

Another point is that in your note, which you had presented earlier, it has been mentioned that a provision of Rs. 500 crores is being made to meet the natural calamities. Our state is facing severe famine. There is no food and water; and the situation is so acute that even cattle are perishing. It is the most severe famine of this century. You are thinking of reducing the amount being spent on natural calamities so that the deficit in the Budget could be brought down. But if the Central Government does not help the Rajasthan Government in the situation I have described, then livestock would perish in large number. At present about 3.5 crores of cattle in Rajasthan are facing famine problems and if you do not provide help to save them, not more than 1/4th of them would be able to survive. During the famine in 1967-68 in Rajasthan, only one tenth of the livestock had survived. I think that the same situation is likely to be repeated now. So the most important thing is that though you have to balance the budget, yet you will have to think of some alternative to solve the problem in Rajasthan. During the previous famine, you had started the scheme of giving wheat as wages. We want that the same scheme of providing wheat as wages be started once again as it will provide a great relief to us. That scheme had kept the prices of foodgrains in check at that time. We want that you should assure us that you will provide the entire help in the form of wheat and only then we would be able to meet the situation.

The second thing I want to emphasize is that there is great need to change the Gadgil formula. In that formula 60 per cent of the assistance is based on population. But the backward areas like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and U.P. which are very large..... (Interruptions) Maharashtra and West Bengal do not come in this category. So long as the Gadgil formula is not changed for these backward areas and area is also not considered as a basis, we cannot get the help which we need. In the present situation, under the Gadgil formula, developed states get more help and underdeveloped states get less help. Hence, there is great need to change this formula.

The third thing I want to say is that yesterday the hon. Prime Minister gave you special instructions to make changes in the

Gadgil formula. You will have to take some strong measures to bring about the change. You have undertaken the rural development programmes and poverty eradication programmes. Under I.R.D.P. which is meant for poverty eradication, the percentage of subsidy should be reduced, from 50 per cent as it is grossly misused. I suggest that the amount of subsidy be reduced from 50 per cent to 25 per cent and instead, the Government may provide other benefits. You can grant benefits in the shape of interest-free loans. In this way you should try to strengthen the economy. This is my only suggestion, as it is grossly misused.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I wanted to say something more, but you are ringing the bell.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have given you more than 10 minutes. So, the time is over. I have given you sufficient time.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : I would like to know from you whether the discussion on the general economic situation is going to continue tomorrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Yes, the discussion will continue tomorrow.

17.36 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

[English]

Closure of Government of India Presses at Calcutta

MR. CHAIRMAN : Kumari Mamta Banerjee to initiate the discussion.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Jadavpur) : Before starting the discussion, I think our Minister Shri Dalbir Singh is also very much concerned about the closing down of the Government of India Presses at Calcutta and Simla. He is very sympathetic to review the whole situation and consider the issue. I know that our hon. Minister will

[Kumari Mamata Banerjee]

not give any negative reply because our party is always fighting in favour of the workers. I hope that our Minister will fight for and protect the rights of the workers. (Interruptions) Sir, it is a very important and serious issue. I think our Minister will consider my point. The people of West Bengal and Simla are waiting to see the decision of the Government to review the whole situation. Our Minister has said in his reply on the 10th November 1986 that it has been decided to close down the undermentioned presses etc. in a phased manner during the years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 : (1) Government of India Press (Forms Unit), Santragachi; (2) Government of India Press, Temple Street, Calcutta; (3) Government of India Press, Simla and (4) Government of India Forms Stores, Calcutta. Also, our hon. Minister has stated in his reply that the decision is based on the ground of streamlining the working of the Government of India Presses and to make them economically viable and also as a part of the process of shedding non-essential activities by the Government. He has further stated in his reply that the staff which cannot be absorbed in other units and are willing to be placed in surplus cell of the Department of Personnel will be transferred to that cell.

While Government has taken such an important decision, I do not know what is the basis on which the decision was taken. I do not know how the Government has taken this decision. The Minister has only stated that as they are economically not viable, our Ministry is going to close down these presses.

I would like to highlight here that out of the 20 Presses spread all over the country, the performance of the Government of India Press, Temple Street Calcutta, accounts for 74 per cent which is the highest among all the Presses. Instead of rewarding it, our Government is giving punishment to it. If a good student gets the first prize because of his intelligence, because of his study, then his parents must give him more opportunities for study; he should be given double promotion, if necessary. But instead of reward, the education of this student is now going to be stopped. Instead of this press being rewarded, it is going to be closed.

Then I come to the second point. As for the Forms Unit, Santragachi, the performance is 44 per cent; it is better than at least six other presses; the performance has improved compared to last year. But as a reward, this Press is facing closure.

Number three is about Simla Press. I have been told by Shrimati Chandresh Kumari about it; she was also very much concerned about it. The performance of the Simla Press is 42 per cent; it is better than many other Government of India Presses, but this Press is now being condemned.

The fourth is : the Government of India Forms Store at Calcutta is a centralised agency for storing and distribution of standard Government Forms, both civil and military. This organisation has been functioning effectively since independence. If this Unit is closed, 700 workers will be on the road.

If Government is not going to review the whole situation, 3,000 workers will be on the road. The Government has already stated that some workers are going to be surplus. Our Prime Minister is very much willing to protect the interests of the workers and farmers. Whenever we raise our voice, we have seen, the Prime Minister is very much willing to sort out our problems. But how are such things happening, I do not know. There must be some communication gap or there may be some lacuna. That is why, these things are happening.

One Review Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of Director of Printing, so far as my knowledge goes, under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Khanna. She has recommended that due to non-viability, the unit must be closed down. I do not know what is the real position. I have no personal grievance against that lady. But we have to face the reality. I have to speak out the reality. Nobody should take any decision according to his or her personal interest.

I would like to mention that the Ministry of Urban Development approved five year replacement plan/programme for modernisation which indicates massive modernisation for all the above-mentioned three Presses. But after

the new Director of Printing came, the decision was suddenly changed. The present Director of Printing, in an open-house meeting at DP and AR in June 1986 located the above three Presses for closing down without showing any reason. Only two years ago there was a budget provision for about Rs. 50 lakhs for a new building for Santragachi Forms Unit, but now suddenly the Press is proposed to be closed down in spite of better performance. In 1985, the most modern equipment for plate-making were installed in Forms Unit, Santragachi, by spending valuable foreign exchange. A six-crore rupee project was also prepared by the CPWD for housing the Santragachi Forms Unit and a Memo for approval of E.F.C. was prepared. But now I do not know why this has been changed. In the case of Simla also, one team of officers had already visited the place and they had already selected a new site. When this new Director came, all this was changed. I do not know what is the intention. I want to say one thing categorically and emphatically. These officials are not interested in maintaining the image of our Prime Minister; the officials are trying to destroy our Party image, they are trying to destroy our government image. When our Government is willing to do something, when our Minister is willing to do something, when our Minister is willing to protect the interests of our country, there should be no such intention on the part of the officials to close down these units. I would request the hon. Minister...*(Interruptions)* I am a public representative and the Minister as also a public representative. I have some problems in my Constituency and he is also having some problems in his Constituency. Because some workers are asking me today, they may ask you also tomorrow. But you have to see the facts. I believe and am optimistic that we will not get any negative answer from you. I know that you are very sympathetic to us and you will see the facts. If the recommendation cannot be accepted please see what are the best things in it and see the facts also.

On the one hand, you propose to close down three units which are giving better performance and on the other hand you are adding six crores to your Unit at Delhi,

the performance of which is below level. I have no personal grievance about Delhi. But I would insist that you have to protect the interest of all places.

(Interruptions)

The Printing machines are very old in the Calcutta Press. They cannot offer regular production due to mechanical and electrical defects. So, replacement is needed for better production.

Secondly, mono-key board and mono-casting machines are very old in those two presses. Government is not supplying the mono-metal to feed these machines. As a result, production is hampered. Replacement and regular supply of mono-metal is needed for better production.

It is also a fact that white printing paper and reel paper for the printing machines are supplied in a very irregular manner. Production is hampered thereby. So, regular supply of paper is needed for more production.

The Government of India Forms Store, Calcutta is one of the oldest offices in India. From this office the Central Government Forms Ledger books and all other papers are supplied throughout India in the most satisfactory manner for more than 50 years. There cannot be any justification to close down the Forms Store Office of Calcutta.

I would not like to speak more words because we know that there is no need to speak more. The only word that we have to speak is our main intention and that is our tenacity.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : You are also in favour of workers Sir. I would like to request the Hon. Minister to please listen to me. Other Ministers—Shri Santosh Mohan Dev, Smt. Sheila Dikshit, Smt. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai—are also here. So. I would like to appeal that please review the whole situation and take concrete decisions not to close down these units, but take some constructive suggestions to open this industry where you can continue these Presses. Only then the worker's interest

[Kumari Mamata Banerjee]

will be protected. Otherwise these workers will be on the road. Who will protect them? In West Bengal sick industries are increasing day by day. In order to get some results you have to save and protect the workers' interest. So, I would request the Minister to kindly review the whole situation and set up a Committee which will review the whole matter and take concrete decisions not to close down these units. Please extend the time for this, not close down. Please review the whole situation and set up a new Committee.

I think I will get proper justice from you. Justice will not remain behind the doors. I need your protection Sir.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : Can I ask a supplementary Sir ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : As per rules, it is not permitted.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, in relation to the information sought in the half-an-hour discussion I want to inform that 20 printing presses are working at present. The Group of Secretaries under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary decided in relation to the press in Calcutta that the enterprises not earning profits should be closed down and even the reasons for taking such a decision have been mentioned. For example, the following reason has been mentioned in relation to the Government of India Press (Forms Unit), Santragachi :

[English]

The reasons of economy and certain non-essential activities, the building of the Press has been declared unsafe. The new building will cost about Rs. 6 crores. As regards Government of India Press, Temple Street the reasons are of economy and shedding of non-essential activities. As regards the third, viz., Government of

India Forms Store, Calcutta the reasons are that on closure of the Temple and Santragachi presses the workload of the unit will considerably decrease and will not be economical to continue.

[Translation]

A meeting of the Group of Secretaries was held and it was decided in that meeting; then only this decision was taken that the running of these presses was uneconomical and hence these should be closed...

(Interruptions)

[English]

(Interruptions)**

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record without my permission. Please take your seats.

[Translation]

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : The Government itself wants that the workers should not suffer in any way. Under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act, the industrial workers in our units will be sent to the surplus cell of the Ministry of Personnel and Training and they will be absorbed in future vacancies... (Interruptions)

(Interruptions)**

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record without my permission. It is not permitted under Half-an-Hour discussion. You have got other methods of raising the issue. About Half-an-Hour discussion the rules are very clear. After the member concerned speaks the Minister will reply. Only members whose name is there in the ballot will ask questions. Others will not be permitted to ask question.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : What reply has he given? Where is the reply?

(Interruptions)**

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record without my permission.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, I rise on a point of order. The hon. lady member has raised a very important matter. The only answer given by the Minister is what the Secretaries have decided. Is this an answer to the Half-an-Hour discussion? This is why the hon. Speaker has allowed to raise this discussion. The member has raised an important matter and given good reasons.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please take your seat. I will give my ruling. I cannot ask the Minister to say anything more.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : As per the rules, I cannot press him to answer more than what he wants to say...

*(Interruptions)***

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : He has not given any reply to any of my questions. In that case why did the hon. Speaker allow me to raise this Half-an-Hour discussion?

In protest, I walk out.

17.56 hrs.

(Kumari Mamata Banerjee then left the House)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Shantaram Naik.

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji) : It is the duty of the Minister to reply all the specific questions. It is, of course, left to him, what he wants to say.

In answer to Unstarred Question No. 1025, it was stated by the Minister at (b) :

"The decision is based on the ground of streamlining the working of Government of India presses and to make them economically viable and

also as a part of the process of shedding non-essential activities by the Government."

All our printing presses print rules and regulations which practically administer the country. Are these and other activities of theirs non-essential activities? What is the economic viability that is derived by closing down the printing presses? When we are opening new industries, what is the sense in closing these printing presses? About three thousand workers are likely to be retrenched. Has any analysis been made about the unemployment problem? Has any systematic study been made to arrive at the conclusion that printing press is a non-essential activity? If so, on what basis?

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (Ulu-beria) : First, I want to register my protest that the Minister has not replied to the points raised in this discussion. It is totally unfortunate...**

MR. CHAIRMAN : All these things will not be recorded. It will not form part of the record. Only put your questions.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : How much work is being done by private presses which could have been done by the Government presses? How many machines were kept idle and those did not work? What is the reason for that? When the Temple Street Press is producing upto 78.3 per cent of the installed capacity, why is it being closed down?

Lastly, will the Government keep the decision in abeyance and discuss the matter with the Unions so that these may run on proper lines?

18.00 hrs.

[Translation]

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, although the hon. Minister is a good friend of ours and he belongs to a backward area of the country and he has greatly served the worker and

[Shri Manoranjan Bhakta]

labour class also, but I am sorry that the bureaucrats of his Ministry have taken a very unfortunate decision on this issue. This has caused a problem of employment to about 3000 persons. The half-an-hour discussion raised by Kumari Mamata Banerjee in this House has also not been satisfactorily answered by the hon. Minister. In view of this, I would like to submit to him that I do not want to raise other issues, but this new problem is causing worry to the whole of the House. Everyone has expressed concern about it. I would like to submit whether keeping in view the feelings of the House, this matter would be reviewed. Hon. Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary should be apprised of the feelings of the House so that some suitable decision on this issue could be taken in the matter. You, please throw some light on this issue.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, our hon. Minister is very competent person and he has been fighting for the rights of the poor. He has spent his life for the welfare of the backward people. But I express my dissatisfaction over his answer which has been prepared by some officers of his Ministry and which is totally anti-poor in nature.

The second thing I want to say is :

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : You put only the question please.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : That is what I am doing, Sir. I am a senior member. I am not here for the first time. I know what I am doing.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You can put only the question. What can I do ?

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : I am putting the question only. Without understanding, how can you say Sir ? I am formulating my question.

The Minister is not listening. I will put the question only when he listens.

[Translation]

Secondly, as my friend Shri Manoranjan

Bhakta has said that the decision to close down these presses can never be adjudged correct in any situation. It has been reported that this decision is based on the recommendations of the committee under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary and the Government has full authority to review this decision. Besides, a new committee may be appointed to go through the recommendations of that committee or the Cabinet Secretary may again be entrusted with this job.

Keeping in view the feelings of the House as also the interests of about 5500 labourers and the policy of the Government, will this whole matter be reconsidered. Will you refer this issue for reconsideration to the committee appointed under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary and defer this decision of closing down the presses till the report of the sub-committee is received say for a period of one year or six months ? This is all that I want to know from you.

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : Without replying individually to the views of various hon. Members, I would like to say this much, as Shri Rawat has also said, that we would review this whole issue within a period of six months. As this august House has expressed concern over the retrenchment of some persons and some other problems, all such issues will also be reconsidered in this period.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Is the whole decision kept in abeyance Sir ?

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : Mr. Chairman, Sir, we are satisfied with the answer of the hon. Minister. We express our thanks to the hon. Minister.

18.05 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, December 4, 1986/Agrahayana 13, 1908 (Saka)