir, I have to report the following two messages received from the Secretary of the Council of States:—

- (i) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 97 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to enclose a copy of the Cantonments (Amendment) Bill, 1952, as reported by the Select Committee, which has been passed as amended by the Council of States at its sitting held on the 18th February, 1953", and
- (ii) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 97 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to enclose a copy of the Live-stock Importation (Amendment) Bill, 1953, which has been passed by the Council of States at its sitting held on the 18th February, 1953."

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

- (1) CANTONMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL.
- (2) LIVE-STOCK IMPORTATION (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Secretary: I beg to lay on the Table:

- (1) The Cantonments (Amendment) Bill, 1952 as reported by the Select Committee which has been passed as amended by the Council of States, and
- (2) The Live-Stock Importation (Amendment) Bill, 1953 as passed by the Council of States.

REPORTS OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Shri B. Das (Jajpur-Keonjhar): I beg to present the following:—

- (1) Fourth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the