

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That the time appointed for the presentation of the Report of the Joint Committee on the Bill further to amend the Preventive Detention Act, 1950, be extended upto Wednesday, the 30th July, 1952."

The motion was adopted.

CENTRAL SILK BOARD (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Central Silk Board Act, 1948, be taken into consideration."

The principal object of this Bill is to make the working of the Silk Board more efficient. The House will be aware that after the passing of the Silk Board Act of 1948 it was expected that the Silk Board would take a great deal of interest in the silk industry and be able to put it on a firm footing. I cannot say that the Board has not done anything—actually the Board itself meets once a year and its Standing Committee generally meets twice a year—but in actual practice it seems that the constitution of an autonomous body of this nature to look after the silk industry has been a trifle premature because the industry itself is not very well organised. Hon. Members in this House who had raised questions at the time when the Tariff (Amendment) Bill was discussed had complained that the protection granted to the silk industry was not adequate. Instances have been put forward in this House where in particular areas the industry is in a very parlous state. It is true that much of the complaint made in this House has a basis of fact behind it. We also found that in their report the Tariff Board could not recommend protection for this industry beyond December 1952, not because they were not willing to do so, but because they felt that all the facts of the case were not presented to them by the industry. Perhaps in view of the unorganised state of the industry it might have been better if the Silk Board itself had undertaken this work of presenting all the facts before the Tariff Board. These and other facts have made the Government sit up and examine whether we could not make this Board work more efficiently. Within the limits of the information that I possess and my own ideas of how we could develop this industry, I felt that close attention by Government was necessary for a period of time before the Board could function as an autonomous body, and it is

with this view that I have brought forward this amending Bill.

The amending Bill has one major provision—it might be called major if hon. Members think that it is a major change. It seeks to take away from the Board its power of electing the Vice-Chairman and allow the Government to nominate that person. At the present moment the Board has no Vice-Chairman. The term of office of the last Vice-Chairman has elapsed and no Vice-Chairman has been elected again. The Government felt that in the circumstances, if the Vice-Chairman happens to be for the time being an official—and he will also then be a member of the Standing Committee—he will be able to give close and personal attention to the industry which by being merely a member of the Board which meets once a year he may not be able to do. Also, there was this question of the autonomy of the Board which creeps in every now and again, and the manner in which the Board functions, and its relations to Government, are extremely unsatisfactory. In fact, I have been asking for information from the Board—I have not got it. I have sent down officers to find out what is happening—very little has come forward by way of help. So I have felt that the time has come when, at any rate for a period of time, this Board has to function as a department of Government if the industry is to be benefited at all by this Board. One might say that the appointment of a Vice-Chairman who is an official is a retrograde step. It might be, I quite concede, but the industry must be organised and be able to take care of itself before we can leave it to the Board to manage its affairs. And according to my view, by reviewing the work that has been done since the Act came into force, I think the Board has not been able to look after the work that was entrusted to it and to help the industry materially.

Hon. Members here have complained about grant of licences for importation of raw silk. Again, some other Members, and certainly the industry, have complained that the silk mills do not have enough of silk yarn for carrying on their work. Government have been trying to do their best in regard to licensing. They want to keep the industry going, at the same time ensure that the local raw silk industry does not suffer. I think concentration in the hands of a Government official who is in charge generally of this type of work and leaving it to him to adjudicate between the rival claims of the local raw silk industry and the mill industry would produce better results

than what we obtain at the moment. All that the Government propose to do is to say that an official will be the Vice-Chairman for the time being. The amending Bill does not say that he should be an official for all time—it merely takes the powers for Government to appoint a Vice-Chairman. It may be that next year if we find that the organisation is working well and its relationship with Government is satisfactory there will be no need for an official Vice-Chairman and he can give place to a non-official. So it does not mean that this system is to come to stay for all time, but at the moment the reform that we need and the efforts that we have to undertake in making the Board active and useful can only be done by making it almost a part of the Government machinery, temporarily at any rate. That is why this particular Bill has been brought forward before the House.

There is also one other provision—clause 2—which has been put in because an amending Bill was brought forward. Clause 2 seeks to amend section 4(c) of the original Act. According to that section, two persons have to be “elected by the Members of the Central Legislature from amongst themselves in such manner as may be prescribed etc.” We have now another House and naturally that House also wants representation. In order to provide for representation to the other House, we have sought to bring in this amendment. That, in short, is the purpose of the Bill. Normally, it is not the practice at this stage to anticipate the amendments, but I shall deal with a few of them.

I find amendments by Shri Gurupadaswamy from Mysore suggesting circulation in one instance and Select Committee reference in another. The issue to be decided by the House is very simple. Does it want the Board to function as it has been functioning all along, or does it want that the Government should pay greater attention to it? If that issue is settled, the question whether the House will accept this Bill or not will also be settled. The question of circulation of the Bill is not necessary, nor is it necessary for it to be considered by the Select Committee because it is not a very complex issue that has to be considered. I know that my hon. friend from Mysore is very much interested in this industry and I am sure he will consider the proposal I have put forward. If he does so, I do hope that he will come to the same conclusion to which I have come, namely, that in order to put the industry on its feet Government will have

to strive hard for a period of time and this is one of the means which will help the Government to assist the industry materially.

Other amendments are by Shri Raghunath Singh. He wants the addition of representatives from each State—U.P., Bengal, Mysore, Jammu and Kashmir and Assam. If he would look into the Act, he will find that representation is provided for some of these States under section 4. Four persons are to be nominated by the Government of Mysore; two by Madras; two by West Bengal; one by the Jammu and Kashmir Government and one person each by C.P. and Berar, U.P., Bombay and Bihar. I do not know if he has looked into it. If he has, I think he will find that this amendment is unnecessary.

The last amendment relates to the representation of the legislature. That also would not be proper at this moment to go into. The representation would be adequate if two Members of this House and one Member of the other House sit on the Board. That, I think, disposes of the amendments which I have tried to anticipate at the moment.

Mr. Speaker: Motion moved:

“That the Bill further to amend the Central Silk Board Act, 1948, be taken into consideration.”

I should like to know whether Shri Gurupadaswamy would like to move any of his three amendments for circulation.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy (Mysore) After the assurances of the hon. Minister, I do not intend to press my amendments in this respect, but I wish to express my opinion regarding certain matters.

Mr. Speaker: That is another matter. He will get the opportunity during the discussion of the Bill.

Shri A. C. Guha (Santipur): The hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry is fortunate enough to have so many autonomous Boards under his control and this House very seldom gets any opportunity to discuss the working of these Boards. All these autonomous Boards, some under his Ministry and others under some other Ministries, handle huge amounts; and sometimes Government makes a grant to them and sometimes excise duties are collected and handed over almost automatically to these Boards. Very

[Shri A. C. Guha]

often, there is no mention of this amount in our Budget papers. I drew the attention of the Finance Minister to this on several occasions and he gave me a promise that he would see that this anomaly is removed. Even when these Boards get grants out of excise collections, the practice should be that these amounts should be entered in our Budget papers and the disbursements shown.

As regards this Board, the hon. Minister has practically forestalled us by admitting all the defects and the complaints that one might bring up against this Board. It is not our argument that this Board has not done anything good for the industry; but when it was set up and certain monies were every year being sanctioned by Government, it was expected that it would work efficiently and under the control and supervision of Government. But now the Minister tells us that he asked for certain reports and information and they have not been forthcoming. Under section 9 of the original Act, the Central Government may from time to time make grants to the Board of such sums as it may consider necessary and from the Budget papers for this year I find that Rs. four lakhs and fifty thousand was the amount sanctioned by the Central Government to this Board in 1951-52. Apart from the grant, there is provision in section 10 for the imposition of cess on certain kinds of silk and this money, if collected, is automatically handed over every month to the Board. I do not know whether any excise duty was imposed by Government and collected and handed over to the Board.

I have been trying for the last few days to get the report of this Board. I could not get it in the Parliament Library. I made a complaint and only yesterday some five or six reports for the last few years have been received in the Parliament Library. I think that this Board should not be so autonomous as to ignore this Parliament which created it and sanctions the money for it and endows it with the powers which it exercises. This Board should submit its annual report to this Parliament and the hon. Minister should see that all the Boards functioning under him do this without fail.

In the report I have seen, I find that there is no mention about the accounts. We do not know the amount that has been spent. We do not know whether there was any excise duty collected and if so, how much. We do not know

the expenditure. There is also no mention as to how the funds at the disposal of this Board are audited. Since the hon. Minister himself says that this Board has not been functioning properly and that he is not satisfied with its working, I do not like to say much about it. I have already requested him to direct the Board to submit its annual report to this House showing the full accounts of monies received and spent and also giving information about the audit. Every pie that is spent on these autonomous Boards should be entered in our Budget papers. Although neither the Finance Minister nor his assistant is here, I would request both of them to see that this is done.

As regards the amendment that is sought to be made, I welcome it. The Vice-Chairman is already a member of the Standing Committee and he presides over the meetings of the Board and of the Standing Committee in the absence of the Chairman, and the hon. Minister is the Chairman of the Board. It is not always possible for the Chairman to attend the meetings of the Standing Committee; so the Vice-Chairman is practically the dominating authority in all the Standing Committee meetings. As Vice-Chairman he has got some special powers also. They are contained in the rules framed under the Act. In this connection I would like to state one thing. Almost all these Acts give either the Government or the Boards powers to frame rules. Though these rules are placed before Parliament, either due to our own fault, or to a defective system, the House seldom gets an opportunity to pay proper attention to the rules. One of the rules of the Silk Board gives the Vice-Chairman the power to enter into contracts on behalf of the Board. This is a very important function and should not be allowed to be exercised by all and sundry persons who may be elected by the Central Silk Board, which the hon. Minister himself has admitted has not been working properly or under the efficient supervision of Government.

I welcome the idea that the Vice-Chairman should be a Government nominee and preferably a Government official. When we are planning towards a Welfare State and the Government is expanding its control over all spheres of activities, I do not think the idea of having an official in such bodies is a retrograde step. Had it been the idea of this Government to move towards a decentralised economy, then I would have certainly admitted

that this is a retrograde step; but when we are not moving towards decentralised economy, we cannot but have Government control effectively done in all these Boards. So, I support the idea of having a Government nominee as Vice-Chairman of the Board.

As regards the other amendment it is not of much significance. Naturally the Upper House should have a representative. Of course this House will be kept informed about the activities of the Board by its representatives on the Board. These members are not expected to control the Board. They should only keep this House informed of the activities of the Board. They should be something like a connecting link between the autonomous Boards and this House.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: The hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry in his brief speech explained the necessity for this amending Bill. He showed sufficient understanding of the problems of this industry. Drawn as he is from that part of the country where silk is grown and produced, naturally he has understood the various problems facing the silk industry.

He also, in his statement, anticipated some of the criticisms which would be levelled from our side and also explained the policy pursued by the Government of India in this respect. But I cannot resist the temptation of pointing out some of the loopholes in the policy so far pursued by the Government of India. I beg to submit with all due respect to the hon. Minister that the Government has no policy as such with regard to this industry. The silk industry today, particularly in the area from which I come, is in a state of collapse. It is almost fading out of existence. The reasons are well known. The most important reason is that there is too much import of foreign silk yarn and silk fabrics from abroad, particularly from Japan and Italy. On account of these large imports during recent years, the native silk industry has suffered a grave set-back. The prices of locally produced silk yarn and cocoons have fallen down considerably this year. During the past two or three months the Government of India have issued more licences to importers to import raw silk and yarn and silk fabrics from abroad. In fact they have doubled the quantity of import during these three months. There was no special reason to import such large quantities of silk when there was a hue and cry from mulberry planters that silk should not be allowed to be imported from abroad. There have

been frantic representations made both to the Government of Mysore and also to the Central Government that the import of silk from abroad will actually kill the native industry. I made this fact clear when I spoke the other day on the Tariff Bill. On that occasion the hon. Minister assured me that immediate steps would be taken to see that the native industry was protected properly. He also said that imports of silk would not be permitted to such an extent. Even today, after three months, I have received many representations from my people in Mysore that the silk industry is deteriorating, that the market is fluctuating and that there is a great slump. In this connection I want to submit that the slump in the silk market today is not a part of the general slump that is spreading over India. The slump in the silk industry began earlier than the general slump. The reason, as I said, is that there is no proper supervision or control by the Central Government in regard to this industry. Government in this respect is not following a consistent policy. In the beginning they wanted to stabilise the prices of silk fabrics, cocoons and other things, but later I find that there is a sort of laxity in their control, a sort of lack of policy in this respect.

In this connection I want to submit that in many parts of Mysore mulberry planters are uprooting their plantations, because they are not getting good prices for their cocoons. It is because the price they get is not adequate to cover their cost of production. Now when the mulberry plantations are being uprooted, and production falls there will be greater necessity felt by the country to import more and more silk. The result would be that the native silk industry would vanish. As the House is aware, during the first world war the silk industry in India received an impetus, because silk was needed for war purposes. Soon after the war, it received a great set-back and many mulberry planters and weavers had to close their business because there was no sufficient market for the goods produced. And during the second world war also there was great demand for silk and silk yarn.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. It is necessary to appreciate exactly the scope of the present Bill which refers to the amendment of the constitution of the Silk Board principally. I can concede that the hon. Member is quite in order in inviting the attention of this House to the state of the silk industry. But the principal object is to see as to how the Board should be constituted.

[Mr. Speaker]

It is difficult to say which observation as regards the silk industry is relevant and which is not relevant. Every observation will be remotely relevant in so far as he speaks of the silk industry. Therefore, it is better that the hon. Members who wish to speak on this Bill do not make it as an occasion for discussing the state of the silk industry in India or any particular state of things or the functions of the Government with reference to the silk industry. Only prominent aspects may be put in, in a short way, in so far as they affect or will mould the constitution of the Silk Board or the view-point with which the Silk Board should function. To that extent the observations will be relevant. Otherwise, on a small Bill like this, we shall be taking up one full day by taking up the question of the entire silk industry. The hon. Member need not, therefore, go into details as he is going into now, but may make the broad points, which I believe he has made by now. If he has any further points, he may certainly make them. But that is the limitation of the debate on this Bill.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: Sir, I shall confine my remarks to the amendment in question. The Board that has been constituted under the Silk Board Act of 1948 has been, so to say, sleeping in all these years and is not doing its work. One of the reasons advanced by the hon. Minister was that there has not been sufficient control of the activities of the Silk Board by the Ministry. And I have got a suspicion as to how he will get greater control over the activities of the Board and how he will secure co-ordination of the activities of the Board with the activities of the Ministry by appointing an official or a Government spokesman as the Vice-Chairman. He himself admitted that it seems a sort of retrograde step to nominate instead of electing the Vice-Chairman. But he says it will smoothen the activities of the Silk Board and will help the Government to have greater control and greater supervision over the silk industry. But I want him to explain how it is possible for him to achieve this sort of control which he wants to have, by nominating an official or non-official as the Vice-Chairman of the Silk Board. How can he succeed? Of course I want him to succeed. I therefore want clarification in this respect as to how it is possible to achieve the end he has in view merely by nominating a man as the Vice-Chairman instead of having him elected. I would also like to know what are the drawbacks in having the Vice-

Chairman elected. If there are grave drawbacks, then I have no objection and let him have a nominated Vice-Chairman. What we really want is work. What we need is that our silk industry should grow and develop.

[SHRI PATASKAR *in the Chair*]

Moreover, as I said, the Silk Board nowadays is just sleeping; it is not meeting at all. I came to know that it was to meet on the 18th or 19th of this month, but it was postponed. Once it was called to meet in Kashmir. Then it was postponed. Then it was called to meet in Delhi on the 18th or 19th of July. But again it was postponed. It is after all in the hands of the Government to arrange for a meeting of the Board at some place or the other to see that the activities of the Silk Board are properly conducted, and to see that the Board takes more interest in its affairs. Unless they meet often, twice or thrice in the year, they cannot turn out any work. So the hon. Minister cannot charge the Board for its laxity or for its inefficiency or for the loose manner in which it is working. It is in the hands of the Minister himself to see that the Board is more active. He can call the meetings of the Board as often as possible in the year.

There is of course the Standing Committee of the Board. It meets once or twice a year. But even the Standing Committee meetings should be arranged more quickly. The members of the Standing Committee should meet as often as possible to have an overall picture of the silk industry now and then. After all, the silk industry is a vital industry of the nation. We cannot allow it to suffer like this. To make this industry stand on its feet, to make it more prosperous and to develop it, it is always better to have meetings of the Board and the Standing Committee as often as possible.

Anyway, as I have said, I do not want to move any amendment. I only want the hon. Minister to assure the House how he is going to achieve the object he has in view of having more control over the silk industry, how he will be able to stabilize the silk industry, and how he will be able to protect the industry from foreign competition.

I want also to place before him another issue that is involved, that is the competition by indigenous artificial silk. Today artificial silk is produced

in India and it is also imported from abroad. It is a great competitor to our natural silk industry. How it is possible to bring about a sort of co-ordination between the two branches of this silk industry, artificial and natural silk, how it is detrimental to the industry if the Government encourages the import of artificial silk from abroad and the production of indigenous artificial silk here, and how this hinders the growth of the natural silk industry—these problems should be carefully looked into. They are very important problems. I say again that so far the Government has not followed any fixed policy—it has no policy at all. I hope at least the hon. Minister who has taken charge of this subject and who is drawn from the silk industrial area will look into all these things and take proper steps to see that this industry is rehabilitated.

Now, there is another point. There has to be a small amendment. I am not moving it but I will just bring it to the notice of the hon. Minister. Here the Chairman is the Minister in charge of Commerce and Supply. Now, he is the Minister of Commerce and Industry, he is not a Minister of Supply. So I feel that an amendment is necessary in this respect. Instead of the Minister of Commerce and Supply...

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: Industry and Supply.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: It has to be the Minister of Commerce and Industry.

Shri T. S. A. Chettiar (Tiruppur): When the Silk Board was established there were great hopes held out to the industry that they would really get good help. I come from an area which specialises in the silk industry, that is, Kollegal in Coimbatore district. The whole taluk depends upon this industry. Today they are at a very low ebb indeed. I had occasion to go to the Library and ask for a report of this Silk Board. Unfortunately the Librarian could not give me one and he said that no such report was ever received. I would suggest to the Government that they should make it a point that the annual reports of every Board constituted by them—it may be a Tea Board, Coffee Board or a Silk Board—should be sent to this House. They may be placed on the Table of the House or at least it may be brought to the notice of Members that such reports are received and submitted. Without these reports we are un-

able to know whether any work is being done. As seen from the original Act the Board has to do some very good work such as "undertaking, assisting or encouraging scientific, technological and economic research, devising means for improved methods of mulberry cultivation, developing and distributing healthy silkworm seeds, reeling of silkworm cocoons, and many others, the supply of technical advice to filature and charkha reellers etc". To help them to do this work they are also allowed to levy a cess; in addition to the grant that they may get from the Government, they are allowed to levy certain cesses. We would like to know whether any cess has been levied by this Board.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: No cess has been levied.

Shri T. S. A. Chettiar: I also want to know whether any work as is mentioned in the clauses of the Bill has been done. I am indeed very sorry to learn from the hon. Minister that the work that has been turned out by the Board is not satisfactory. So it is a welcome measure so that a greater control may be exercised over the Board and that a Vice-Chairman, probably a Government official will be appointed so that the Government will have a proper check on the Board.

It has been said in the opening speech that the protection given to the silk industry was not found to be sufficient and I would like to refer here to a certain alternative spinning material that has been imported into this country and particularly what is called "stable fibre" that has been introduced in this country in the spinning mills. For want of cotton, they were allowed to import this staple fibre. I have gone to hundreds of weavers in the course of the recent elections and most of the weavers complained that this staple fibre is a fraud. It does not stand for more than two or three washings while put in water and the result is that the weavers who eke out their living by weaving complain about it. I do not know why this staple fibre should be allowed to be imported into this country at all. If you go to the market in Delhi, you will find things which were imported in a large measure, which are not good material but which stand cut-throat competition with the indigenous industry especially in silk. I would like the Government to go into the matter.

The Tariff Board had made a report last year and I understand from a letter that is published here that the

[Shri T. S. A. Chettiar]

Mysore Government which was one of the important producers of this industry was not satisfied with the protection given to that industry. Neither do the Government of India seem to be happy over the protection given to the industry. Protection should be effective when it is given. I would suggest to the hon. Minister that things like the staple fibre should be entirely banned, if possible, as they do not even give the money's worth to the poor man who purchases it.

These are some of the few suggestions which I thought I would make. We hope that next time when any report of this Board is put before the House, we will see substantial work being done by the Board.

10 A.M.

Shri Raghobachari (Penukonda): I did not very much intend to participate in this debate, but I happen to come from Dharmavaram, a famous place where silk sarees are manufactured and I am intimately associated with the producers of silk sarees as well as with consumers. As the whole Board and its administration is going to be entirely under the control of the Government, the Minister being the Chairman and another Vice-Chairman being nominated, the relevant point that I wish to suggest to the hon. Minister is this. The complaint in this industry is that the silk industry is suffering because of foreign competition. There are two sections of the silk industry. One is the producer of the raw yarn and in competition with the import of yarn from outside, he suffers and the other is the consumer, as well as the person who makes the cloth. I have invariably found by experience that whenever you import silk from outside, the weaver gets more employment as more things are manufactured and the consumer has always the advantage as the prices go down. Therefore, this is really a fight between the man who actually produces the raw material and the foreign silk import, by which he suffers; the man who actually consumes it sometimes suffers and sometimes benefits. When the Board is under the control of the Government, it would be the great concern and responsibility of the Government to so control the import policy that really the consumers' interest as well as that of the weavers, who naturally produce more goods when there is plenty of yarn, are safeguarded. These two things must be protected in conjunction with the man who actually produces the raw material. That is a point which I wish to emphasize.

It is rather difficult for me to locate where exactly the difficulty has arisen. The Chairman is the Minister in charge and the other gentleman who is now elected is the Vice-Chairman. The Minister's statement revealed that there appears to be a sort of non-cooperation somehow between the Board and the Government. He complained that certain information asked for was not being supplied and reports were not being submitted. So the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman or the whole Board seem to have a feeling of non-cooperation between them. Could not the Minister as Chairman try to remedy this defect? Secondly, it appears that the Board does not seem to exist for any useful purpose and the Minister wants to give this new shock so that it may have effect on the Board.

The power of nominating for a year as stated by the hon. Minister in order to effectively function may be accepted, although it is a retrograde step. The producer of the raw material, the consumer and the weaver who produces—these are always in competition and in the process of controlling the affairs of this Board, this may also be kept in view.

Shri R. K. Chaudhury (Gauhati): I happen to be one of the unfortunate members of the present Silk Board and I hope that the House will bear with me in patience for some little time for this reason, if not for any other reason. According to me the issue which is before the House so far as the Bill is concerned is whether we should have an elected Vice-Chairman as at present in the Board or whether we should have a nominated Vice-Chairman and whether the corollary follows that an official is certainly to be more depended upon than an elected member. If we accept this position then it would be much better to have an official Central Silk Board than to have a sprinkling of elected members in that Board. If this is the principle on which you act, namely, that an official is far more dependable and that an official is credited with greater efficiency even in a Board like the Central Silk Board, why now bother your heads about the increased number of elected members in the Central Silk Board? Why do you want to have another member from the Upper House or any other House? Why not do away altogether with elected members on the Central Silk Board? It is very well known to the House that the present Commerce Minister is very earnest so far as expansion of industries in India is concerned. We have known him even while he was an ordinary Member of this House and the keen interest that he takes in

matters industrial raises hopes in our minds that the future prospect of industry in India is in very safe hands. But, at the same time, I must say with great regret that I cannot agree with him in the view which he has expressed that an official Vice-Chairman will be of more service to the Central Silk Board. I know of an elected Vice-Chairman of this Board. I cannot concede that any other person, official or non-official, will be more competent than him. He was a retired officer, a Rai Saheb or Rai Bahadur. I think he was originally working in the Mysore Government. His knowledge of the industry is certainly marvellous and he was of great help to the Board itself. I cannot for a moment concede that there cannot be another elected non-official member who is capable of taking his place. I submit that in this Bill instead of saying that an official shall be appointed, we might very safely say that an official may be appointed in certain cases, for instance, when we find that in the Board there is not a competent man who could be elected.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: Government will now nominate, and they can nominate a non-official.

Shri R. K. Chaudhury: If that is the view of the Government, then, we might put this clause in this way: that in cases where the Board finds that they have no competent person to elect as Vice-Chairman, then, the Board shall report the matter to the Government and the Government shall appoint or nominate a Vice-Chairman. That would save the prestige of the elected members of the Board.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: May I interrupt the hon. Member for a Minute? In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, it is stated that the Vice-Chairman should be a Government official.

Shri Raghachari: It is stated here:

"It is felt that if the Vice-Chairman is a Government official appointed by the Government, he could take greater interest. . . ."

Mr. Chairman: I think the hon. Minister will reply in due course. The hon. Member may proceed with his speech.

Shri R. K. Chaudhury: I could not quite follow.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member may proceed in his own way without minding the interruptions.

Shri R. K. Chaudhury: Section 6 reads as follows:

"The Board shall elect from among its members a Vice-Chairman who shall exercise such of the powers and perform such of the duties of the Chairman as may be prescribed or as may be delegated to him by the Chairman."

The present amendment in clause 3 is:

"In section 6 of the principal Act, in sub-section (1) for the words 'The Board shall elect from among its members' the words 'The Central Government shall appoint from among the members of the Board' shall be substituted."

As the amendment stands at present, I do not think it will be possible for the Board to exercise the option of electing their Vice-Chairman. I would therefore suggest that the amendment may be to this effect: that whenever the Government considers it necessary on account of the fact that there is no suitable member who could be elected as Vice-Chairman, then, Government shall appoint an official as Vice-Chairman. That is the procedure followed for some time also in electing Chairman of Municipalities and local boards. If the Government would not accede to the proposal that I have made, the hon. Minister may accept at least this suggestion of mine, namely that the election of the Vice-Chairman shall be subject to the approval of the Central Government. If that is done, the Government will be in a position to exercise their judgment whether the person elected as the Vice-Chairman by the Board is a suitable person or not, and if not the Government will exercise their option of not giving their consent to that election and then Government may appoint some other person as Vice-Chairman. I think that is the best course. Otherwise, it is not only a reflection on the present Silk Board, it is also a reflection on the competency of the elected Members of this House or of any House who will exercise the functions of the Vice-Chairman. That is tantamount to a reflection. I would repeat my request to the hon. Minister to accept one of the two suggestions that I have made before the House namely that the Government may exercise the option when they find that the Board has not been able to select a suitable man as Vice-Chairman or when they find that the Board has elected a Vice-Chairman whose election they cannot approve of, and then only they can appoint an official as Vice-Chairman.

[Shri R. K. Chaudhury]

Secondly, I would draw the attention of the House to one remark which has been made by the hon. Minister, a remark which has been made in the Statement of Objects and Reasons namely that in order to enable the Government to take a greater interest in or pay greater attention to the Silk Board, the nomination of an official as Vice-Chairman is necessary. I join issue on that point. It is not on account of an elected Vice-Chairman that Government has not taken greater interest or paid greater attention to this Board. It is on account of the fact that individual Ministers find it impossible to pay the attention that is due to the Central Silk Board. When my hon. friend Dr. S. P. Mookerjee was the Minister in charge of Industry and Supply, he always made it a point to attend every meeting of the Central Silk Board, and he used to evince very great interest in the affairs of the Central Silk Board. It was his idea and I hope that idea is still shared by the hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry also, that a great deal of the future of India depends on a proper expansion of the silk industry in this country.

So far as my State is concerned, I can say that if greater interest is really paid to the silk industry in my State of Assam, it alone can increase the output of indigenous silk in this country about ten times more within a short time. But, that opportunity has not been given to Assam. Not because there was an elected Vice-Chairman; the elected Vice-Chairman, though a man of advanced age, was always anxious to visit Assam and see things for himself. He also desired to encourage certain inventions which were made in Assam, that they should be brought to the Committee so that they may be examined. But it is not on account of the lack of interest shown by the Vice-Chairman or the Members of the Central Silk Board, that they were lacking in interest in the silk industry, but it is on account of the failure of the Government to give the necessary funds to carry on the work of the Silk Board.

My hon. friend, Mr. Guha, has said that he is giving his whole-hearted support to this Bill. I wish I also could do that, but I have been inconvenienced by the possession of knowledge of certain facts of which my hon. friend Mr. Guha is absolutely ignorant.

the petty sum of rupees four lakhs or so which my hon. friend said was given to the Silk Board was hardly enough to improve this industry,

particularly when this industry is at loggerheads with the silk imported into this country. Unless you can protect this industry for some time—and that protection it has not been possible to give so long on account of the failure of the Ministers in charge to pay greater attention to this industry—it is very difficult to make progress. If that attention had been paid, the output of silk would have increased many times. As I said, the attention which is wanted is not so much the attention of the Vice-Chairman. The attention of the hon. Minister in charge of industries is wanted, and that attention can be exhibited, demonstrated to the satisfaction of all concerned if more funds are put at the disposal of the Central Silk Board.

How are we suffering for want of an official Vice-Chairman? Can this official Vice-Chairman induce the Government to give greater grants? Can this official Vice-Chairman—I ask this question pointedly—persuade the Government to give larger grants to the Silk Board than it is possible for an elected Vice-Chairman who may happen to be a Member of Parliament or a Member of some State Assembly? Is it possible for an official Vice-Chairman to get greater attention from the Minister than an elected Vice-Chairman who may happen to be a Member of Parliament or one of the State Assemblies? If this question is answered in the affirmative by the hon. Minister, then I will be bound to say that the hon. Minister has suddenly conceived a greater attachment for the officials than he has for his own associates the Members of Parliament or the Members of any Legislature.

I may mention in this connection what disadvantage we had for want of funds. A certain gentleman named Shri Nidhiram Das has devoted his entire life to the silk industry, spent his life in inventing three spinning wheels, one for spinning cotton, one for spinning tussore and one more. I have moved the Central Silk Board several times for the grant of a certain sum of money so that these things could be distributed all over India. My hon. friend Mr. Mahavir Tyagi himself purchased one of the spinning wheels from that gentleman, and he had given a trial to the spinning wheel, and the output of this spinning wheel is much greater than the output of any other spinning wheel which has been invented up-to-date. He has also invented a spinning wheel for the manufacture of tussore. That spinning wheel was sent to Orissa and to Bihar and demonstrated there and all those who have seen it have marvelled at

the increase of output from this spinning wheel. The Secretary of the Central Silk Board went to Gauhati and himself saw the experiment being made, but he was handicapped for want of funds. What he did was to purchase a certain number of spinning wheels from him and distribute them in different parts of India. But that gentleman has spent all his fortune for improving the spinning wheel and he has no factory to manufacture them. He has been granted a certain sum of money by the Government of Assam which is very small and which does not help him at all. What I was saying in this case was that a lakh of rupees be granted to this man for the improvement of the spinning wheel and for its distribution throughout India. If the Government had undertaken to start a factory and distribute these spinning wheels, I think in India the increase in output of silk would have been several times more than what it is. But, how can the Central Silk Board give one-fourth of its funds to a particular State or for any particular invention? Unless Government earmarks that grant for that purpose, the Central Silk Board is quite helpless in the matter. And the Central Silk Board was several times asked to come and see the place. The predecessor to the present hon. Minister had once upon a time given an engagement that he would go and see these spinning wheels in Gauhati on a certain date at a certain time, but unfortunately, he could not do so. So, what is wanted is not greater attention through an official Vice-Chairman, but greater attention, greater interest from the Chairman himself, from the Minister himself. The Minister has to think whether it is worth while for this country to have a larger output of silk or whether it is not worth while; whether it is better for the Government to pay more attention to the cotton textile industry, and not to the silk industry. If the latter is the view which is entertained by the hon. Minister, then it is better not to have the Silk Board at all. Let us give our attention to silk after this emergency is over. But if we really want the Silk Board, if we want to foster the indigenous silk industry in this country, he should himself take interest. He should not introduce this ill-feeling between officials and non-officials by his preference openly in this House of an official in place of a non-official. Could not any elected non-official from this House who is quite competent, hold the office of Vice-Chairman? When the funds of the Silk Board are so low, why should we appoint an official as Vice-Chairman whose pay will perhaps be not less than Rs. 2,000 per month. Rupees two thousand so

far as the Silk Board is concerned, is not a small sum. Twenty-four thousand rupees a year is not small. And that function can be very well carried on by an elected member either of this House or of a Legislature.

Then, another thing which is a great menace to the silk industry in this country is the import of artificial silk and the mentality of our fashionable young women who want to change their silk, their clothes, their dress, their sarees very frequently. I tell you one thing: the silk which is produced in Assam is durable practically throughout one's life. It is not torn easily, and it has to be worn practically all one's life. Now, the fashionable young women do not like to have durable silk at all. They want silk which can be changed twice a day. They do not want any durable silk. The point at issue before the Board would be whether durable silk or the artificial silk is to be preferred. After all, it is the voice of the women that matters, and they are practically in a great majority preferring the flimsy silk. Of what use then will be the indigenous silk? I do not know whether the hon. Minister has seen the moonga silk.....

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I have not.

Shri R. K. Chaudhury: Mahatma Gandhi, after examining this silk, said in Gauhati that this moonga silk is the finest woven silk that he had seen in India. This silk is very durable, and every time it is washed, it becomes more and more golden in colour, and does not develop any verigated pattern of colours. I have seen that in sarees nowadays,—even in the dresses of Members of Parliament— all sorts of designs and flowers etc. in all sorts of colours. But the moonga silk preserves its golden colour. Therefore, I submit that if you really wish to foster the silk industry, do not allow our indigenous silk to be pushed out of the market by artificial silk. My hon. friend Mr. Jhunjhuna-wala made a complaint the other day that in Bhagalpur, silk was gradually being ousted from the market, because of the import of a large quantity of artificial silk. This artificial silk does not last long, and so the women can change their dresses very frequently. I would most respectfully appeal to this House and also to the hon. the Minister that we must once and for all decide that we should have indigenous silk. Then we have to take measures to protect our silk industry against the imported artificial silk. We have to do propaganda about our indigenous silk, and educate our

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people in this behalf. We have also to impress on them the durability of the indigenous silk. We should not yield to the temptation of having frequent changes in dress, by having resort to these artificial silks.

Once again I have to appeal to the hon. the Minister to amend this clause in the manner I have suggested. Let us give the Board once again a chance to exercise their own option as to whether they will have a non-official Vice-Chairman or an official Vice-Chairman.

Dr. M. M. Das (Burdwan—Reserved—Sch. Castes): The Bill before the House is a small amending Bill, but it is destined to serve a very important purpose. It seeks to amend the two provisions of the parent Act, namely the Central Silk Board Act of 1948, by which the Government of India assumed full control and responsibility for the raw silk industry in this country. A cess was imposed, and the Central Silk Board and its Standing Committee. . .

Mr. Chairman: May I bring it to the notice of the hon. Member the fact that the present Bill is more or less confined to the constitution of the Central Silk Board. I quite understand that the hon. the Speaker, while in the Chair, said that anything relevant to this Bill may be said. But at the same time I think we have had a fairly good discussion about the import of silk etc., the general state of the silk industry etc. I would advise hon. Members therefore to confine themselves, as far as possible, to the composition of the Board which is the main subject-matter of this Bill, so that the same points may not be urged over and over again.

Dr. M. M. Das: I am speaking about the Board itself. A cess was imposed. . .

Mr. Chairman: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member. But let him confine himself to the limits I have suggested.

Dr. M. M. Das: A cess was imposed. . .

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: No cess was imposed, although it can be imposed.

Dr. M. M. Das: And the hon. the Minister of Commerce and Industry was the Chairman of the Board. Although four years have passed since this Central Silk Board came into existence, yet the condition of the silk industry in the country has neither

improved nor stabilised. On the contrary, as has been stated in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, this industry has been placed in very difficult circumstances. Apparently the Central Silk Board, which the original Act had created, has failed absolutely to discharge its functions adequately and satisfactorily. This failure on the part of the Board has been ascribed to two reasons in the Statement of Objects and Reasons. One is that the hon. the Minister of Commerce and Industry, who is the *ex-officio* Chairman of this Board could not attend the meetings of the Board regularly, due to his other pre-occupations, and secondly the Vice-Chairman was a member elected by the Board, and not appointed by the Government, and so he could not discharge his functions entrusted to his responsibility. These are the only causes that are responsible for the deplorable condition of the silk industry in our country today.

As has been mentioned by many hon. Members, the import of large quantities of foreign silk, especially Japanese, and the rampant speculation on artificial silk, have their repercussions on the price and the demand for raw silk in the home market. Mysore, which is the largest silk producing State in India, has asked the Central Government to impose quantitative restrictions on the import of silk. Our annual consumption of silk is determined by the Tariff Board is about four million pounds, whereas our annual production is 2.1 million pounds. So there is a real necessity for the import of silk from foreign countries. But the quantum of import has to be calculated. In order to do that, we must take into consideration the fact that the substitution of natural silk by artificial silk is increasing daily in this country.

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, it has been said that in order to place the industry on a stable foundation, it is necessary that the Government should have a more effective voice in the control exercised by the Board over the industry. A brief reference therefore to the various factors that have made it imperative for our Government to assume greater control over this industry may not be irrelevant or impertinent. The silk industry is one of our very ancient and important industries. It gives a valuable income to thousands of poor cultivating families in different parts of the country, it saves a substantial part of our foreign exchange, and it provides our armed forces with a

very important necessity, namely the parachutes. The silk industry all over the world has one aspect of its own which makes it imperative for our Government to assume greater control over this industry. In every silk producing country, whether it is Japan, or India, the production of raw silk is a subsidiary industry of the poor peasant. Raw silk cannot be produced on a large manufacturing scale in factories. When I say that raw silk cannot be produced in factories, I mean that it will not be remunerative at all to produce raw silk in factories. The cost of production of raw silk in factories will be too high to stand in competition with the silk manufactured by cottage industries. The production of raw silk is suitable only as a subsidiary industry for peasant families who grow mulberry and rear silk worms in their own fields. Sericulture or the production of raw silk cannot be taken up by highly industrialised countries, because people there find more remunerative occupations in their mills and factories. This is the reason why the raw silk industry cannot be taken up by countries like the United States of America. Thus the production of raw silk is always and everywhere the industry of the poor cultivator. It cannot improve, it cannot flourish without the active help and active participation of our Government. Not only in our country, where the primary producers of raw silk are poor and illiterate, even in countries like Japan the improvement of this silk industry is directly proportional to the help and active participation of the Government received by them.

Mr. Chairman: May I suggest to the hon. Member that all these points are only remotely relevant and the only point that arises directly out of the Bill is the composition of the Board? The Speaker had already held that these points were remotely relevant. It will be better to reserve these observations for some other occasion.

Dr. M. M. Das: Sir, I was only mentioning the factors which have made it necessary for our Government to take greater control of the industry. Anyway, there is another point which has no doubt been mentioned by some other hon. Members which I beg to place before the House and to which I wish to draw the attention of the Government. The greatest enemy of the silk industry in our country today is the artificial silk or rayon. The price of artificial silk is very low compared to that of natural silk. The weavers in many cases use artificial silk as the woof and natural silk as the warp. *Sarees* are thus made

cheaper and they find a ready market in the country. Thus the demand for natural silk is reduced. This makes the fabric of very low durability and it is sold in the market as a pure silk product. The consumer is thus cheated and when he pays the price of the pure stuff, he gets a less durable stuff. The result is that the customer is inclined to buy less and less amount of silk goods. This is a very important matter to which I want to draw the attention of the Government. The position is just the same as the adulteration of pure ghee with *vanaspathi*. My suggestion is that the Government should impose a ban upon the weaving of artificial silk with natural silk.

Before I conclude I beg to make one more submission to our Government. Government want a more effective control over the affairs of the Silk Board and the Silk industry. We have no objection at all to that. But what we do expect from our Government is that they should do everything in their power to improve the silk industry of our country. The silk industry has got a great future in this country and it is capable of solving many important and pressing economic problems in our rural areas, especially of the lower middle class and the cultivators. I support the motion.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha):
I beg to move:

"That the question be now put."

Mr. Chairman: I think there has been sufficient discussion so far as this small Bill is concerned. Therefore, I accept the motion for closure.

The question is:

"That the question be now put."

The motion was adopted.

Shri S. N. Das (Darbhanga Central): Before the hon. Minister replies, I would like to ask one question—whether the opinion of this Board was taken on this point regarding the official Vice-Chairman and whether the reports of this Board and other commodity Committees are supplied to Parliament Library or not, and if not, why the reports are not supplied?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I am sorry to have taken up the time of the House over this innocuous measure. It seems to have aroused a certain amount of heat and also a certain amount of interest. A question was asked by my hon. friend behind whether I had taken the opinion of the Board. My whole complaint is that the Board does not function. It met a year back. As my hon. friend said, the Board was to meet at a

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very delectable place called Srinagar, not having been before to Srinagar, I would have taken the opportunity of attending the meeting, but I felt Parliamentary work was more important than attending the meeting of the Silk Board at Srinagar. I hope I will be able to visit Srinagar sometime before my life comes to an end. The Board does not function. Whom am I to ask? How can I consult the Board about this? The whole idea is that the Board has not functioned, it does not function and so we thought at least we could make the Standing Committee function. The idea really is that the Vice-Chairman is nominated by Government and he will be in the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee would meet and would function. The hon. Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri—he has gone away now—asked 'Why should we not have non-officials?' The non-official may be somewhere in Assam and the Standing Committee will meet in Delhi or Bombay. He would not be able to come to the Standing Committee meeting. The whole thing is so horrible that I would rather bring in a motion to repeal the Act! The Silk Board cannot be allowed to continue in this moribund state. My idea really for the time being is to make my Textile Commissioner the Vice-Chairman and to shift the Standing Committee office to Bombay and ask him to put some life into this particular Board and to help this industry in a small measure. If hon. Members do not want it, well the responsibility for the industry languishing will be on them and not on my head.

A number of questions were raised. It was asked whether a cess was levied. No cess has been levied. The accounts of the Board are regularly audited by the Deputy Accountant General under rule 12 of the rules prescribed. For the time being, import of the staple fibre, raw silk, has been kept in abeyance. We have not yet announced the Policy. Until there is a further study in regard to the needs of the relevant industries, I do not propose to permit import. But perhaps if the industries are kept closed—for instance, I am told that the art silk industry is kept closed and they manufactured about 300 million yards of cloth every year and employed somewhere about 40,000 to 50,000 workers—I might be compelled to allow imports, but in any case at the moment they are all matters which are being examined.

To come back again, a number of hon. Members have made a lot of use-

ful suggestions and I have taken note of all of them and if Government are to exercise, some kind of control over this Board and reform its method of working, the suggestions that hon. Members have made will be usefully noted and I can assure hon. Members that these suggestions will be considered and, as far as possible, utilised.

My hon. friend, Mr. Arun Chandra Guha, raised some very vital issues in connection with Boards functioning under Acts of Parliament under my Ministry. I recognise the force of his criticism. In fact, it would be my ambition to relate the working of these Boards somehow to supervision of Parliament in future. I cannot make any promise at the moment, but my mind is running on these lines, that the reports must be placed on the Table of the House. Of course, these reports are sent to the Library; I shall in future place these reports also on the Table of the House.

Shri A. C. Guha: The reports were not available in the Library. I complained and they were sent only yesterday afternoon and I find them this morning.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I recognise in this particular instance the reports came only yesterday, but that again shows that the Board has not been functioning properly.

There is another remark of my hon. friend, Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, that the Board has been functioning properly. It meets once a year. The Standing Committee is supposed to meet twice a year and it has not met the second time during the current year. If the industry is going to be helped by keeping this Board in this moribund condition, the House can well understand what will happen to the industry.

Shri R. K. Chaudhary: On a point of information, Sir. If the report has not come, is the Vice-Chairman responsible for that or the members of the Board, or is the Secretary responsible?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: The question really is that we want to bring home the responsibility to somebody, and we can only bring it home to an official, not a non-official. Non-officials are above any kind of responsibility—in most Boards I am sorry to say they are decorative. I do hope when we reconstitute the Board members will take a little more interest. But we can bring home the responsibility only to an official. That is why for one year at any rate we propose to try this. If it proves

successful, well, we might try it for some time more. If it does not prove successful I shall certainly appoint a non-official and allow the Board to languish. It is not a question of my being wedded to a particular idea of bringing an official into it. I want to do some good to this industry.

Well, that seems to be the answer in regard to the various questions put. But in regard to further amendments that may be necessary, I have said before in another connection that I am examining the entire question. Even if the Silk Board Act has to be amended in some measure perhaps as I may have to amend the Coffee Marketing and Control Act and the Rubber Production Act also, we will probably bring forward the amendments together—we will put them together in one Act. I shall then tell the House how we propose to improve the working of the Board, but the matter is under examination. But I thought the present amendment was rather urgent particularly because of the insistence by hon. Members that more attention should be given to this industry by Government—an insistence which I thought had substantial basis on facts. I need not go further into this matter but I do hope that if the House approved of it some good will result out of this to the silk industry.

Shri A. C. Guha: May I know whether the Board has taken any steps in the direction of technical and economic research and for testing and grading the raw silk? Those are the two important functions of the Board.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I have a summary of what the Board has been doing. It made certain recommendations to Government. It has imported some machinery from Japan. A batch of three Indian sericulturist officers from Madras, Mysore and Bengal were sent to Japan at the suggestion of the Board. Twenty thousand saplings of different varieties of mulberry plant have been imported. They have three technical inspectors affording practical technical assistance and guidance to mulberry and non-mulberry silk-growing States. So far as any research is concerned, I cannot find any evidence in any record that is produced before me, but as I said I am quite willing to concede the matter is entirely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

“That the Bill further to amend

the Central Silk Board Act, 1948, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2. (Amendment of section 4 etc.)

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: I am not moving my amendment.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: May I suggest that if the hon. Member, Mr. Gurupadaswamy moves his amendment to make “two” into “three” Members of the House of the People, I would willingly accept it.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: I beg to move:

In page 1, line 8, for “two persons” substitute “three persons”.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I accept the amendment, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

In page 1, line 8, for “two persons” substitute “three persons”.

The motion was adopted.

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

“That clause 2, as amended, stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2, as amended, was added to the Bill.

Clauses 3 and 4 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1 was added to the Bill.

The Title and the Enacting Formula were added to the Bill.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I beg to move:

“That the Bill, as amended, be passed.”

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

“That the Bill, as amended, be passed.”

The motion was adopted.

RESOLUTION RE BERNE CONVENTION FOR PROTECTION OF LITERARY AND ARTISTIC WORKS

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education and Natural Resources and Scientific Research (Shri K. D. Malaviya): I beg to move:

“This House approves the Berne Convention for the protection of Literary and Artistic Works, as finally revised at Brussels on the 26th of June, 1948 and signed by