

12.22 hrs.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (STATUS, IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES) BILL*

The Minister of Revenue and Civil Expenditure (Dr. B. Gopala Reddi): On behalf of Shri Morarji Desai, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to implement the international agreement for the establishment and operation of the International Development Association in so far as it relates to the status, immunities and privileges of that Association, and for matters connected therewith.

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to implement the international agreement for the establishment and operation of the International Development Association in so far as it relates to the status, immunities and privileges of that Association, and for matters connected therewith."

The motion was adopted.

Dr. B. Gopala Reddy: I introduce the Bill.

12.23 hrs.

TAXATION LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister of Revenue and Civil Expenditure (Dr. B. Gopala Reddi): Sir, I move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Indian Income-tax Act, 1922, the Wealth-tax Act, 1957, the Expenditure-tax Act, 1957 and the Gift-tax Act, 1958, be taken into consideration."

One of the objects of the Bill is to give effect to the Government's decision to relax the secrecy provisions of the direct taxes Acts for the purpose of publishing the names and other particulars of certain types of tax offenders and for the purpose of disclosure of information regarding the amount of taxes payable by assesseses. The relaxation of these secrecy provisions is expected to help Government in its attempts to grapple with the problem of tax evasion. I am aware of the criticism that a person's tax details are matters of intimate personal concern to him and that he should be entitled to have them kept as a secret known only to him and the Government. While I appreciate the force of this criticism up to a point, I do not see why the importance of the secrecy provisions should be considered so paramount that they should not be relaxed even to a limited extent if the public interest justifies such a relaxation. It cannot be denied that the publication of the names of those who have been penalised or offences against the tax laws of the country will serve as a deterrent against the commission of such offences by others. Further, there is no reason why persons who commit offences against the tax laws of the country should in this connection be regarded as a privileged class as compared to those who commit offences against the other laws of the country. Government had, therefore, been contemplating for some considerable time the bringing in of legislation of the type now before the House. However, as the Direct Taxes Administration Enquiry Committee was also considering the same question, it had been decided to await the views of that Committee before taking a final decision in the matter. As hon. Members are aware, the Committee has expressed views in support of the relaxation of the secrecy provisions. The relevant proposals of the Bill have been framed after taking into consideration the recommendations of the Committee in this regard.

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†I introduced with the recommendation of the President.