

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Friday, 5th March, 1954

The House met at Two of the Clock.[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

3 P.M.

CONVICTION OF SHRI BHAJAHARI
MAHATA

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have received the following communication from the Magistrate, First Class, Purulia.

"I am to inform you that I have today convicted Shri Bhajahari Mahata, M.P. and sentenced him to undergo simple imprisonment for one year and to pay a fine of Rs. 300 in default one month simple imprisonment under section 9(5) of the B. M. P. O. Act.

He has been placed in division 'A'."

DISTRIBUTION OF BUDGET
PAPERS

Dr. Lanka Sundaram (Visakhapatnam): I desire, with your permission, to raise the question of break-down of distribution arrangements of budget papers in the Press gallery on the 27th February, leading to the

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leakage of the taxation proposals long before the Finance Minister started reading them to this hon. House. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the facts are as follows:

Instead of distributing part A of the budget statement, known generally as the 'review', part B, containing taxation proposals, was distributed—some fifteen or so copies—to Press representatives, with the result that, to the best of my knowledge and belief again, though some of the Press representatives, with their high sense of conduct and code of honour, returned them, a few copies left even the premises of this august Parliament.

I raise this question so as to get an enquiry instituted for the purpose of getting the guilty people punished, and more so, to ensure that such a mistake does not occur in the future.

Shri Raghuramaiah (Tenali): May I say something which has got a bearing on this. Immediately after I came to know about this nearly four days ago, I have myself tabled a short notice question on it. Would it not be better, before pursuing this matter, to await the reply of the Government to that question, so that we may know the facts and then decide what to do?

Mr. Speaker: Let us see what the Minister has to say, now that the matter has been raised, and we shall perhaps disallow the short notice question.

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting (Dr. Keskar): I would like to place before the House the

[Dr. Keskar]

facts as they are which are not exactly the same as what my hon. friend gave. As in previous years, the Press Information Bureau received this year also, on the day of the presentation of the Budget, sealed bags containing Parts A and B of the Finance Minister's speech. The bags were handed over to an assistant of the Press Information Bureau by the Finance Ministry at 4 P.M. He brought them to the Press Room of the Parliament House and kept them in the shelves under security arrangements.

The procedure of distribution of the Budget papers is explained in the letter attached, which was sent earlier by the Press Information Bureau, and which was circulated to the Press representatives, and which I will lay on the Table of the House. This procedure has been followed for a number of years.

At 5 P.M., the officer-in-charge of distribution asked the assistant who had brought the budget papers to open the bag containing Part A of the speech, but through inadvertence, the latter opened the wrong bag, namely, the bag containing Part B papers and the distribution started. At that time there was a tremendous rush, nearly 100 correspondents, eager to go back to the Press gallery to listen to the Finance Minister, pressing for copies.

The mistake was detected within a few seconds but within that time about a dozen copies had been taken by correspondents. Immediately steps were taken to withdraw the copies and, thanks to the co-operation of the Press, it was possible to get them back within a few minutes. No premature publication or leakage occurred.

It will be seen that the incident happened on account of a mistake almost accidental, and it was discovered in the course of a few seconds. Copies were immediately withdrawn. The person who is in charge has been handling the distribution of budget papers for many years and is one of our trusted hands. Apparently, a

momentary confusion caused by the rush of pressmen was responsible for this mistake.

I very much regret the mistake. To avoid such mistakes in future, it is proposed to take delivery of Part B of the Budget speech from the Ministry of Finance half an hour after the Finance Minister has begun his speech instead of simultaneously with Part A as at present.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram: May I make a submission?

Mr. Speaker: There is no scope for it. We will now proceed with the Budget discussion.

RAILWAY BUDGET—Contd.

Shri Nevatia (Shahjahanpur Distt.—North cum Kheri—East): Sir, as the time available is very short, I shall try to be brief. No other statement of the hon. Minister has aroused so much enthusiasm in the minds of the millions inhabiting vast and undeveloped areas of this country as the one which he has made in his Budget speech. He has said that "considering the vast areas in our country which are awaiting economic exploitation through the introduction of satisfactory transport facilities, I feel it is necessary to adopt a bold policy of development and expansion of the Railways". I am sure that all Members of this House as well as the public outside would wholeheartedly welcome this statement. But the question is: how and when this bold policy is likely to be implemented. People inhabiting the undeveloped areas are not prepared to wait indefinitely for the implementation of this policy.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

In this connection, I recall the speech of some hon. Members who have expressed satisfaction over the financial condition of the railways. I wish I could agree with them. The facts and figures however are otherwise. The capital at charge of the community in respect of this vast undertaking will be Rs. 907 crores.