

[Shri Muhammed Elias]

majority of seamen, or if it is not so, then all the registered Unions must be recognised by Government. Otherwise, no dispute can be settled amicably. Everywhere, we are seeing rival Unions. We have already written to the Ministry of Transport in this regard. In the shipping offices of Calcutta, everyday in the name of Unions, hooliganism is indulged in. As soon as the seamen register their name and get wages inside the office, they are being attacked by *goondas* and money is taken away from them in the name of subscription or donation for Union.

13.30 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the chair]

Therefore, my suggestion is that all registered Unions must be recognised or it must be decided by ballot that which Union will be recognised by Government. I find that in the Indian maritime Board and in the Labour Board of Indian Seamen, there is no representation given to members. The seamen are largely members of the Indian Seamen's Federation; but there is no representatives in the Maritime Board or the Labour Board. The majority of Indian seamen, about 80 per cent. of them are members of the Indian Seamen's Federation; but, that Union has not been given any opportunity to send its representative to the Indian Maritime Board or in the Labour Board. Provision must be made in this Bill with regard to the recognition of unions of seamen.

There are elaborate clauses with regard to the National Welfare Board for seafarers. I welcome those clauses. But, still, I want to say that the representatives of seamen must be taken on the Welfare Board also.

I do not want to mention many things. The Bill is a massive one with an enormous number of clauses which require careful thought. I hope this Bill will be the opening of a new era for the building of our shipping indus-

try in this country. Let the Bill be also a guarantee to the Indian seamen of their living and working conditions for they play a very important part in our shipping industry.

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I may announce to the House that there were certain adjournment motions about the ammunition packages that were being unloaded at Pathankot, that there were certain explosions and there have been deaths as well. The Defence Minister will make a statement in that connection at 5 o'clock.

#### MERCHANT SHIPPING BILL—contd.

Shri Raghunath Singh: Shastriji was able to give a shape to Indian shipping and now he is giving shape to Merchant shipping.....

Shri Mohiuddin (Secunderabad): Is a Member of the Joint Committee allowed to speak?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have permitted him.

Shri Raghunath Singh: I asked for permission.

I call this a historical day because nearly 2,400 years ago, Chanakya, realising the importance of shipping activity, framed some basic principles of law which will remain a guide to all framers of shipping law of the future. On this day, no one will forget to acknowledge the patriotic efforts of Walchand Hirachand, the father of Indian shipping. I also thank another gentleman, Shri S. N. Haji, a member of this House and Round Table Conference, who fought on the very floor of this House and saved Indian shipping when Lord Inchcape wanted to strangle the infant Indian shipping. In the true sense, he was the pioneer of coastal shipping in India.

The historic speech of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, at the Round Table Conference is still echoing, when he charged Englishmen and said: 'Indian shipping should die so that English shipping might survive.'

Now, Indian shipping is being tied up with a golden chain and marching very gloriously on the blue billows under the guidance of a true disciple of the Father of the Nation, Shri Shastriji and his colleague. He has not only given a shape to Indian shipping; but, he is creating a formidable second line of defence for India. The Bill is proof that India will not lag behind in the shipping world. The days are not far off when the tricolour freely unfurling on the masts will be found kissing the shore where the blue water is visible with the message that transportation is civilisation. This civilisation must grow, not following the policy of discrimination of flag but with the free policy of enterprise, free-trade, freedom of bunkering, harbouring and sailing on the high seas.

Sir, I welcome this Bill. It gives facility to the registration of foreign ships and gives also facility for the crew and seamen.

I want to say a few words as far as the Joint Committee is concerned. There are two shipping conferences that are being convened at present in the world. One is for the codification of the international law of shipping and the second is being held at Geneva in which people of 18 nations are assembling—in which India is also taking part—to codify international law as far as land-locked States are concerned. My suggestion is that our Joint Committee should take full advantage of the codification of the shipping laws of the International Conferences and frame our law in such a way that it would give impetus to our Indian shipping so that our Indian shipping finds an honourable place in the shipping world.

**Shri Goray (Poona):** If this Bill, which follows closely on the heels of the Navy Act which we passed during

the last session, is an indication of the coming of age of our Merchant Navy, the rows and rows of empty benches in this House is an indication of our utter indifference to one of the most vital forms of transport. Of course, I join the House in congratulating the Minister.

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** It was complained that there was no good food on the seas; that is why, probably, people have gone for lunch.

**Shri Goray:** I join the House in congratulating the Minister who presented this Bill to the House. We have been fighting for this sort of consummation for the last 25 years at least or more. I remember—then I was in college—in the Legislative Assembly of those days, people like Mr. Haji used to fight the foreign government and were asking for reservation of coastal shipping to our own ships.

We have progressed very quickly after the attainment of independence. But, this progress will have to be accelerated further; and, we shall have to see that after the passage of this Bill, we expedite measures to build our Merchant Navy very quickly and efficiently. We have a very long coastline extending over nearly 2,500 miles and nearly 99 per cent of our foreign trade depends on water transport.

If I referred to some of the landmarks in the development of our Merchant shipping, I think, it will not be out of place. A place of honour must be given to people like Morarji and to Walchand Hirachand.....

**Shri Surendranath Dwivedy:** Not Morarji Desai.

**Shri Goray:** No. I had in mind the late Shri Narottam Morarji and the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, which was formed with a capital of Rs. 4½ crores in 1919 by Walchand Hirachand. Another landmark in the history of our Merchant Navy is the training of officer cadets on the ship, 'Dufferin'. That was in the year 1927. Since that time, we have been steadily making progress and it is but natural that we should, after Independence, try

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to give a fillip to the building of our merchant navy.

I think it will not be out of place if I emphasise that this particular line of transport is so important and so vital that we should really have a separate Ministry for shipping, for the development of this particular branch. Our Minister of Transport and Communications is burdened with so much work and development of shipping is only one of them. I do not think that with all the goodwill and efficiency he has, it will be possible for him to give single-minded attention to the development of this transport.

So far as this Bill is concerned, it is a very comprehensive piece of legislation consisting of nearly 16 parts but in many respects, it is only a replica of a similar Bill of U.K. I do not know why so much time had to be taken to frame a Bill of this nature

When I compare this Bill with the Bill of U.K., I find that almost chapters have been bodily taken over from that Bill and incorporated into ours. This was the process by which we formulated this Bill. I do not blame any one because after all we are coming late on the scene and when we frame our own policy, a good deal of stuff will have to be borrowed from those who have been and are pioneers. But what I feel is that we ought to have been more expeditious in framing a Bill of this kind.

When I compare this Bill with the U.K. Act, I find also that while they have been very clear about the objectives that they had in their minds, we are vague. About the U.K. Act of 1894 it has been said that—

“The chief aim which the legislature has set out to achieve by passing the Merchant Shipping Acts may be said to be the establishment of a system of national identification. In insisting upon the achievement of this aim must depend the achievement of subsidiary aims like the safety of the mariners, etc.”

With this clear objective in view, we find that the U.K. Act has introduced sections where this objective has been defined in no uncertain terms. For instances, sections 1, 9 and 25 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, had been drafted with this sole purpose. They have said:

“A ship shall not be deemed to be a British ship unless owned wholly by persons of the following description.....”

They go on enumerating who the persons should be.

Compare this to the provision in our Bill on page 10.

“A ship shall not be deemed to be an Indian ship unless thirty-three or more shares in the ship are owned by citizens of India; or (b) the ship is owned by a company.”

This provision is rather vague and may give rise to many a lacuna. It will perhaps frustrate the objective that we have in mind. I may point out how sometimes the inadequate provisions that we make in our legislation lead to the frustration of our objectives. I am told that we have an airline company called INDOMER. There also we had insisted that the company must have some shareholders who are citizens of India. There are of course some Indian shareholders and directors on the board of that company but they are powerless. I was told that very recently, the company was able to take some aeroplanes outside India and sell them to other not very friendly countries and we had cancel the licence given to Indomer. This should make us more cautious.

I have pointed out this because I want to see that we develop our merchant shipping on our own. It is not only enough to reserve our coastline for our own ships but to see that our indigenous companies prosper and under the cover of such provisions

alien interests do not get shelter and do not set an opportunity to frustrate the objective with which we are launching this particular Bill.

The hon. Minister, while presenting the Bill to the House waxed eloquent and he pointed out that within the next three or four years we shall be reaching the target of about a million tons. I very much doubt whether it is a plausible suggestion. Very recently the Chairman of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company while addressing their general meeting pointed out that it was a stupendous task and the progress that had been made so far did not really warrant any hope that within the next two or three years, we should reach the target of ten lakhs of tons. In our Second Plan we have said that we shall be satisfied if we reach the target of nine lakh tons. If we look at our achievement in the First Plan, we will find that while we had fixed a target of six lakh tons, the actual target that we reached was not more than five lakh tons. This lag is there. If it is said now that we are going to reach a target of ten lakhs of tons by the end of the Second Plan period, it means that we shall make up for the loss and over and above that we shall add a lakh of tons to the original target fixed for the Second Plan. I think it is rather a tall order and I am inclined to agree with the Chairman of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company when he observed that it would be difficult and that we had still to make a leeway of nearly 2.50 lakhs of tons. That will have to be done within the next three years. I really do not feel assured when the hon. Minister stated that we should be able not only to reach the target but perhaps to over-reach it.

**Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri:** That is my ambition. The target is nine lakh tons no doubt but our ambition is that we should exceed that target. The main hurdle, as I said, is the difficulty of the foreign exchange. There is no other special difficulty at the present moment. The circumstances are rather very favourable for the pur-

chase of new or second-hand ships. I, therefore, do not feel, as the hon. Member feels, that it would almost be impossible to reach that target.

**Shri Goray:** Sir, I would be very glad, indeed, if I get another opportunity of congratulating the hon. Minister, and I shall not hesitate to do so if we reach not the one million target but even if we fulfil the target that we have set up for the Second Five Year Plan. But, what I am saying is that we shall have to devote a good deal of money, and a good deal of energy and attention to this particular branch of transport, which we are not doing at present.

Coming to the provisions of the Bill itself, I would like to say that a whole chapter has been devoted to the amenities that are to be given to seamen. So far as these provisions in the Bill are concerned, they are very good, and if they are really observed in practice I suppose the life of seamen, which was just now described by my friend, will be improved. But, what I feel is that these provisions must be carried out, and some machinery will have to be evolved to see that they are not infringed.

Clause 89 of this Bill deals for instance with qualifications for, and medical examination of, seamen. The practice is that when seamen are examined a good deal of time is wasted in that examination. Seamen are made to come and very often the doctor is not able to attend to all those who come, and in this process a good deal of time is lost.

Similarly, there is a provision in clause 97 which deals with certificate as to the agreement with crews of foreign-going Indian ships or home-trade Indian ships of two hundred tons gross or more. Here also you will find that before the ship goes out to the sea the seamen have to wait for a long time, for over days, in the harbour, and there they are given some daily allowance and some sort of accommodation. This allowance is a very paltry allowance and the accommodation that is given to them is of the

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poorest. I would certainly appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that these seamen, who usually come from a very poor section of our people, are looked after in a better manner before they go out to sea and the period that they have to wait in ports like Bombay, Calcutta or Madras is as short as possible because, as you know, the cost of living in ports like Calcutta, Bombay or Madras is very high. The accommodation given to them should also be improved. Just now what they get is a hovel type of accommodation and this does not add to the morale of the sea-going people.

The next point that I would like to touch upon is, that very stringent provisions have been made here regarding the certificates that are to be issued for the ship which is going out. These provisions are very good. But, I myself have travelled on some of these ships and I have found that, either the man who is in charge of giving such certificates does not really pay any attention to the safety devices on the ships or to the amenities on the ships, or he does look into them but, somehow, he is induced to give a certificate. There must be some very heavy penalties attached if certificates are given without due attention being paid to the safety measures and to the amenities. Sir, we know that in the accidents which have happened on the western coast invariably it has been found that the safety measures were not properly attended to, or the signals were not properly attended to. All these things are not only peculiar so far as shipping is concerned, but we find the same thing happening on the railways, and many a time in this House the hon. Minister in charge of the Railways has come forward and said that these accidents were due to human failures

What are these human failures? I think, these human failures are nothing but negligence on the part of officers. To check this negligence you will have to find out certain penalties. They must be afraid to neglect their

duties. I would like to find out what sort of penalties have been recommended in this Bill. These officers must be put on their guard, and they must feel that if they overlooked their duties they would be very severely dealt with.

If we wanted to develop our shipping, we shall have to see that the passengers and the cargo are very well looked after, and our ships are the safest and the best-equipped ships. Unless you create that sort of confidence you will not be able to create that enthusiasm for our shipping lines which alone is a sure guarantee of our success. People have, of course, a national feeling, but beyond a particular point that national feeling cannot be relied upon. So, I would request the hon. Minister to see that these safety measures are properly attended to.

Then, there is a clause about apprentices. It has been laid down that nobody who is below the age of 15 should be accepted as an apprentice. I would like to say that for an apprentice the age limit might be lowered to 14 because, after all, he is not going out as a full-fledged seaman, but he is only trying to learn the trade. If you go to Bombay or other ports you will find that boys who are less than 14 manage their country craft very well. If you lower this age limit to 14, I suppose, you will be able to recruit a bigger number of seamen who, eventually, will turn out to be worthy, full-fledged seamen.

There is a limit on the number of passengers that a ship should carry, a lower limit. I would like to say that there should be an upper limit also, because cases have occurred where because of overcrowding on the country craft they begin to list, and it should be possible to define an upper limit beyond which passengers should not be carried; that will avoid overcrowding and also make the life on board the ship more easy.

I now come to the recognition of unions. This has become a headache not only in this line but also on the

railways and in so many other industries. I think the right policy for the Government will be to have an impartial committee or an impartial machinery which will go on the spot and ascertain to which union the seamen or the railwaymen, or any other class of labourers or workers for that matter, owe loyalty. Just to go by the flag or the particular party label will not be a correct policy so far as the trade unions are concerned.

In the shipping line also we know that there are rival unions and, as seamen are always prone to be a little rough, rival unions come to clashes and ugly scenes are created. I think, this sort of rowdiness is, perhaps, common to all seamen throughout the world. In America the long-snore men are famous for this sort of thing. I would like to say, if you want to avoid these clashes, this rowdiness, these bickerings and fights between seamen, you should not try to patronise a particular union and try to victimise a union which is not to your liking

14 hrs.

Let us appoint some sort of a committee or a commission and let us have an impartial ballot if possible and the union which gets the majority of votes should be recognised as the representative union

I do not want to take more time of the House. I wish that this measure is speedily enacted and the merchant navy in India grows rapidly and takes the pride of place that it deserves to take.

**Shri Heda (Nizamabad):** I welcome this Bill. It has not come anyway early. Rather, it was long overdue, and it is good effort that we are consolidating all the relevant provisions into one Bill, and that is why its size has been, as pointed out by a previous speaker, quite a massive one. But the size should not frighten us. If we go through the provisions clause by clause, it would become clear that the theme, as we find in the Bill, is quite understandable. The Bill is divided into various chapters, each

chapter dealing with particular points, and the various clauses make the whole point very clear.

The most salient point of the Bill has been in relation to the provisions of the sailing vessel trade. For the first time, we are trying to have some control over it. So far there was no control, and it was a great lacuna, and we had to rely upon the foreign Act, in spite of our Independence which is more than a decade old, for these relevant matters. After the passage of this Bill, that lacuna would not be there, and I think we would be having quite adequate powers to deal with the various aspects of the shipping industry and trade.

So far as the target is concerned, it was very heartening to hear from the Minister that his ambition is to put the target not at 9 lakhs but rather at ten lakhs of tonnage. My friend Shri Goray felt that this is a little over-ambitious target. But I think it is not so. The question is one of finding all the money. If the money is found out, the purchase of the first hand or second hand ships, to begin with, could not become so difficult and the target would not be so difficult to achieve.

The point is from where we shall get this huge sum. The hon. Minister has referred to it and we have also read in the papers that we are getting a sizable loan from Japan in yen which is their currency. I think this loan is the balance amount left out of the Asian Development Fund of the United States. This loan would be serving really the purpose of Asian development. It will develop India on the one hand and Japan on the other. Japan is in dire necessity of iron ore and it is only India which could supply any amount of iron ore to Japan. Without iron ore, Japanese steel industry would be starving, and it will be difficult for the United States to supply the iron ore from such a long distance. Therefore, it is but fit, looking at the various circumstances, that an agreement is reached between Japan and India, and this loan has been the result.

[Shri Heda]

The export of iron ore itself is responsible to a great extent in this way, and in other ways also, to the development of our shipping trade and industry. Even from this point of view, when we look at the past things, I feel that we have not done what we should have been able to do. Recently, I had undertaken a tour to some ports in Andhra Pradesh, the State from which I come. Other Members had also joined it, and we had been to Masulipatam, Kakinada and Visakhapatnam. When we were in Kakinada, we found that the previous day of our arrival, there, the Kakinada port had broken the record in loading. About 4,000 tons of iron ore were loaded in the steamer *Jug Larva*. Masulipatam also had done very well so far as the export of iron ore is concerned. The same is the case with Visakhapatnam port.

The point is, while on the one hand we state that our major ports—Bombay, Calcutta and Madras—are congested, I think these medium-sized and minor ports have been kept rather starving. A little improvement here and there would increase their capacity very much, but the measures, either have not been taken properly or, even when they are taken, they are taken with a little lethargy. I hope that the position will not remain so for long. The avenue that has been opened to us in the shape of this export of iron ore and manganese ore will be such that we will be able to develop our ports very well.

Almost the same is the story of Visakhapatnam port. That port could also have been doubled, but somehow or other, the development of Visakhapatnam port is also not so satisfactory. Apart from this, when the hon. Minister was giving us the statement in his speech, about the purchase of the first-hand or second-hand ships, the Speaker who was then in the Chair, just interrupted him and asked him why we spend all this money in the shape of foreign exchange in purchasing them and why

we are not building the ships ourselves. The Minister said that we have got one shipyard and that we are thinking of a second shipyard.

In today's Question Hour, Shri Raj Bahadur, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications, told us that so far the site for the second shipyard has not been selected, in spite of the fact that a team has visited, I think more than a month before, all the possible sites. He said that a report would be coming by the end of March. If this is the pace with which we are going to select the site of the second shipyard and build the ship-building industry, I think it will take a longer time. There is a feeling in me and in many others that the foreign interests who have their own investments in India and who have their own industry or trade and so many other things, are not so keen to develop our country as we ourselves are. Therefore, if we entirely depend upon them for guidance and advice which, at times is quite essential, the result would be that much time would be lost and progress would be more slow and rather unnecessarily slow.

I do not mean to say that it will be always or exactly so, but that is the point so far as the selection of the second shipyard is concerned. Whatever the reasons may be, it gives enough scope for an apprehension of this sort in the minds of the people in our country.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: May I say a word? I would merely like to say that it would be rather unfair to level that criticism against the delegation or the commission which came here from UK. It is not always very easy to fix up the site, because it involves many technical matters to be gone into and very carefully studied. The hon. Member is aware of the fact that even fixing up a site for bridges takes a pretty long time. So many things have to be studied before a decision could be taken. When the UK Mission visited various places,

they came and met me, and they said they would be able to submit their report by the end of March which, I hope, they will do. So, they are not taking a long time, and the hon. Member should have no suspicion on that account.

**Shri Meda:** That was not exactly my point. What I meant was that there was scope for apprehension. I am glad the hon. Minister has made the position very clear, and I am quite hopeful that the site would be selected very soon.

One point more I would like to mention in this connection. Our present steamers earn some foreign exchange. They want that the foreign exchange they earn reserved and a separate pool made out of it, so that that foreign exchange may be made available to them—of course, they would pay the equivalent amount in rupees—which they can utilize in purchasing new steamers of second-hand steamers, thus adding to their tonnage. That is the point that they have made.

I do not know why the Finance Ministry were not agreeable to this proposal. The result is that our merchant navy is not being expanded, as it should have been. The hon. Minister himself stated today that we spent to the tune of Rs. 150 crores to Rs. 180 crores in the shape of foreign exchange on freight itself every year. If we look at this amount, that small request of the Steamship Owners' Association is such that not only should it be accepted but something more should be done. I am glad that while Shastriji is in charge of this portfolio, he is quite serious—the trade and industry have also felt it—and the trade is very grateful to him that he is putting the weight of his personality into the matter and trying to develop it.

The small points which we find here and there should not remain undecided, and quick and satisfactory decision should be taken in this regard. I am quite sure that this Bill

will be a landmark in the development of our industry and trade. So far as navigation is concerned, it will be a good landmark in the country's progress.

With these few words, I support the Bill.

**Shri Mohiuddin:** I am very glad that the Bill has now been introduced in this House to regulate the Indian shipping by Indian law. As the hon. Minister has himself stated, for the last ten years our shipping has been regulated by the British Act. Now that after a long time we are going to pass a law of our own for regulation of our own shipping, I hope that the progress that we desire for our own shipping will be made as quickly as possible.

The speaker that preceded me had already referred to the progress that we are making in construction of ships in India. The hon. Minister has stated in his introductory remarks that he has been able to create a Shipping Development Fund so that those who borrow money may repay it in instalments to the same fund. It will be a sort of revolving fund for the purchase of new ships. This is a step in the right direction, and I hope that the tonnage under Indian flags will increase very rapidly.

But the progress that we have made in constructing our own ships has been rather slow; not as rapid as we expected. The fundamental principle in planning and for a rapid progress of a country is that we should lay the foundation for those key industries which open up avenues for new industries in the future. Apart from supply of food, and raw materials in our own country for our own industries, there are certain important fundamental industries, key industries, like steel, shipping, machine tools, heavy machines, electrical machines and so on.

The Second Plan has shown a marked awareness for the development of industries, which are the foundation for future progress. The

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machine tool industry has been established, even though at the present moment our local manufacture of machine tools are only 12 per cent of what we import. The steel industry is also being established, and I hope that the sheets required for manufacture of ships will be soon available. A shipyard was established 5-6 years ago. But the expectation that it will develop into a first class shipyard and supply ships at a pace that will be desirable and necessary has not proved successful. We hope that hon. Minister will look into this aspect of the problem of supplying ships for our marine trade.

The second and important factor is the manufacture of marine engines. That is also one fundamental point on which our future progress will depend. There have been talks about establishing a marine engine factory. I know there are difficulties, because our own demand for the time being of marine engines is very small. But, still, that is another important industry which, we hope, the hon. Minister will pay attention in establishing, so that the future of shipping industry in India is ensured. With these few general remarks, I wish to say a few words regarding the Bill itself.

Two hon. Members on the opposite side have spoken about seamen and the amenities for seamen. I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the amenities to the passengers, especially the unberthed passengers or the deck passengers, about whose amenities the hon. Minister himself referred in his introductory speech.

The Bill provides for a welfare cess which will be devoted to the provision of amenities to unberthed passengers on the ships as well as at the ports. About five or six years ago, the Government had appointed a committee called the Deck Passengers Amenities Committee, and some rules have also been framed on the recommendations of that Committee. The amenities

that were recommended by the Deck Passengers Amenities Committee require revision now.

The condition of deck passengers or unberthed passengers is certainly horrifying. When the number of passengers increases and when there is rush in particular seasons for tickets, the conditions become still worse because the amenities or the space regulations are sometimes relaxed. This happens specially in the pilgrimage season. As a matter of fact, the rules that were framed on the recommendations of the Deck Passengers Amenities Committee do not fully apply to pilgrims. For example, in regard to Haj pilgrims, the minimum of space and the minimum of other amenities for the pilgrim ships are much less than for ordinary deck passengers that travel from Bombay or other ports to East African ports or to Persian ports.

Now, I quite understand that the increase of amenities depends on increase in the number of ships. But there is another aspect of the problem, and that is that the ship-owners, the shipping companies, by utilising the same space for a larger and a much larger number of passengers earn much higher profits. And they do not provide the amenities that they should provide after earning those profits. I have seen myself at the Bombay docks the great rush of passengers to occupy the limited space on the decks—the way in which the passengers are herded together and also the condition in which they travel.

For example, there are rules that a certain number of latrines should be provided for a certain number of passengers. While the minimum qualification or requirement is relaxed, the number of latrines and bath rooms remains the same as it was before, and this contributes to great inconvenience and difficulties for the passengers. I hope that the provision that is now being made in the Bill for cess for provision of amenities to deck passengers or unberthed passengers will be fully used and pressure will be

brought on the owners of ships that they themselves should increase the amenities for passengers, especially during the pilgrim seasons. It is necessary that the upper limit for space requirement, which already exists, should not be so easily relaxed, as is usually done, especially during the pilgrim seasons.

It has also been suggested that the age limit for apprentices should be reduced from fifteen to fourteen. I entirely agree with that suggestion and I hope that the Select Committee will take that point into consideration.

I wish to end my remarks with congratulations to the hon. Minister who has shown his determination to increase our shipping tonnage by at least one lakh more than the target figure laid down in the Second Five Year Plan.

**Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur):** Sir, I congratulate the hon. Minister on bringing forward this very comprehensive Bill. You remember, Sir, the other day, while speaking on a Bill, I made an humble submission that the Bills that are placed before this House should be comprehensive in scope and in content; and I was taken to task by the hon. Minister for making that suggestion. He said that I had a passion for asking for comprehensive Bills. I do not know if I have a passion for asking for Bills of that kind. But I must say that the Bill which has been brought forward by this Ministry is something which satisfies my description of a comprehensive Bill I believe that Members of this House feel rewarded and happy when they find that almost every aspect of this question has been discussed in this Bill and that approval is sought for all those facets of the problem which concern this question.

To tell the plain truth, I do not feel very happy when I look at the map of India from the point of view of merchant shipping or even from the point of view of our Navy. At best, we are in the elementary school stage I could have said that we are in the kindergarten stage. But that would

be too harsh. We are just making a beginning and a very auspicious beginning. I would welcome that day when our merchant shipping attains to that state of efficiency and prestige which some of our neighbouring countries enjoy, for instance, Japan or which some small countries in Europe enjoy, for instance, Italy. I think that that is the target that we have to aim at and that is what we have got to do. I am sure that this is our first exercise in that direction.

Many points have been made by the speakers who have preceded me. I would say, when I looked at the Statement of Objects and Reasons, I found that our history begins in the year 1838. Our history is not indigenous. Our history has been mixed with the history of the U.K. of which we were some part. I do not want to use the word that we were subjects of the U. K. It began in 1838. Today, we are in 1958. One hundred and twenty years have passed by. Today, we are in a position to bring forward a Bill which envisages a Merchant Shipping Commission, under our own auspices, with rules which will govern it, rules of our own making and all the paraphernalia which goes with it, which was formerly not of our making, but of the making of a foreign power. One hundred and twenty years is not a big period of time in the history of any nation or in the history of any country. If we have woken up in 1958, I think we are to be happy about it. I wish this thing had been taken in hand immediately after our Independence. But, it has taken us some time to bring forward a legislation on this point. Better late than never. I think it is good that we have done so this time.

We need for this purpose and for other purposes some kind of a uniform codification of laws, of procedure, of rules and of regulations. When I look at that question, I find we have been having a tangled mass of rules and regulations, a jumble of rules taken from here, from there, from everywhere, an intricate combination of things. We have been tinkering with

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the problem in the light of what has happened in some other countries and in the light of what has happened in our country. If I may be permitted to say so, we have been living in a kind of jungle so far as this department of our national activity is concerned. But I am glad that some kind of order is being introduced into it today, and some kind of uniformity is being brought about in this. It is something for which we have to be grateful to this Ministry.

I also find that the Ministry has not been very extravagant in its demand so far as the Financial memorandum is concerned. I hope the hon. Minister will not come to us again after six months and ask for more officers. I hope we will not have a supplementary demand on this account. That is what happened some time ago. On looking into the Financial memorandum, I find that the Minister has not been very excessive in asking for officers, for departments and all that kind of thing. Every day, we find we are in a mood to ask for many officers and that kind of thing. Of course, departments are required. At the same time, I have a feeling that we are having too many of these things. I find here the hon. Minister has not made demands on the financial resources of this country to an extent which would have made us sit up and pause and consider. I think he has kept the demand at the necessary level and I think, from that point of view also, this Bill deserves a good response on the floor of the House.

Of course, I long for the day when this merchant shipping in our country will be a line of defence for our country. When that will happen, I cannot say. You will find in every progressive country, the defence needs of the country are related with the merchant shipping of that country. Whenever there is any emergency,—I do not want to use the word war; it is a terrible word—you will find an integration between these two wings of the Navy, a happy integration. I do not

know when that will happen. Perhaps you will have to wait very long. I would ask the hon. Minister to look at this problem from that angle also so that our merchant shipping does not only subserve the purposes of trade, and carrying of passengers—they are very good objectives—but also in time of pinch, in time of difficulty, it could be helpful in that way also.

Some of my hon. friends have spoken about passenger amenities. I do not want to go into the details of that question. Of course, I agree with them that the deck passengers must have a fairer deal than before. I would go so far as to say these passengers should have all facilities. So far as the deck passengers are concerned, they are comparable to our third class passengers on the Railways. As we want happier conditions for them, so we want happier conditions for the deck passengers. I hope that some day our Minister and our Minister of State will travel *incognito* on these ships as deck passengers and find out for themselves where the shoe pinches. Of course, they might be knowing it already, but I think they will have a first-hand experience of the trials and tribulations of these deck passengers. (Interruption). Yes, what is it?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member should not invite and ask for interruptions.

Shri D. C. Sharma: I agree with you, Sir.

So, I say that these gentlemen should some time travel *incognito*. If they are recognised, so much the better for them, but if they are not recognised, so much the better for the deck passengers. So, we gain both ways.

There is a lot of profiteering going on in this country by the travel agents. Of course, something is going to be done with regard to them, but I feel that the rules and regulations which govern the grant of licences to the travel agents and enable them to book passengers should be tightened in such a way that the uneducated passenger,

the illiterate passenger, the passenger who comes from a village in India and wants to go to some other country, is not taken undue advantage of in any way. At present, we hear so many complaints in this connection. They do a lot of profiteering in this respect. The regulations concerning these persons should be so stringent that they are not able to trade upon the ignorance or credulity of these passengers

Moreover, there are also, as you know, sometimes unsavoury things told about these passports and other things. I know all these things will be looked into, but there is one thing in which I am interested more than anything else, and it is this, that the ship-owners should also be brought under very rigid control. I know there is going to be some kind of supervision now, but I think they need a more vigilant, more strict and a more persistent control than is possible now. It is because the passengers do not have a fair deal from them, but more than that I would say that the Ministry should try to popularise this kind of travel

When I go to the railway waiting rooms, I find that they are doing something to popularise travel by the railways. When I go to the office of an air service, I find that they are trying to popularise this kind of travel, but I find that travelling by sea is becoming more or less an old-fashioned thing now. Very few persons think of travelling by sea.

Only the other day, I received a guest who has come from East Africa. He travelled by sea from East Africa to India. He is an Indian citizen. He was giving me very doleful details about the travel, and he said to me: "Well, on my way back to East Africa, I am not going to do my journey by ship. It is tiring, it is not comfortable, it is not warranted by the amount of money that we spend on it. I am going to fly to East Africa."

Now I say that the gap, in terms of money, between air journey and sea journey should be such that travelling by sea becomes attractive. Of course, it will require also amenities, it does not require only an attractive fare. I think for that purpose the Ministry should take active steps.

So many things are being done in this country to popularise travel by air. There are test flights, and some of our M. Ps. also go on those test flights. Of course, I have not gone, and I do not want to go in those test flights. In the same way, travelling by sea should be made popular in this country

**Shri V. P. Nayar (Quilon):** Why not a free ticket for us?

**Shri D. C. Sharma:** You will have a free ticket in Kerala, but I cannot have a free ticket in Delhi, because in Kerala, you have so many boats I am not referring to anything else

We are told that India has had naval traditions for centuries and I think Kerala and Andhra were the States where these traditions were very strong, perhaps in Kerala more than in Andhra. When I read the history of India, I find our merchants going to all the corners of the world and trading there. We hear, and also see in books, so many things about the glories of India in the naval field in those days, but now we have no traditions of that kind. I believe the country has got to be re-educated in that direction, it has got to be retold all these things. I believe from that point of view also this Bill is good, but something should be done so that the education of the country in this respect is carried out in an adequate manner.

I want to say one word about apprentices. Of course, a suggestion has been made that the age-limit should be lowered. I do not know if there would be any advantage in

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lowering the age-limit. The life of an apprentice is very hard, and I believe that 15 years is not a very bad limit for becoming an apprentice. I feel that that is the right age for a person to become an apprentice, but I would say that the training of the apprentices is not being done as scientifically and as adequately as it should be done. In fact, the life of apprentices in our country is a sorry life. They do not fit properly into the scheme of things. They are not given that kind of education which is given in some other countries. So, in this respect we should learn from other countries.

I believe the country from which we can learn is Japan. I have some idea of Japanese ships, the way in which they take up apprentices and train them. I feel that somebody should have a blueprint of the training which is imparted to the apprentices in Japan. And I feel that with suitable modifications, those conditions should be brought about in our country also.

I would, therefore, say that this is a very intricate question. My hon. friends have been talking about ports, machines, and all that kind of thing. Of course, all these things are necessary, but more than all that, by means of this Bill, we have an opportunity to make our people sea-minded. Our Air Force has done its best to make our people air-minded, and we have become air-minded in a much shorter time than so many other countries. I would say that even if the Ministry needs an additional officer for making our people sea-minded, the House would not grudge the appointment of that officer. That is because the air, the land and the sea are our three great national assets. While we have been developing to some extent so far as air is concerned, and we have also been developing land, we have not done anything of that kind so far as sea is concerned. We must do something in this direction also.

Another thing that I should say is that the Ministry which is responsible for this should bring about some kind of liaison between itself and the Education Ministry and see to it that our students also get some kind of orientation towards the sea. Without this kind of orientation, all these Bills would not be so conducive to the greatness of the country as they should, and they would not revive the ancient naval glories of this country to the extent that they should.

With these words, I welcome this Bill.

Shri V. P. Nayar: I am sorry that I was not able to listen to the speech of the Minister, since the discussion started almost half an hour earlier than we thought it would.

I must at the outset say that we welcome this Bill not because of its 447 clauses, not because it has after all come, but because it shows that Government have at last realised the necessity at least to codify, amend and consolidate the various provisions on this subject.

I was trying to go through some of the old debates. I find that in 1922 when one of these Bills was under consideration, a Bill in which the words 'native seaman' were used, some hon. Member of the Central Legislative Assembly then raised an objection, and it was promised by Mr. McInnes who was the then Member concerned, that the words would be deleted from our legislation. I am glad that after nearly thirty-six years, Government have at last chosen to remove these words which had an odium for us.

I heard Shri Raghunath Singh pay a compliment or tribute to the late Mr. Walchand Hirachand. I wonder whether he or most of the Members here recognise the signal services rendered for the cause of Indian shipping by that great South Indian patriot, Mr. Chidambaram Pillai. Probably most of the people from this

side may not have known him. But we cannot forget that patriot who even chose to go to jail; he did not do business like the other people who have been honoured as pioneers of industry. Shri D. C. Sharma also said something about our traditions. Especially, he referred to Kerala. We are proud that we have one of the most ancient maritime traditions in India. But all that does not lead us anywhere now.

When we consider a Bill of the kind which we have before us today, it is not only desirable but also extremely necessary that we should take stock of the entire situation in regard to Indian shipping. It is well that the Planning Commission has laid down a target of 9 lakh tons. Shri Goray expressed a doubt whether this target would be achieved. Considering the way in which the private sector has been dilly-dallying with the shipping industry, I have also my own very grave misgivings. I would like the Minister to take a very serious note of this that unless he goes all out, it may not be possible, just as even in the First Five Year Plan, we did not stand up to the expectations. The private industry had a glorious opportunity at the end of the last war; shipping was completely left to them, that is, to their whims and fancies. At a time when ships were available for purchase, they did not choose to take advantage of the situation. Now, again, the Minister says that we are in a good time, ships are available, and maybe we may have some difficulties in regard to finance, but generally speaking, the situation today seems to be advantageous for the acquisition of more tonnage. But if we are not to repeat the very costly mistakes which we have committed, and which we have allowed the private industry to commit to the very serious detriment of our country as a whole, then, I am afraid the Minister will have to take a sterner action.

The shipping companies come forward always with a number of pleas. They want concessions in income-tax,

they want concessions for several other things. I remember when the Minister himself went to Bombay to preside over a shipping conference, he congratulated Mr. Master for his able advocacy of the shipping companies' case, which resulted in exempting shipping companies from the incidence of wealth tax. These companies say that it is very difficult for them to go ahead with the Plan. I was looking through their official organ, if I may say so, namely the journal called *Indian Shipping*. I thought before I went through these magazines that after all, the companies were not earning very heavy profits. I was, however, really astonished to find that while the impression had been created that shipping companies had obvious difficulties, and almost insurmountable difficulties, the record of the last year shows a picture contrary to what is generally believed.

For example, from the February issue of *Indian Shipping*, the most recent issue, I find that the Great Easterns, one of the major companies, has made a profit as follows:

"The net profit has also recorded a rise for 1956-57 from Rs. 24.95 lakhs in the previous year to Rs. 67.2 lakhs in the last year."

15 hrs.

Another company, India Steamship, had only Rs. 30 lakhs profit for the year before last, but last year its profit went up to Rs. 107 lakhs. Most of these companies are like that but the Eastern Shipping Corporation, in which Government have a share and which was taken over, as far as I know, as a going concern from the Walchand Hirachand group, has only a small profit of 10 per cent. or so. In the annual meetings they say that the year under review had particular difficulties, that owing to the Suez crisis they had to take a longer route and they had also to surmount several other unforeseen difficulties. With all that some of the companies, whose-

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profits are indicated in these reports, contrary to what was normally expected or given to understand, have not at all fared badly. For example if you take one company, the India Steamship Company, I found from some other book, *The Investor's Encyclopaedia*—I do not remember which—it had only a subscribed capital of Rs 250 lakhs, i.e., about Rs. 2½ crores and on an investment of Rs. 2 crores I should think that a net profit—it is not gross profit, it is net profit—of Rs. 107 lakhs is something which most of the other industries cannot pay today.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: For what period?

Shri V. P. Nayar: For 1956-57 It is most recent It is the February, 1958 issue.

15.02 hrs.

[SHRI BARMAN in the Chair]

The year before that it was only Rs. 38 lakhs and in the course of one year the net profits have jumped up in the case of India Steamship to Rs. 107 lakhs This is not an isolated instance either, because I find that the Great Eastern's profits also have jumped up from Rs 24.95 lakhs to Rs 67.62 lakhs There are other companies—I do not want to tire the House I am only trying to argue that the difficulties in which the shipping industry is supposed to be do not exist in reality and that they have been making profits. Maybe, there is something fundamentally, basically wrong with the shipping industry—I do not know. It is time that we find it out also.

Sir, when ships were available—it is well known that liberty class of ships were available for purchase in those days—how is it—it is a question which we must pose to ourselves and seek an answer—that war-torn Japan could increase in the course of these few years her tonnage from 1.3 million to 4 million and now Japan is

out to give credit for ship-building, 50 per cent. with order and five or six years payment? How is it, Sir, that war-torn Germany and Italy could rebuild their merchant marine to several times?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: The amount of assistance they have received . . .

Shri V. P. Nayar: I am coming to that

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur):..and the number of shipyards they have.

Shri V. P. Nayar: They are not the main reasons There also it was not State-owned shipbuilding industry. There was also the private sector.

My point is that for all these years, after the attainment of independence, we have not gone into the question with as much seriousness as we ought to have done I find that it is a wrong estimate I consider that the statistics given in this magazine, *Indian Shipping*, which is an official organ of the Indian Shipowners' Association and which has the blessings also of my esteemed friend Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri, must be taken as something nearer truth

I know we do not as yet have an organisation for collecting the statistics of the offtake and intake in our ports, shipwise or countrywise. In fact, if I remember correctly, it was one of the recommendations made by an Expert Committee. Sir, in this again it is seen that the President of INSOA at the time when he indulged in unrestrained hyperboles of praise about the Minister, who chose to deliver some inaugural address there, says:

"I am, however, disagreeably surprised in this connection to learn that according to an answer recently given by the Finance Minister in the Lok Sabha the annual amount of freight bill paid

by India to foreign ships was perhaps erroneously quoted at Rs. 58 crores only in 1956-57. From such data, as are available, it is estimated that this freight bill cannot be smaller than Rs. 150 crores per annum. I am inclined to agree with that estimate. It will, therefore, be recognised."

Sir, it appears from this—I do not remember having been present in the House when the Finance Minister gave out this figure—that the shipping interests have calculated that the figure of Rs. 58 crores as our total freight bill for the year 1956-57 was a gross underestimate. On the other hand, from the statistics available to the shipping interests, they estimate that our freight bill is Rs. 150 crores per year. I do not know which of the two is correct. I shall be glad if the hon. Minister can quote from some authoritative publication or from his own Ministry's information that the representatives of the shipping interests have given a wrong figure. I would very much like to be contradicted also on this.

Sir, in this case when we are spending such a huge amount running into several crores, we must also consider whether in the recent past or after the attainment of independence, we have taken proper steps to see that there is not this much of drain on our foreign exchange. It is not a desirable item that we spend for shipping. The bill appears to be heavier than the annual bill on import of foodgrains.

Sir, what is the position of our industry? It is well that coastal trade is left completely to Indian-owned ships. Maybe, it was as a result of one of the recommendations of the Committee in 1950-51. But what is our position in respect of our overseas trade? It is estimated that India's overseas trade will represent about 6 per cent. of the entire world's overseas trade. But today India's total tonnage may be roughly about 1/200, or about ½ per cent., of the world's tonnage, if for the whole world we

take it that at present there may be about 105 million tons. We are just having over ½ million tons. How long can we go on with this? Should we not take some active steps? I know the difficulties. As the hon. Minister said, they had shipyards. We cannot have shipyards immediately. But that is not the point. We have placed orders—our shipping interests have placed orders—with countries where the docks are over-filled. Their order books have no space to write. If we place an order for ships today, we may not get ships till 1960 or 1961. I understand that in Japan, the order books are not so very much filled and they are in a position to make deliveries earlier. But owing to the present commitments of the companies they cannot go in and take advantage of such offers. I am only trying to suggest that despite the several difficulties the Government of India did not have the proper approach in the matter of shipping in the past and it is time that we take greater interest.

Sir, take for example the freight of transporting coal. The hon. Minister knows it much better than I do. because till recently he was holding charge of the Railway Ministry. Then also he had shipping with him. Then, when the Minister changes from one portfolio to another, it also happens to be fortunately under him. I do not know why, but the fact is that today throughout the world when water transport is cheaper than railway transport, it is something which we cannot understand—it may be possible for the Government to justify by figures—that in various places in India, coal transported by the coastal steamers would cost very much more, 50 per cent. or even 75 per cent. more. In Cochin, for example, I understand that if from the Bengal-Bihar collieries coal is transported through the sea route it might cost double. Of course, railways have a subsidy for that, but yet it costs double of what it costs for transport by railways. The coastal steamers are monopolised by Indian interests; cent per cent of

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the coastal trade is with them. Yet, year after year, once in two or three years, the freight rates are allowed to be enhanced.

We talk of congestion in major ports. In fact, in some ports, it has become almost a bottleneck now. With our imports of vital commodities mounting up, there being no phased programmes in regard to our imports, and with the terrible mismanagement or at least lack of co-ordination between the various departments of Government, we find that the congestion in ports is on the increase. We have had to invite foreign experts to come and advise us as to how best the congestion in our ports can be reduced. Simultaneously with that, some of the minor ports are getting out of their existence. I do not know of other States, but I can say this with certainty that near the port of Cochin, we have a minor port, Alleppey. Today Alleppey is going down. Its annual intake and export of cargo is dwindling. Maybe it is because these ships do not like to call at the Alleppey port because they have slightly better facilities in Cochin. I am only suggesting it, when we think in terms of avoiding bottlenecks by delay in the major ports, this aspect of diverting cargo from major ports to minor ports, has not at all been considered with the seriousness which it deserves.

Some of the shipping companies have had practices. They draw bills earlier than the time when they load, allowing the business interests to cash the money on the bill of lading through the bank. They have preferences for certain places where they have offices. All this has come to mean that the prosperous trade which some of the smaller ports had is being wiped out gradually during the course of years. I want the hon. Minister to go into this question, especially in regard to the port of Alleppey and to take steps to see that Alleppey which was once called the Venice of the East, even if it does not regain its past

glory, is at least maintained at a tolerable level, and may regain some of the past glory.

Shri B. S. Murthy (Kakinada—Reserved—Sch. Castes): Why not regain all the past glory?

Shri V. P. Nayar: I have no desire to go into the various provisions of this Bill, as at this stage of discussion, we are not expected to go into the detailed provisions, but to speak only on the principles of the Bill. It is certainly a job which has to be left to the better hands of the Joint Committee and I do not want to go into it.

But I would say that with our experience of the private sector in the shipping industry of our country, with our experience of the mismanagement of the affairs of our first ship-building yard, we know that one of the ships which the yard built has necessarily to have a dead weight of 200 tons in order to maintain its poise in water. I understand that although at the time the design for the ship was being made, one of our own engineers said that this would result in the ship losing its balance when floated, the famous French consultants did not seem to agree and said, "We are better technicians and we know what it is" Ultimately when the ship was constructed, it was found that for every voyage, apart from the cargo which it can take, in order to float, it requires a dead weight of 200 additional tons. The affairs of Vizag ship-building yard also call for criticism, but probably this is not the occasion for that.

I am only saying this to show that in every aspect which is directly or indirectly connected with the shipping industry of this country, Government must have a greater vigil and must spare no effort to set things right when they are found to be wrong. Our country cannot afford to wait till the private industry, on their own volition, choose to equip themselves with the necessary tonnage. Something has to be done. I know they are now being given credit facilities

which most of the other industries do not have. If my information is correct, I read from the hon. Minister's speech at Bombay that shipping companies are entitled to loans at the rate of 3 per cent interest. This concession is not generally allowed to other industries. With all this, we do not have any ambitious target at all even in the Second Five Year Plan, although, as I have submitted before, I have my own misgivings whether even this target will be fulfilled.

That apart, if we go at this rate, if at this juncture we lag behind in the race in which other countries have led us—even small countries have a greater tonnage than us—we shall never catch up. If we want to catch up, let us see what we can do in this context. It is good that we have a second shipyard, although, as it came out, the site has not been fixed. I believe that all the aspects will be gone into before a final decision is taken. But let us have more shipyards. Let us not confine to shipyards which will make only 5,000 or 10,000 tons ships. Let us have smaller yards where smaller sehips, at least coastal vessels, of 200 or 100 tons can be made.

We know, as a matter of fact, that just like the merchant marine, the service in the fishing industry is also lagging behind on account of the fact that we do not have enough fishing vessels. That also is a very important aspect, although the hon. Minister can say that it is not within the scope of his Ministry. We know that in maritime countries the fishing industry and the merchant marine were really the cradles of the countries' respective Navies. Therefore, an over-all view should be taken in this context and Government should take more active steps to see that we reduce our dependence on foreign shipping and the amount that we have necessarily to pay for transporting goods into and from our country and also to see that the private interest in the shipping industry

is kept in proper check, their profits being necessarily directed to be ploughed back for the development of our own industry.

When this Bill comes back with the report of the Joint Committee, if I then manage to get some time, I hope to speak on the clauses. Enough has been said on some aspects of the Bill by the Members who preceded me. But as I read through the Bill, I had one doubt which I could not resolve. In one of the clauses, it has been provided that passenger brokerage will be licenced, although I could not lay my hands on that particular section.

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** Passenger brokers will be licensed.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** Under what section?

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** That I shall have to find out.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** This is a very serious matter. I happen to know some details about it, especially how some of the brokers function at Madras. As you know, several hundreds of people go by every steamer which is bound for any of the Burmese or Malayan ports from our place, and very often when we are back in our constituencies, complaints are brought before us. Now also there is a system and I do not know for certain whether it has legal recognition. These poor people are all going as unberthed passengers. I have heard, but I have not seen, that several times the number of the carrying capacity will be allowed to use the ship as unberthed passengers.

In the berths, they are packed like sardines. It is very difficult, because we do not have adequate transport facilities from Madras to a Malayan port or to Singapore, and as many people want to go who cannot afford the luxury of air travel or even first-class travel—they go there for small jobs; several thousands of them;—they go there even as labourers—they cannot choose any other

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form of transport. Take a particular ship *s. s. Rajula*. They have 800 tickets for this voyage next week and there will be 2000 people wanting to go by that steamer. What they do is that through a chain of brokers the company, even if it is Binny and Company, sell the tickets beforehand, fixing a quota, that is, company A will have 500 tickets, company B will have 200 tickets and so on. Ultimately, if the ticket is worth Rs. 40 or Rs. 50, the intending passenger will have to go to Madras three times—from Kerala he will have to go to Madras three times to purchase the ticket—and he will have to pay twice or even thrice the amount which the company is legally entitled to collect.

This was happening even last year. I do not know whether it has changed very much this year. How are we going to avoid that? If by a system of licensing, a fool-proof system is devised, I am all for accepting it. But when we think of the licensing system, we must think of the particular concerns which have been complained against for malpractices and black-marketing of tickets. They should not be given any opportunity. We should always keep a watch over them, because it is very necessary that we control their activities and prevent them from acting in the most nefarious way.

Then again, there is the question of hostels. I have had the advantage of having been shown the Madras hostel for seamen. It is good, although I thought that it did not cater for the seamen in the required proportions. I would like that some more money be spent on their amenities; especially when these boys who are out in the seas for quite sometime touch some port, they should have better facilities.

I do not want to go into the other provisions. I would earnestly request the hon. Minister that when the Bill

goes to the Joint Committee these aspects also should be taken into account. I hope that when he brings back the Bill along with the Report of the Committee, the lacunae which one finds now, probably because of a mass of clauses which we have, will have been reduced and that next time it will be possible for us to take part in the debate with a better drafted and modified Bill.

**Shri Jaipal Singh** (Ranchi West-Reserved-Sch. Tribes): I am glad that Government have, at last, come forward with a Bill which seeks to consolidate dozens of other Acts with their very inharmonious titles. Pre-independence titles just do not fit in in Independent India. Any Bill that seeks to consolidate so many Acts is bound to be confronted with problems that are, on the face of them, difficult to understand. So I do not propose to criticise the Bill as such. I would only humbly present to the hon. Minister the perspective that must be kept in view if this Bill, a consolidation of previous Acts, is to be in harmony with what we have in view.

Just as we have been making up what we lost in the past in the matter of textiles, so also this country has to think of getting back or regaining the position it had centuries ago, a position which it had to lose because the country chose to be under foreign domination.

**Mr. Chairman:** I may just say that as five hours have been allotted to this Bill and as I do not find many Members eager to speak, I make the concession that even a Member of the Joint Committee, if he wants to speak, will be allowed.

**Shri Jaipal Singh:** India is not just India territorially. India is everywhere to the west, the east and the far east. All this is due to the maritime genius of India in the past which we lost during a period of three centuries.

Now, the problem before us is not merely the consolidation of these various Acts. Everything that we do now has to be an ambitious pattern, something—it is not merely historical, of what we were in the past—that will be in alignment with the very best internationally.

I say this because my hon. friends on that side could not understand when the Navy Bill was here before us, when some of us including our friends in the Treasury Benches took up an attitude which, at the time, seemed to be in conflict with our peculiar concept of democracy and socialism in India. It is not enough for us to delete the word 'Native' seamen, for example. That takes us nowhere. Whether we call ourselves 'native seamen' or something else, we are just what we are.

I have to single out this point because in this particular Bill, I find there are quite a good many clauses where we seem to be wrangling with terminology. Let us go for the substance and not for the shadow. If we are to develop into what we should be, though, of course, the coastline is there, it is not merely a coastline of 3000 miles, but the country is big enough to be as big as any other country in the matter of naval affairs or merchant marine. If that is the case, we must take up the same attitude as we have been doing in the matter of civil aviation, of which my hon. friend was the Minister. Till only the other day he had been 'flying'. Now he is on the 'waves'. I want him to realise that if he has to rule the waves, he must not be a King Canute that would just not work; the waves will come along and drown him.

I think the country as such has to come to its senses, if I may put it that way; it is blunt way of talking, but I think the sooner we come to our senses that if we have to survive internationally in the world as a merchant shipping country, our standards have to be as good as the standards of any other country in the world, the better for us.

My hon. friend, Shri V. P. Nayar, said just now that small countries had increased their production of shipping tonnage. Do we assess ourselves territorially because some tiny country can produce motor cars and we, a big country, cannot? Is that how we assess ourselves?

I think that is a wrong way of looking at things. My hon. friend also said that my hon. friends there and their predecessors lost the opportunity of buying *Liberty* ships. As far as I am aware, *Liberty* ships were not for sale. I think my hon. friends on that side would be the first to say that we should buy nothing from America. So, I really do not know where we stand. But the point is this. Let us be realistic. Are we in a position to multiply our tonnage; are we trying to crawl first, or to run before we can even crawl? Where do we stand? One minute I hear the swarajist attitude, no help from outside, let us do everything, and, therefore, go back to this Bill where you find sailing ships. Page after page, sailing ships. Are we living in an age of sailing ships? Have we not arrived at a motor stage? I am not arguing against sailing ships as such. But, all that I say is this, that, if we want to go ahead, we have to take and learn lot from other countries that are ahead of us because of the three centuries of loss that we had to suffer. So, I should say that in the perspective that this Bill seeks to create, we should always bear in mind that the Bill by itself will not lead us anywhere unless we have an objective, a goal, an ideal and an ambition ahead of us. So, when we go, for example, to wages, standards that have to be set, we must bear that in mind.

In the past, it is a fact that our shipping was kept going mostly by the south-west and the south-east. And, I can well understand my hon. friend, Shri V. P. Nayar, regaling himself with the traditions of the past. Whether it is Alleppey, whether it is the coast of Orissa or something else, it is exactly the same. But, we must not

[Shri Jaipal Singh]

only think of Alleppey or the coast of Orissa or something like that, we have to think in terms of the whole of India. That is very very important.

I have no objection whatever if Alleppey is developed. I am the first to rejoice because this is the first time, perhaps, that we would have an enormous export trade in shrimps, the very valuable foreign exchange earners. I think my hon. friends will bear me out.

But, are we going to develop Alleppey only because of its shrimps? What are we aiming at? Think of the past. What was our position in the past? Our sailing vessels, our wooden vessels—we had only wooden vessels—were everywhere, they carried our civilisation, our culture and our merchandise. That is not happening today. Who is carrying whatever merchandise we have today? Apart from coastal shipping it is largely in foreign hands. Go to the Baltic Exchange, what is the picture there? We are like beggars. We have merchandise but the transport is in non-Indian hands. I think that is a situation that has to be changed. It is not merely a question whether we build ships ourselves. As we do in other commodities, if we cannot manufacture those commodities ourselves we do not hesitate to import those commodities from elsewhere so long as they are under our control, so, I venture to suggest that in this Bill, we must all the while bear in mind that there are two aspects to the picture. One is that which we ourselves can manage and the second, that for which we have to depend on others.

Now, if you have these two aspects, you must not have dual standards such as we are having in some spheres today. It is unfortunate that we have to say we are a poor country and we cannot pay people. My friends are in charge of civil aviation. So, if I use that as an example, I think, they will forgive me. I know their difficulties, I think they also know that

I appreciate their difficulties. But, at the same time, what is the position today? What are our airmen getting? What are foreign airmen getting? Put these two things side by side. What picture do you get? Fortunately, we are fully Indian today in that particular respect. And, unfortunately, because we have a monopoly, therefore, we can drive a very hard bargain.

But, when it comes to merchant shipping, I warn my friends over there—they may talk easy—until such time as we can produce all the personnel, from the top to the bottom, there is the danger of this dual standard. I do hope they will remain Indians and think more of Indians and they will get all the facilities, they will get all the wages, they will get all these because there has been far too much of it. I see it everywhere in our administration. The moment we have all our own, we think of poor country and patriotism. In the name of patriotism we call upon the personnel to accept less.

I regret I have to stress this but, it is very very important. You have got only to go to your own States. Go up and down the river Hooghly and you see this problem facing you. What about the Hooghly Pilot Service? What is the position there today? Look at an Indian employee and also look at a non-Indian employee. It is about time we looked after our own nationals as well as we did other nationals.

Similarly, when I do examine the various clauses which deal with space, medical facilities and the like, I do hope this Bill will be one-way traffic, not parallel traffic, one kind of regulations for Indian nationals and another kind for non-Indian nationals. I feel this Bill contains that and I do hope the Joint Committee will see to it that here we are consolidating a number of Acts, but we are also told—right at the very first page—that it is there to amend also.

What are the amendments? Most of the laws were made during the British regime, the pre-independence period. We all know what that means. 'Native seamen' is an example. I have already instanced that. I do hope the amendments here will fall in line with India as it is today, as what we are all struggling here that it should be. I think, that is, if I may say so, Mr. Chairman, somehow or other the blackest spot in this Bill. I do hope the Joint Committee and the hon. Ministers themselves will see to it that this gap is narrowed as much as possible. I fully agree with them that it cannot be done overnight. There, I am willing to agree with them; but, surely, independent India is not just going to ditto whatever has been done in the past.

So, in conclusion, all that I say is that this Bill is long overdue. It is about time it came; and, in fact, it is rather too late. But, I am glad it has come. It is time to consolidate the many Acts. Not only these; but there are other laws also in regard to merchant shipping. But in consolidating, let us not lose sight of the fact that we are consolidating all these Acts in a completely different atmosphere. If the atmosphere is different, if it is an atmosphere where we want to be independent, I would like to see that touch of independence in this Bill as it emerges from the Joint Committee. Otherwise, all our Acts may just as well remain separate; we have made no advance whatever. So, I venture to hope that the hon. Ministers will see to it that their pretence, I am sorry, their profession to amend these various Acts will be in the background of Indian India.

**Shri Warier (Trichur):** I have only one point. Our good friend has misunderstood what my hon. friend, Shri V. P. Nayar, has been telling. We had been dealing with the question of ports in this House quite often. Even today morning, we had a question about Kandla and the diversion of cargoes from Bombay. Kandla would ease the congestion in Bombay. Simi-

lar happens in the port of Alleppey and I wanted to make this point.

**Mr. Chairman:** Shri V. P. Nayar is here and he can as well explain.

**Shri Warier:** I want to elaborate that point. It has been said that we are particularly interested in the development of only minor ports. That is not the point. The coastal ships have got a monopoly of shipping in the coastlines. But these coastal ships had not been calling at certain ports, for instance Alleppey and other ports. For the last two years or so, not a single coastal ship called at that port. Even ships with cargo to that port and neighbouring places are diverted to Cochin port which has better facilities. For that, there are certain dubious methods adopted by shipping agents. The mate's receipt given for cargo loaded in the ships are given even prior to loading. Along with that mate's receipt the bill of lading and the shipping documents can be manufactured and given to the banks and on that the credit will be open to them. These dubious methods are adopted in order to have an advantage in the competition for getting shipping. The agents are resorting to that. By these and other methods, shipping is diverted from some minor ports into major ports.

Now, major ports have congestion. At the same time, cargoes which can be loaded and unloaded in minor ports are diverted so that the congestion is increased. Government had taken note of this aspect in the Indian National Coastal Conference where this subject had come up for discussion. The Coastal Conference insists upon having a minimum guarantee of 500 tons for these minor ports, whereas foreign ships calling at these minor ports go on with loading and unloading in these minor ports without insisting upon any minimum guarantee. But our coastal shipping interests which depend mainly on coastal trade are insisting upon the 500 tons minimum guarantee in these minor ports which at times they cannot afford. It is an impossible condition placed upon

[Shri Warrior]

them so that these coastal ships may not call there. Why should the Conference insist upon such a condition when foreign ships are not insisting upon any such condition? Not only trade is diverted from that port of loading and unloading but congestion is increasing in the neighbouring port. The minor port is neglected and it goes down. After a while, we will meet with a situation that even foreign ships which are at present coming there will not load or unload their cargo there.

From this, the general conclusion must be drawn. A co-ordinated system must be there whereby the minor ports can develop and retain their importance. If this is done, the major ports can reduce their congestion and the development in the country will not be more in one place and less in a certain other place. Government should insist upon priorities being given to these minor ports and I hope that Government will take this up seriously.

Shri Achar (Mangalore): The speaker who preceded me mentioned about minor ports and I too would like to emphasise a little on that point. Only the other day, I read in one of the dailies of New Delhi that a year back, very heavy equipment arrived at Vizag for the Bhilai plant from Russia. There were nine or ten ships and the port was so congested that the cargo could not be unloaded for months and months. There was delay and the report was that the demurrage came to an amount of Rs. 2 crores. I do not know how far it is correct. My friend to the right indicates that it is not correct. Perhaps it is not correct and I am inclined to think so. But such things are reported in the papers and it indicates one thing, viz. we are paying some amount for demurrage and I would like to be enlightened by the Minister. Are we paying such large amounts as demurrage for the equipment from sources like Russia or Germany who are helping us in these steel plants? It was a responsible daily of Delhi and I do

not know how far the report was true. But it indicates that large amounts are being paid as demurrage when we are getting equipment for implementing the core of the Plan.

This, more than any thing else, warns us, and almost sets one a thinking whether we are planning in a very measured manner. Steel plants are, no doubt, the core of the Plan but, at the same time, merchant shipping and development of ports must be undertaken, probably, simultaneously. That is the reason why probably, such heavy demurrage is being paid.

Apart from that question, I would like to say a word or two about the minor ports. Coming as I do from one small port of Mangalore in the west coast, I would like to say that this question of development of this port has been considered for a long time. Once it was considered it was possible to develop that port into a major port. Finally that question was postponed; if not, at least the matter is not being considered now. At last it was more or less decided to develop this into an all weather port, but in that direction also there is still no progress made. I am mentioning all these facts not from the point of view of nursing any grievance or anything of that kind, but what I am feeling is that this question of development of our ports and development of shipping industry is not attracting as much attention as other items in the Plan are attracting.

Historically, it is stated that even in earlier days Delhi did not give much attention to either shipping or naval strength. Even the greatest of Mughal Emperors from Akbar to Aurangzeb did not pay any attention to the shipping industry. It is quite natural. It is in South India that we find this merchant shipping industry or naval strength as more attended to. I can remind the House of the great achievements of the Vijayanagaram Empire. I do not say that now also Delhi is acting like Mughal Emperors.

It may be that in those days North India did not pay much attention to the naval side. But, certainly, so far as the present Government is concerned, it is paying sufficient attention; there is no doubt about that. At the same time, I would say, probably, it will not be out of place if I point out that this Bill to amend and consolidate the laws comes after ten years. That is also a fact which can be remembered, only just to measure the position how far the present Government also realises the importance of navy and mercantile industry.

I wish there was a little more time between the introduction of this Bill and this discussion. In fact, the Bill is more than 23 pages, and it is almost impossible within the short period we had to analyse or give any connected opinion about the provisions.

Of course, as the position stands, the details are only discussed in the Joint Committee, and there is no purpose to go into the Bill clause by clause here. The most important aspect I would like to mention is the particular attention Government has to pay for the development of merchant shipping. The previous speakers, one or two of them, seem to think that, though they could not ignore it, the small boats and smaller naval items are not very important, the river boats or the boats with which our smaller fishermen engage themselves are not of much consequence, and it is only the bigger ships, the steamers, that we have to attend to because international trade depends on them. No doubt, we must have the latest ships and steamers but, at the same time, it cannot be forgotten that to a large extent in the coastal area there is the fishing industry and also navigation in small rivers, though not to very long distances at least to smaller distances. There is that industry and it is giving employment to a large number of people, the fishermen and others. The Government cannot neglect that side because it gives employment to those people. It is also essential from one point of view, that it is a very cheap way of transport.

The essential point this Bill will have to achieve, and with that intention probably amendments may be necessary, is that we also must develop our merchant shipping. With that main intention in view the Bill has to be looked into, and I hope the Joint Committee will attend to that aspect, which is the most important aspect.

**Shri D. E. Chavan (Karad):** Mr. Chairman, Sir, at the outset, I congratulate the hon. Minister for bringing this comprehensive measure before this House. I fail to understand why the Government have taken such a long time to consolidate the various measures or, rather, fragmentary acts that were there before this Bill was introduced. If we study some of the aspects of the matter, we will find how it was necessary to bring this measure much earlier than it has come and try to build up the merchant navy or merchant marine in India long before.

Sir, it is a common knowledge that we have been spending large amounts of money thus causing a considerable drain on our foreign exchange resources. If we take one matter only, that is, how much money we have spent by way of freight to foreign shipowners when we imported food-grains into this country since 1948 up to the present time, 1956-57, we will find out how much money we have paid, and how much foreign exchange we have lost, which is so badly needed for the implementation of the Second Five Year Plan.

16 hrs.

Sir, whenever questions concerning the grant of import licences with regard to machinery are raised in this House, the Ministers tell us that there is an acute shortage of foreign exchange and that in the circumstances it is not possible to grant the import licences to import machinery from the foreign countries to develop on a co-operative sector, because there is a shortage of foreign exchange; that unless the critical situa-

[Shri D R Chavan]

tion in respect of the foreign exchange resources is eased, nothing could be done. That is generally the reply which is given by the Government.

The question is whether any attempt has been made by the Government to conserve these foreign exchange resources. If you take into consideration this aspect of paying freights to foreign ships, we can understand what a colossal amount of money we have spent. That is the only aspect I am dealing with.

I may here give certain figures from which the problem could be understood. In the year 1946, 22.49 lakh tons of foodgrains were imported into this country, and the freight paid to Indian shipping in that year was Rs 16.4 lakhs, while to foreign ships it was Rs 1,469.6 lakhs. In the year 1947, the foodgrains that were imported into this country were 23.34 lakh tons, and the freight that was paid to Indian shipping was Rs 89.4 lakhs, while to the ships of foreign flag it was Rs 1,440.6 lakhs. In 1948 foodgrains imported into this country amounted to about Rs 28.41 lakhs and the freight paid to Indian shipping was Rs 134.8 lakhs, while to the ships of foreign flags it amounted to Rs 1,417.2 lakhs. In the year 1949 Rs 37.06 lakh tons of foodgrains were imported into this country, and the freight paid to Indian shipping was Rs 67.9 lakhs and to the ships of foreign flags it amounted to Rs 1,348.1 lakh. Similarly the same was the case in the years 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953 up to 1956. The total amount of freight paid to the ships of foreign flags up to 1957 amounted to Rs 15,785.7 lakhs. That means, it came to about Rs 157 crores. Compared with this amount, the amount that was paid to our Indian shipping was about Rs 11.28 crores. We have paid, since 1946 up to the present time, that is, 1956-57, Rs 157 crores to the ships of foreign flags. That means, this amount was paid from our balances, that is, from the foreign exchange.

So, my submission is, from 1946 up to the present time, that is, 1956-57, about Rs 157 crores were paid to the ships of foreign flags. This amount could have been very well saved if the Government had considered this aspect of the matter and tried to build up our merchant marine much earlier than what they intended to do.

It was said on the floor of the House that in future also it would be necessary to build up our foodgrain stocks and for that purpose it was necessary to import about two lakh tons of foodgrains into this country. This will also be required to be brought into this country through ships of foreign countries for which it would be necessary to pay some amount from our foreign exchange. As I have submitted earlier, the foreign exchange situation of this country is very acute, and the Government cannot afford to spend any amount from that. Many of our programmes in the Second Five Year Plan have been held up and particularly so in the co-operative sector. People have collected money, shareholders have contributed money and some of the co-operative sugarcane factories have purchased some material and have spent Rs 5 lakhs to Rs 10 lakhs over that. When the people come to the Government and ask for import licences, the reply that is generally given is, there is shortage of foreign exchange.

May I ask the Government, what they were doing when it was known to the Government that it was necessary to import foodgrains from foreign countries and that those foodgrains will be required to be brought into this country through foreign ships. Was it ever attempted by the Government to build up our merchant navy? On the contrary, it was laid down by way of policy. The Shipping Policy Committee appointed by the Government of India had laid down a target of two million tons of mercantile

marine in order to secure to Indian shipping 100 per cent. of coastal trade of India, 75 per cent. of India's trade with Burma, Ceylon and other neighbouring countries and 50 per cent. of India's overseas trade and 30 per cent. of orient's trade formerly carried by Japanese, German and Italian vessels. Even though this policy was laid down much earlier, no attempt was made by the Government to build our merchant marine. The result is disastrous we have lost our foreign exchange; much of our programme in the Second Five Year Plan is held up on account of that.

Now, Government, after the advent of freedom, nearly after about ten years, are coming up with this comprehensive measure which they should have done much earlier than this, knowing fully well the situation that was gradually developing in this country.

The position regarding this problem has been stated in one of the books. It has been mentioned therein that India has an extensive coastline from Lakhpet to Calcutta, extending over nearly 4,000 miles. 99 per cent. of India's foreign trade is being carried by ships through the seas that surround her on all the three sides, the east, the west and the south. Over 20 million tons of coal, salt, oil and other cargo are carried through the Indian coasts, besides substantial quantities to and from the neighbouring countries like Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan. Approximately one and a half million passengers are transported on the west coast and something like five lakhs between India and Burma ports. Besides, India has an overseas trade involving another 20 million tons of cargo and two lakhs of passengers per year. Though India stands eighth in regard to the total volume of overseas trade, Indian shipping is lagging far behind. Roughly about 93 per cent. of her deep-sea trade is handled by foreign shipping companies. Out of the total world tonnage of nearly 88 million gross tons, the Indian gross registered tonnage at the end of 1952-53 stood at 4,35,300 GRT. So, it is very

necessary to build up our merchant marine and every attempt should be made in that direction. It was stated by the Minister in charge of Shipping on the floor of the House that the shortage of foreign exchange is holding up our progress in this. As I have just now pointed out, we are spending a huge amount of foreign exchange in paying freights to the ships of foreign flags if they can spare a portion of this amount, we can gradually build up our merchant marine.

So, we have got to do something. It has been stated that for the success of our Second Plan it is necessary that our agriculture should be put in order. Similarly, it is also necessary to build up our merchant marine for the success of the Second Plan. For example, take the railways. Last time when the Railway Minister spoke on the floor of the House he said that in the year 1957-58 about Rs. 30 crores have been set aside for importing some of the items that are necessary for building our railways here. So, about Rs. 30 crores have been allotted in the budget for 1957-58 for importing materials from foreign countries. So, had we succeeded in building up our merchant marine, much of this payment of foreign exchange by way of freight could have been saved.

Then, we are building up in this country so many co-operative sugar industries. About 45-50 new factories have been licensed. Machinery for the purpose of building these sugar factories have to be brought from foreign countries. There also freight has to be paid. Then this freight has to be paid in foreign currency. Therefore, at a time when our foreign exchange resources are falling to a perilously low level, we are forced to spend foreign exchange for payment of freight.

Therefore, unless we are alive to the situation and try to conserve our foreign exchange by building up our merchant marine and thereby save every pie that we can, it will not be possible for us to go ahead with the Plan and make a success of it, which

[Shri D. R. Chavan]

we so much cherish. Therefore, taking into consideration the colossal amount that we have paid and are paying to the foreign countries by way of freight, it is very necessary that we should build up this merchant marine as early as possible by making some allotments to it, if necessary, even by curtailing some other expenditure.

I am sure all these points will be discussed and thrashed out in the Select Committee when they consider the various clauses. After discussion in the Committee, it will come up before the House again, when we can go into it in detail. I am glad that Government is making every effort to build up this merchant marine.

Shri N. B. Maiti (Ghatal): At the outset, I congratulate the Minister for having brought forward this measure, which is a long-awaited one, and I think it will be taken advantage of, as time passes. While speaking about the Bill, I wish to emphasize only one or two points.

First of all, I shall say a few words about the recruitment of personnel. India, as we know, has a coastline of about 4,000 miles. It stretches from the mouth of the river Hooghly downwards to Cape Comorin and then upwards upto the Gulf of Kutch. The coastal area is inhabited by people who are adventurous, who are brave, who have been sea-faring in olden times. It is a well-known fact that people of these areas stretched and spread themselves southwards, eastwards and westwards. When they went out, they took with them not only merchandise but also some aspects of Indian civilisation.

Though this Bill deals with coastal shipping, the provisions of this Bill can be of use in bringing together people living in distant places of our continent. In this vast country it is not generally expected that people who live far away from the sea will take so much interest as the people living near the sea. It is a well-

known fact that those countries which are surrounded by sea, or which are adjacent to the sea, have got sea-faring people. England and Japan are examples. In China we find the coastal people taking interest in shipping and going to the sea, though not so much by the people living in the hinterland.

In India also, we can envisage that only those people who live near the sea will take interest in manning the seas and become seamen or apprentices or masters. Of course, I do not mean to say that people from inland, from far off places, from the middle of the country, may not come forward and run the institutions. But, generally, it is accepted that people living in the coastal areas will take greater interest than the rest. So, I would suggest to the Committee to consider whether the training could be so organised as to give impetus to those people to come in greater numbers to those avocations of life. That is my first point.

Secondly, one of my friends suggested that South India in the olden days did something about sea-faring. Here I would also like to add East India; because it is a known fact that people from Bengal went over to Ceylon, to Sumatra and Java and to other places, and their performance at the time was no less than that of the people of the South. Therefore, they should not be forgotten in this matter; and so also, I think, the people living in the western coast, the areas in the west.

What I would suggest is that there should be more ports in the coastal areas than there are now. India, having a vast hinterland, should have more ports in the coastal areas than what exists today.

16-22 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

The establishment of more ports should be thought of. Though it has

not been envisaged in this Bill, my hon. friend Shri Achar suggested that arrangements should be made for the establishment of more ports. I add to what he has said and I also suggest it.

With these few words I conclude, and I thank you for the opportunity given to me.

श्री आश्व (मालंगवा) : मि० डिप्टी स्पीकर, सर, सब से पहले मे मान्यवर ट्रांसपोर्ट मंत्री जी को धन्यवाद देता हूँ कि चाहे देर से ही क्यों न हो, वह यह बिल हम सदन के सामने लाये हैं। इस बारे में काफी चर्चा हो चुकी है। हमारे इंडियन और फारेन शिप्स में जो काम करने वाले मुलाजिम हैं, उनके मरक्षण के बारे में मैं कुछ बातें कहना चाहता हूँ। हमारे यहाँ करीब करीब चालीस हजार सीमेंट काम करते हैं। उनकी तनख्वाह आदि के बारे में क्या बन्दोबस्त किया जायेगा, इसका इस बिल में कोई जिक्र नहीं है। इस सम्बन्ध में मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि अगर इस बिल में इस बात का जिक्र होता है कि उनकी मिनिमम तनख्वाह क्या होनी चाहिये, तो अच्छा होता। इन लोगों के बारे में मिनिमम बेजिज एक्ट की प्राविजन्ज लागू होनी चाहिये और इन के लिये इन्शोरेस की भी गुंजाइश होनी चाहिये।

यह भी ध्यावश्यक है कि अपर मरिजिम में इंडियानाइजेशन होना चाहिये। इस लिये इन लोगों के लिये—चाहे वे सीमेंट हो, मास्टर हो या दूसरे मलाजिम हो—गार्ड का बन्दोबस्त होना चाहिये। मैं समझता हूँ कि आज इस विषय में जो गुंजाइश है, वह बहुत कम है।

इस इडस्ट्री को तरक्की देने के लिये पैसा इन्वेस्ट करने का जहाँ तक प्रश्न है, मैं समझता हूँ कि उसके लिये हमारे पास काफी जरिये है। लाइफ इन्शोरेस कार्पोरेशन की तरफ से करीब करीब दस लाख रुपया रोजाना इन्वेस्ट किया जाता है। क्यों न हम

गवर्नमेंट की तरफ से इस बारे में कोशिश करे और ज्यादा से ज्यादा वैसल्ज और मरकान्टाइल शिप्स आदि बनाने की कोशिश करे ?

इस देश के इतने बड़े कोस्ट वी देख-भाल के लिये हम को सी-स्काउट्स रखने की कोशिश करना चाहिये। बम्बई में कुछ थोड़े से सी-स्काउट्स हैं। हिन्दुस्तान में स्काउट्स की तादाद देखते हुए अगर हम सी-स्काउट्स रखने के बारे में बन्दोबस्त करे और उनको उचित तालीम दे, तो हमको इसका बहुत फायदा होने वाला है। इस के अतिरिक्त हम को अपने कास्ट पर छोटे छोटे पोर्ट्स बनाने चाहिये।

ऐसा कहा गया है कि हिन्दुस्तान इस इडस्ट्री में पीछे नहीं था। आईने-अकबरी में लिखा है कि अकबर के जमाने में केवल इदम नदी पर वैमल्ज की तादाद चालीस हजार थी। इतना ही नहीं, इन बागें में हमारा हिन्दुस्तान दुनिया में बहुत आगे बढ़ा हुआ था। तो वह आज क्यों पीछड़ा हुआ है ? आजादी प्राप्त करने के बाद भी अगर हम इस सनअत की तरफ ध्यान नहीं देंगे, तो हमारा बहुत काफी नुकसान होगा।

इन लोगों की प्रोटेक्शन के लिये यह ध्यावश्यक है कि वैसल्ज का शुरू से ही सरवे होना चाहिये—बनाते वक्त ही उनका सरवे शुरू होना चाहिये, और फिर पीरियाडिकल सरवे की व्यवस्था होनी चाहिये। इससे वैसल्ज के एक्सीडेंट्स से बचने की गुंजाइश हो सकती है।

मुझे आशा है कि जो पायट्स मैंने अर्ज किये हैं, उनके बारे में मिनिस्टर साहब जरूर अपनी कोशिश करेंगे। इतना ही मुझे कहना है।

Shri Balasaheb Patil (Mira): Sir, when we read the provisions of this Bill we find that it deals with three things. One is shipping, the other is seamen and the third is about the

[Shri Balasaheb Patil]

passengers There are provisions relating to ships, and they are in respect of inspection, licensing and certificates We have heard just now that there are certain associations of persons and companies going on with this mercantile business on the sea and they are earning a lot of money What I would like to submit here is this Take this question of inspection, certificates and licensing We have had a great deal of experience of this system of licensing at one end we find there is red-tapism and at the other bribery and such other unhappy things That has been our experience Therefore, my submission at this stage while we are considering this Bill will be that so far as the ships that are there and running on the sea are concerned, licences could be issued to them And henceforward, whenever we build a ship, then from the very beginning restrictions should be put on the company and there should be inspection by government inspectors And in the government-owned harbours and shipyards the ships should be built, and there would be little question of giving licences and certificates Today, Indian mercantile shipping is in the hands of private persons Naturally, private persons do not see to the national interests first They look to their own big pockets and big profits Therefore, they choose bad ships, seamen are not experienced and they are paid low Then, again they do not care what happens on the sea In order to improve all these things, these private persons must be told that a certain amount of money should be kept aside for taking all these precautions

We have heard just now from one hon Member that certain companies are making great profits The Government should put a check on that and force these companies to build new ships Or, if they do not, the Government should take a certain amount out of their net profits and build new ships Our experience shows that we are not amongst the

nations which have a sea empire or sea power If we do not do what I have suggested, we will be far far behind We have before us the target of so much tonnage We won't be able even to reach that target within the Second Plan period

We find in this Bill there is provision for apprenticeships But, it is entirely left to the private persons It is laid down that if they think fit, they should train certain persons That is an unsatisfactory way of training our persons As a matter of fact, we have so many miles of coast line, but we have very few persons expert in seagoing business My submission is that the Government should take this question of training in their hands and there should be more centres for the training of persons Government must make a provision that the shipping companies should make arrangements for the training of persons Not only that The trainee must be paid some allowance at least so far as the training is concerned

There is a provision in this Bill about recruitment Some senior officers are appointed and they have to sit at the port stations only In our country we have so many cities in the interior, in the mainland These recruiting offices should be established in the mainland also so that they may recruit people there, give them training and give them jobs

The seamen are there They are engaged by the companies What is the basis of that? An agreement Who makes the agreement? The person who wants employment and the person who wants him to be employed As we have found, there are companies which make a lot of profit. But, these companies would not employ the persons who demand a higher pay There must be some provision made in this Bill that there should be, as my hon friend who spoke now said, some standard wages, minimum wages that are to be paid.

What is the tenure? The tenure which is mentioned in this Bill is the tenure of the agreement. Suppose a person gets a lot of profit and the seaman demands a higher pay, he will be thrown out of job. What has he to do? He has up to now been doing the work of a seaman. He will have to go without any work. That should not happen. There must be some provision in this Bill regarding tenure of appointment. Suppose a person works for ten years and then he is asked to go, where is he to go? There must be fixity of tenure. For that, there must be an officer or committee or commission to go into this question and consider the question from all aspects and make some suggestions to the Government.

There are some provisions in this Bill as to how the wages are to be calculated when a person leaves service, what deductions are to be made, etc. Where is the provision for compensation if a person is thrown out of job? There is no provision whatsoever. Regarding the textile labour, there are so many laws, Industrial Relations Act, Minimum Wages Act, etc. Why should not the Government think it necessary to import all these provisions here and make them applicable to the seamen also?

All these things have to be done. Then, we will have the best ships, the best seamen and we shall prosper in mercantile shipping also

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** Mr. Deputy-Speaker, my senior colleague, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri has given the main features of the Bill in his opening speech. It is not my purpose to traverse the same ground again. I will confine my observations to the points that have been made out by hon. Members here.

To start with, I may express our gratefulness to the Members for the measure of welcome, I should say, unanimous welcome, that they have extended to this Bill and the complimentary remarks that they have showered. In the first place, let it be

realised that this Bill represents a milestone in the development of Indian shipping. It has been claimed in our history that for over 30 centuries, Indian ships ruled the waves. We know that in Bali, Sumatra, Java, Philippines, in far-off Japan, there is ample testimony to show that Indian ships crossed the oceans, they were seaworthy and the art and industry and craft of building ships had reached an excellence which is borne out by all the imprints that our civilisation has left in those distant lands. That was what was in the ages by-gone.

So far as our present age is concerned, we only know that only through the pioneering efforts of certain distinguished countrymen of ours, there was, at the dawn of Independence, just a nucleus of Indian ships. I should say this nucleus of Indian shipping itself was a sort of tribute to the great efforts that these great men made in this behalf, and to the struggle that they had to wage against the vested interests of a foreign power. We know how our industry was put down. But, then, through the efforts of the people whose names have been mentioned here, to whose memory and to whose great work I also pay my tribute, we had this nucleus. I refer to Sarvashri Chidambaram Pillai, Narottam Morarji, Walchand Hirachand. Even today we have got two stalwarts with us. One is Shri M. A. Master and the other is Shri S. N. Raji. All these people have, all these years, from inside the legislature and outside, fought the battle for Indian shipping. It may thus well be said that this Bill is a sort of symbol of the renaissance of Indian shipping. From this, we want to go ahead on the onward march of progress. That is also one of the purposes, apart from the consolidation of the various laws on this subject and the amendments that are incorporated in this Bill. We should make it a vehicle for our onward march. Therefore, the provisions of this Bill should be examined in that light and against that background.

[Shri Raj Bahadur]

I find that many hon. Members have devoted a good bit of their attention while making their observations, to the efforts that have been made by the Government and by the industry as such, in the development of Indian shipping as also to the congestion in ports, development of ports, sailing vessels manufacturing industry, coastal traffic, etc. I shall in brief make some observations in regard to each one of the points.

To start with, Shri Muhammed Elias who opened this debate from the other side said that he was rather worried about the shifting of the B.I. Lines' headquarters from Calcutta to Hong Kong. Our information, so far as it goes, is that so far they have got their headquarters at Calcutta, but we shall have to make enquiries in regard to that. In such matters however, it is obvious, that their own discretion will, after all, prevail.

The next point he made was about the treatment meted out to our seamen by the shipping companies. He said that whereas certain recommendations have been made by the I.L.O. in regard to wage etc we have not been able to keep up to the standards that have been laid down by them. I can only state the position as it obtains today.

Take for example, the question of wages. Indian seamen's wages are now roughly five times the pre-war level. Wages are generally negotiated between seamen's unions and ship-owners, and the Government of India have always lent their support for all the reasonable proposals for revision. I think this should be the common experience of the labour representatives that wherever reasonable proposals have been put forward by the labour representatives, the Government representatives have always sided with and supported those proposals.

During recent years various concessions have been made and agreed to by the ship owners. For example, I may refer to the merger of war bonus in the basic wages, increase in rates

of daily allowances, apart from the recent ten per cent. general increase in wages.

It was said that there was no machinery by which they could represent their grievances or put forward their legitimate demands. I may say that there is a bi-partite National Maritime Board which includes representatives of ship-owners and seafarers. This deals with questions relating to the terms and conditions of the seafarers' employment. We always encourage bi-partite negotiations and see to it that they succeed. As I have already claimed, we have always stood by the I.L.O. conventions and in the principle of "equal pay for equal work," and in this regard, if there is any discrimination between foreign seamen and our seamen, we will always fight against that discrimination, and will try to end it as quickly as we can.

In regard to welfare, the House is aware that we have got a National Welfare Board for Seamen. This also includes seafarers' representatives. It may also be mentioned here that the report of the Committee On Welfare in Ports has already been submitted and the question of social security which has also been raised here is currently under examination. We are acting according to the recommendations of the Asian Maritime Conference held in Ceylon in 1953.

So far as seamen's employment scheme is concerned, of course the Bill as it is now has got adequate provisions, but I would request hon. Members to pay a visit some time to our seamen's employment office at Bombay. They will see what arrangements are made there, and how far they are satisfactory. For my part, I can say that a visit of mine, the first one, was an agreeable surprise to me, and I can say that the way in which the signing off and the signing on of the seamen is going on there in that particular office, the arrangements made there, the registers kept there, the records maintained and all that

is something which can very well be treated as an example for other similar institutions. It may be stated that the measures taken in this behalf have already benefited 70,000 to 80,000 seamen.

I may also refer the hon. Member to clause 204 of the Bill which also empowers the Government to frame rules in regard to the composition of the Board and the terms and conditions of the Members thereof and for similar allied matters. So, in case there is any genuine complaint or grievance of the labour representatives on this score, that can always be set right.

So far as Shri Raghunath Singh is concerned, I can only thank him for his kind words and encouragement welcoming this measure.

Shri Goray said that we have taken chapter for chapter from the British Shipping Act. We do not want to claim that this Bill is entirely original in conception and drafting. We have largely drawn upon other similar measures. Very few things in this life of ours can be claimed as original. We have got to draw upon the experiences of other similar organisations and of other countries. There is no harm if we draw upon that experience and utilise it fully to our advantage.

He says that there is no provision for making the character and the identity of a ship Indian. I can only tell him that it has been clearly laid down here and that this objective is ensured by the relevant provisions of the Bill, and I think there should be no difficulty in regard to that too. The word "company" has been defined in the Bill which states that the definition given in the Indian Companies Act will apply to these shipping companies also. The very fact that ships owned by Indian companies only will be allowed to have the status of Indian ships and that they will have to have a given majority of Indian shares will ensure the Indian character of the shipping companies will be preserved. I think all that is required in this respect is already mentioned in the Bill.

Now I come to the point made by Shri Goray in regard to the minimum age of employment of apprentices. The minimum age of employment is fixed by an international labour convention, and it is 15. Although India has not actually ratified that convention, it has accepted it in principle. Therefore, so far as the age of the apprentices is concerned, it is difficult for us to lower it, but then all the relevant provisions in this respect are also in the Bill, and if there are any shortcomings in those provisions, they can be ironed out before the Joint Select Committee. I should like to add that there should be no difficulty if any improvements are suggested in regard to those provisions.

Another point was made, namely that it is difficult for the seamen to get through the medical examination and that it takes a long time for them to wait for it. I may point out here that formerly medical examination was held once in every two years, but now it is done only once in every five years. This has reduced the frequency of examination and has lessened any possible hardships or tedium which has been experienced by the seamen. As a rule, only as many seamen are booked for medical examination on a particular day as can be examined in one day. At any rate, if there are any drawbacks or shortcomings in this respect, we can try to improve the arrangements still further.

The next point made by Shri Goray was in regard to the certificates for ships. He says the provisions are good, but that the ships' safety devices and amenities are not up to the mark, that passengers and cargoes are not well looked after. If his reference is to the deck passengers or unberthed passengers, I would only refer him to two particular provisions in this regard—clauses 226 and 248 of the Bill. I think I may in passing read out those particular provisions.

Clause 266 reads:

"(1) A ship intended to carry unberthed passengers or pilgrims

[Shri Raj Bahadur]

shall not commence a voyage from the port or place appointed under sub-section (1) of section 223, unless the master holds two certificates to the effect mentioned in sections 227 and 228."

If a cursory glance is cast over clauses 227 and 228, it will be seen that:

"The first of the certificates (hereinafter called 'certificate A') shall state that the ship is seaworthy and properly equipped, fitted and ventilated, and shall state:—

- (a) in the case of an unberthed passenger ship, the number of passengers which she is capable of carrying;
- (b) in the case of a pilgrim ship, the number of pilgrims of each class which she is capable of carrying".

There are other provisions also, but I shall not weary the House by reading them out. But clause 228 might also be referred to, which reads thus:

"The second of certificates (hereinafter called 'certificate B') shall be in the prescribed form and shall state:—

- (a) the voyage which the ship is to make, and the intermediate ports (if any) at which she is to touch;
- (b) that she has the proper complement of officers and seamen;
- (c) that the master holds a certificate of survey or a safety certificate or certificate A;
- (d) that she has on board such number of medical officers licensed in the prescribed manner and such number of attendants, if any, as may be prescribed;

(e) that food, fuel and pure water over and above what is necessary for the crew, and the other things (if any) prescribed for unberthed passenger ships or pilgrim ships, have been placed on board. . .".

So, all these provisions are already existing.

16.52 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Apart from that, clause 248 also gives Government the power to make rules in regard to unberthed passenger ships. That is so far as it goes in regard to unberthed passenger ships.

Shri Heda asked as to why we should not speed up our buying if we have got to do it, and he also referred to the point which was made by you, Sir, this morning, as to why we should continue to buy these ships from foreign countries. This point was amply answered by my senior colleague. I am only mentioning this because certain doubts were expressed by some Members opposite that we are not going as fast as we ought to have gone in building up our merchant navy.

As I have said, as recently as 1945, we had only 1.25 lakh tons GRT so far as Indian shipping was concerned. At the dawn of Independence, it was a little over 2 lakh tons. As to the position after 1947, I shall give the figures at two particular stages. At the end of the First Five Year Plan, we had with our shipping companies as much as 4,80,000 tons of Indian shipping, and orders had already been placed for another 1,20,000 tons. So, the target of 6 lakh tons fixed in the First Plan was achieved, and the provision that was made in this regard in that Plan was also utilised. Out of Rs. 28 crores which had been provided for, Rs. 18 crores had been spent and Rs. 8 crores had been committed for. So, at the beginning of the Second Plan period, we could say that the target for the First Plan had

been achieved, and that we could make a good start for the Second Plan, and accordingly, the target was fixed at 9 lakhs tons.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** The Minister says that the First Plan target was achieved, after adding the tonnage for which orders had been placed.

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** Before the expiry of the period of the Plan.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** From January 1st 1958, our gross tonnage was only 5.86 lakhs tons. And the First Five Year Plan was over about a year ago.

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** If the hon. Member would bear with me for a moment, I shall tell him what the position is. There is nothing to conceal here, and everybody knows what the position is.

As I said, at the end of the First Plan, we had 4,80,000 tons of Indian shipping. We had already placed orders for another 1,20,000 tons. That means that the target of 6 lakh tons had been achieved. But ships do take time for actual delivery.

In the Second Plan, the target was fixed at 9 lakhs tons, and a provision was made for Rs. 37 crores, together with an additional Rs. 8 crores, which was a carry-forward from the previous Plan. Out of this Rs. 45 crores, we can say that we have already placed orders for acquiring 1,81,000 tons. This brings the total to about 6 lakhs of tons on hand and to achieve our target of 9 lakh tons the gap which we can say is to be made up is to the tune of 2,10,000 tons, since 3 lakhs tons were to be added by way of new tonnage and 91,000 tons was for replacement and renewals. So out of the total allotment that we had for the Second Plan period, we can say that we have achieved the best results that could be achieved with the amount in our hand. We are now trying with the help of other schemes on the basis of "pay-as-you-earn" or deferred payments, to augment the strength of the tonnage.

Another point which was made by **Shri V. P. Nayar** was that we have not

cared for the coastal trade, and that coastal steamers charge higher freight than even the railways or the road transport services. Of course, this is a fact that steamer charges are higher, but then, here, the law of economics applies. It is a question of supply and demand. We do not have the required number of vessels that we should have for the needs of our coastal traffic. We should have at least 4 lakhs tons for our coastal shipping, but we have got only 2.40 lakhs tons. So, it is obvious that we have got to provide for more coastal vessels, and it is only then and then alone that we can cut down the freight charges.

In regard to Alleppey, the hon. Member said that that port has been dwindling in its importance on account of neglect on the part of Government. I would like to tell him that the coastal conference which is an autonomous body and which takes decisions in regard to the traffic which the coastal vessels should handle, in regard to the freights, and in regard to the terms and conditions on which the vessels would touch a particular port etc. says that unless a port offers as much as 500 tons of traffic on a particular trip, a ship will not call at that port. So far as Alleppey is concerned, we know that the ships which have to call at such minor ports have to wait two or three miles away in the stream, and in certain cases, they have got to wait as much as seven miles away in the stream, and from there all the traffic has got to be carried.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair (Thiruvella):** Is it not true that the foreign ships do not impose any such conditions and they come there and load and unload?

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** But it is a question of the facilities and the conveniences available at a particular port. We are all at one in our desire to see these minor ports grow and develop. There is no difference of opinion on that score. But the fact remains that so far as Alleppey is concerned there is a port which is very close to it, namely Cochin. When Cochin offers better facilities, we cannot

compel the steamers or the vessels which carry on this trade to call at Alleppey, because at Cochin they find all that they need. Similarly, I can give the instance of Visakhapatnam and Kakinada. Kakinada also can be developed as a very good port. As Shri Raghunath Singh has told us, in one particular day, with the help of barges, that port could handle a traffic of as much as 4000 tons of ore. Kakinada port is served by road, by rail and also by the Buckingham canal. All these facilities are there but even so it could not be developed as a major port so far. Now, if the people of Kakinada think that because of some indifference on the part of the Government of India, that port is not being developed, I think it would be neither fair nor reasonable; because, after all, if a port has to be developed then for its development we require finances. I would very much like that Alleppey, Karwar, Kakinada, Masulipatnam, or in the far north, Bedi port etc. should all be developed; and similarly, we also want that the Okha port also should be developed. But the point is that we require finances for their development. We also require some sort of arrangement by which steamers can go and call on these ports.

17 hrs.

The only answer to the problem, in my humble view, is that we should have similar steamers and smaller vessels to touch these minor ports and serve them. Unless and until we have got small steamers which can enter these ports directly and do not have to depend for facilities for loading and unloading, on lighters and barges, we cannot hope to develop these minor ports. With bigger steamers that at present serve our coast line; with steamers having a dead weight tonnage of ten or twelve thousand or seven or five thousand we cannot expect that these steamers can serve the minor ports well. Then, also the obvious law of economics will again come into play. So, the point remains

that if we want to develop these smaller ports, we should have fast-moving smaller ships, say, having a tonnage of 200, 300, 400 or 500 tons, which can go right up to the port and which may not have to depend upon the lighters or barges for their operations which evidently entails larger expenditure in loading and unloading. At the same time we also have to realise from where could we procure these small vessels. For these small vessels the only remedy is that we should develop and promote the sailing vessels manufacturing industry. When I say 'sailing vessels', I would not say that we should continue to use sails in our vessels for ever. We can mechanise those vessels. We can attune the industry to the modern needs. We can make it good enough so that the vessels that are manufactured, may be suitable enough to cover and seaworthy not only our coastal trade, but also our trade with adjacent countries. If we could rehabilitate the sailing vessels manufacturing industry on modern lines, and we know that there is a good talent for it in the country, which is already engaged even at present in manufacturing these smaller vessels, if we could utilise that talent, and patronise it; if we could train those people and start making smaller mechanised vessels and if we can serve the needs of minor ports through those vessels, then both the coastal trade will develop as also the problem of development of minor ports will also be solved. So, in regard to that particular point, I can only say that much.

I would say a word in regard to the "Andamans". As the hon. Members know, there is already a committee which is going into the question of the stability of Andamans and we shall have to wait for this report.

Mr. Achar said something about demurrage. He said that we have paid Rs. 2 crores. Just this morning I answered a question and I said with the difficulties that we have got in respect of Bombay and Calcutta all

the amount paid in respect of demurrage so far is only about Rs. 68,000 or a little over that. Of course, that does not mean that we have paid all the bills in respect of demurrage. But let us realise that so far as the liners are concerned, we do not have to pay any demurrage. They come, they have to stay in the port so long as they have not completed their work. In respect of the chartered vessels alone we have to pay some demurrage charges and there too there is a period during which—it depends upon the terms of the charter however—they have got to stay in the port and for which they cannot claim any demurrage. Only after that particular period expires, some charge may be claimed.

**Mr. Speaker:** How long will he take?

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** About five minutes.

In regard to that point of demurrage, I have said that we will give authentic figures after full investigation or enquiries made in regard to them, as soon as they are available.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** What about the profits of shipping companies?

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** They are paying income-tax and you know very well about it.

**Mr. Maiti** asked us that we should make proper arrangements for training and that it should be organised so that coastal people are attracted towards this profession and that we should make good use of the talent of these people, who for generations have been seafaring. We can only say that there are provisions for this in the Bill and apart from that we have already got good institutions for training. Those institutions are following standards which are followed in U.K. By good institutions I mean to refer to the Training Ship 'Dufferin' and the Nautical and Engineering College at Bombay and similar institutions which are serving good purpose and which are turning out the required number of hands that we require for this purpose.

I think, Sir, with these words I can say that whatever other points are there, we shall consider them at the stage of the Joint Committee meeting and we shall discuss them then.

**Shri Muhammed Elias (Howrah)**  
 rose—

**Mr. Speaker:** All hon. Members can attend the Joint Committee meetings and also send memoranda and information to them. After it comes back from the Joint Committee, they may make their statements.

The question is:

"That the Merchant Shipping Bill, 1958, be referred to a Joint Committee of the Houses consisting of 45 members; 30 from this House, namely:—

Shri Upendranath Barman, Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri, Shri Liladhar Kotoki, Shri S. Osman Ali Khan, Shri Harish Chandra Mathur, Shri Anirudha Sinha, Shri Ram Dhani Das, Shri Ghanshyamlal Oza, Shri Raghunath Singh, Shri Nardeo Snatak, Shri Tekur Subrahmanyam, Shri K. P. Kuttikrishnan Nair, Shri K. Periaswami Gounder, Shri Dinesh Pratap Singh, Shri Mool Chand Jain, Dr. Y. S. Parmar, Shri N. M. Wadiwa, Shri Radha Raman, Bakshi Abdul Rashid, Shri Shivram Rango Rane, Shri Raj Bahadur, Shri Hirendra Nath Mukerjee, Shri K. T. K. Tangamani, Shri Rajendra Singh, Shri Nath Pai, Shri Ram Sewak Yadav, Shri S. A. Matin, Shri Aurobindo Ghosal, Shri Badakumar Pratap Ganga Deb Bamra, and Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri.

and 15 members from Rajya Sabha;

that in order to constitute a sitting of the Joint Committee the quorum shall be one-third of the total number of members of the Joint Committee;

[Mr. Speaker]

that the Committee shall make a report to this House by the first day of the next Session;

that in other respects the Rules of Procedure of this House relating to Parliamentary Committees will apply with such variations and modifications as the Speaker may make; and

that this House recommends to Rajya Sabha that Rajya Sabha do joint the said Joint Committee and communicate to this House the names of members to be appointed by Rajya Sabha to the Joint Committee."

*The motion was adopted.*

#### STATEMENT RE EXPLOSION AT PATHANKOT

The Minister of Defence (Shri Krishna Menon): Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government deeply regret to have to inform the House that a tragic incident occurred at the Ordnance Rail Head Group at Pathankot on the 24th February, 1958, at 08.15 hours, resulting in considerable destruction of life and property. Six railway wagons containing ammunition and other Defence stores were on the military siding, ready for unloading. Not long after the unloading began, there was an explosion. Two of the wagons containing ammunition were completely blown off, three others are badly damaged, while the sixth wagon appears at present not to have been seriously affected. The debris, including elements and fragments of the wagons, was thrown by the ferocity of the resultant blast well over a radius of 1000 yards from the railway siding.

The explosion, which is reported to have been heard as far away as Gurdaspur, 23 miles from Pathankot, set fire to the Defence stores in the depot over a wide area. The fire raged for about three-quarters of an hour, destroying considerable quantities of stores. No lives were lost as a

result of fire. Fire parties from all Units in the station reached the spot in a few minutes and put out the fire in less than an hour with great courage and skill. Field Ambulance with necessary medical, nursing staff and blood donors of the Military Hospital also reached the spot within a few minutes of the explosion and the casualties, both Defence and civilian, were removed to the Military Hospital speedily. In the face of the constant danger of further explosions taking place, the fire fighting crew together with the personnel in the Depot and from the neighbouring Defence Units and local Civil authorities carried out rescue operations with commendable speed, courage and efficiency. The area of the Ordnance Rail Head Group, including the Army military forwarding organisation and vehicle park is now secured by civil and military guards. All civilians working in the Depot were instantly removed out of the perimeter and outside the area which is still considered unsafe.

Road and railway traffic stand suspended.

The full extent of the casualties is not yet known. As far as can be ascertained at present, 18 civilians and 8 army personnel are known to be dead. The bodies of 23 of the dead have been recovered. Three of the dead cannot be removed from the wagon where their bodies now are without risking further explosions. Eight military personnel, one civilian employee and one member of an army family received injuries. The condition of the three of the injured is serious, but they are expected to recover. 28 civilian employees are now missing. It is not known how many of these have died in the explosion. It is, however, surmised by the Army authorities that some of these who are local civilian employees may have run away to their villages and the Civil Police are making efforts to trace them.

Army Headquarters and the Defence Ministry have been in constant touch