

"Clauses 6 to 46, the Schedule, Clause 1, the Title and the Enacting Formula were added to the Bill."

Shri Sadhan Gupta: On a point of order. There are certain amendments. Let them be formally moved, and they can be put to the vote, whatever happens to them

Mr. Speaker: The practice is that whatever amendments were being considered before that time, those amendments will be put to the vote separately. All others which have not been moved will not be moved. That is the practice

Shri Nagi Reddy: At least those which we want to press for division can be voted separately,

Mr. Speaker: No. The time is over. Whatever practice was there will be continued.

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed".

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed".

The motion was adopted.

PURCHASE OF TENTS FOR DIS- PLACED PERSONS' CAMPS

Shri A. C. Guha (Barasat): Mr. Speaker, this is about a reply given to a question of mine regarding the purchase of tents and the number of tents used in the refugee camps. I find that up till now during the last five years about 2 lakhs of tents were purchased up to 1955, and 99,000 tents have been purchased in 1956, and the total amount paid for them would be a huge sum. There is no total given, but in 1955 they purchased tents worth Rs. 1.32 lakhs and worth Rs. 1.35 lakhs in 1956—this is the

biggest amount in any year—, Rs. 79 lakhs in the previous year i.e., 1954 Rs. 31 lakhs and so on. I have also quoted any figure for 1956. In that year also the purchase of tents went up to Rs. 1.35 crores.

17.32 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair

If I refer to anything about this matter I think the hon. Minister will again come back to his favourite theme that after all he has to give relief to the refugees and that he has to give them some sort of protection. The name of his Ministry is Rehabilitation Ministry. The question of relief comes only when his Ministry has failed to discharge the work which is basically allotted to it, namely the rehabilitation work. When rehabilitation has been delayed or when it has failed, only then the question of relief comes. It is just an issue which has come out of the failure of that Ministry in discharging its original and basic duty.

The Minister of Rehabilitation and Minority Affairs (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna): Sir, on a point of order. Under rule 55 the Member can ask for elucidation on a matter of fact. Here is a question that was put by him. I have answered that question and given the desired information from parts (a) to (e). May I enquire from him which part he is objecting to and for which complete information has not been given?

Shri A. C. Guha: Sir, I am also allowed to make a small statement

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: These are the facts that have to be considered by the Speaker when he is admitting the half-an-hour discussion. When he has applied his mind and allowed that, perhaps it is not the time now to go over it again and give a decision whether this ought to have been admitted or not. Now we have to take up this discussion for half an hour and Mr. Guha may continue.

Shri Balasaheb Patil (Miraj): There is no quorum.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Let the House be counted.

Shri Naushir Bharucha: Let us adjourn.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Let us see if we have quorum.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I am not objecting to the ruling given by the Chair in admitting this.

Shri Naushir Bharucha: No proceedings can go on before there is quorum.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Let the bell be rung—Now there is quorum. The hon. Minister may raise his point.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I am not objecting to the motion having been admitted. I only wanted to say that the policy of my Ministry, whether it is relief or rehabilitation, is not the question before the House. A certain question has been asked and certain information has been given. Under rule 55(1), if any elucidation is needed on a matter of fact, that can be asked. That was the only point I was submitting before you.

Shri A. C. Guha: I think he is misquoting something.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Rule 55(1) does refer to elucidation on a matter of fact. Those are the guiding principles but who is to determine whether certainly it needs elucidation on a matter of fact or not? It is for the Speaker to decide. He has to apply his mind and then alone he can give his permission. Rule 55 (3) says:

"The Speaker shall decide whether the matter is of sufficient public importance to be put down for discussion, and may not admit a notice which, in his opinion, seeks to revise the policy of Government".

This question of revision of policy has also to be considered when permission to admit is given by the Speaker. So when he has applied his mind and admitted the notice, there

is nothing that can now be decided afresh, and we will have to take up the discussion.

Shri A. C. Guha: I would not have raised this question, but yesterday.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: What the Minister wanted to say and emphasise was that there was nothing to be elucidated. All facts required by the hon. Member in his question had been given completely. The answer was precise and clear and so there was no question of anything more being required. He wants to draw the attention of the hon. Member that he should first say—this is his plea—as to what is there which requires further elucidation.

Shri A. C. Guha: My suggestion is this I know the Minister will surely stress that he has been able to give relief. But my point is that the real purpose of the Ministry is not relief. The money is allotted primarily for rehabilitation. When rehabilitation has failed only then the question of relief comes. So, it is not for the Minister to take much pride about the relief he has been able to give.

Tents come in with the question of relief. Tents are used in refugee camps

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Cannot the order be reversed; first relief has to be given and then rehabilitation has to come?

Shri A. C. Guha: Previously the idea was to have transit camps only for 6 weeks or months. In 1953, a committee reviewed and reported that some of the refugees are in camp for one year and they expressed dissatisfaction. The Ministers' Committee also expressed dissatisfaction that the refugees should be kept in forced idleness some camp for one year. But, here is a case where the refugees have been kept in camps for 5 or 6 years.

About these tents, I do not understand why these tents have been used when these camps have become more

[Shri A. C. Guha]

or less a permanent feature in the programme of work of this Ministry. First of all, they are more costly in the ultimate analysis because the life of a tent is officially stated to be one year. But really speaking the life is not more than 9 or 10 months. Even according to the official view after one year, the price of the tent which is about Rs. 130 goes a complete waste. If they can put up small huts nearabout that cost, I think they would last much longer and would have been more comfortable for the refugees.

I have seen the refugees living in tents. Tent life is most difficult in all weathers. In summer, it is too hot; in winter it is too cold and in the rains they get completely drenched from above and they also get rain water flowing on the floor. The tent is the least comfortable for the refugees to live in. It is better that they are replaced by some sort of huts. I think the hon. Minister may decide what he will do about this.

Then, about the purchase of tents. This money is given by the Government of India and there is an agency of the Government of India, the Director General of Supplies. It is the policy that all purchases should be made through this agency. Out of 299,000 tents, we find that only 2,500 were purchased through the DGS. All the rest, about 297,000 were purchased locally. From the replies given it is found that even the local purchases have been made without calling for tenders. I do not think that such huge amounts should have been spent without calling for tenders. Firstly, the agency of the DGS should have been utilised and even if local purchases are made they must be made through calling tenders, and not purchased through any particular person or through their own agencies as given in the reply.

There are so many production centres run in these camps. There are at least 5 or 6 production centres particularly for tents and they have been

spending a few lakhs of rupees if not crores on these. I think the hon. Minister must know the correct figure. I do not know why these tents should not have been produced from these production centres. We find that during these 5 years, only 1500 tents have been produced at these centres. What is the cost of these production centres; what is the expenditure incurred on these production centres all these five years? That is also an information which this House should have.

Yesterday the hon. Minister has said that the names of the worksite camps have been changed.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I never said that.

Shri A. C. Guha: He said that since July there have been no worksite camps.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Not that the names have been changed.

Shri A. C. Guha: I should say that is evading a direct reply. I asked him: where have these men gone? He did not reply. The men are there.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I remember that a reply was given. Because work could not be found there, they had to be taken to the ordinary camps and they were treated as ordinary displaced persons.

Shri A. C. Guha: That is not true. But am I to understand that they have been removed?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It may not have satisfied the hon. Member, but a reply was given.

Shri A. C. Guha: Are we to understand that these 43,000 people have been removed from those sites? I do not think the hon. Minister is in a position to say that. I know; I have personal experience; only they have changed the name. Are they going to effect some changes? By merely changing the name, the hon. Minister will

not be able to change the character of the camp.

About the purchase of tents, he can say something about the new policy of purchase and also whether the tents are going to be gradually replaced by huts and hutments. That should be done and the earliest it is done the better. I do not wish to take much time of the House.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He ought to leave some time for others also.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Under rule 55(5) the hon. Member can put a question. No speech is allowed.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Bashirhat): I hope you will permit me to put a few questions. I am glad that this discussion has come up.

As I go through the answer which has been given, I find that in 1956 as many as 96,500 tents had been purchased through the agency of the West Bengal Government. If one calculates one finds that each tent has cost Rs 137. The 2,500 tents which were purchased by the Ministry of Rehabilitation through the DGSD has cost Rs 123 only. Actually, in this there has been a profiteering of Rs 13 lakhs, if one takes it at the rate which obviously was available to the DGS.D. We find there has been a profiteering of Rs 13 lakhs by the agency of the West Bengal Government. What is it that Government means by saying "through their own agency"? This is a very important question, because again and again has come up the question of the corruption of the agencies of the R and R Department in West Bengal and we should like to know the real facts. This is one thing that comes absolutely from the facts which have come over here.

The second thing is this. We are told that the manufacture of the tents has been undertaken by the production centres in West Bengal. I heard from Mr. Guha that there are five centres that are producing these tents. I do not know where they are. But I would like to know whether any

attempt has been made by the Rehabilitation Ministry to ask the refugees to set up production centres assuring them that Government would buy the tents which they produce. If this has been done, what has been the response? Or only a few centres which Government have thought fit to entrust these orders have produced these 1,500 tents?

Shri A. C. Guha: In five years.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: This is a time when refugees are wanting to find some means of rehabilitation, and there is a ready market for these tents. Has any call been made to get all sections of people to start the manufacture of these tents?

The third question I would like to put.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The rule says an hon. Member can put a question but I have allowed more.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: We have asked more than one question.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: May I read the rule? Rule 55(5) reads:

"There shall be no formal motion before the House nor voting. The member who has given notice may make a short statement and the Minister concerned shall reply shortly. Any member who has previously intimated to the Speaker may be permitted to ask a question for the purpose of further elucidating any matter of fact:***".

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I will not ask any more questions, I think it will be rather embarrassing for the Minister.

Shri Harish Chandra Mathur (Pali): May I know how purchases are divided between the Central Government and the State Governments, and why is it that the purchases are only to the extent of 2 per cent through the D.G.S. & D?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Sir, all the information that was required has

[Shri Mehr Chand Khanna]

been given in answer to the question and I would ask Shri Guha who has raised this debate to point out on what part of the question proper information has not been supplied. Anyhow, I have made it clear in my reply that in the years 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1956 tents have been purchased by the Government of West Bengal. One thing I want to make absolutely clear and that is, that all the tents that have been purchased have been purchased through open tenders. There is no such thing as negotiation, and I am sorry to say that the Member opposite has charged the Government of West Bengal with corruption.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I should like to know why the lowest tender was not accepted.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I would like to pay a very high tribute to the Government of West Bengal. It is not remembered that during these years there has been a very heavy exodus from East Pakistan. During the year 1954 the average was about 10,000, in 1955 it was 20,000 and in 1956 it was 26,500, so much so that in some particular months like February, 1956, 50593 persons came out of East Pakistan into the eastern zone; in March 55381 came out, in August 43,000....

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: And in October, November and December?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: If the hon. Member will bear with me for two minutes I will give all the figures. I was listening to her questions, and if she does not want me to reply to her questions that is not very fair to me.

Well, Sir, you have to take into consideration the situation prevailing in West Bengal. You have normal remedies for normal situations. The situation has been throughout abnormal in the State of West Bengal in the last three years.

Shri Bimal Ghose (Barrackpore): It is normally abnormal.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: When you do not know the number of persons who are coming we depend upon the mercy of Pakistan. When you place an order with the D.G.S. & D. certain formalities have to be gone into. We have to tell them that we will need so many tents during the year. That has not been possible. But the authority is vested in the Government of West Bengal for a number of years now to meet this abnormal situation. They had the power and the authority given to them by the Government of India to purchase tents by open tenders. That has been done.

Now that things are becoming a little more normal we have now taken to the normal procedure. The exodus has gone down very appreciably. We have already purchased 15,000 tents during this year from the D G S & D and an order for another 15,000 tents has also been placed.

Then I come back to the work centres and production centres. We have a number of production centres. It is not only that we are producing tents in these production centres, a number of other articles are produced which are required and for which raw material is available. There is demand for such articles. But, as far as these tents are concerned, we have to take into consideration that there is one thing very important. Unless we have water-proof canvass and skilled labour in the production centre these tents cannot be manufactured. We tried to get good water-proof canvass and we failed. Last year we have produced some tents in our production centres and the number is gradually going up. The situation was very grave, vis-a-vis exodus from East Pakistan. The only thing that we could do than was—and to which my friend Shri A. C. Guha is taking very serious objection—this. I should have gone to the agents of the DGS&D—and placed an order, and when these unfortunate people had come from East Pakistan,

I should have denied them shelter. That was the only option left open to me—to go to the normal agency and take a long time, and with those people coming, not in hundreds but in thousands—.

Shri Bimal Ghose:—which was known.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: It was known to you presumably. I do not know about it.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: It was not new. It was there since the last two years.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: It may have been known to Shri Bimal Ghose, but it certainly was not known to me, namely, the details as to the number coming from East Pakistan next month. It was not known to me. It was not known to the Government of West Bengal. But my own feeling in the matter is this. I admire the West Bengal Government for one thing. It is for this. The administration of the relief department there has been kept up to a particular level and the admi-

nistration did not break down. They have done extremely well and I can assure the House that, now that normal conditions are prevailing, we are reverting gradually to the normal procedure and the purchase of the tents through the DGS&D as well as through the production centre will be followed.

But I want to submit one thing. I cannot give a categorical assurance to the House that no tents shall be purchased in the open market, through open tenders by the Government of West Bengal, because, if unfortunately the situation again deteriorates tomorrow we have to do that.

Shri Bimal Ghose: The situation is the same. They are not allowed to come.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The House now stands adjourned to meet again at 11-0 A.M. tomorrow.

17.57 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, the 30th August, 1957.
