

Mr. Speaker: It is impossible to go on contradicting.

Shri Bangahi Thakur: In the newly reclaimed areas in Tripura, which are free from fertilisers, the production amounts to 75 maunds per acre. May I know what will be the effect of fertilisers on such soil?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain): This is more a question for the scientists to answer. But, even as a layman, I can say that wherever the fertility is high, fertilisers need not necessarily be used.

U.S.A. Wheat

*1860. **Shri Naushir Bharucha:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal of U.S.A. to make urgent sales of surplus wheat valued at 85 million dollars has been finalised; and

(b) what are the terms as to (i) price; (ii) credit or payment; and (iii) delivery?

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): (a) No such proposal has been received from the Government of the United States.

(b) Does not arise.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Is there any proposal to get wheat from America against manganese ore?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: It is still under discussion. At present, there is no proposal, and nothing has been decided about it.

Shri Joachim Alva: This week, there is a report that there is feverish American diplomatic activity in Cairo with Nasser to give him frozen cast of Suez Canal as well as wheat. May I know whether we are also proposing to buy some wheat, and whether the Government of India would be alert in regard to the price that they will pay for wheat, for, the Minister said last time that the price for wheat will be lower than that prevailing according

to the International Wheat Agreement?

Shri C. D. Pande: We want wheat and money. We want both.

Mr. Speaker: There are other persons also ready to buy. Are we going to try to go in advance and purchase at a cheaper price? That is the suggestion of the hon. Member.

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain): We are always vigilant and want to buy at the lowest price.

Inland Water Transport Freight Rates

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*1861. { **Dr. Ram Subhag Singh:**
Shri Bhagavati:
Shri Basumatari:
Shri Liladhar Kotoki:

Will the Minister of Transport and Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether the joint steamer to companies which operate their vessels in the Ganga, Brahmaputra, etc, have increased their freight rates;

(b) if so, by what percentage; and

(c) how has this increase in freight rate been received by the transport users?

The Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation (Shri Mohiuddin): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The freight rates on cargo other than foodgrains have been increased by 12½ per cent. from 1st July, 1957 and by a further 10 per cent. approximately from 1st April, 1958. Freight on foodgrains has been increased by 12½ per cent. from 15th February, 1958.

(c) There have been some protests from the users.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: May I know the effect of this increase in freight rates on the agriculturists in Asam and Bihar?

Shri Mohiuddin: The actual effects will be very difficult to assess. But my answer is not concerned with Bihar; it is concerned with Assam. As

the railway freights as well as the river-craft freights were increased on account of the transportation costs, there must have been some rise in the case of consumers' articles also.

Shri Kamal Singh: The question deals with the Ganga. And the Ganga passes through Bihar also.

Mr. Speaker: The question deals with the Ganga and the Brahmaputra.

The Minister of Transport and Communications (Shri S. K. Patil): May I add a word? The effect of it is naturally bad, because when the rates are increased, the peasants and everybody else also suffers. But there are reasons for it, and we are going into the whole question of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra river navigation.

Shri Basumatari: May I know whether the Joint Steamer Companies consulted the Government of India before they increased the freight?

Shri Mohiuddin: No.

Shri Hem Barua: In view of the fact that the freight rates are almost annually increased—last year, by 12½ per cent., and this year by 10 per cent.—by the Joint Steamer Companies, and the services are concomitantly curtailed on this plea and that, may I know whether Government propose to institute an enquiry into the expenditure structure of the Joint Steamer Companies and suggest reduction of uneconomic expenses, if possible?

Shri S. K. Patil: I have replied to this question already. The whole question is under investigation. The companies have approached Government, and have been approaching Government, for the last two or three years, because, according to them, they are suffering losses. The whole question has to be gone into not only with reference to the increase in freight charges but also with reference to whether those companies could continue their services which they are unable to do just now.

Shri Hem Barua: During the last two years, when the companies met Government, did Government make any suggestions to them to suitably utilise their sterling deposits . . .

Mr. Speaker: These are all arguments.

Shri Hem Barua: . . . and their reserves also for . . .

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to allow the hon. Member to go on giving reasons why they should reduce the rates. The hon. Member will only elicit facts. But the hon. Member wants to take the place of the Minister in the matter of negotiation and give him details as to the heads under which expenditure can be reduced. He may reserve it for a future occasion. What is the information that he wants to have from the Minister? I have also heard him for two minutes, and he is only giving information as to how the Minister should act; first of all, he says that the overhead charges and other charges should be reduced so that they will not ask for increased freights; then he asked what they have done with their sterling balances. I allowed that question also. Then, he goes on to ask some other question as to what they have done with this or what they have done with that. Is he eliciting information or is he giving information?

Shri Hem Barua: May I make a humble submission? I just want to ask a straight question. It is only for the last two years . . .

Mr. Speaker: That question is disallowed.

Hon. Members should elicit information during the Question Hour, and utilise it for that purpose. There are various other ways in which these things can be raised. The hon. Member knows how best to utilise the time of this House.

Shri Yajnik: Will the Minister give us an assurance that no further increase will be made in the rates?

Mr. Speaker: Why should he ask for assurances during the Question Hour?

Shri S. K. Patil: It is very difficult to give an assurance of that type, but we have got to choose between two things, a slight increase in the rates or the total stoppage of that convenience altogether.

Shri Kamal Singh: May I know whether the steamer service upto Buxar has been continued, and if it has not been continued, what steps Government are considering to continue this service?

Shri Mohiuddin: The Bihar service has been discontinued, and I am not aware whether the question of restarting it is under the consideration of the company.

Shri Liladhar Kotaki: May I know whether the Government of Assam have brought to the notice of the Government of India the situation arising out of the increase in freight rates and whether they have submitted any proposal to the Government of India to solve the problem?

Shri S. K. Patil: The Government of Assam are naturally very anxious when these things happen, not only, as I said, with reference to the increase in freights but the whole position of these steamer companies, whether they are going to continue or not. I promised, and I repeat it, that the whole question, including even those places where it is stopped, is under investigation, and very soon we shall come to a decision as to what the future course should be.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: I am thankful to the hon. Minister for the reply he has just now given. But during the last session, the then Minister of Transport gave an assurance that the steamer service which was operating in Bihar would not be discontinued. May I know why the service was allowed to be discontinued, and on top of that, freight rates were allowed to be increased?

Shri S. K. Patil: The hon. Member knows that we have not got so direct a control over these foreign companies as to say when they should continue and when they should discontinue. Surely, the licence is with us. But the whole question is under investigation, because the companies, according to them, are making heavy losses. *Prima facie*, it may be so, but it is a matter for investigation. Therefore, as I promised—and I do it once again—the whole question, after it is gone through and we come to a decision as to how we are going to help those companies to continue the service and even keep the freights within reasonable limits, will be decided in the next few weeks.

Shri Hem Barua: The hon. Minister was kind enough to say that during the last two years these companies approached Government and acquainted them of their losses, according to them. In the meanwhile, they were increasing the freight rates, by 12½ per cent. in 1957 and by 10 per cent. in 1958. May I know what steps were taken during these two years to see that the freight rates were not increased and to ascertain that they were actually suffering losses?

Shri S. K. Patil: The only alternative was to give them a subsidy. That is exactly what they are demanding. It is difficult for Government to give a subsidy like that without preliminary investigation. The other alternative was stoppage. Therefore, it was really a very serious matter, and Government could not contemplate that. Now we have to wait for some time till we go into the question and come to a decision.

बांस का फल

*१८६२. श्री चासर : क्या खाद्य तथा कृषि मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि बांस का फल एक खाद्य पदार्थ है;