

Railways

12.50 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEES FOR ZONAL
RAILWAYS

The Minister of Railways (Shri Jagjivan Ram): In September 1958, you were pleased to make a suggestion that my hon. colleague, the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and myself might examine the feasibility of arranging a discussion every six months for two or three hours either on the floor of the House or outside on matters relating to the railways, such as amenities to railway users, punctuality of trains etc., so that the time of the House might not be taken up during the Question Hour on such matters. We had welcomed the suggestion and such discussions were being considered.

We had also been considering the feasibility of arranging an annual conference as suggested by you in July 1957, between the hon. Members of Parliament, the Members of the Railway Board and the General Managers of Zonal railways, in order to discuss railway matters of day-to-day importance. This has been implemented and as the hon. Members are aware, an informal consultative committee of Members of both Houses for each of the eight zonal railways, has been constituted. The first series of meetings of these committees was held in May last, which I consider has served a very useful purpose. This, I feel, is an excellent forum for an informal discussion on matters of day-to-day working between the Members of Parliament and the railway authorities responsible for operating the railways. I am sure that the frank and free expression of views at these meetings will prove of immense value to the railway administration. I have purposely laid emphasis on maintaining a completely informal character in these meetings. The General Managers take down notes and have been instructed to take early action that may be feasible on the various suggestions. Likewise, matters which lie beyond the powers of the General

Managers are taken note of by the respective Members of the Railway Board and suitable action is taken. It is my intention to have two such meetings each year, one during the Budget session and the other during the Winter session of Parliament. I hope these meetings will afford a good opportunity for a better appreciation of the public needs by the top railway executives.

In the circumstances, it is considered, and you have been pleased to agree, that it is no longer necessary to hold a discussion in the House as originally contemplated.

Mr. Speaker: If it is serving its purpose and hon. Members are satisfied, I do not want the time of the House to be taken away here except in cases where one or two matters may be brought up by way of questions and so on.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (K'annam): I am not very clear about your ruling on this.

Mr. Speaker: There is no question of ruling. When a question was put some time ago and I found a number of hon. Members were interested in pursuing the subject matter of that question, I made a suggestion to the hon. Railway Minister. Almost every day we travel on some railway or the other, and therefore I suggested that instead of waiting for a general discussion regarding the amenities, inconveniences to passengers etc., once a year, we might have some time devoted in the discussion for a discussion of the conveniences that are necessary or the grievances even once in six months. I also said it might be done either here or through consultative committees outside. He might have some conference. The hon. Minister wrote to me, and he has been pursuing this as he has just stated, and in view of this, it may not be necessary to devote any particular day or days for discussion once every six months. Let us try this method, that is what the hon. Minister has said.

Shri Tribhuvan Kanner Choudhary (Bengaluru): The meetings of the consultative committees are only held for one or two hours. So, if the time there is extended, perhaps we would not take the time of the House unnecessarily.

Mr. Speaker: It all depends on the Members.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: Well, the time can be extended, but it will all depend on what time is required there. I am thinking that to start with we may have four or five hours for each zonal committee.

Shri Vajpayee (Balrampur): Members should be informed of the action that has been taken on the suggestions made in the Committee meetings.

Mr. Speaker: Let him write to them.

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): The hon. Minister said that we had a consultative committee meeting in the last week of the last session and it proved useful. That is quite true. I would like to know whether he has got any proposal for future consultative committee meetings like holding them in the last week of a particular session.

Mr. Speaker: He has already said he will have two discussions, one during the Budget session and the other one six months later.

Shri Tangamani: My suggestion is whether they cannot have it in the last week of each session, because it will be easy for the Members also to meet here, and the General Managers can also come here, and then there will not be accumulation of many of the issues which would be otherwise raised here. I remember the suggestion was casually made by the hon. Minister himself that he would have such meetings in the last week of each session.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: We had this meeting during the Budget session and I propose to have it in the Winter

session so that some time will be given to the General Managers to examine and implement the suggestions made in the previous meeting. Let us first have two meetings in the year, then if necessary we can increase that.

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members will write to the hon. Minister. If there are any serious matters for consideration, and if the work is too much for two meetings, then, the hon. Minister will have one more meeting.

12.11 hrs.

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: THIRTY-NINTH REPORT

Sardar Hukam Singh (Bhatinda): I beg to move:

"That this House agrees with the Thirty-ninth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 3rd August, 1959".

If I may be permitted, I might refer to a notice of an amendment that has been given as regards items Nos. 9 and 10, relating to the Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member concerned may not be moving it.

Shri B. Das Gupta (Purulia): I have given notice of an amendment to increase the time allotted for item No. 9 by two hours.

Mr. Speaker: He wants to increase it from 5 to 7 hours?

An Hon. Member: What is that item?

Shri B. Das Gupta: This item relates to the motion regarding the First Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities for the period 30th July, 1957 to 31st July, 1958, laid on the Table of the House on the 8th May, 1959. The time allotted is 5 hours. I want that it should be increased to 7 hours.