

[Shri Satya Narayan Sinha]

agreed to consider and pass the Bill, I would like to inform the House at this stage that in doing so, a certain curtailment of time allocated for a debate on the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would be inevitable unless of course the House extends its sittings up to 6 o'clock on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th December.

I am sure that I am voicing the sentiments of hon. friends, representatives of Scheduled Castes, in stating that they would have no objection to a certain curtailment of the time allocated for the debate on the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes if that would ensure the consideration and passing of the Delimitation Commission (Amendment) Bill. How much time will be available for the debate as against 6 hours allotted for it by an order of this House will, of course, depend upon the time taken for the consideration and passing of the Delimitation Commission (Amendment) Bill.

Sardar Hukam Singh (Kapurthala-Bhatinda): I would request the hon. Minister to make it clear whether it has been assumed that the Select Committee would be able to finish its task within this period because the Report has to be presented tomorrow and only this morning the Committee has met.

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: It is meeting again this after-noon and the Committee expect to finish the report today so that it will be placed before the House tomorrow.

Shri Frank Anthony (Nominated-Anglo-Indians): Are we to take it that the time allotted for the discussion of the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes would be reduced for that is what it will come to.

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: Yes.

Shri Frank Anthony: Then, I respectfully submit that it has already been pointed out that six hours are comparatively inadequate. In the previous years....

Mr. Speaker: Let us take up this matter later on. The situation, as I understand it, is that there has been some necessity for the Delimitation Commission to revise the number of seats in certain States on account of the final census figures coming rather late. If this Bill is not passed, the result will be that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, whose seats are to be allocated on the basis of the latest figures, will be the sufferers. Therefore, that Bill has to be passed very urgently. That is now I understand the position; and, in view of that, this has to be given priority. That is one thing.

The discussion on the Report may continue for six hours. The alternative is, as pointed out in the statement, that the House will have to sit for one hour longer for three days. There is no objection, on my part at least, to the House sitting up to six o'clock.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi (Nellore): May I suggest that the House may sit from ten o'clock to five o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: I think it is not possible to discuss this matter now. At least tomorrow the House will have to sit from eleven o'clock as there has been no notice. The hon. Members may consult among themselves and come to a conclusion. It need not be discussed here.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

SPECULATIVE ACTIVITY IN TEA EXPORT
RIGHTS

Shri N. M. Lingam (Coimbatore): Sir, under Rule 215, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Commerce and Industry to the following matter

of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The inordinate speculative activity in Tea export rights and its repercussions on tea prices and the Industry."

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): Mr. Speaker, I would like to state at the outset that any impression that the present high prices of tea quotas are causing concern to any significant proportion of growers or traders would be only erroneous. Government are in very close touch with the tea interests both through the Chairman of the Tea Board as well as directly. But it is clear that while there is a great deal of interest in the matter of quota prices, there is little disposition amongst the bulk of them to consider that Government ought to intervene at this stage.

The House may remember that under the old Tea Rules, it is possible for gardens that produce no tea to get export quotas and gardens which had increased their production to get only limited quotas which bore little relation to their production. The revised rules have put the matter more on a realistic basis. Quotas are now granted on the basis of the best crop of any of the previous four years. The reasons for the increase in quota prices are obscure. I will not detain the House by referring to the various theories that have been advanced in this connection. The point of real importance is whether the interests we are primarily concerned with, namely the growers of tea, are prejudiced by the high quota prices. Government are also concerned with the question as to whether in any way these prices are affecting exports.

On the first point there is practically unanimity amongst the growers that the prices are not hurting their interests. The producer goes to the market for export quotas only when he wants to export more than the percentage

permitted by the Licencing Committee. And, when he does so, he makes a calculation and buys up the quota only when that leaves him a fair margin of profit. On the question of exports, it seems quite clear that the high prices of tea quotas are the result and not the cause of the high international price of tea. With regard to speculative activity, it is difficult to assess the scope and extent of such activity. We are, however, informed that there is not much speculation in the sense that large quantities of export quotas have been concerned by speculators and have changed hands. The actual quantities dealt with on the basis of high quota prices are understood to be relatively small.

The total permissible quota for export this year is 135 per cent. Out of this 129 per cent. has already been authorised for export and the balance that remains is only 6 per cent. which amounts to approximately 20 million pounds. The question as to whether a further release should be made will be taken up when Government receive a final report from the Chairman of the Tea Board about the extent to which the current year's crop was damaged by floods in the north-east India. In any decision that the Government will reach they will have to keep in mind the effect of further export releases on the prices of tea in the internal market.

From time to time suggestions have been made for an amendment of the rules regarding the distribution of tea quotas. I have not seen any such proposal yet which would not be open to some other objections. Government would be glad to consider proposals for an amendment of the quota rules but these must keep in mind certain objectives, viz., that they must relate quotas on a realistic basis to production, that they must not in any way hurt the interests of the growers, and finally that they must not hamper the export of tea.