

PETITIONER:
UNION OF INDIA

Vs.

RESPONDENT:
COL. J. N. SINHA AND ANR.

DATE OF JUDGMENT:
12/08/1970

BENCH:
HEGDE, K.S.
BENCH:
HEGDE, K.S.
SHAH, J.C.

CITATION:
1971 AIR 40 1971 SCR (1) 791
1969 SCC (2) 662
CITATOR INFO :

R	1972	SC2185	(12)
F	1973	SC 698	(11)
R	1973	SC1252	(14)
RF	1975	SC2057	(8)
RF	1976	SC2433	(7)
R	1976	SC2581	(18)
F	1977	SC 854	(9)
R	1978	SC 597	(218)
R	1978	SC 851	(65, 66)
R	1980	SC 563	(16, 18, 21, 22, 25, 27, 31)
R	1981	SC 594	(5)
RF	1981	SC 818	(22, 29)
R	1984	SC 630	(4)
R	1985	SC1416	(99)
RF	1986	SC 555	(6)
R	1987	SC 65	(2)
RF	1987	SC 593	(23)
RF	1987	SC1933	(10)
R	1989	SC2218	(5)
RF	1990	SC1004	(8)
R	1990	SC1368	(22)
RF	1991	SC 101	(22, 152, 261)
RF	1991	SC 564	(6)
R	1992	SC1020	(12, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25, 29, 31)

ACT:
Constitution of India 1950, Arts. 309, 310-Rules made under Art.309-Pleasure doctrine embodied in Art. 310- Fundamental Rule 56(j) embodies pleasure doctrine-Compulsory refirement at age of 50 after a certain number of years of service does not have civil consequences Rules of natural justice cannot be invoked in such case-Rules of natural justice operate only in areas not covered by law validly made.

HEADNOTE:
The first respondent joined the post of Extra Assistant Superintendent in the Survey of India Service in 1938. Later he was taken into the Class I Service of the Survey of India and rose to the post of Deputy Director. He also officiated as -Director. On August 13, 1969 the President of India pleased by an order under Rule 56(j) of the Funda-

mental Rules to compulsorily retire the first respondent from Government service. No reasons were given in the order. The appellant challenged the order by a writ petition in the High Court. The failure on the part of the concerned authority to give opportunity to the first respondent to show cause against his compulsory retirement was held by the High Court to have amounted to a contravention of the principles of natural justice. Against the judgment of the High Court the Union of India appealed.

HELD : Rules of natural justice are not embodied rules nor can they be elevated to the position of fundamental rights. As observed by this Court in Kralpak's case these rules can operate only in areas not covered by any law validly made. If a statutory provision can be read consistently with the principles of natural justice, the Courts should do so because it must be presumed that the legislatures and the statutory authorities intend to act in accordance with the principles of natural justice. But on the other hand a statutory provision either specifically 'or by necessary implication excludes the application of any or all the principles of natural justice then the court cannot ignore the mandate of the legislature or the statutory authority and read with the concerned provision the principles of natural justice. Whether the exercise of a power conferred should be made in accordance with any of the principles of natural justice or not depends upon the express words of the provision conferring the power, the nature of the power conferred, the purpose for which it is conferred and the effect of the exercise of the power. [794 G-795 C]

Fundamental Rule 56(i) does not in terms require that any opportunity should be given to the concerned Government servant to show cause against his compulsory requirement. It says that the appropriate authority has the absolute right to retire a government servant if it is of the opinion that it is in the public interest to do so. If that authority bona fide forms that opinion the correctness of that opinion cannot be challenged before courts, though it is open to an aggrieved party to contend that the requisite opinion has not been formed or the decision is based on collateral grounds or that it is an arbitrary decision. The respondent had not challenged the impugned order on any of these grounds. [795 D-F]

Compulsory retirement does not involve any civil consequence. A person retired under Rule 56(i) does not lose any of the rights acquired

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by him before retirement. The rule is not intended for taking any penal action against government servants. It merely embodies one of the facets of the pleasure doctrine embodied in Art. 310 of the Constitution. The rule holds the balance between the, rights of the individual government servant and the interests of the public. While a minimum service is guaranteed to the government servant, the government is given power to energise its machinery and make it more efficient by compulsorily retiring those who in its opinion should not be there in public interest. Three months notice is provided to enable the retired employee to find out other suitable employment. [795 G-796 B]

On the above view of the law, namely, that no notice to show-cause was required, the appeal must be allowed.

T. G. Shivacharana Singh v. State of Mysore, A.I.R. 1965 S.C. 280.

Kraipak and Ors. v. Union of India, A.I.R. 1970, S.C. 150, State of Orissa v. Dr. (Miss) Binapani Dei and Ors., [1967] 2 S.C.R. 625 distinguished.

JUDGMENT:

CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION: Civil Appeal No. 381 of 1970.
Appeal-from the judgment and order dated December 22, 1969
of the Delhi High Court in Civil Writ No. 746 of 1969.

Niren De, Attorney-General and S. P. Nayar, for the
appellant.

Sardar Bahadur, Vishnu Bahadur, and Yougindra Khushalani,
for respondent No. 1.

G. S. Chatterjee, for respondent No. 2.

The Judgment of the Court was delivered by.

Hegde, J. 'In this appeal by certificate the only question
that was canvassed before us was as regards the validity of
the order contained in memorandum No. F. 16-42/68-S-1, dated
August 13, 1969 issued by the Government of India, Ministry
of Education and Youth Services, retiring the 1st respondent
compulsorily from government service in exercise of the
powers conferred under cl. (j) -of Fundamental Rule 56 with
effect from August 14 1969. That order was attacked before
the High Court on various grounds. The High Court rejected
some of those grounds. It did not find it necessary to
decide ' a few others but accepting the contention of the
respondent that in making the order, the appellant -had
violated the principles of natural justice, it held that the
impugned order is invalid The High Court accordingly issued
a writ of certiorari quashing that order.

Before us the only contention presented for -our decision
was whether the High Court was right in holding that in
making the impugned order the appellant had violated the
principles of natural justice. No other contention was
taken before us. Hence we shall address ourselves only to
that question.

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Before proceeding to examine the contention above-formulated
it is necessary to set out the material facts. The 1st
respondent. herein Col. J. N. Sinha successfully competed
in the examination held by the Federal Service Commission in
1938 for the post of Extra-Assistant Superintendent in the
Survey of India Service. After selection, he was appointed
as an Extra-Assistant Superintendent. He worked as
probationer for a period of three years and thereafter he
was confirmed in that post in 1941. During the second world
war, he Volunteered for active-service in the army and was
granted an emergency Commission in the army. He was granted
a regular commission in the army with effect from October
23, 1942.

In exercise of the powers conferred by the proviso to Art.
309 of the Constitution, the President of India made on
August 17, 1950 rules called the Survey of India
(Recruitment from Corps of Engineering Officers) Rules, 1950
for regulating the recruitment and conditions of service of
persons appointed from the Corps of Engineering Officers of
the Defence Ministry to the Survey of India Class I
Service.- Rule 2 of the said Rules provides for the
recruitment of Military Officers to the Survey of India
Class I Service and Rule 3 provides that the recruited
officers will be on probation for two years which may be
extended by the Government on the advice of the Surveyor
General. The 1st respondent was taken into the Survey of
India Class I Service under Rule 2 of the aforesaid 1950
Rules as Deputy Superintendent Surveyor with effect from
June 1951. Thereafter the President of India in .exercise
of the powers under the proviso to Art. 309, made on July 1,

1960 the Survey of India Class I (Recruitment) Rules, 1960 for regulating the recruitment of Survey of India Class I Service. The 1st respondent was subsequently promoted firstly as Superintending Surveyor and then as Deputy Director. After sometime he was promoted as Director and lastly as Director (Selection Grade). The last mentioned promotion was made with effect from October 27, 1966. On May 17, 1969, Fundamental Rule 56(j) was amended. Thereafter on August 13, 1969, the Ministry of Education and Youth Services issued the impugned order. The 1st respondent was given three months pay and allowances in lieu of three months notice prescribed in Fundamental Rule 56(1). The 1st respondent being aggrieved by that order, challenged the validity of the same. As mentioned earlier, the High Court accepted his plea. The Union of India has appealed against that order.

Fundamental Rule 56(j) reads

"Notwithstanding anything contained in this Rule the appropriate authority shall, if it is of the opinion that it is in the public interest so to do have the absolute right

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to retire any Government servant by giving him notice of not less than three months in writing or three months pay and allowances in lieu of such notice

(i) if he is in Class I or Class II Service or post the age limit for the purpose of direct recruitment to which is below 35 years, after he has attained the age of 50 years.

(ii) In any other case after he has attained the age of 55 years.

Provided that nothing in this clause shall apply to a Government servant referred to in clause (e) who entered Government service on or before 23rd July, 1966 and to a Government servant referred to in clause (f) ."

The order impugned merely says that in pursuance of cl. 56, the President was, pleased to decide that in public interest the 1st respondent should retire from government service with effect from August 13, 1969 and that he would be given three months pay and allowances in lieu of three months notice provided in the said rule. No reasons are given for compulsorily retiring the 1st respondent. Admittedly no opportunity was given to him to show cause against his compulsory retirement. The failure on the part of the concerned authority to give an opportunity to the 1st respondent to show cause against his compulsory retirement was held by the High Court to have amounted to a contravention of the principles of natural justice.

The validity of Fundamental Rule 56(j) was not questioned before the High Court nor before us. Its validity is not open to question in view of the decision of this Court in T. G. Shivacharana Singh and Ors. v. State of Mysore(1).

Fundamental Rule 56(j) in terms does not require that any opportunity should be given to the, concerned government servant 'to show cause against his compulsory retirement. A government -servant serving under the Union of India holds his office at the pleasure of the President as provided in Art. 310 of the Constitution. But this "Pleasure" doctrine is subject to the rules or law -made under Art. 309 as well as to the conditions prescribed under Art. 311. Rules of natural justice are not embodied rules nor can they be elevated to the position of fundamental rights. As observed by this Court in Kraipak and Ors. v. Union of ' India(2) "the aim of rules of natural justice is to secure justice or

to put it negatively to -prevent miscarriage of justice. These rules can operate only in areas not covered by any law validly made. In other words they do not supplant the law but supplement it." It

(1) A. I. R. 1965 S. C. 280

(2) A. I. R. 1970 , S. C. 150.

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is true that if a statutory provision can be read consistently with the principles of natural justice. the courts should do so because it must be presumed that the legislatures and the statutory authorities intend to act in accordance with the principles of natural justice. But if on the other hand a statutory provision either specifically or by necessary implication excludes the application of any or all the principles of natural justice then the court cannot ignore the mandate of the legislature or the statutory authority and read into the concerned provision the principles of natural justice. Whether the exercise of a power conferred should be made in accordance with any of the principles of natural justice or not depends upon the express words of the provision conferring the power, the nature of the power conferred, the purpose for which it is conferred / and the effect of the exercise of that power.

Now coming to the express words of Fundamental Rule 56(j), it says that the appropriate authority has the absolute right to retire a government servant if it is of the opinion that it is in the public interest to do so. The right conferred on the appropriate authority is an absolute one. That power can be exercised subject to the conditions mentioned in the rule.' one of which is that the concerned authority must be of the opinion that it is in public interest to do so. If that authority bona fide forms that opinion, the correctness of that opinion cannot be challenged before courts. It is open to an aggrieved party to contend that the requisite opinion has not been formed or the decision is based on collateral grounds or that it is an arbitrary decision. The 1st respondent challenged the opinion formed by the government on the ground of mala fide. But that ground has failed. The High Court did not accept that plea. The same was not pressed before us. The impugned order was not attacked on the ground that the required opinion was not formed or that the opinion formed was an arbitrary one. One of the conditions of the 1st respondent's service is that the government can choose to retire him any time after he completes fifty years if it thinks that it is in public interest to do so. Because of his compulsory retirement he does not lose any of the rights acquired by him before retirement. Compulsory retirement involves no civil consequences. The aforementioned rule 56(j) is not intended for taking any penal action against the government servants. That rule merely embodies one of the facets of the pleasure doctrine embodied in Art. - 310 of the Constitution. Various considerations may weigh with, the appropriate authority while exercising the power conferred under the rule. In some cases, the government may feel that a particular post may be more usefully held in public interest by an officer more competent than the one who is holding. It may be that the officer who is holding the post is not inefficient but the appropriate authority may prefer to have a more efficient officer. It may further be

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that in certain key posts public interest may require that a person of undoubted ability and integrity should be there. There is no denying the fact that in all organizations and

more so in government organizations, there is good deal of dead wood. It is in public interest to chop off the same. Fundamental Rule 56(j) holds the balance between the rights of the individual government servant and the interests of the public. 'While a minimum service is guaranteed to the government servant, the government is given power to energise its machinery and make it more efficient by compulsorily retiring those who in its opinion should not be there in public interest.

It is true that a compulsory retirement is bound to have some adverse effect on the government servant who is compulsorily retired but then as the rule provides that such retirements can be made only after the officer attains the prescribed age. Further a compulsorily retired government servant does not lose any of the benefits earned by him till the date of his retirement. Three months' notice is provided so as to enable him to find out other suitable employment.

In our opinion the high Court erred in thinking that the compulsory retirement involves civil consequences. Such a retirement does not take away any of the rights that have accrued to the government servant because of his past service. It cannot be said that if the retiring age of all or a section of the government servants is fixed at 50 years, the same would involve civil consequences. Under the existing system there is no uniform retirement age for all government servants. The retirement age is fixed not merely on the basis of the interest of the government servant but also depending on the requirements of the society.

The High Court was not justified in seeking support for its conclusion from the decision of this Court in *State of Orissa v. Dr. (Miss) Binapani Dei and ors.*(1) and *A. K. Krailpak v. Union of India*(').

In *Binapani Dei's case*(') *Dr. Binapani Dei's* date of birth was refixed by the government without giving her proper opportunity to show that the enquiry officer's report was not correct. It is under those circumstances this Court held that the order refixing the date of birth was vitiated for failure to comply with the principles of natural justice. Therein the impugned order took away some of the existing rights of the petitioner.

In *Krapak's case*('), a committee consisting of Chief Conservator of, Forest, Kashmir and others was appointed to recommend names of the officers from Kashmir Forest Service for

(1) [1967] 2 S. C. R. 625.

(2) A.I.R. 1970 S.C. 150.

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being selected for the Indian, Forest Service. The Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir was one of the candidates for selection. Further it was established therein that some of the officers who competed with him had earlier challenged his seniority and consequently his right to be the Chief Conservator and that dispute was pending. Under those circumstances this Court held that there -was contravention of the principles of natural justice.

For the reasons mentioned above, we are unable to agree with the conclusion reached by the High Court that the impugned order is invalid. We accordingly allow this appeal, set aside the judgment and decree of the High Court and dismiss the writ petition. In the circumstances of the case we make no order as to costs.

[The Court by order dated November 18, 1970 and January 19, 1971 on an application for review filed by the respondent vacated its order dismissing the writ petition. Instead,

the proceedings were remanded to the High Court for decision on such points as were not, dealt with and decided in the judgment of that court. Ed.]

G.C. Appeal allowed. Proceedings remanded.
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JUDIS