

STANDARDS OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL

Mr. Speaker: The House will now take up further consideration of the motion moved by Shri Nityanand Kanungo on the 25th August, 1956, for reference of the Standards of Weights and Measures Bill to a Joint Committee.

Shri S. C. Samanta will continue his speech.

Shri S. C. Samanta (Tamluk): Yesterday, I was referring to the weights of seers in different parts of West Bengal. The weights and measures differ even within the same district and even from commodity to commodity. Even when the nomenclature remains the same, the units represented are different in quantity. Yesterday, my friends were telling the House that the opinion of Chambers of Commerce and other bodies and of the people at large has not been taken into consideration. Since 1870, the Government have been trying to have a uniform standard of weights and measures in the country. So many committees had gone into the question and produced reports. I shall mention them here: Report of the Bengal Committee on Uniform Weights and Measures, 1866; Report of the Central Committee on Weights and Measures, 1867; Report of the Weights and Measures Committees, 1913-14; Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1928; Report on the Marketing of Wheat in India, 1937; Report on the Marketing of Linseed in India, 1938; Report on Weights and Measures of Capacity in Bihar, 1938; Report on the Marketing of Rice in India, 1941; Report on the Marketing of Lac in India, 1943; Report of the Marketing Sub-Committee of the Policy Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, of the Reconstruction Committee of Council, 1946; Annual Report of the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, 1948; and the Report on the Marketing of Groundnuts in India, 1953. All these reports have elaborated the handicaps to trade and the hardships of cultivators because of

the want of uniform standards of weights and measures in the country. In the meantime, the Planning Commission and the Indian Standards Institution have progressed in the matter. The circular issued by the I.S.I. and the information supplied by the State Marketing Officers to the Planning Commission show that every State Government is ready to have a uniform standard of weights and measures in the country. I think all Members are for it. Some friends are telling us that this is not the time and we may take it up after 15 years and so on. After setting up so many committees, if the people at large and if the villagers are not to be cheated, then a uniform standard of weights and measures should be introduced now. I think this is the proper time for doing this.

By passing this Bill, the Government have to take the responsibility to see that this reaches even the distant villages. The Committee which was established by the Planning Commission have given some suggestions, which should be considered after passing this Bill.

They have said:

"The Government of India to introduce the decimal system of currency in which the weights and dimensions of coins should be related to the metric system. Intensive education and propaganda programme including, among other things, the following:

(a) teaching in elementary and secondary schools...." etc.

There are so many suggestions and they say:

"(f) publication of informative bulletins and pamphlets including conversion tables;"

I want to add the words "in all regional languages" at the end Then,

"(j) publicity through village panchyats."

I want to add at the end:

[Shri S. C. Samanta]

"Community project areas, community development project areas and N.E.S. blocks".

This question of the introduction of the metric system was also considered by the director of the National Physical Laboratory, England, Sir Edward Bullard. He has remarked that though the metric system is not prevalent in England, after going thoroughly into the conditions in India, he feels that the metric system should be introduced here. There is a fear in the minds of some that if we introduce the metric system, greater commercial difficulties may arise with U.K. and U.S.A. where the metric system is not prevalent. From the remarks of Sir Edward Bullard, we may remain content that no such thing will happen and so, that ground cannot be put forward for deferring the use of this system in India.

Lastly, I would request the members of the Joint Committee to remember one point. Just as we retained the name "paise" in the case of coins, so also, it should be examined whether some name which is common in India may be retained in the case of weights. For example, I would request them to consider whether "tola" cannot be retained. If we take 100 tolas to be a seer, 3,000 tolas will become a maund and we may carry on like up to a ton. The Joint Committee and the Government should think over the matter on these lines and see whether some such Indian nomenclature, which will be at par with the metric system, can be evolved and retained.

With these words, I whole-heartedly support the Bill.

The Minister of Consumer Industries (Shri Kanungo): I have hardly much to contribute to this debate, because my work has been made much easier by the contribution of all the Members, especially Mr. Chowdhury and Mr. Samanta. The motion before the House is the committing of the Bill to the Joint Committee. Every one of the speakers, including my esteemed senior

colleague, Mr. Reddi, agrees that standardisation of weights and measures is necessary. There have been various suggestions as to how, when and in what steps it should be done.

I might mention that to the several difficulties ahead of us in the transition and change-over period mentioned by the various speakers, hundred and one others may be added. We have no illusions about the difficulties, but, everyone who thinks about it, and I believe the members of the Joint Committee in particular, will realise that sooner we face these difficulties and find solutions for them, the better it will be for all concerned.

One of the means of overcoming most of the difficulties is the speed at which we undertake the completion of this programme of change over. Doubts have been expressed whether the State Governments have been consulted or whether they have expressed their concurrence without thinking much about it. I beg to submit that the State Governments know fully well that under the present Constitution, the implementation of the change over is their responsibility. In fact, they are more than fully aware of it. Almost all the States have set up special committee presided over by one of the Ministers concerned with the work or one of the senior officers. In some places, these committees have met several times in the mean time to find out what are the steps that are required for the completion of this programme.

It was expressed by one of the speakers that the Act of 1939 was on the statute book, but the standardisation could not be one. I hope and I am sure that under the existing direction of the House, no such lag will happen in the implementation of this programme. The urgency of it is so great and so pressing that I do not think we can wait for it.

The motion for circulating the Bill for eliciting public opinion was sought to be justified on the ground that the

various commercial bodies and State Governments have not had an opportunity of considering the matter. Several hon. Members have already mentioned the specific instances where consultations have taken place and how, for the last several decades, this matter has been under discussion. I would specifically mention that in a matter like this, a matter of fundamental importance regarding the type of weights and measures which has to be the standard measure in a country, the only persons who can effectively think about it and express an opinion about it are the Members of Parliament. Each one of the Members of this House represents hundreds of thousands of his constituents. They are the best judges. They are in constant touch with the pulse of public opinion, so to say. I suppose their decision is the decision of the people. Therefore, I submit that nothing will be gained except wastage of a valuable half year or 4 months to be more exact by accepting the proposal for circulation. One of my hon. friends mentioned the routine of eliciting public opinion. I need hardly say that that procedure is not necessary and will not produce any worthwhile results.

Doubts have been expressed about the period of transition which has been mentioned in the Bill as ten years. The doubts have been mostly that that period is too short for the purpose. But, experience elsewhere in regard to this shows that it is not so difficult. In the U.S.S.R. they had planned for a period of 10 years to complete the change-over. They were able to do it much quicker, somewhere in about eight years. Thailand took 13 years; Italy took ten years only; Czechoslovakia took four years; Turkey three years. In Syria, they did not have any transition period at all. Syria is a small country and I do not know how they are managing. I perfectly realise, considering the vastness of the country and also the fact that the inspection procedure and staff for this type of work is not existent in some of the smaller States and it is not adequate

in most of the States, that it may be difficult. But, I humbly submit that once Parliament has expressed its desire, nothing will stand in the way. Again, I want you to realise that the quicker we do it, the easier it is for us.

Regarding publicising the idea for which suggestions have been made by different Members, I submit that not only these but hundred others have to be found out. That is why we have got special committees formed in the different States to find out ways and means of how the programme could be hastened. We, from our end, will be publishing material which will be useful in explaining doubts and difficulties which may be raised from time to time. The committee of which I have the honour to be the Chairman, has already decided that they will bring out a periodical in which worthwhile papers and material will be published which would help the people in the States and elsewhere to put across the idea as clearly as possible.

Regarding commercial associations and industrial associations, they have been consulted at every stage, I suppose, several times. All of them have agreed in principle to the change over. That is obvious. No one can disagree with it. But, it is also true that they will have difficulties. Any change-over, as you, Sir, will realise, means difficulties. They have to be overcome. Therefore, the Government of India have decided to offer advisory service where it is required by the smaller enterprises, by the smaller establishments so that their particular problems can be solved in consultation with the Government. That service, I hope, will be available in a very short time. Certain suggestions have been made that instead of adopting the metric system, we might as well invent a new system for our country. I do not think it is necessary to say anything about it. To use any of the existing nomenclatures or the weights and measures which are prevalent in our country which run into hundreds will create confusion because the concept of the content of

[Shri Kanungo]

a particular weight is different and once you adopt that weight, it will create confusion amongst others and it will lead to various abuses which a standardised system of weights and measures is designed to overcome.

This particular Bill only lays down the standard, and the standard as such will be hardly understood by the public. The definitions and all that which you find in the Bill and hardly anything which can be discussed by the public in general. It is only for the Members of this hon. House to digest and to express their opinion on it. In regard to the other steps which are more important and about which doubts have been expressed, as I said where legislation is necessary we shall come to the House for it. Regarding the programmes and the implementation of those programmes, we will have to consult not only the Members of Parliament but also the representatives of the people in the State Legislatures because it is a programme which has got to be implemented all over the country, and God willing, I hope once the standards are laid down by law by Parliament the programme can be implemented and implemented in a shorter period than anticipated.

Mr. Speaker: I shall put the motion for reference to the Joint Committee to the House.

Shri Kanungo: There is an amendment for eliciting public opinion. That has got to be put first. Does he press it?

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: I have no objection to withdraw the amendment. My intention in bringing the amendment before the House was to focuss the attention of the Government on the extraordinary difficulties they have to face both here and in the States in implementing this. Also during the next ten years there are several other things probably much more important than this which we

have to do. Anyhow, I do not want to press my amendment I beg leave to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. Member leave of the House to withdraw his amendment?

Hon. Members: Yes.

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill to establish standards of weights and measures based on the metric system be referred to a Joint Committee of the Houses consisting of 45 members; 30 from this House, namely, Shri R. D. Misra, Shri P. T. Thanu Pillai, Shri Bhagwat Jha 'Azad', Shrimati Ammu Swaminadhan, Shri M. Muthukrishnan, Shri U. R. Bogawat, Shri Akbar Chavda, Shri M. B. Vaishya, Shri Ganpati Ram, Shri Sunder Lall, Shri A. R. Sewal, Shri Khub Chand Sodhia, Shri S. R. Telkikar, Shri Bhagu Nandu Malvia, Shri Balwant Sinha Mehta, Sardar T. S. Akarpuri, Shri C. R. Basappa, Shri L. J. Singh, Shri K. T. Achuthan, Shri Kamal Krishna Das, Shri Birendranath Katham, Shri Bhawani Singh, Shri N. R. M. Swamy, Shri Baddam Yella Reddy, Shri H. N. Mukerjee, Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy, Shri R. N. Singh, Shri Nand Lal Sharma, Shri Kailash Pati Sinha and Shri Nityanand Kanungo and 15 members from Rajya Sabha;

"that in order to constitute a sitting of the Joint Committee the quorum shall be one-third of the total number of members of the Joint Committee;

"that the Committee shall make a report to this House by the 20th November, 1956;

"that in other respects the Rules of Procedure of this House relating to Parliamentary Com-

mittees will apply with such variations and modifications as the Speaker may make; and

"that this House recommends to Rajya Sabha that Rajya Sabha do join the said Joint Committee and communicate to this House the names of members to be appointed by Rajya Sabha to the Joint Committee."

The motion was adopted.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FORCE BILL

The Minister of Defence (Dr. Katju): I beg to move*:

"That the Bill to provide for the constitution of a National Volunteer Force for imparting military training to citizens of India, be taken into consideration."

I need not take much time of the House in dwelling upon the object of this Bill because it is already well known and it is a matter for gratification that the organisation which this Bill seeks to form and introduce has been in operation now for nearly 18 months and has made a great appeal to the people of the country.

The urge for securing elementary training is a strong one. It is a desirable one, and the people need it and should have it. We have several organisations. We have for our college students the National Cadet Corps. We have for our school boys the Auxiliary Cadet Corps. We have for citizens the Territorial Force. In 1953 we thought that we had better expand its activity and do something substantial for meeting the desire of the people in the shape of giving them military training. So, first the territorial organisation was a little enlarged, but in 1954 we thought we had better have a separate organisation, and from the month of May, 1955 this National Volunteer Force, which I have now suggested

by an amendment should be called the Lok Sahayak Sena, has been functioning. The proposal is that it should impart training to begin with to a lakh of individuals each year, so that in five years time we complete the number of five lakhs.

The method proposed is to hold a camp of one month's duration. There are 200 camps to be held in a year and each camp will provide training for 500 people and thus the number of a lakh is reached. I am very happy to say that so far, during the last 16 to 17 months, we have had 261 camps. These have become very popular. They are held in all parts of India including places as far away as Leh in Jammu and Kashmir. The demand for holding camps is great. I notice that a suggestion has been made that the camps should be held in community project centres. That is a matter which we always keep in mind. It is suggested that this should be embodied in the Bill. I do not think that would be advisable because the site of the camp is fixed having regard to all the relevant factors including the response of the people, the desire of the people, the facilities which may exist there etc. I should not like myself to be bound by any such restriction.

Shri Raghur Sahai (Etah Dist.—North-East cum Budaun Dist.—East): But you have already stated it in the Statement of Objects and Reasons that you will be holding these camps near community projects.

Dr. Katju: I say that is one of the relevant factors which is taken into consideration, but to introduce a sort of restrictive clause in the Bill may not be useful. Anyway, this is a general thing.

Now, we want to impart this military training to people who are fit to receive it. Today under this Bill and also in the actual procedure we have put a limit of between 18 and 40 in respect of age. I submit that this is a very useful thing and a proper thing to do. Some suggestion

* Moved with the recommendation of the President.