

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, March 3, 1987 / Phalguna 13
1908 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Consumer Councils

*85. PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state :

(a) whether consumer councils and various other bodies to be constituted under the Consumer Protection Act have been set up; and

(b) if so, whether organisations working for the interests of consumers have been given representation on these bodies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD):

(a) Consumer Protection Councils and Redressal Forums have to be set up by the Central and State Governments according to the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Rules pertaining to such of the provisions as relate to the responsibility of the Central Government have been framed and will be notified soon. Draft of the guidelines and model rules have been circulated to the State Governments in respect of their area of responsibility. Other administrative action has also to be taken to ensure that the institutions envisaged in the Act are set up at the earliest.

(b) Such organisations will be given representation on the Consumer Protection Councils, as and when they are set up.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE :

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, this Bill was passed in this House on 9th December 1986, and if I mistake not, today it is 3rd March 1987. Already it has been admitted by the hon. Minister that rules pertaining to such of the provisions as relate to the responsibility of the Central Government have been framed and will be notified soon.

Our rules as well as Practice and Procedure of Parliament state very clearly that after the rules are framed, they should be laid on the Table of both the House of Parliament as soon as possible. I do not know how you take the meaning of the words 'as soon as possible'. You have evolved your own vocabulary and interpretation of words.

On the last day of the last Session, this Bill was passed and you say that already the rules and regulations have been framed and these will be notified soon.

So, as yet the notifications have to be made and they are to be laid on the Table of the House. First, let me know when are you likely to lay these rules and regulations on the Table of the House.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT) : I would respectfully submit for the information of the hon. Member that the rules will be laid on the Table of the House. When we say 'framed', that means, we have to prepare the rules and they have to be vetted by the Law Ministry. The Law Ministry also vetted them, and we will certainly lay them on the Table of the House as soon as possible. I do not mean, only at the 'tag end' of the Session. No. We shall try to lay the rules as early as possible during this Session itself. And if I might tell the hon. Member that we have done it within two months time—it may perhaps be a record—we went into the rules immediately, almost when we passed the Bill, and I am sure that if not today,

tomorrow he is going to appreciate us as all other consumer organisations did including his wife.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Sir, I have full confidence in the Minister that he is efficient and he will lay the rules. But because I found that we sat for one legislation up to midnight and anti-terrorism rules were not laid for about 19 months, that is why, I had a doubt in my mind.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : You depend on my assurance.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : That is right. I depend more on your efficiency. I am glad about that.

The next question is, once the Bill is passed, once you get the assent, the rules are laid on the Table of the House.

Interruptions

Can I catch your ear, Sir? I say, in a good spirit!

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Even if I do not look at you, I always hear the Member. My ear is always towards you.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : They said that after the councils will be duly constituted, representation will be given to various organisations. So, it is very clear that so far the representation has not been given because the councils have not been duly constituted. But I would like to know from the Minister is he aware of the fact that there are a number of women organisations which are running the consumer organisations and some of them are also effectively and efficiently conducting the testing laboratories and they have asked the Government to give them the financial assistance? If the whole infra-structure of the council itself is not available, then naturally, the assistance will not be available. Will he assure us that at least by the end of the financial year, those pending cases will be dealt with and necessary financial assistance will be given because they will be needing testing laboratories which will be useful for the implementation of the Act which you have fortunately framed and which I have fully supported?

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : As for the information of the hon. Member, it is not that at the Centre, consumer advisory council has not been existing for a long time. It exists and it has been meeting regularly. Some representatives of some organisations are also members of that council. After this Act, it has got the statutory recognition. Some of them who are considered as suitable will be included in the council.

As far as the question of giving financial help to some organisations is concerned, the Ministry has been for sometime giving some help to some of them. Now the question which we are considering is whether actually we want an absolutely independent grassroot movement to grow by the people undiluted by the Government, undiluted by the Government interference and so on.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : You are not attending to every grassroot.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : Please listen to me. We have confidence in the people of India that they will certainly develop an organisation of that kind. But whether we should give help or not, that is a matter under consideration.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Sir, he has now admitted that he has already given the representation. But there are a number of genuine organisations which are already writing to you. You have not given them representation. They say, "We are conducting testing laboratories", and the papers have commended that they are doing good work. Even then, no financial assistance is coming.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : We understand the concern of the hon. Members for these organisations; so am I. And some of them have done really good work. The question in principle is, whether financial help should be given or not. We are considering this matter. We have been earlier helping some of them.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : They are women organisations; have some soft corner for them.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Why are you asking soft corner only for women? What about men?

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : We very rightly appreciate your point and we believe that women are better crusader for the cause of the consumers. That is why, in this whole Act, in every Tribunal, a woman has been compulsorily made a member. So we do know that it is the lady who knows the pinch of the kitchen more than anybody else.

[*Translation*]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Consumer Protection Act was passed on 9th December, 1986. As all these rules have been framed to protect the consumers, would it not have been proper to publish the draft rules in the newspapers in order to invite the suggestions and objections from the people? I think that after 9th December, the rules should have been published in the Gazette to elicit public opinion. It would have benefited the people a great deal.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to submit that there is no need to elicit public opinion on the rules. We do not think it to be necessary. Secondly, I want to submit for the information of the hon. Member that almost all the consumer organisations of the country, the Trade and Commerce and Industries Chamber, almost all the Indian newspapers and magazines have praised the consumer laws and have stated that progressive steps have been taken by us.

The second point here is that our approach is that all of us must work together in the interest of the consumers, trade and industries. The people from private trade and industries should also extend their co-operation.

I also want to say that for follow up action, we have held a meeting in which all the Ministers of the State participated. We have told the people belonging to the Public Sector, Private Sector and the Cooperative Sector to set up their own consumer organisations so that the problems of the people can be solved.

[*English*]

Social Burden on Public Sector Units

*86. †SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT ;
SHRI YASHWANTRAO GADAKH PATIL : Will the

Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Department of Public Enterprises has asked the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) to work out the social burden on each public sector unit as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 9 February, 1987;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the Bureau of Public Enterprises will submit its report to Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (PROF. K. K. TEWARY) :
(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, every Member of the House is worried about the fact that our public sector undertakings are incurring huge losses. Is the press report about the social burden of public sector units correct? Does not the hon. Minister think it necessary to ensure that such losses due to social activities and social burden do not occur? Are these the reasons or there are some other reasons?

The senior officers of the public sector enterprises live luxuriously. Their chambers are luxurious. The hon. Minister's Chamber is nothing as compared to theirs. I would therefore, like to know whether there is no control over their expenditure? The hon. Minister gets only one driver, one car and a limited salary. Your powers regarding expenditure are also restricted. Are there any norms regarding the expenditures by the officers of the Public Sector Units or do they spend as they like? There is so much of burden on these undertakings on account of this wasteful expenditure. Their guest houses are better furnished than even the Governor's Houses in the States. I want the hon. Minister to apprise me in this regard.

PROF. K.K. TEWARY : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question asked by the hon.