

Rules

which are very important, are concerned, the Joint Committee cannot have the advantage of the views of the Members—

**Mr. Speaker:** What was done was this. The hon. Members will kindly recollect that early in the day, the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs mentioned—soon after Question Hour—that he will inform the House as to whether they want to take up that Bill or not during this session. Some hon. Member—I think it was Shri Khadilkar—said that three hours were not enough for that Bill and said that it was not adequate, though the original proposal of two hours was revised and the time raised to three hours by the Business Advisory Committee. I think the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs considered this matter. He came and reported to the House that he will consider this matter and be able to report to the House whether, in view of the demand made for additional time, it may be possible to get along with that Bill in this session or not. Thereafter he came and reported that it will not be feasible to take up that Bill during this session and that it stands postponed for the next session.

So far as the two Bills about Delhi are concerned, certain important persons were naturally desirous to serve on the Joint Committee and in accordance with our ancient practice and the practice that we have been adopting not to allow the hon. Members to say twice over and in order to enable them to reserve all their energies for the Joint Committee, the Bills were gone through. So, there was nobody to speak, and therefore, we saved so much of time.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** May I submit that that is not the actual position?

**Mr. Speaker:** What does he want now? He wants the House to adjourn?

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** Not at all. I understand from Shri Bharucha that

he had actually sent a chit for speaking on the Delhi Corporation Bill.

**Shri Naushir Bharucha:** I got up but in the meantime the proposal was made—

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** I was attending a sub-committee of the Estimates Committee. Shri H. N. Mukerjee is in another committee. Many Members who wanted to speak on these Bills, without knowing that the Bills had come so early, are already working in the other committees. They have no notice. If we go on at this rate, I do not know what will happen.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Members have no business to be on another committee when the House is sitting. The House is paramount. They must sit in the evening. I am really surprised. We have got to go through the work and at the same time work for longer hours also. Let the committee meet in the afternoon. I made a wholesome provision that during the forenoon no committee shall meet. In the afternoon also, the same principle must be adopted. Except where there is emergency, they must only meet after the regular business of the House is over.

**Shri Nagi Reddy (Anantapur):** The programme is not adhered to.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is adhered to. The hon. Members must always feel that they cannot expect every hon. Member to take part in the debate so that the House may be kept busy even though it may not be necessary.

Let us proceed to the next business.

MOTION RE. REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS AND ELECTION PETITIONS) RULES

**Shrimati Benu Chakravarty (Basirhat):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for not having been present in the

[Shrimati Renu Chakravartty]

House. I was in a parliamentary committee. I beg to move:

"This House resolve that in pursuance of sub-section (3) of section 169 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the following provisos be added to sub-rule (1) of new rule 41A of the Representation of the People (Conduct of Elections and Election Petitions) Rules, 1956, as further amended by the Notification No. S.R.O. 1993A dated the 18th June, 1957, laid on the Table on the 17th July, 1957, namely:—

"Provided that such polling stations are not situated in rural areas.

Provided further that before notifying the polling station the opinion of the recognised parties is taken and a majority of them agree to the notification."

This House recommends to Rajya Sabha that Rajya Sabha do concur in the said resolution.

I have moved this amendment to the rules under sub-section (3) of section 169 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The notification says that from now on the Election Commission has the right to notify in any particular area that actual polling will take place not by the old methods but actually with pen and paper. As a matter of fact, I would have liked to read the actual notification, but in the hurry I have not been able to get the papers.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member may apprise the House what exactly is the position.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** The position is this. Now, by a notification in the gazette, the Election Commission is now being given the right to say that in a particular area A, voting will take place by means of the ballot. They have not detailed it. Perhaps, the voter will be given the picture or the symbols of the

various parties and individuals and on the side of it, ticks or marks will have to be given by the persons who go to vote. This notification of course is left to the discretion of the Election Commission. Now, I have tried to put in my amendment a very clear and categorical proviso to be inserted. We do not want to leave it to the discretion of the Election Commission or its wisdom to say that such and such area should be a notified area, which may be a very backward area, where majority of the people are illiterate, who have never put pencil to paper. We do not want that the Election Commission should have the discretion to notify such areas.

I have said that two provisos should be added. One is that no polling station which is situated in a rural area can be notified as such. So many people have asked me, "Do you think in the urban areas, the people are more literate? There are urban areas and constituencies where a large portion of the people do not know to read and write". But even I have not excluded the right of the Election Commission to notify certain urban areas, though I would urge the Election Commission to take into consideration the level of literacy in that urban area too. I have not done it for this specific reason that we might try to start experiments in this matter.

There is no doubt that our method of voting is very cumbersome, because I come from a constituency, which is the most difficult area even to carry the ballot boxes. We know what terrible difficulties our officers have. The whole election procedure and the election arrangements are cumbersome. They have to walk miles before they arrive at the booth. I understand the difficulties, but in spite of that I have moved this amendment because I feel that if at this stage we introduce this sort of innovation, it will adversely affect the results.

For example, I have known in my area that a large percentage of muslim women become terrified when they come to the polling booths. I have myself have been called sometimes by the polling officer, who said: "Please ask this lady who is in burqua whether she wants to vote or not, because she is unable to move even." So, I believe that this is an impossible way of voting at the present moment. I do urge the Government to accept this proviso, because most of the Members, whether from this side of the House or that side, will say from their own experience that our country is not yet in a position to accept this type of voting.

Secondly as far as I remember, if I am not absolutely incorrect, in the notification it is said that a person who has to vote will be led up to a table or some place, which will be within sight of the polling officers and the presiding officers, and he or she will be asked to cast his or her vote. What is our experience? Our experience is that at the present moment the village population is terrified that the ruling party will know which way they are voting and for whom they vote. The question is often debated, "If I vote for the opposition parties, what will happen to me?" Apart from that, the propaganda continues that it is all secret voting and nobody, except yourself and your conscience, knows whom you have voted for. In spite of that, another propaganda is carried on the other side: "If you do not vote for us, we will know exactly for whom you are voting. There are numbers written and from that we will calculate and find out for whom you have voted." It is the psychological part of it that is made to play upon the electorate. Imagine in a village where the members of the panchayat or headmen or other members who are leading social and economic figures within that village are the polling officers and your having to cast your vote within sight of those men. I wish I had the notifi-

cation with me, but if this is at all correct, I can say on behalf of the opposition parties at least that we will object vehemently to this type of voting. So, from all these points of view, we feel that we cannot accept such a change and we are not prepared to give this power of issuing notification to the Election Commission. That is why I look upon this power to be given to the Election Commission with very great fear and I have moved this amendment.

Another proviso that I have sought to include is that before notifying the polling station, the opinion of recognised parties have to be taken and a majority of them have to agree to the notification. Up till now, as you know, the Election Commission has proceeded in most matters in consultation with the major political parties. We have had frequent discussions and on the whole, up till now we have had good relations with the Election Commission and the consultations have borne fruit. Therefore, I feel that if you give this power of notification to the Election Commission, it is right that a majority of the recognised parties accepts it. The Election Commission may say that in such and such area, we consider that we should give the electorate the right of voting by ballot. Not only there may be illiteracy in that area, but my friends from Kerala say that it is not only a question of illiteracy, but certain other factors come into play. As I have already pointed out, certain psychological factors like victimisation later on have to be considered. That is why, in spite of the fact that I recognise that our method of carrying ballot boxes from place to place and the whole procedure is cumbersome and expensive yet at the same time I say that in our country, the time is not yet ripe when we can allow this type of voting. That is why I strongly urge that both these provisos have to be put in.

I am prepared to accept the position that certain areas may be used as

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experimental areas. I am not absolutely averse to it. In a city like Calcutta for instance, say in our Law Minister's constituency, we will not object to the experiment being made. But certainly in certain other constituencies, we would strongly object, because of the various factors I have mentioned. Even in such places like the Law Minister's constituency where we can allow such voting to take place, the majority of the recognised parties should agree with the Election Commission that we should try the experiment.

So, I am moving this amendment and I hope that the Law Minister will not look upon this amendment as something that is coming from the Opposition and so it should be voted down by the big majority of the Congress. It is something that is reasonable and corresponds to the objective reality in our country. So, I would urge the Government to accept these two provisos that I have mentioned.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Mathur is not here and so his amendment is not moved Mr. Ranga.

**Shri Ranga (Tenali):** I find myself very much in agreement with what has fallen from my hon. friend's lips just now. It is clear that all parties, whether on this side of the House or that side, are agreed on one thing, namely, that the present system has certain defects and the proposed system also might have equally big, if not bigger, defects. We have had experience of both the systems.

Earlier than the advent of adult franchise, we used to have the ballot system and the illiterate villagers used to be helped by the election officers in the presence, of course, of the representatives of the candidates, to indicate their preferences and in that way voting was taking place in those days.

17 hrs.

It was because all political parties in the country, more particularly the

Congress Party itself, were anxious that a change should be made and greater secrecy should be assured and greater protection afforded to our millions and millions of illiterate voters in making and giving effect to their choice that we have introduced the coloured box system.

We have had two occasions so far as this Parliament is concerned in which we had the experience of the working of the coloured box system. I, for one, have come across a lot of difficulties not only in my own constituency, but in the case of so many friends also in different parts of the country. For instance, many voters did not know into which box they were to put their ballot papers. Some of them put them into the wrong boxes. Some did not even know that they had to put the paper down the slit. They used to leave the paper at the top of the box, giving an opportunity for some interested election officers to go inside from time to time and drop them into the box of the candidate whom they wanted to favour. So many things like this happened.

Another thing has come to light. Quite a large number of friends were ingenious enough to insist upon these voters to go inside, to carry on a kind of make-believe and bring back the ballot papers and take Rs. 2 or 3 or 5 or even four annas sometimes. These outsiders were quietly sending in some reliable people to drop these papers. So many things like that had happened, it is true. With the result, oftentimes, it has been found that papers which were intended for one box, of a party, let us take, my own party, the Congress party, general box, were dropped into the reserve box, and they come to be invalidated. All these things had happened. There is no doubt whatsoever.

In some places, the lighting effects were not proper and adequate and so many people had suffered. The

placing of these boxes was a complicated matter. In some places, it was the first box, in some places, it was the last box, so far as I was concerned. It must have been so in the case of so many other candidates also. When they had to coach the poor voters—and they need quite a lot of coaching on the part of the candidates, their friends and supporters, and there is nothing wrong about it—necessarily difficulties had to be experienced. All these are defects of the existing system.

Nevertheless, it has had its virtues too. I am sure most of our own Members of the Congress Party in this House would bear testimony to the fact that if there had been the ballot system instead of the coloured box system, a large number of the voters who had voted for them would have felt rather shy, might not have voted, might not have chosen to go even to the polling booths at all and run the risk of voting in some places where the opposition was more powerful than the Congress. Naturally, they are afraid of vengeance on the part of the opposition. As my hon. friend said just now, the opposition too had the same difficulty in those places where the Congress happened to be too powerful and the local Congress candidate and his friends happened to be not so scrupulous and not so much wedded to the democratic way of voting. It could hurt and it did hurt both sides.

That was the reason why we of all parties were reconciled to the existing system because wherever it hurt, it did hurt everybody more or less equally, and wherever it worked well, it worked in favour of everybody, the opposition parties as well as the Congress party, the major party in the country.

What is more, we have got terrible social forces in our country: castes, tribes, all sorts of things. All these have got certain compulsions on the mind of the voters. The voters do not always feel quite free from all these compulsions. Therefore, every effort

has got to be made, not so much in the interests of the political parties, but in the interests of the voters themselves, at that particular moment of exercise of their unfettered will when they go inside to make their choice, to give them this assurance, complete freedom, and that freedom I fear is likely to be very much dwarfed or refused or denied in case this proposed system of balloting were to be introduced once again. That is why I am extremely doubtful and I am hesitant also about the advisability of giving this particular authority to the Election Commission.

I am second to none in my admiration for the good work that our Election Commission has done so far, and I wish to go on record as expressing my satisfaction about the impartial manner in which the Election Commission has discharged its duties till now. I am glad that they have brought us credit all over the world by the way in which they have conducted our two general elections, which is indeed a very difficult and onerous responsibility. I am glad my hon. friend from the Communist Party also has borne testimony to all that I have said, and in addition to that she has also expressed her satisfaction that whenever any kind of choice had to be made by the Election Commission, it was good enough to convene a conference of the representatives of the various important political parties and ascertain their wishes and give effect to the more or less unanimous view of those concerned. They may possibly do the same thing in the future also. If this rule were to be accepted and implemented, they may follow the same procedure of consulting people, but in spite of all that I would not like the Election Commission first of all to be burdened with this too dangerous a responsibility. Secondly, I would rather that this rule if it is insisted upon by the Government—I hope they would not insist upon it—would be treated only as a mere experiment to be tried out only in a very, very few places. In

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the light of the experience that they gain I would like them to come back to this House. I would like them to review that experience not only at the level of the Election Commission, but also at the level of the Government and this House. Whether the results of the experiment are good or bad, I would like them to give an opportunity to this House, as well as to the Government themselves and to the Election Commission to review the whole position and then come to a final decision as to whether we should come to have side by side both the systems in future in as many places as possible, or whether we should continue to carry on with our present system.

Therefore, I hope the Government will exercise the greatest possible caution in regard to this matter. I also trust that the Election Commission would not be in a hurry to take upon itself this very onerous responsibility and exercise it in too many places. If proper advice were given by the Government, I hope the Election Commission would be willing to place the results of the experiment before the Government and Parliament at the earliest possible opportunity so that we may have an opportunity of exercising our own judgment in regard to the matter before they take up this alternative method on any large scale in any State, not to speak of the whole nation.

Shri Siva Raj (Chingleput-Reserved—Sch. Castes): I entirely agree with the view put forward by the mover of the amendment and I am glad to be able to support the amendment. In addition to the facts mentioned by Shrinati Renu Chakravarty as to why the amendment should be accepted and also the support that is given to the amendment by Shri Ranga, who, I am glad to say, can rise above prejudices and give support to a good cause, I wish to point out that this is a case of introducing more

confusion where confusion already exists.

As we all know, in spite of the fact that we have got elaborate machinery, the electorate is so illiterate and so disorganised that even under the present rules of the elections there is a lot of confusion. If anybody pretends that we have marched forward and can adopt a better system and more complicated system of voting, I personally think—I am afraid to suggest it—that he is intellectually dishonest.

So I feel that the introduction of this innovation will create more confusion.

Another point I want to suggest is that this will be placing the Election Commission under a peculiar difficulty. They have already got the name during the last elections of practically being an agent of the Congress Party, for reasons which it will be difficult here for us to elaborate. At any rate, the Election Commission start by giving the symbols much earlier and far in advance of the elections to the Congress Party. Again in the matter of certain other instructions, it would appear to the ordinary man that one particular party is being favoured by the Election Commission. Not that I suggest that they have taken part in these elections, but the methods that they have adopted go to suggest that they are practically agents of the party in power. So this will further go to confirm the impression that is unfortunately created in the minds of even intelligent people that the Election Commission are taking steps merely to help one particular party.

Now if the Election Commission are given this power to select an area and if it unfortunately happens that they select areas where the people at the moment are moved towards one particular political party, they can easily be charged with affiliation or partiality towards the particular party.

It is for these two reasons that I support the amendment moved by Shrimati Renu Chakravartty.

**Shri Punnoose (Ambalapuzha):** I am really surprised that we are now contemplating the power to make certain changes in the system and handing over that power to the Election Commission. It is a fact that our present system is a little expensive and in some ways cumbersome. But I do not think that any serious change in it can be entertained very easily. We have to examine the implications of such changes.

The marking system has got its advantages from an economic point of view. I am speaking not only from theoretical experience; we have gone through this experience in Kerala. In the Travancore part of it, we had election on adult suffrage in 1948. It was the marking system. What happened was that even 60 per cent of the people or the votes had done the open voting. Any man—any educated man for that matter—can do it. I remember a Government Secretary came to the polling booth and said that he could not vote because he had not brought his spectacles. That is a very very legitimate excuse. Therefore, the presiding officer had to do the voting for him. What is the result of that? The result is that a rich candidate can fix a price, say, Rs. 5 or Rs. 10. He can see with his own eyes.

And, then, outside the polling booth the money can be given after the actual voting. Thus, we have seen that 60 to 65 per cent of the votes were open votes in 1948 in the Travancore-Cochin area, when the marking system was there. Here, it is said that after the marking, the ballot paper has to be folded in a particular way, it has to be shown to the Presiding Officer and then put into the ballot box. That is an additional danger because the Presiding Officer and the agents of the candidates try to scrutinise whether a particular voter has voted for a particular candi-

date or not. It is mentioned there that the paper should be so folded as to conceal the mark but our average voters will not be able to do that.

By and large, our present system has worked well. Even now there are complaints. In Andhra during the last general elections in 1954, the story was current that by some machinery, by some device—I do not know what it is—very clever people could know which man voted for which candidate. You were there at that time and I only passed that way and I heard the story. I am told that this affected the elections in a large way.

**Shri B. S. Murthy (Kakinada-Reserved—Scheduled Castes):** Not at all

**Shri Ranga:** On both sides.

**Shri Punnoose:** When such stories can be there and when voters can be affected in a large way by such stories, it is better not to make any changes in the present system. Anyway, the amendment proposed here may be tried as an experiment if the major political parties in an area agree to it. It can be tried there and it cannot be tried anywhere. This power should not be unconditionally handed over to the Election Commissioner.

Even in Panchayat elections in Travancore-Cochin area, we have got a similar system and not the marking system, nor the raising of hands. I know that in areas where the raising of hands and the marking system prevail, there are complaints; but this has worked well. What has been done is that the present system has been adopted in the Panchayat elections also and not vice versa. Therefore, I support this amendment.

**Shri V. P. Nayar (Quilon):** I also believe that the time is not ripe enough for our country to try this experiment. If we from Kerala feel difficult over this, I am positive that Members from other States will feel much more. We come from a State which is, perhaps, the most educated

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State. Even there, in the most literate State, I do not think it is workable.

When you talk about literacy, it does not mean that a man who is deemed literate can go through all the instructions though they may be printed in English or in the language. It is very difficult for a man who is deemed to be literate to find out what it actually means.

For example, you will find in these rules that if there is such a difficulty for any voter to understand the instructions or the import of the instructions, it is necessary for the Polling Officer to explain to that particular voter what those instructions really mean. Imagine the case of a constituency—most of our constituencies are like that—where the larger percentage of voters are illiterate. It will be absolutely essential that each voter goes to the Polling Officer and asks, "Please tell us what we have to do; we do not follow the instructions." We know that in such cases, people who cannot even hold a pen—a larger majority of our women—will not be able to exercise their votes. In such circumstances, it would be rather dangerous if we make a trial with this system. As the hon. Minister says, this system may have some advantages; nobody disputes it. The question is whether it is time for us to switch over to that system. Even in cities like Calcutta and Bombay, I do not think, it will be yielding the results which are desirable.

There is also another difficulty in the matter of recording votes of illiterate and infirm voters. Shri Punnoose gave us an instance. A Secretary to Government went to a booth and told the Presiding Officer that as he had forgotten his spectacles, it was not possible for him to find out the lines marked. Imagine the other way. I have known the case of another officer. Unless his vote was registered for a particular party, his idea was that he would fall into disfavour of the Government. He was of that opinion.

Mr. Speaker: Whatever the other States may say, people from Kerala would not say that.

Shri V. P. Nayar: I concede that. Even in the most literate State of Kerala, there have been such cases—not of ordinary illiterate people but of Government Secretaries and law graduates. They come in order to impress the outside agent and they fear that otherwise they will be done away with as my esteemed friend, Shri Ranga, said.

I know the case of an officer who went to a polling booth with a neck bandage in his hand. He said that he had no real bandage in his finger. He asked the vote to be placed for him.

As at present, rule 41(I) reads like this: "Recording of votes of illiterate or infirm electors:

If owing to illiteracy or blindness or other physical infirmities, the elector is unable to write the ballot paper or make a mark thereon, the presiding officer shall record the vote in accordance with the wishes of the elector and fold it up so as to conceal the vote."

I can say that it is not possible for me to write. I may as well say that I had an attack of Malaria and my fingers refuse to write. It will be difficult for the presiding officer to apply his mind then and there and to find out whether the rule is followed or not.

There is also this difficulty. You give freedom to the voter to have his vote recorded by somebody else. Shri Ranga has said that there are various kinds of pressures outside the polling area. It is easy for the polling officer to find out or to get a general idea as to what percentage of such open votes have been cast in favour of a particular candidate. How can this be prevented? Later on, it may be passed on. I do not say that all presiding officers will do it. But as at present, the scope for abuse is very much less. But if you once introduce it in an area where the people are not



in a position to understand the full implications of these rules, we are inviting trouble. The time is not ripe for our country to adopt this method whatever be its theoretical advantages.

An idea of literacy should not be taken from the census figures. I am a literate, if I know how to write the alphabets of my name. Yet, I may not know how to read. Unless there is a comprehensive rule, it is very difficult to get an idea. So, I do not see the reason why we should support this measure as it has emerged today. I hope the hon. Law Minister will appreciate the practical difficulties and think of some other way to give greater conveniences for voting.

**Shri Shree Narayan Das** (Darbhanga): Sir, I have nothing much to add. This provision of voting by marking the ballot paper, I think, is going to be an experimental measure and I think the power that is going to be given to the Election Commission will be used only as an experimental measure. After gaining some experience, it may be gradually introduced at other places. In view of the fact that a large number of our voters are illiterate . . .

An hon. Member: The majority of them.

**Shri Shree Narayan Das**: . . . I would say the overwhelming majority of them are illiterate this method cannot be adopted by them for voting. As has been stated by my friend **Shri V. P. Nayyar**, in case the voters are not able to read the ballot paper they will have to go to the polling officer and consult him. This is a very bad principle. Even now for placing the ballot papers in the boxes certain voters go to the presiding officers and ask them to explain the signs and show them how to place the ballot papers. If the proposed method is adopted, more than 50 per cent of the voters will have to go to the presiding officers and ask them to explain how to vote. Instead of putting the ballot papers in the boxes, the presiding officers will now have to mark them.

This is not good. There will be no secrecy in the voting.

I am of opinion that some experiment should be made. If the intention is to adopt this method in some by-elections as an experimental measure, especially in such areas where there is a large amount of literacy, I think this amendment should be accepted. If this is going to be the general rule and if it is going to be adopted at a very early date in a large area, I think this should not be accepted. We are not yet in a position and our voters also are not yet in a position to adopt this method.

Even in the present method of putting ballot papers in the boxes there are some glaring defects, especially in the case of voting from a constituency where there is one Scheduled Caste candidate and a general seat member. In that case two votes are given to a voter. According to the provisions that we have made in our Representation of the People Act, if both the ballot papers are placed in one box then one of them is declared to be invalid. But there is corruption even in regard to that. Some of the candidates go to their constituencies and ask their voters to place both the papers in one box knowing fully well that one will be declared invalid. But in that case his rival is deprived of one vote.

There is another thing in our present Act, the Representation of the People Act. Supposing there is one general seat and a reserved seat, there are two votes. The Scheduled Caste Candidate contests for both the seats, the reserved seat as well as the general seat. The corrupt practice followed is of asking the voters to put both the votes in one box, although it is not a corrupt practice under the provisions of the law as it stands at present. But that is not morally justified.

Therefore, this system of voting by putting ballot papers in the boxes is also not good. The method now proposed is better. But under the present circumstances, and in view of the fact that literacy in our country

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is very low, the introduction of this system will not be of much use at present. The hon. Minister should assure the House that this system which is going to be introduced now will be adopted in a very very small number of polling stations. I think we should see how it works.

**Shri B. S. Murthy:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, in this very House even to press the button some Members are not able to do. Instead of pressing 'No' they press 'Aye', and instead of 'Aye' they press 'Abstain'. If that is the state of affairs when Members of Parliament are asked to say 'Aye' or 'No', God only knows what will happen in the rural parts of India, where 80 to 90 per cent of the voters will be *bilkul illiterates*.

We had have two elections in 1952 and in 1957. Both these elections have been praised all over the world as election peacefully and constitutionally conducted without any party taking advantage of its being in power or out of power. Therefore, it is too early to think of the system that is now being proposed by the Minister of Law. I do not know the reason prompted either to the Ministry of Law or the Election Commission. I would urge upon the Government that in giving such powers to the Election Commission, care should be taken that the fundamental principle of the vote by the ballot, that is the secrecy of the vote, should be maintained. Especially in villages, as Shri Ranga and others have already stated, the fact of the have-nots is rather very miserable and most of them are at the mercy of the landed aristocracy or the capitalists as the case may be.

As it is, Shri Punnoose was trying to make a case to show something about Andhra. It is not only in Andhra but everywhere in India, that is to say,—perhaps in Kerala, because in Kerala they have got a big boosting—everywhere, the lower classes, es-

pecially the farm labour, agricultural labour and the artisan classes in many places are not going and participating in the elections wherever there was doubt that the votes will not go to the party in power at that particular locality. In Andhra it may be Congress; in Kerala it may be Communists.

**Shri B. K. Galkwad (Nasik):** At all other places, the Congress:

**Shri B. S. Murthy:** Shri B. K. Galkwad is yet to understand me perhaps. I said in Andhra it may be Congress; it may be Communists in Kerala. Wherever the people are rich, both in their influence as well as in their wherewithal and resources, they have always tried to see that the votes they considered will not be cast in their ballot boxes are prevented. Therefore, if this is the state of affairs, prevailing to day, when all precautions are taken to keep the secrecy of the vote and the ballot, what will happen if the literate system of voting is restored? A man goes; the majority of them are illiterates and he will have to go and say, "I will vote to so and so; please show my place where I should mark and how I should mark". When we are asked to go and vote for some of the memberships the Parliament elects, some of us are committing mistakes here. Instead of marking one gentleman, we mark the other and we cut out the ballot paper and it goes away. Therefore, this is a rather cumbersome and more undemocratic measure and, if I am permitted to say, it is an unwanted, unnecessary system, which especially makes the have nots more afraid of the votes at the elections.

Therefore, if democracy in India is to progress well, as it has been for the last ten years, and if the system of vote by ballot is to have its full play, I suggest to the Minister of Law to see this system by means of which the literate vote is marked,—voting by making—when introduced, will be restricted entirely not even to all

the urban areas but to certain parts in major cities where all the voters happen to be highly educated people, conscious of their liberties as well as their rights and privileges. Therefore, I request the Minister of Law to see that all necessary precautions are provided so as to see that no abuse is made of the new legislation.

**Shri Tangamani (Madurai):** rose—

**Mr. Speaker:** Enough has been said about it.

**Shri Tangamani:** There was an experiment in Madras State. I think, we should—

**Mr. Speaker:** It is 5.30 p.m. now. There is a half-an-hour discussion.

**An Hon. Member:** We have saved some time.

**Mr. Speaker:** He may continue tomorrow.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Shri Harish Chandra Mathur (Pali):** Will you kindly permit me to move my amendment?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member was not here when I called him.

**Shri Harish Chandra Mathur:** I apologise to you and to the House for my absence.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not prepared to accept it. Hon. Members must be in their seats when I call them.

**Shri Ranga:** Tomorrow you can take it up.

#### SUSPENSION OF TRAIN SERVICES —CHUPRA—VARANASI LINE

**Mr. Speaker:** The House will now take up the half-an-hour discussion.

**Shri Radhamohan Singh (Ballia):** **Mr. Speaker,** I want to raise a half-an-hour discussion on the answer given by the hon. Deputy Railway Minister on the 22nd August to a short notice question that I put on the suspension of trains on the Chupra-Varanasi line. I asked for this discussion and I am thankful to you for allowing it, because the matter is so urgent and important. It affects the life, property and comforts of lacs

of people and also the inter-State Communication between U.P. and Bihar. In view of the danger to this line due to erosion by the river Goghra, I wanted to know from the Minister what steps the Government were taking. The answer he gave was, "Everything that is possible is being done". This answer was so vague and indefinite.

But nothing was done. No arrangements were made to take care of the stranded passengers—I saw men, women and children going with bag and baggage. The railway authorities were so careless and so regardless of the comforts of the people that it appeared that it was not the people's Government in charge of the railways, but the old company regime which had again come into being. When I read in the papers that when there was a breach in some railway line in Assam the passengers who were stranded were fed by the railway authorities, I wondered whether it was the same Government in Assam which was in charge of railways in U.P.

Trains were cancelled, but no arrangement was made for the passengers going from Chupra to Varanasi. The communications from Banaras to Bhatni were also suspended and the trains from Ballia to Shahganj were also cancelled. Without any rhyme or reason this was done, without any regard for the comfort of the passengers.

The other point was that we did not know what the experts' opinion was, but on the question of saving the line, there was utter disregard of public opinion. The river was two miles to the north of the line in 1955 and the people raised a hue and cry that the line must be saved, and there was danger to it. But the authorities sat tight over it and cried, "we have got no regard for that. If the river comes near the line, we shall say to it like King Carnete, "Go back" and it will go back. At last the river came in June, 1957 and when it was only 200 feet from the track, then only they began to think of saving the line.