

CORRECTION OF ANSWER TO STARRED QUESTION No. 581 re: JUTE INDUSTRY

Shri Kanungo: I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the statement correcting reply given on 27th August 1958 to a supplementary by Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri on Starred Question No. 581 regarding Jute Industry. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1046] 58.]

RATIFICATION OF ILO CONVENTION

The Deputy Minister of Labour (Shri Abid Ali): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the statement regarding the ratification by India of the ILO Convention No. 88 adopted in 1948 concerning the Organisation of the Employment Service. [Placed Library See No. LT-1047] 58]

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS THIRTIETH REPORT

Sardar Hukam Singh (Bhatinda): I beg to present the Thirtieth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions.

12.08 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**STATELESS PERSONS OF INDIAN ORIGIN IN CEYLON**

Shri N. R. Munsazay (Vellore): Under Rule 197, I beg to call the attention of the Prime Minister to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

The problem of stateless persons of Indian origin in Ceylon.

The Deputy Minister of External Affairs (Shrimati Lakshmi Menon): Last month there were reports in the Press that a Minister of the Ceylon Cabinet had stated that Ceylon Government had decided to give citizenship rights to about one and a half lakh of plantation population in all, and that the next step would be to find means of encouraging the gradual return to India of the remaining

"Indians", as he chose to call them. These press reports have caused anxiety and concern to the members of the House and Government are glad of this opportunity to make a statement clarifying their position on this essentially human problem of treatment of persons of Indian origin who have chosen to make Ceylon their home.

The plantation population of Indian origin to whom the press reports referred, must be distinguished from two other categories of persons in Ceylon with whom they are sometimes confused. The first category are those known as Ceylon Tamils. They speak Tamil but they have been Ceylon nationals for hundreds of years and they are part of Ceylon in the same way as any other nationals of Ceylon. Then there are Indian nationals who have gone to Ceylon for professional or business reasons. We are responsible for these Indian nationals and look after their interests as best as we can. Hundreds of these, who had been in Ceylon, have returned to India or been sent back to India by the Government of Ceylon. Nearly half a lakh (46,303) came back from the beginning of 1954 to the end of 1957. The Government of Ceylon have the right to decide whether, and for how long they would allow the national of India or any other country to remain in Ceylon. These Indian nationals can remain in Ceylon only for the period of the visas given to them by the Government of Ceylon.

The plantation population of Indian origin constitutes a third category of Ceylon residents. They are about nine lakhs. They have been in Ceylon as plantation labour for a long time. Most of them were born there. The so-called Indo-Ceylon problem is the question of Citizenship rights for this estate labour which has contributed greatly to Ceylon's prosperity and which according to our views is entitled to Ceylon citizenship. It is about these persons resident in Ceylon that negotiations have taken place between the Governments of India and Ceylon. An agreement, as the House knows,

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was signed between the two countries in January, 1954 and further elaborated in October, 1954. Since then there have been differences of opinion between the two Governments over the interpretation of certain clauses of the Agreement and further discussions have been held from time to time. They wish to be Ceylon citizens as evidenced by the fact that almost all of them applied for Ceylon citizenship.

The Government of Ceylon issue periodical statistics on the progress of registration of these persons as Ceylon citizens. According to the latest statistics received, out of a total of 2,37,034 applications, covering an estimated 8,29,619 persons, filed by persons of Indian origin for Ceylon citizenship, only 24,559 applications covering 96,923 persons had been accepted until the end of August 1958. 1,96,063 applications covering 6,96,252 persons had been rejected. 7,397 applications are reported to have been withdrawn and 9,020 applications are still pending disposal.

The press reports about the Ceylon Minister's statement do not apparently represent the policy of the Government of Ceylon. In fact, the following day, the Prime Minister of Ceylon stated that his colleague had been misrepresented and that the Government had not decided the number who should be granted citizenship. In his discussions with our Prime Minister in December, 1957, he made it clear that his attitude like ours was based on the recognition that this is a human problem which calls for a human approach. In Parliamentary debates on this subject in August, 1958, he ruled out any inhuman methods as both impracticable and undesirable and declared that he was hopeful that "reasonably the problem could be solved." He also recognised that there was a lot of goodwill in India towards Ceylon.

In effect, the persons who have been refused Ceylon citizenship have been rendered "stateless". They cannot be-

come Indians unless they are registered as such. They could only be registered if they apply for Indian citizenship of their own free will and if they are qualified for such registration under our laws.

Our stand continues to be that these people, have, by decades of their residence in Ceylon and their contribution to Ceylon's development, earned the right to continue their way of life in the country of their adoption. Those of them who wish to become Indian citizens of their own free will, can apply to our High Commissioner in Ceylon for registration and, if they qualify under our citizenship law, our High Commissioner will register them as such. We have made this position clear in all our discussion with the Ceylon authorities. Our High Commissioner in Ceylon naturally discusses this and other matters with the Ceylon authorities. The Ceylon High Commissioner also discusses this and other matters of mutual interest with our officials here. These talks and discussions continue and no new developments have taken place recently.

There is thus a measure of agreement in our outlook. Ceylon authorities, who are directly concerned with the problem, and we, who are indirectly concerned with it, are both conscious of our long common tradition of good-neighbourliness and friendship and neither of us would like this friendship to be affected by any wrong or hasty step. We are both aware that no quick solution is available. We are both exploring possibilities of a just and fair solution of this essentially human problem.

12-15 hrs.

**PARLIAMENT (PREVENTION OF
DISQUALIFICATION) BILL—
contd.**

Mr. Speaker: The House will now take up further consideration of the