

MINIMUM WAGES (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister of Labour (Shri V. V. Giri): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

“That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.”

The motion was adopted.

Shri V. V. Giri: I introduce the Bill.

GENERAL BUDGET—GENERAL DISCUSSION—Contd.

Shri N. C. Chatterjee (Hooghly): After the dramatic exit of our Communist friends, we have got to discuss a more prosaic subject, the budget. We are sorry that the only non-Congress Ministry in India functioning in a neighbouring State has come to an end. It is a bad day for democracy. We shall have the subject discussed later on.

I am sorry I cannot join the congratulations which have been conferred upon the Finance Minister on the introduction of this budget. Frankly speaking, there is no evidence of an Architect's mind behind this budget. About 50 per cent. of the national revenues are being spent on Defence—Rs. 199 crores and odd lakhs, practically Rs. 200 crores. I am not one of those who want to paralyse the safety of India but I am not satisfied that our defence expenditure is being properly incurred or is properly being spent. There is scope for retrenchment and it is a matter of regret that Shri Gopaldaswami Ayyangar is no longer here and there is no responsible top ranking Minister who is in charge of Defence.

An Hon. Member: The Prime Minister is there.

Shri N. C. Chatterjee: The Prime Minister is there but he has got too many burdens to bear. It is not fair to him, nor to India that he should be asked to run the Defence Department.

We are distressed by the Finance Minister's adoption of the system of deficit financing. Sir George Schus-

ter who was the Finance Member of the Government of India and who is now the Chairman of the Lloyds Bank, recently toured India and he has said many helpful things. He also stated that in the present state of India's economy, deficit financing is a risky experiment. There is bound to be inflation. I want to know from the Finance Minister how he is going to check the evil effects of inflation. We are thankful for the small mercies of the Finance Minister. He has given us relief with regard to taxation by raising the limit of personal income-tax. That will lead to a loss of revenue of Rs. 82 lakhs but, at the same time, we are deeply perturbed over the revelations made which show there is something seriously wrong in our administration. I am referring to the 4th Report of the Public Accounts Committee which deals with a very important subject, the import and sale of Japanese cloth. The attention of this hon. House should be drawn to this great scandal. Due to the import and sale of Japanese cloth, our revenues have suffered a loss to the extent of Rs. 55 lakhs and the Committee reports that the antecedents of one firm from whom Rs. 15 lakhs are outstanding is very dubious in character. The Committee has recommended that some Judges or a Judicial Committee should investigate into the handling of the whole transaction and it is time that deterrent punishment, in my opinion, should be accorded to officers who are guilty of squandering the Indian tax-payer's money in this regrettable fashion. Some telegram came from the Indian Embassy, Washington that a large quantity of cloth and yarn of Japanese production was available and that could be sold in India if payment was made in United States dollars. Then the deal was signed which involved a payment of over Rs. 6 crores. Then the stuff came and then it was discovered that neither the yarn nor the cloth was suitable for Indian consumption. As a matter of fact, the Sub-Committee headed by the hon. Member, Mr. T. N. Singh, has gone into the matter very carefully. They have reported that when the yarn came it was discovered that the cost was over 100 per cent. higher than the prevailing prices in India. It is a very serious matter. It seems the responsible Minister in charge of the Department was kept in the dark. Apparently the Ministry did not wish the Standing Finance Committee to know that this blunder had been committed in buying the cloth at an enormous cost. The Committee further says that it is only after the irrevocable contract has been entered into that the Government of India became aware of the