

Shri A. K. Sen: I do not think we have ever adopted any lukewarm attitude in this matter. We only say that some of the States have opposed Central legislation.

Shri Ranga: Apart from Madras and Andhra, may I know whether any other State Governments have introduced any Bills in their legislature on this subject? Has the Government of India suggested to the State Governments the advisability of taking up legislation to protect religious endowments?

Shri A. K. Sen: If and when the views of the State Governments are received we shall decide upon the course of action which the Government of India should take. If we decide upon uniform legislation, it is the end of the matter. If we do not, it will still be a question for consideration whether we should request other State Governments to undertake legislation similar to those now prevailing in Madras and other States.

Incentives for Tea Planters

+

- *130. { **Shri Hem Barua;**
Shri P. C. Borooah;
Shri P. R. Chakraverti;

Will the Minister of **International Trade** be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have proposed to give additional incentives and excise concessions to tea planters for extending areas under tea as well as for increasing production in the existing gardens; and

(b) if so, broad outlines of the plan?

The Minister of International Trade (Shri Manubhai Shah): (a) and (b). Already several steps like hire-purchase scheme, rebate scheme, artificial irrigation scheme etc. have been implemented by Tea Board. Various measures to encourage production of tea and to extend the area under tea are under active consideration of Government.

Shri Hem Barua: Speaking at the Tea Planters' Conference of South

India, the hon. Minister held out a promise of excise concessions and also referred optimistically to the prospects of newer markets like the Soviet Union. May I know the progress so far made on both these accounts?

Shri Manubhai Shah: As far as incentives are concerned, the matter is under active consideration and I do hope that as we want to increase tea production very considerably, some measures will be coming out as early as possible. Regarding sale of tea to the Soviet Union, it has considerably expanded as a result of the new five year pact, which I have already placed before the House. As a result of that pact, our exports to the Soviet Union will practically be doubled.

Shri Hem Barua: Nil tariff by the ECM countries is an encouraging piece of news for the industry but may I know whether Government have taken into account the other obstacles in the way of tea penetrating into the ECM countries like quota restrictions, internal taxation etc; if so, have Government contemplated any measures to improve the situation on this account also?

Shri Manubhai Shah: For the ECM and the EFTA region which we consider to be one of the most sophisticated regions of the world we have now a crash programme for tea propaganda. A Special Tea Adviser has already been appointed two months ago. There has been a special committee and a large amount of expenditure has been sanctioned by the Government of India for intensive propaganda. We are also in touch with our neighbouring country as to whether they would join us. But whether they join us or not, our programme of tea promotion will continue. About the quota restriction, the Kennedy round of talks are to begin next year; but there are also other things, like, internal duty, and these also we are tackling.

Shri P. C. Borooah: Since the replacement of the age-old tea arrears and putting up new extensions are

badly and urgently needed for keeping up production, will the Government be pleased to relax the terms of long-term loan, that is, granting the loans on second charge allowing the first charge to be with the financing banks against the advances on working capital?

Shri Manubhai Shah: As the hon. Member knows, I have already told everybody interested that as long as Government money is not unsafe, I am prepared to relax all conditions.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Besides increasing production and acreage, what steps have been taken also to improve the quality of tea because in the internal market though the price has shot up the quality is so bad that it is almost unbearable?

Shri Manubhai Shah: I am not prepared to accept that the quality of tea is bad, that is, Darjeeling, Orange Pekoe, Lopchu and various other teas as are consumed here. As a matter of fact, our exports mainly consist of common tea and not of quality tea. Most of the quality tea is consumed in the country and I am not prepared to accept that, in an humble way.

Mr. Speaker: That might be the reason why she is left with bad tea, because all quality tea goes out.

Shri Manubhai Shah: No, Sir; it is the other way about. It is the common tea and not the quality tea which is being sold out.

Shri Tyagi: No, Sir; tea is fast losing its flavour.

Shri Manubhai Shah: What the hon. lady Member says, namely, that the Indian tea which she gets is not of a high quality, is not borne out by facts. Even then, we are appointing a tea research association which will be a central organisation for improving productivity and the quality of tea.

Mr. Speaker: Why should he not send a quality tea sample to the hon. Member?

Shri Manubhai Shah: I am prepared to do that.

Shri Hem Raj: May I know whether the Punjab has approached the Central Government for making some modifications in some of the schemes which the Tea Board has made for the purpose of improvement in the tea gardens in the Kangra District?

Shri Manubhai Shah: The hon. Member has secured only a few days back a reduction in the excise duty on tea produced in his part of the country and I am glad about that. I do not think any further type of concessions are forthcoming very soon. But if there is any simplification required by the co-operative gardeners and small holders in the Punjab, we are certainly prepared to give them very liberally.

Shrimati Jyotsna Chanda: Which are those States which have implemented the proposal of extending tea areas; and, also, are they considering putting restrictions on tea areas converting into rice-growing areas as also to *supari* plantations?

Shri Manubhai Shah: As far as extending tea garden areas is concerned, all restrictions have been removed. There are so many people who have taken extra land that it will be difficult to give the whole enumeration because there are more than 90,000 planters. But in every region small extensions are going on.

Shri P. R. Chakraverti: Is there any assessment of the prospects of increased production as a result of this facility being made available to these tea planters?

Shri Manubhai Shah: I would rather not hazard any forecast because tea is an agricultural commodity and it depends on more factors than one; but we will try to implement as many intensive schemes as possible so that our tea production increases as it has shown some tendency over the last several years.