

[Shri Braj Raj Singh]

Discussion was scheduled to be held on the 1st March, 1960, but, for want of quorum, it fell through.

Direction No. 19 reads thus:

"When half-an-hour discussion under sub-rule (1) of rule 55 is interrupted for want of quorum or when there is no time for the Minister to give a full reply to the debate, he may, with the permission of the Speaker, lay a statement on the Table of the House."

Does it mean that the Minister can delay the laying of the statement on the Table of the House by as long a period as fifteen days? This discussion was held on 1st March, and today is the 16th March, which means that full fifteen days have elapsed. I understand that the meaning of the Direction perhaps is that the statement should be laid then and there on the Table of the House. Fifteen days should not be required for the laying of the Statement.

Mr. Speaker: The direction says that when there is no time for the Minister to reply, he may, with the permission of the Speaker, lay a statement on the Table of the House. But does it say that it should be laid on the Table of the House then and there. Hon. Members are aware that when there is a half-an-hour discussion, the hon. Minister comes prepared to speak. But if he has to reduce it to writing and lay it on the Table in the form of a statement, it will naturally take some time. From the 1st of March till now, the hon. Minister was evidently preparing for the debate on the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, it is no good hustling hon. Ministers. If they do it a little too quickly, then hon. Members take exception to it on the ground that sufficient material is not placed before the House. If they take time to inform the House, then it is said that

it is too late. It is a rather difficult position. Let them not be hustled. They are all our people and they must have time.

Shri Braj Raj Singh: Shall I take it that the hon. Minister was not ready to reply to the half-hour discussion raised by me on that day? If the House had not adjourned for want of quorum on that day, the hon. Minister would have had to reply to the points raised by me. That means that all the material was with him. He only wanted to get it typed so that it could be laid on the Table.

Mr. Speaker: There is nothing in this. If an hon. Member himself was asked to put in writing what all he says, I am sure he will take 15 days (Interruptions).

12.13½ hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

FIFTY-NINTH REPORT

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

12.14 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

AGREEMENT BETWEEN SOVIET FOREIGN TRADE AGENCY AND THE HINDUSTAN ORGANISERS (PRIVATE) LIMITED

Shri Raghunath Singh (Varanasi): Under Rule 197, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Steel, Mines and Fuel to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

The reported agreement signed by the Soviet Foreign Trade

Agency and the Hindustan Organisers (Private) Ltd., Bombay, for the import of petroleum products from USSR".

The Minister of Mines and Oil (Shri K. D. Malaviya): I am grateful, Sir, for this opportunity given to me to clarify the position relating to the agreement reported in the Press on the morning of March 9 as having been concluded by the Trade Representation of the U.S.S.R. Government here and an Indian firm known as the Hindustan Organisers (Private) Ltd.

2. I must first express some concern at reports in some newspapers here and abroad that I had sent for the U.S.S.R. Ambassador and sought his clarification on this deal. The U.S.S.R. is a country with whom we have very friendly relations, and with whom our technical and economic collaboration is growing; due to my connection with the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, whose efforts they are assisting, I have frequent contact with him, and his officers; we have many more matters to discuss than a thing like this. It was one such periodical discussion that I had with him on March 10; we have met again on March 14. Since this particular agreement had meanwhile been reported in the Press, I—and not the Ambassador—mentioned the correct position in such discussion, and he confirmed it again.

3. There is full accord between our two Governments on these matters, including this question of import of oil from the U.S.S.R. The Trade Plan for 1960, under the Indo-Soviet Trade Agreement, has just been finalised. It does include, this time, petroleum products as an item. The likely tonnage mentioned, for this initial year, is far below our total deficit imports and what we hope it may be in subsequent years. On the other hand, it is substantially more than the tonnage figures that, I understand, were mentioned in the report-

ed agreement between the U.S.S.R. Export Organisation and an Indian firm.

4. There is complete understanding between our Governments that the arrangements for import of petroleum products from the U.S.S.R. should be on Government-to-Government basis. That being understood, it would obviously be for us then to decide how to handle that oil on its being imported. There is our new Government Distribution Company; there are major bulk consumers like various Government Departments and undertakings; there are also various companies in the private sector distributing oil products, like the particular Indian firm mentioned in this reported agreement or their associates, who may also be interested in the supplies thus to be obtained from U.S.S.R. through Government auspices.

5. In this context, it should be clear that the conclusion of this particular agreement directly between the U.S.S.R. Export people and an Indian firm, could only have been through a *bona fide* misunderstanding. I would go further to say that, but for such misunderstanding on the part of the particular Oil Trade Organisation of the U.S.S.R., this particular agreement would not have been concluded at all.

6. When I address the House during the coming Budget discussion, I shall be referring in more detail to the arrangements we have in view for the distribution of petroleum products in this country, including particularly the Government Distribution Company which we have set up. We would like to see that all imports of petroleum products as such, into this country, come through, and are distributed by or on behalf of, Government agencies or public agencies; this, however, is for the future to see.

7. I hope that this will set at rest any doubts that may have risen in

[Shri K. D. Malaviya]

the minds of Members and of the public as a result, perhaps, of somewhat exaggerated reports in some sections of the Press, not only in this country but even abroad, about the particular agreement referred to in the Notice.

Shri Vidya Charan Shukla (Baloda Bazar): May I rise to have a doubt cleared?

It has been reported that one of the Joint Secretaries of the Oil and Mines Branch of the Ministry, Shri Sahni, was present when this agreement was signed between the Russians and the Indian company. We would like to know whether it is true or not.

Shri K. D. Malaviya: No, it is not a fact.

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): The hon. Minister has referred in his statement to some misunderstanding due to which this agreement was signed. The Minister has not clarified in the statement what that misunderstanding was and how the anomaly arose.

Shri K. D. Malaviya: The misunderstanding obviously was that in the background of negotiations going on between the two Governments, perhaps it was open to them—because the law of the land did not prevent it—to enter into some sort of agreement for import of petroleum products. There was nothing to prevent it. If there had been more detailed exchange of views about this particular agreement, perhaps this would not have happened.

Shri Raghunath Singh: I have tabled the Call Attention motion. I should be allowed to ask one question.

Mr. Speaker: We usually do not allow any questions immediately after

a statement is made. The Call Attention Notice, Short Notice Questions and other Questions had been sent to the Minister so that he could make a comprehensive statement. Immediately after the statement is made, we do not allow a discussion. If after going through the statement in full, any hon. Member has any doubt, he may get it clarified by tabling an appropriate question. I will allow it, and if arising out of that, a discussion is necessary, I will consider it later. But at this stage, let us proceed to the next item.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): May I ask one question only?

Mr. Speaker: Shri Raghunath Singh. He is the first Member who tabled the motion.

श्री रघुनाथ सिंह: मैं सिर्फ यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस एग््रीमेंट के होने के पहले सरकार से इस बारे में कोई सलाह ली गयी थी या नहीं ?

श्री कै० बे० मालवीय : सरकार तो यू० एस० एस० आर० गवर्नमेंट से पेट्रोलियम प्राइक्ट्स खरीदने की बातचीत कर ही रही थी, और सरकार को यह भी मालूम था कि जब यह एग््रीमेंट हो जायेगा पहले सरकार और यू० एस० एस० आर० सरकार के बीच में, तब प्राइवेट कम्पनियां भी इस तरह का एग््रीमेंट हमारे जरिये कर सकती हैं या करें। यह पालिसी की बात है। लेकिन इतिहास से यह हो गया, और इसकी और गवर्नमेंट का ध्यान दिलाया गया और यू० एस० एस० आर० सरकार का भी ध्यान दिलाया गया और सब मामला साफ हो गया।