

value of the report which the Estimates Committee might make to this hon. House?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: It is very wrong to say that it will detract from it. We respect both the Committees, and if my friend wants that the Estimates Committee should be respected more, I am prepared to do it.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram: You yourself, Sir, is a Member of the Estimates Committee

Mr. Chairman: There is no occasion for argument now. We cannot go deeply into this question at this stage. The Question Hour is only devoted to eliciting information from the hon. Minister, and therefore, I cannot allow this argument.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram: I am not discussing, Sir. A vital question of privilege affecting this hon. House is involved in this particular question and answer.

Mr. Chairman: What is the point? Let the hon. Member kindly explain?

Dr. Lanka Sundaram: I have already notified the Chair in a formal letter last week, drawing attention to this particular fact, that the appointment of committees by the Government, when statutory committees of this House are investigating questions is a very serious matter. It has happened in the case of the Public Accounts Committee also. You would recall that the Hirakud question was taken over by one particular investigator. That is the point I am raising, and I hope the Chair, in due course, would give a ruling on this matter.

Mr. Chairman: At this stage, it does not arise. The matter will be looked into. As the hon. Member has already sent a letter, it shall be replied to, and the point looked into.

Shri Sarangadhar Das: May I know whether the tractors that are being purchased at the present time, presumably in the United States, are being purchased by any individual officer of the Ministry sent there, or

through the India Supply Mission, Washington?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I would like to have notice of the question. I would also like my hon. friend to specify the particular set of tractors which he has in mind.

Shri Raghavachari: May I know whether the Government propose to stop the functioning of this new committee which they have appointed, over and above the Estimates Committee?

Shri B. S. Murthy: Until a ruling is given.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: There is no conflict, I do not think that we are trying to make this other committee which we have appointed, sit in judgment over the Estimates Committee. In all probability, they will be complementary committees, and not conflicting ones.

Shri Velayudhan: The hon. Minister stated that the C.T.O. is working very well. May I know whether an officer at the head of the C.T.O. was dismissed before, for certain defalcation in the purchase of tractors, or something like that?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I do not think anybody was dismissed, but I would like my hon. friend to give me notice of this question.

POST OFFICES

694. Ch. Lakshman Singh Charak: (a) Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state how many post offices are in the Jammu and Kashmir State at present?

(b) What is the average monthly income and expenditure of the village post offices in Jammu and Kashmir?

The Deputy Minister of Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) Urban 31.

Rural 269 as on 31st March, 1953.

(b) Information is not readily available.

Shri A. M. Thomas: May I know from where the personnel working in these post offices in Jammu and Kashmir, are drawn, from the inhabitants of that area or from outside?

Shri Raj Bahadur: They are drawn from the inhabitants of the area in most cases.

Shri A. M. Thomas: May I further enquire whether the allegation reported to have been made by the ex-Prime Minister of Kashmir, to the effect that discrimination is being made in the matter of appointments to the Communication Department, has come to the notice of the Government; and if so, is there any foundation for that allegation?

Shri Raj Bahadur: I consider that allegation as unfortunate, and I may add that it is totally unfounded.

Th. Lakshman Singh Charak: Do the Government propose to increase the number of post offices in the villages of Jammu and Kashmir?

Shri Raj Bahadur: For the information of the hon. Member, I may say that we have more than doubled the number of post offices in Jammu and Kashmir State, ever since 15th August 1947. It is now 269, as against about 130 previously.

Shri N. M. Lingam: May I know whether post offices have been opened in Jammu and Kashmir, in villages having a population of less than 2,000?

Shri Raj Bahadur: Every case depends on its merits. In most cases, we have followed a uniform policy, governing the opening of new post offices throughout the country, namely that of opening post offices for villages with a population of above 2,000 but in certain cases, we might have allowed some concession.

PARLAKIMEDI LIGHT RAILWAY

*695. **Shri Sanganna:** (a) Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state whether Government are aware that many breaches have been caused to the Parlakimedi Light Railway line

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(Eastern Railway Zone) by the floods during the month of June, 1953?

(b) If so, what is the total value of damage caused?

(c) Were communications dislocated for some period due to these breaches?

(d) Do Government propose to make any improvements to avoid such breaches in future?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Shahnawaz Khan): (a) The reply is in the affirmative.

(b) Rs. 5,000 approximately.

(c) Yes, for about 3 days.

(d) Question of providing additional waterways etc. is under consideration.

Shri Sanganna: May I know the names of places at which the breaches were caused?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: There is no specific name of the place where these breaches occurred. They were caused on a section of the railways.

Shri B. C. Das: Has the attention of the Government been drawn to the fact that breaches are an annual occurrence there?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: Yes. Government are aware of that, and they are taking adequate steps to cope up with them, by providing additional waterways.

Shri B. C. Das: Are the Government considering the question of changing the light railway into a metre gauge railway?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: No, Sir.

Shri Sanganna: May I know whether these breaches have been caused on account of the fact that there is a narrow drainage system provided by the culverts under bridges?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: They are being widened, and additional waterways are also being provided.