

297 Agr. Workers (Minimum VAISAKHA 3, 1915 (SAKA) Wages and Welfare) Bill 298

SHRI VIDYACHARAN SHUKLA: Sir, I beg to move:

"That provisions of sub-rule (1) rule 30 and the proviso to rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha in their application to the debate on the Railway Protection Force (Amendment) Bill, 1991 (Substitution of new Long Title for Long Title, etc.) by Shri Basudeb Acharia which has been adjourned today to the next day allotted for Private Members' Bills, be suspended to enable the Bill to be set down in the List of Business without Ballot as the first item therein.

(ii) Motion RE: Suspension of Debate

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"The provisions of sub-rule (1) of rule 30 and the provisos to rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha in their application of the debate on the Railway Protection Force (Amendment) Bill, 1991 (Substitution of new Long Title for long Title, etc.) by Shri Basudeb Acharia which has been adjourned to the next day allotted for Private Members' Bills, be suspended to enable the Bill to be set down in the List of Business without Ballot as the first item therein."

The motion was adopted

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we go to the next item- Agricultural Workers (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill

Shri Sriballav Panigrahi - not present

Shri Virendra Singh - not present

Dr. Laximinarayan Pandeya - not present

Prof. K. V. Thomas

15.44 hrs

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS (MINIMUM WAGES AND WELFARE) BILL-
CONTD

PROF. K. V. THOMAS: (Ernakulam): Sir, the Agricultural Workers (Minimum Wages and

Welfare) Bill moved by my colleague Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh is to protect a very large number of unorganised agricultural workers in the country.

Sir, in many States, the rights of the agricultural workers are not adequately protected. Even in the so-called left front ruled States, agricultural workers are not getting their due rights. That is, even in West Bengal, these agricultural workers are not getting the adequate legal protection for getting the minimum wages and protection for other welfare activities.

In this Bill, it has been suggested about the minimum wages to be paid to workers, it is suggested that every employer shall pay a minimum of Rs. 700 per month or Rs. 30 per day to the worker engaged by him for working on his land. And this rate of wages has been subject to change in according with the rise in price index. This Rs. 30 is a very small amount. But even that amount is not legally protected by the legislations neither in the State Government nor in the Union. But fortunately for Kerala, we have made a number of leading legislations in this direction.

As back as in 1962 under the Congress Government in Kerala when Shri R. Shankar was the Chief Minister and Shri P. T. Chako was the Home Minister, who was the father of the present Member Shri P. C. Thomas we enacted the first Land Reforms Act. By that Act, the small and marginal farmers got released their land from the landlords. Then who had been doing the job of agricultural workers became the owners of the land which they were sowing and reaping for years. That was one of the landmark legislations in the case of land Reforms Act in the country. Again in 1970 when Shri Achuta Menon was the Chief Minister and Shri K. Karunakaran was the Home Minister, we again brought another leading land Reforms Act by which in the rural areas ten cents were given to the tenants of the land and three cents were given in the urban areas to the tenants of the land. Always, tenants of land were with the agricultural workers. Under the same Ministry when Shri Vakkom Purushottam

[Prof K V Thomas]

was the Labour and Agricultural Minister, we brought the Agricultural Welfare Fund and Agricultural workers' Minimum Wages Bill. That was in 1970. Under that Bill, the minimum wages for the agricultural workers were fixed and a welfare fund was started. With this fund, the children of the agricultural workers got free education. They got financial assistance for higher education. And agricultural workers were given free financial assistance for constructing their own houses. After 60 years of age, when an agricultural worker becomes old, when he can not go for work, he is given pension.

In 1978 when Shri A K Antony was the Chief Minister, he started the wages for the unemployed youth. Again, in 1982, when Shri Karunakaran was the Chief Minister, he started the Fishermen Welfare Fund. A fisherman who dies due to an accident when he goes for fishing is given assistance out of that fund. In the beginning the assistance given was Rs 3,000. Now, we have increased it to Rs 15,000 and that will be given within 48 hours.

In the present Bill, it has been suggested that compensation for death while working the dependent of any worker who dies while working shall be paid in a lumpsum amount of Rs 1,000 or more depending upon the service which the worker has rendered. This is paid out of the Fund created under Section 8.

But, Sir, already in Kerala a large number of welfare schemes for the agricultural workers, headload labourers, for the fishermen, are in existence. We have made adequate provisions for the fishermen. We are now giving Rs 15,000 within 48 hours. The headload workers Welfare Fund was started in the year 1982. It is a scheme to protect the rights of the headload workers. Another important scheme which the present Government has started is the pension scheme for the journalists. We have introduced a scheme where we are giving Rs 1,000 as a pension to the journalists after the age of 60 years.

Similarly, the small and marginal farmers are provided with another pension scheme of Rs 1,000.

All these schemes show that when Congress Government was in power in Kerala, they have started very novel schemes to help the agricultural labourers, the fishermen, the unemployed youth, headload workers and a large number of other people in the lower strata of the society. But our Left Front who have been in power in West Bengal, they could not do anything for these sections even though they have been very vehemently arguing for these poor people.

This Bill carries a social spirit and that spirit is that lakhs and lakhs of agricultural workers in India, especially in the Northern India, who are unorganized and who move during the seasons from one State to another, should be adequately protected.

It has been said that there should be a constitution of Agricultural Workers Welfare Fund. A large number of suggestions have been made by my hon friend, Shri Deshmukh. But Sir, ultimately the responsibility rests with the State Governments and not with the Central Government. So, the Central Government should take into confidence all the Labour Ministers of the State Governments and insist that a legislation should be brought by the State Government. Lakhs and Lakhs of the unorganised sector, which is the backbone of our agricultural sector, should be duly protected. So my request to the Government is that the Government should accept the spirit of this Bill and see that the State Government, which have not brought a similar legislation, as we have seen in Kerala, bring this in all the States.

It is very important because these agricultural workers are the backbone of our economic structure. In the industrial sector we can see that organized workers can argue for their rights, whether it is the LIC employees, whether it is the bank employees, whether it is the HMT employ-

ees, they are unionised or organised. If you look at the entire working class in the country except 10 to 15 per cent of the organised industrial sector, the remaining major sector in the unorganised agricultural sector should also be protected. My request is that they should not be left to the mercy of the landlords. These poor people who migrate from one State to another, from one district to another at the mercy of the big landlords, should be adequately protected and necessary legislation should be brought in. I request that the spirit of this Bill should be accepted by the Government of India and the Government of India should take a lead so that all the States bring a legislation which contain the spirit of this Bill.

With these words, I support the spirit of the Bill.

[*Translator*]

DR. P R GANGWAR (Pilibhit) Mr Chairman, Sir, I support the Bill presented by my hon friend Shri Deshmukh.

India is primarily an agricultural country. There are 605228 Gram Sabhas and 5000 blocks in the country. There are farmers and agricultural labourers. People do farming. The big farmers do farming. People with less land do farming for some time and for the rest of time they work as agricultural labourers. Hon Members sitting on the other side said that maximum agricultural laborers belong to Scheduled Castes. I don't agree to this. All those involved in farming are farmers and agricultural labourers. The figures as on 1983 show that there were 10683 Scheduled Caste laborers and 3954 Scheduled Tribe labourers whereas the total number of labourers belong to all communities was 30867. All of them do farming and work as agricultural labourers in their spare time. The farmer and the agricultural labourers have close relations. Since they cannot work in the fields and earn their livelihood on farming only throughout the year they work as labourers also. Until and unless the Government gives incentives to

farmers, the agricultural labourers cannot make progress. The farmers feeds not only the agricultural labourers but also the entire country. They produce foodgrains to feed all countrymen.

After 45 years of independence no leaders of the country has paid any heed towards farmers and agricultural labourers. The farmers produce foodgrains and sugar, they themselves eat coarse rice and supply basmati rice to others. Our farmers and agricultural labourers themselves eat jaggery and supply white sugar to people. The Government has not paid any attention to them till today. Sardar Ballabha Bhai Patel, Choudhan Charan Singh and Lal Bahadur Shastri who had given the slogan of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan', were the messiahs of farmers of our country. The people sitting on the other side do not refer to their names. They eulogise the Nehru family which had thrown the future of the country into dark. Farmers and agricultural labourers are the largest family of farmers. They are poor and live across the nook and d corner of the country. It is difficult to organise this family because it comprises a very large number of people. That is why nobody takes care of them. In such circumstances, it is the duty of the Government to pay attention to farmers and agricultural labourers. No educational facilities, roads, bridges, provision of drinking water and means of transport have been provided to farmers and agricultural labourers who live in villages. The facility of partial old age and widow pension has not been provided. This facility is not provided to needy persons whereas it is being provided to those who do not need it. There is no proper arrangement. On the contrary liquor is made available in every house. Liquor contract is given to every village. The Government engineers clashes among villages by providing them liquor. In such a circumstance the advocates and the capitalists exploit them. Possession of surplus land is not given to agricultural labourers. The land has not been vacated till today. The said possession has not been registered. But after coming into power of BJP in Uttar Pradesh, Shri Kalyan Singhji the

[Dr P R Gangwar]

Chief Minister followed the foot-steps of Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and enacted a legislation in the interest of farmers. Within three months of this legislation all the possessions were given in their respective names. I would like to suggest that the Central Government should also enact a law on Shri Kalyan Singh's lines so that possession of land of the poor people could be registered in their names.

The farmers and the agricultural labourers take loans for seeds, fertiliser and water. They are too poor to repay this loan. They mortgage the land and other properties with capitalists and take loan. The entire land goes to the hands of capitalists. At the same time, I would like to make an appeal to my agricultural labourers to do justice with their work and do proper work for the wages they get. It should not be so that 'vakha Chala Betavan Khurapi Vahi Kate'. That is why I would like to make an appeal to both of them to remain united as both have close connections with each other.

When the BJP came to power in U.P., it got all the possessions registered within three months. As I have said earlier, the Central Government should enact a similar legislation. The Government of U.P. has made 60 per cent allocation for villages and 40 per cent for cities for the development of farmers and agricultural labourers. Such provisions should also be made by the Central Government.

Finally, I would like to make some suggestions. A legislation should be enacted for the development of farmers and agricultural labourers. Minimum wages of labourers should be fixed and while fixing it, the interest of farmers in particular should be kept in mind. Some welfare schemes should be formulated to provide employment to labourers during their leisure time. The agricultural labourers should be insured at Government cost.

16.04 hrs

[Shri Peter G. Marbaniang in the Chair]

The crops of farmers should be got insured

on individual basis and not collectively. Ideal schools, dispensaries, roads and bridges over rivers and nallahs should be constructed in rural areas. If agriculture is developed, the progress of farmer can be made possible. When farmers are given chance to develop, our villages would automatically develop. The development of villages would enable our country to develop.

With these words I conclude.

SHRINITISH KUMAR (Bar) Mr Chairman, Sir, I support the Agricultural Workers Minimum Wages and Welfare Bill, 1991 moved by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh and congratulate him for bringing forward this Bill of public importance. The objective of the Bill is good. After independence, the Government has been making endeavors to improve the lot of agricultural workers. But till today, no desired improvement has been made. The plight of agricultural workers is not a secret. There is no security of job provided to agricultural workers who work in the villages. Unorganised labour is not the matter of concern for the Government. The entire concern of the Government and the society is for organised labourers and unorganised labourers are not taken care of.

Sir, in the past, there were bonded labourers. They had to serve a particular master for generations. It is claimed that there is no bonded labour today. It may be correct in the eyes of law, but the plight of these agricultural workers is not better than that of bonded labour. There is some improvement in the situation of those villages and areas where agriculture has become profitable. The problem of non-availability of agricultural workers has been developed and workers are arranged from other states. In such a situation, the local workers are not being exploited in these areas. But the areas where there are maximum unprofitable holdings and less area of agricultural land, are facing serious problem. The Indian farmer who has less holdings and engaged labourers for his farming does not intend to make less payment. He is of the

view that reasonable wages should be paid to labourers. But his condition does not allow it.

Sir, we are not trying to understand the problems of rural areas in the country properly.

Regarding the problems of rural areas, the intellectual sitting at a distance sometimes ponder over and come to the paper results. As a matter of fact, 70 per cent people of the villages are leading their lives in the same condition. The condition of farmers who have negligible land and have no irrigational facility is miserable. They want to pay wages but they are not in a position to pay it. They want to pay them maximum. For outsiders they are farmers from social viewpoints but their domestic condition very poor. They face shortage of essential commodities. They are forced to keep their tale of woe secret and lead a life within the four-walls of their houses, miserably.

There are so many problems here. In this Bill first of all it has been stated to maintain the land records. Land-reforms are very much needed here. But today the forms of land-reforms have changed. Today in a major part of the country it has a little significance as to how many persons have surplus land and in what quantity. Today a few persons would be having surplus land beyond the ceiling. Therefore, the issue of distribution of surplus land beyond the ceiling has become of little importance in big areas but the land-reforms have much importance. The surplus land should be earmarked and distributed among the landless people. I support it and it should be implemented strictly.

Moreover I would like to draw the attention of this august House that only this legislation will not be sufficient to complete the task of land-reforms. Today the greatest land-problem is the Absentee Landlords' i.e. the people who do not cultivate the land are the owners of the land. According to existing law in our country when the family is divided every member of the family enjoys the right to have the family land of his share. Whether he is in any service or runs any business. Those people cultivate through other

persons or any of their brothers living there cultivate the fields and he too has equal share. In such a situation the number of landless people is increasing day by day. Therefore, the provision of keeping land record in this Bill is very good. The records relating to land should be updated all over the country. Although it is a State issue, yet the Center should make a law in this regard and update the land records by monitoring them constantly. If it needs any amendment in the Constitution, that too should be done. The principle of one man-one job should be admitted. In the absence of such a law and according to the provisions of this present law, the persons who does not cultivate his land becomes the owner of the land. Consequently several labour disputes take place in many areas and the land is left uncultivated. Shearing of crops is also not permitted on such land. As a result of it on one hand it hampers the production and the fields are left uncultivated and on the other hand, people do not get employment. Therefore today the principle of 'economy-man one job' needs to be implemented strictly. It will result in the availability of surplus land in large quantity and that can be distributed among the landless people. Unless it is done, all persons cannot be given employment. Today unemployment is the greatest problem of the country and this problem of the country and this produce is more acute and complicate in countryside. The State of Bihar from where I hail, labourers are fleeing from these. There labourers are going to Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh, in search of employment. These labourers can get job only when land reform is implemented strictly and the principle of one man one job is enforced. It will provide the surplus land which can be distributed among the landless people and crores of people will get employment and they will increase production with their labour in fields. It will also increase employment.

Today there is a need for the development of barren and uncultivated land in the country. Crores of people can be engaged in this work and employment be made available to them and

[Sh. Nitish Kumar]

simultaneously the production can also be increased.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you I would like to state one more thing as per Dr. Ram Mahohar Lohia, land army is very much needed here. There is a large area of surplus land which is not being cultivated. After making it fit for agriculture, that land can be cultivated properly. A large number of people who are unemployed can be given jobs. Land army should be constituted and be used for increasing production; thus the problem of unemployment can also be solved. By the end of this century we will require 240 million tons of food-grains whereas our production is less than 180 million tons or even less than it.

There are 7 years left in this century. In such circumstances, we will neither be able to fulfill our needs nor we can provide jobs to the labourers; the agricultural labourers would not get justice also in such a odd situation. Therefore, the constitution of a land army is essential. The landless labourers work on fields but they do not get their full wages. Moreover, the Government claims that there is a Minimum Wages Act and the farmers who will not pay the minimum wages, action will be taken against them. Though there are other laws too and labour inspectors are there, yet they do not look into these anomalies and they only harass the people. The existing laws are not used for ensuring the minimum wages to labourers. The officials like Inspector and others use these laws to make heavy their purses and harass the labourers etc. Suvery should be held in some selected areas all over the country to find out the areas where the agriculture is uneconomical and whether the small farmers or ordinary farmers are paying minimum wages to the labourers or not; whether they are actually not in the position of paying it, if so, the Government should ensure the minimum wages to the labourers. But by punishing the farmers, no good for the labourers, can be done. In those areas where farmers are not

capable of paying the wages, funds should be created there so that labourers may get their full wages. The minimum wages for the different areas should be fixed and it should also be fixed as to what minimum amount would have to be paid by the farmers in particular areas and the remaining margin should be paid by the Government. A special fund should be created for this purpose, then alone we can uplift the rural population and the agricultural labourers in true sense. Of course, the dignity of labour is vanishing in this country. It can be maintained only by enacting laws in this regard and if it is used in different way, it will not solve the problem. The Government must think it that everybody born in this country is entitled to lead his life properly with dignity. And if he has been given this right, the Government should not evade this responsibility. This is an unorganised sector so no attention is paid to it. It is bluntly pleaded that the Government cannot do anything if labourers are not paid their wages in countryside. Merely the creation of so many posts and monitoring on it won't serve any purpose. The Government rather, will have to conduct a comprehensive survey and help the labourers in getting their genuine wages. when any discussion is held in true sense for providing them minimum wages, certain Organisations become active to instigate the farmers to fight against it. They do not know as to what sorts of farmers live in what areas. The persons possessing one or one and a half acre of land is put into the category of farmers and it is announced that the is a landlord. Thus you will observe that in such disputes, small farmers can not defend themselves. There are lakhs of farmers who do not have money enough to move the Court, who are unable to provide education to their children, who are unable to provide even two time meal to their families but unfortunately they are termed as landlords. If you go to their homes, you will find that the women in their families do not have even two pairs of sarees. But the vested interests create a sort of misunderstanding between labourers and make them fight among themselves. It should not be on like this. What is needed here is that the farmer should be compelled to pay wages as per his

capacity and the marginal amount should be managed by the Government so that farmers and labourers may give their contribution in the development of the country. The development of cultivation and the country can be made possible only when they work together like two wheels of a chariot. With these words I support and welcome the Bill introduced by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh.

[English]

DR RAM CHANDRA DOME (Birbhum)
Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the Agricultural Workers' (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill, 1993 brought forward by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh.

I congratulate my esteemed colleague for bringing such a nationally important Bill to this House.

This is an important Bill. The Bill when it will be enacted will give a new direction to the development of the whole nation.

If we go through the history, we can see that our country is basically an agricultural country. Millions and millions of people who are living in the rural India are related directly or indirectly with agriculture, majority of them are women. Even 50 per cent of those agricultural workers are women. Their socio-economic condition is very bad. They can never lead a healthy life. Basically women are suffering and it is their fate. That is why, illiteracy and ill-health are the main things which are associated with their fate.

After 45 years of independence, even today, we are discussing such a legislation.

Today we have no national wage policy for those poor section of people who are the real architects of the development of our nation.

Those people are basically landless and helpless. They work on the land. They produce food with their blood and sweat to feed the nation.

But they have no privilege to enjoy that agricultural produce which they themselves need. The vast majority of landless agricultural labourers have no shelter, not a piece of land of their own, though in the pre-independence days, during the freedom struggle, the Congress party, the chief rulers in our country, has given a commitment to the peasantry in our country that they will adopt a radical land reform programme. They pledged that they would give land to the tiller and this will be the major thrust of the development programmes. After independence, those people have been deprived of this privilege by the ruling party.

Even today nothing has been done in the name of land reforms. Though the zamindari system is not in vogue these days in that form, yet it is there in the modified form. The same repression is going on. Basically, this is due to lack of political will on the part of the ruling party, the majority ruling party in this country. That is why they did not get the minimum justice that is required. Because of the injustice meted out to such people, India is facing a lot of problems as far as development is concerned.

Sir, India is a country which has got a vast number of people who are below the poverty line, who are illiterates and who possess ill-health also. All these are directly related to the socio-economic status of vast millions of agricultural workers and peasantry. So, if the Government does not take steps to change their socio-economic status, the fates of these people cannot and will not be changed. Our economy will not be rejuvenated.

In the name of restructuring and rejuvenating the dying Indian economy the Government is formulating so many new policies. You are proposing new economic policies. You have introduced the new industrial policy, new trade policy so on and so forth. But nothing will solve the problem of the vast masses of our country. We are having many problems. Further you are going to surrender the economic sovereignty to the imperialist and foreign agencies. We have

no alternative steps other than this Unless you fulfill the basic tasks in the agricultural front, our country will not prosper The fate of the vast majority of our people will remain So Further the fate of the vast majority of our people has a direct bearing on the development of our economy particularly in generating employment potential So long as the Land Reforms are not implemented these problems cannot be solved

It is to be regretted that even after so many decades of Independence even today we have not been giving the minimum wages to those agricultural workers Thousands of bonded labourers are there in Independent India They are undergoing a miserable life Even today the agricultural workers and landless peasants are undergoing many difficulties They are brutally tackled by the big wigs by the ruling political parties in our country I want to cite one example here In the year 1991 one incident took place in a district of Madhya Pradesh when the BJP was in power A tribal youth was working as bonded labour with a zamindar there Once he tried to flee from his clutches But then he was again brought back and his right hand was chopped off This happened in independent India Even today in many nooks and corners of the country, some such incidents are happening When they demand for minimum wages to maintain their minimum standard of living, which is denied to them they are treated with lathis bullets and so on ? This is the situation prevailing in our country I think basically the legislation is very much important But mere legislation will not serve the purpose so long implementation is not there political will to implement legislation is not there We have so many legislations But the problem is we are having no will to implement those Acts to give them justice social economic and political justice This is the situation prevailing today

We must give thrust in these areas for the above benefit of our country in the generation of employment potential if our internal market

does not go up by bringing up those their socio-economic status and the minimum purchase capacity, then the internal market the domestic market will not gather momentum If the domestic market is not helped, then the entire economy will be jeopardised There is no other alternative in this area In the course of industrialisation in the course of development in other forms particularly in the course of solving the unemployment problem in our country those people the vast majority of our agricultural labourers should be given their due share to be brought up to a minimum standard of living so that their purchase capacity goes up Otherwise employment potential will not be generated and massive increase in unemployment problem will not be solved

Another problem is majority of the agricultural workers are women Where the feudal system is there our women are the worst sufferers We have to do something about that We should have political will to get rid of these sufferings which the millions of women particularly those who are economically in a bad position they are socially backward they are educationally backward they are compelled to lead a miserable life If the vast majority of our people are compelled to live in this way our further generation will have to implement the Act Otherwise development will be handicapped If we want to give justice through a legislation we must come to a consensus that not only political legislation is enough, but simultaneously we should have a political courage we should have political will to implement this Act Otherwise it will not serve the purpose So at the end I once again emphasize that majority of agricultural workers should get a minimum wage throughout the nation and that should be ensured by the States and also by the political parties

There are other welfare programmes which will have to take care of their education health socio-cultural aspects and they should be fulfilled by this legislation Last but not the least is the root cause of this whole problem and that is the unfulfilled task of land reforms That should

be taken up first and it should be given priority.

With these few words, support the Bill.
Thank you

MR. CHARIMAN: The time allotted for this Bill is over. But, there are a number of Members who want to participate in the discussion. So, should we extend the time by two hours, so that we will be able to cover all those Members? Is it the sense of the House?

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: O.K. Now, I call Shri Vishwanath Sastri.

[Translation]

SHRI VISHWANATH SHASTRI (Gazipur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all I would like to congratulate my colleague Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh for introducing this Bill relating to the most crushed unorganised agricultural labourers who are the lowest section of our society.

The condition of our labourers is very miserable in our society. Even today they do not get work for the whole of the year. They migrate else where for their livelihood. Every year the labourers from Eastern Uttar Pradesh area from where I hail, go to Punjab and Haryana in search of their livelihood. The condition of labourers is so miserable that it can not be described in words. Till now due to the old feudal system, they were paid very low wages, but gradually their wages have been increased marginally.

There is a saying in our country that while coming to collect his wage, the labourer's napkin towel should be in such a way as the food grains given to him as his wages should fall down through the holes in the napkin and he should collect grains one by one then he can come again to earn his wages. Otherwise, he will not come in his work next day. Similarly, there was a fraudulent practice prevalent in Eastern U.P. that the wages were paid to the labourers in the

form of food grains by weighing them with a piece of brick and the same piece was constantly used to clean the utensils everyday resulting in the reduction of weight of that brick piece day by day. As a result of this fraudulent practice there were large agitations in Eastern U.P. Consequently a slogan was given that "Jiski lathi Uska Khet, Jamindar ka Pharo Pet." Due to this agitation, Jamindari system was abolished in our State Uttar Pradesh. The land-ceiling law was implemented in Uttar Pradesh. But despite all this, the condition of agricultural labourers remained unchanged. A law was made for the agricultural labourers of Uttar Pradesh. The three categories of wages are fixed in Western Uttar Pradesh. The three categories of wages are fixed separately in three parts of the entire State. The wages fixed in western Uttar Pradesh are different from those in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Though there are kanungo who function as inspectors and keep the revenue records and supervise it but actually they are there only for the name sake. They have been entrusted with a number of miscellaneous work that he is unable to do this work. Somewhere the wages are not written and somewhere the wages are not given. In the eastern Uttar Pradesh at some places the labourers are given one or two bighas of land as their wages. If a labourer is given land and his wages he is given two kilograms of food grains as well for ploughing the fields. But if the relation between the zamindar and the labourer turns hostile, the zamindar recovers the land as well as the entire wages paid for this livelihood. In such a situation there is no machinery which may ensure the payment of wages to the labourers. They have no organisation which may help them in any case. The result is that one such case continues in court for several years. These cases are not settled in a month or two; they take years. They will have to be ruined. So the agricultural labourers do not get the minimum wages fixed for them.

Not only that, they also become the victims of social exploitation. Landless farmers are really in a more pitiable condition. In Eastern

[Sh Vishwanath Shastri]

U P and in so many areas in my own district there are number of landless labourers. Even clay is not available to them to plaster their houses on the occasion of Deewali. When they go to ease themselves in fields, they bring clay in their pots. They collect it whole year, then they are able to plaster their houses. Such a condition is still prevailing there whenever the labourers try to organise themselves they are attacked. The Harijan Basti of Solpur village in Gajipur district was burnt to ashes. People tried to protest against it, but agricultural labourers are definitely living in a horrible condition. Our Government should pay attention towards it. The Bill which has been brought by the honorable member should have been brought by the Government for their welfare. Today in agricultural development there is contribution of tractors and threshers also but at the same time accidents have also increased due to increasing half to. The hands of agricultural labourers get cut off in these accidents. There is no provision to provide them medical treatment or aid. Safety measures are not adopted in this regard. In such a situation they do not get the wages as they cannot work with the wounded hands, and so their capacity of working fall and they become insecure. In this Bill provisions should be made to provide all the facilities to agricultural labourers like the factory workers in case of accident. There should be arrangement for pension for agricultural workers in old age when they become incapable of working. A separate department should be established for implementation of the laws made for their welfare. I think there should be a separate directorate at national, State and district level to look after the welfare of agricultural labourers and implement the laws made for their welfare. Inspire of all these things it is clear that in our country agricultural workers do not have land of their own and they are called 'Halwahas' which means one who ploughs for others. Today the landowner does not go to field for tilling, agricultural workers work for him and give the production to him without having any share.

Sir, if the name of land distribution and land reforms, if the land allotted to the tiller they can raise the agricultural production in the country.

Sir, this can solve the problem of foodgrains. Today land owner does not plough the land. Today a farmer having land upto five acre cannot afford to keep agricultural labour and agricultural inputs, whether it is fertiliser, seeds or any other things, have become costlier. As a result small farmer takes loan for nourishing his family and in the end sells the land to pay this loan. That is why in spite of allotting land on lease for residential purpose, agricultural purpose and campaign of land reforms, the number of landless is increasing continuously, I do not understand this contradiction.

Sir on the one hand the Government talks about giving land to landless labourers in the name of land reforms but on the other hand the number of landless is increasing though it should have decreased. More and more farmers are being evicted from the possession of their land. It is not because of any landlord. The policy of capitalization of agricultural development is responsible for eviction of small farmers and prosperity of big farmers. Today people have private agricultural farms. From Nainital to the whole Terai region including Lakhimpur there are big farms of people who do not have any interest in agriculture. There farm house owners are generals of army, big police officials and industrialists. Birlaji is not only a big industrialist but also a big agriculturist. He has a 4200 acre farm at Pipra in Khiri - Lakhimpur. Big people have turned to agriculture because there is no tax on agriculture. It can compensate the industrial loss and tax evasion can be easily manipulated by this. Agriculture is being used for hiding black money. I would request that such type of farms should be banned and the land should be given to tillers. People who have business or service should not have agricultural land. Today some people have land, industry, business and also service, this accumulates all the means of production in some limited hands. These should be distributed equally. I would demand to estab-

lish a separate directorate for agricultural labourers, arrangement of pension, appropriate arrangement for treatment in case of accidents and appropriate arrangement for education of the wards of agricultural labourers should be made.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, in the field of education, there is some arrangement for the children of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes but in Eastern Uttar Pradesh there are many other backward castes. The only difference between them is that people eat things touched by them. Rajbhar, Nonta, Bin and so many other castes are not being considered as SC/ST but their condition is not better than SC/ST. So I would like to request you to make arrangements for the education of the children of agricultural labourers.

With these words I support this Bill.

[English]

SHRI A. CHARLES (Trivandrum): Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Agricultural Workers (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill, introduced by my colleague Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh. Though I am in agreement with some of the sentiments expressed by him and though I share his concern in the welfare of the agricultural workers, I feel that the provisions of this Bill are far too inadequate to meet the demands of the time and to give some sort of security to the agricultural workers.

Our country is still mainly depending on agriculture. A vast majority of our people are either small farmers or agricultural workers. Though production of foodgrains and other agricultural produce has increased substantially in the last two decades, we have yet to go a long way. At the time of independence, if I am correct, for 35 crores of people, we had to import the foodgrains for more than 50 per cent. Today we are more than 85 crores. It is a great joy that we

are producing foodgrains for the entire population of this country and we have had an occasion even to export to some of the countries who are always with us such as the former Soviet Union and the present Russia. So, thanks to the reserves, latest varieties of advanced seeds, fertilisers and latest technology we have substantially improved the food production. But, still it is a fact that the conditions of the real workers are miserable.

Sir, when we consider the plight of the agricultural workers, I am compelled to bring to the notice of this august House, the sad plight of the small farmers also. Farmers do not mean huge zamindars. In Kerala, we are proud to say that we are the pioneers in the area of land legislation as my friend Mr. Thomas has pointed out. Right in the year 1962, we had the first land legislation and thereafter there have been a number of amendments and improvements and today actually there is no land holder who is having more than 15 acres of standard dry land and 22 acres of wet land. But there are exceptions in the plantations. So, to bring forward a Bill making the small farmers responsible for the entire welfare of the workers will, be dangerous. But the welfare of the workers should certainly be kept in mind when we bring forward a legislation.

Sir, I have gone through some of the provisions of the Bill and I am sorry to say that it is not only inadequate, but it also does not give any sort of relief. The whole concept, I will say, is not correctly appreciated. In the financial memorandum, it is said that the total recurring expenditure will be Rs. 40 crores; it may go beyond Rs. 1,000 crores in a country of 850 million people where more than 70 per cent are depending on agriculture. I am not criticising the Bill, but I do not think any careful thought has been given in drafting this Bill. Again, the responsibility of constituting a fund is given to the Central Government. How is it possible when the agricultural sector remains in the State subject? So, it is the

[Sh A Charles]

responsibility of the State Government

Sir, in Kerala we have a welfare scheme. We have a legislation for ensuring the minimum wages and you will be surprised to know that even though the minimum wage paid is Rs 30/- per day, you will not be able to get an unskilled worker for even Rs 45/- per day. So, the wages have gone to such an extent everywhere. So, also there are other welfare schemes and here my friend has suggested that Rs 1,000/- should be given to the family if an agricultural worker dies. This is very inadequate in today's situation. The unorganised sector still remains as one of the most neglected sections of the community. The traditional fisherman is another unorganised section in our society and they are exploited everywhere. There is no encouragement for them and it is a sad thing that the organised sector employees such as the bank employees and even well-paid employees of the Indian Airlines and the Air India take the whole country to ransom while the poor agricultural workers are totally neglected.

Sir, I am thankful to the hon. Member for bringing forward a legislation so that the real problems of the workers could be highlighted.

I would suggest legislation for ensuring remunerative prices to the small farmers and also provision for giving fertilizer - I do not use the word "subsidy" - at a reasonable price. The hon. Minister for public distribution is responsible for PDS throughout the country. A life has been given to that Ministry and the people are hoping a lot on that. I request the people not to have any disillusion - unless you give support price we will not give the grain. How can we take food grains and essential commodities to the remote parts of the country? While we ensure welfare of the workers, we are equally responsible in keeping the welfare and interests of the small farmers.

I have another suggestion. Mostly in some of the bigger States, no land legislation has been

so far attempted. There are thousands of acres of either waste land or vacant land. In Kerala, if you go from one part of the State from Parashala to Kasargode, in a car, you will not find an inch of land either vacant or unutilised. There, the density of population is highest. I suggest some sort of adoption of villages. People from Kerala and from some of the States where people are densely populated - thousand or two thousand people - can be taken together and they should be rehabilitated in some parts of the Northern India. It will enable the vacant land to be used and it will increase production. At a time when the unity and integrity of the country is being challenged, it will also enhance the emotional integration of this great country. Our people you know are there throughout the world. Wherever you go throughout the world, you will see a Keralite. It will be a pleasure to see somebody from my State in Uttar Pradesh, in Madhya Pradesh. I may even tell my hon. friends on the other side, they may certainly help you in building the temple also. There is no problem for our people to go anywhere in the country, integrate with the people there and help production and welfare of this country. By that, the waste land can be utilised. Our people could be accommodated, production can be enhanced. The agricultural workers would also be helped. With your pleasant smile, it will be a happy thing for some of us to come to your part of the country. I know the hospitality which you will extend. This is a very sensible proposal I am making. I am sure, three whole House will receive it in the spirit with which I am telling.

About the welfare measures in Kerala, even traditional fishermen have some welfare scheme. If anybody were to die out of accident in the mid-sea, within two weeks a minimum of Rs 10,000 is given to the family of the person who dies. So, Rs 1,000 is a very meagre sum. I suggest that the welfare scheme should take care of immediate maintenance of the family and the future of the family.

With these words, I share his concern. I thank you for giving us an opportunity to highlight

this area But I am sorry, the proposals contained in the Bill are not sufficient Peasantry is one section of the community which is the backbone of the country You may well know the beautiful lines of *Deserted Village* by Oliver Goldsmith,

"Ills fares the land, to hastening ills a Pray,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay
Princes and Lords may flourish or may fade,
A breath can make them as breathless as
mad, But a bold Peasantry their country's
pride, When once destroyed can never be
supplied,

If this peasantry, the small farmers and agricultural farmers are ruined and destroyed, the future of the country will be dark

So, I strongly commend this legislation to ensure their protection and welfare I request the hon Minister for Agriculture to see that this legislation shall be brought forward to protect their interests and help the country

[Translation]

PROF RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer)
Mr Chairman, Sir I earnestly support the 'Agricultural Workers (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill, 1991', presented by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh India is an agricultural country and in ancient times in Vedas have also been said that-

"Krishimeet Kishshaw"

means 'O man, you till and further said'

"Akshaimardivya"

which means 'do not gamble' Agriculture had been the oldest occupation in this country, whether the farmer is somewhere landlord, somewhere owner of the field, somewhere landowner of the field tilled by someone and somewhere

only guard But the person who works, tills, irrigates weeds out, constructs waterbeds, cuts grass and other weeds and harvests in the fields of someone is agricultural labourer Farmers prosper in case there is good crop, many farmers are in better condition than the income tax payees but the agricultural labourer born in debt and poverty, brought up in debt and poverty and he has to die in the debt and poverty Attention should be paid towards their welfare, which has not been done Drought, famine flood frost hailstorm, excessive rainfall, and scanty rainfall are regular features in this country We are fully dependent on monsoons It is said about Indian Budget that it is a gamble of monsoons It is said about Indian Budget that it is a gamble of monsoon Agriculture is the backbone of our economic set up and the agricultural worker is worst affected by the natural calamities After days s hard work when the labourer asks for the days s labour he gets maltreatment or just one kg of foodgrains The Supreme Court has decided that every worker should get Rs 22 as minimum wages per day but the agricultural labourer is deprived of that so far

I recall that in 1989 Ministry of labour had fixed Rs 15 as daily wages for Agricultural labourer but he is not getting even that It is a matter of regret that the labourers in the States of Rajasthan, Andhra-Pradesh Goa and Madhya Pradesh are getting minimum wages at the rate of Rs 12 per day The minimum wages prevalent at present in Gujarat and Bihar is Rs 15 and in Punjab and Haryana it is Rs 35 That is why the agricultural workers of Rajasthan and Bihar prefer to work in Punjab and Haryana at the time of harvest They get more wages there but their lives remain endangered Now the law and order condition has improved in Punjab but when terrorism was there the labourer from Rajasthan and Bihar always fell victim to bullets Labourers were shot while they were cooking their food or sleeping They were killed by terrorists while

they were traveling in trains There is no legislation to save their life There is no law for the security of their families

The total number of agricultural workers producing rice, wheat, oilseeds, rapeseeds, cash crops or working in tea gardens is seven crores In 1961, it was three crore This Bill should be passed in interests of these seven crore agricultural labourers Law should be legislated to raise their minimum wages Minimum wages of Rs 22 has been fixed for labourers working for drought relief, famine, construction work and under the Jawahar Rozgar yojna Similarly, the minimum wages of agricultural labourers should also be fixed Men, women and children all work in the fields They are paid minimum wages at the rate of Rs 12 and Rs 15 It should be fixed at Rs 22

Government should constitute Agricultural Workers welfare Authority to safeguard the interests of the agricultural labourers Provision has been made that it should be manned by experts and specialist officers Who would advise the Government about improving the plight of labourers who toil hard in different climates and seasons An Advisory Board should be constituted to give advice to this Authority and Ministry of Agriculture keeping in view the changing circumstances A labourer should not lead a life where he has to sleep under the open sky shivering in cold He must have resources so that he can have basic amenities of life and two square meals a day Keeping this in view an Agricultural Workers Welfare Fund and an Advisory Board should be constituted If he dies in harness, i.e. while working in the fields, his family should get full benefit Sometimes these labourers have to guard the fields from wild animals like 'Nilgai' and the wild boar single handedly His life is always at stake Therefore, his life should be insured Arrangements should be made for giving compensation in case of

This Bill proposes to establish Agricultural Workers Welfare Fund The Agricultural Workers (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill must be passed by consensus There is need to pay full attention for safeguarding the interests of the Agricultural workers who is *Annadata* for us We all sit in air-conditioned rooms but the labourers plough the fields in scorching sun during summer Steps should be taken to initiate welfare measures inter interests and in view of the hard life they have to lead Minimum wages should be fixed at Rs 22 Orders to this effect have also been issued by Supreme Court Insurance Scheme for the benefit of these labourers should be introduced in States where there is terrorism on the pattern of the Crop Insurance Scheme These workers have temporary employment They work for a few months in a year and thereafter they work as *Sadhi* or servants There is a practice prevalent in some States where these labourers work as servants and plough the fields Gradually he becomes a bonded labourer and he is not paid for his work An agricultural worker should not be treated as a bonded labourer Without taking much time of the House, I would like that my voice should not fall on deaf ears of the Government A Government which claims to be espousing the cause of farmers and workers particularly the poor, during the last 43 years, has not done anything remarkable in this field There is a lot of difference between preaching and practice -

Kathni thothe jagat main, karni uttam sar

Kahan kabir karni sabal, uttare bhavjal par

The Government should take initiative in this direction because in the welfare of farmers and agricultural workers lies the welfare of the nation I bow in reverence to those who brought about green revolution and with this I conclude

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh): Mr. Chairman, Sir, last time, when this Bill was being discussed, I was on my legs. Today I could not remain present here because.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am allowing you as a very special case.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: I thank you for your gesture. That is what I was saying. Last time when I was on my legs, the speech was unfinished. This time, I had an impression that the other Bill would take some more and also I was busy with the Standing Committee meeting. Last time also, I lent my support to this Bill. Today also, I have no hesitation to support to the Bill. When I was listening to the speech delivered just now by Shri Rawat, he himself said that the Government should do all these things without further delay; forty years precious time has been lost. He also said that minimum wage which has been fixed in some States, that minimum wage is not being paid. That is not only true if one state but that is also true of different states. Even whatever is the requirement of the situation, the financial requirement or needs to run a family, if you consider that, then what is provided in this Bill is not sufficient. Something more should be there. What a class-IV employee is getting by and large, that should be the income even of a labourer. But the situation the country is such that even it is not possible to ensure payment of minimum wages fixed by the Government. That is the real situation.

Even in respect of states- the Minister has given information to the questions of some hon. Members,- about the minimum wages in different states- also, minimum wages are not uniform. In Maharashtra, it differs zone-wise as much as from Rs 12 to Rs. 20 per day, according to the zones in Maharashtra. I understand, some are industrially developed areas, some are agricultural areas, irrigation provision is there, some are dry areas, perpetually drought areas like the Kalahandi district which has been very

severely hit by drought. This was visited by the hon. Prime Minister. Now Rs. 25 has been fixed as the minimum wage by the Orissa Government. Earlier it was Rs. 12. It means, there is more than 100 per cent increase. But that is not paid. It is rather followed more in violation.

In our country, we have several progressive legislation's. I would say we are next to none in respect of passing laws. But if they remain in the state books and what will happen then? That is exactly what is happening in respect of certain laws. On the floor of this House also, we have discussed several times about the Bidi Workers Bill, Provident Fund, Bonded labor. We have discussed even about the Child Labour. We have prohibited child labour. But in spite of that, it is common knowledge that it is going on a large scale. Even when you restrict, peanuts are sending them. They say that if an esquire is conducted, they will say that they are not laborers but as they are starving they may give them some employment. That is the real situation. Poverty is our real enemy in this country. We have to fight out and alleviate poverty.

We have 259.5 million rural laborers. Out of them 54.4 per cent or 165 million are male laborers and 33.2 per cent or 94 million are female laborers. Although the male and female ratio should be 50 per cent, there is a difference because the higher caste families do not want their females to go out and work as labourers. That is how there is this difference in the male and female ratio. Anyway, they can afford but the poor people, they cannot afford; unless all of them work, they do not get two square meals a day. They are working in the agricultural fields. I have all sympathy for the laborers and monochrome should be done for them. But I am asking you one question. How many agriculturists, how many cultivators in this country are well off, to the extent of a Class IV Government employee? A Class IV employee is getting a minimum of Rs. 1,200 per month. How many farmers or their families are having a net income of Rs. 12,000 per annum after meeting all their expenditure? It is not so even in the case of bugger

[Sh. Sriballav Panigrahi]

cultivators, unless they have got some supplementary income and not from agriculture alone.. They are very few. We have ceiling laws. If actually the ceiling laws are implemented, then very few families will be getting the income exclusively from Agriculture as that of a Class IV government servant. If anybody comes and argues with me or contradicts me, I am well prepared to face them.

This is the position. The capacity of employer is also very important.. In this case, the farmer or the cultivator if he has engaged some people, his paying capacity is also very important. there was a sudden increase from Rs. 12 or Rs.25. There is a quantum jump and in Orissa, I understand that many farmers have reduced the number of labourers; they made it to half and all those people were thrown out of employment. They had to go elsewhere, to places like Raipur, Vizag or Rourkela in search of their livelihood.

So, let us be practical and let us have a pragmatic approach. What can be done? When Shri Rajiv Gandhi was the prime Minister, he was feeling very concerned about the plight of this section - poor people, labourers - and he appointed a National Commission on rural Labour. they did a very good job.

They have presented the report. I old like to know what happened to that report. To what extent it has been implemented? They had recommended for land reforms to be implemented rigorously. They had also recommended something for insurance etc. It is a very good thing. Insurance of course should be there. At the same time he is a human being; a labourer is a human being. He should have a house, he should have a home stead land. Crores of families do not have a home stead land. Our Cabinet Minister is present here; he is a progressive man; he was the Chief Mmister of Kerala; he knows how many poor people do not have a home stead land also. Wherever he is either in a factory, or an industry or in e field, or under a farmer, the

State Government should provide him with home steeds land. give them some financial assistance, so that he can build a hutment, not a palace, not a building; but at least a hutment. that should be a place of his own to take shelter. At the same time his children shelled not be depraved of going to school. To that extent the Government should levy taxes for poor people. In a way it is the Government's responsibility to mop up, to arrange resources for the poor people, the have-nots, people below the poverty line, the rural lasbouyr and their children..

One they get into a Government job or some company's job, the treatment that they get is different. For them there is Central school, be it a Class IV employee also. For rich children better school facilities are available. What about these people? when a Government employee goes to the hospital everything is reimbursed for him. All free treatment is there. If medicines are not available there and he purchases from the market his medical bill is reimbursed. But what do these poor people get? On the medical side and education side this facility should be provided by the Government at par with Class IV or Class III Government employees. Why not? Farmers cannot provide these facilities. So the Government should also build up for them like Insurance Fund or something like that. For Clothing also, why not poor school children be provided with dress? Whatever it is, it is a pious wish. Prof. Rao also said even Rs. 12 is not implement able and is not being implemented. You can fix it. In certain States it is Rs. 12 and it is Rs.20 somewhere else. At the same time let us fight out poverty. How can we do it? Together with land reforms, the investment on land and water has to be massive. Let us provide irrigation. Once there is irrigation, when the land is irrigated, is capable of producing more than one crop, two crops round the year, the agricultural laborers remain busy there, and they get employment. In some areas not just Rs.25, they earn even Rs.50 a day. In Harked Command Area is Orissa- I belong to that area- even labourers do come from Chatisgarh of neighboring Madhya Pradesh. Unless they come in large

numbers, the agricultural operation is not complete here. Where there is good irrigation round the year and crop is there, naturally there is no question of dearth of employment. Rather labour is not available there. So let us create such a situation with regard to irrigation and land reforms.

I told for education facility, health facility, housing facility there should be some sort of a fund. The rich people who are enjoying the benefit of freedom should contribute something more. The poor people, the have-nots, the unfortunate people should get benefit out of such a fund.

I say that in spirit this is a good Bill, ideal and pious. But it should not be a pious wish. It must be practicable also at the time of implementation. Otherwise such Bills would add to the statute book: they will remain in the statute book; will not be implemented. We have heard our Labour Minister. Some other provisions are there about its implementation; a register should be maintained, Government of India will do this and all that. In a vast country like India, it is not possible. It has got to be decentralised. Some Members were demanding provident fund organisation to be bifurcated or decentralised. The Minister said yes it should, but we do not have enough resource to that. The infrastructure is not there so far as organised labour, industrial labour, is concerned.

Some benefits which should accrue to them are not accruing due to these difficulties what to speak of the unorganised sector like rural labour. Anyway, the Government should convene a meeting to discuss whatever recommendations of the National Labour Commission are there and there and try to implement them. The Labour Minister, the Agriculture Ministers of states, etc. should also participate in such discussions. At the same time, such situation should be created so that the whole lot of the unfortunate poor rural labours improves. With these words, I conclude.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA (Mandsaur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this Bill presented by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh is a undisputed Bill. It is a Bill to protect the interests of workers and to create a healthy atmosphere. As it is stated in the objects and persons of this Bill that there is no legally provision in the existing laws of the country to protect interests of agricultural works, and to solve their various problems. A legal provision should be made to protect their interests and to ensure their development. So, I support this Bill.

Sir, while presenting this Bill Shri Deshmukh has stated that the Government too has some responsibilities to protect interests of the workers. It is the responsibility of the government to come forward and look into it and enact the law where it is necessary but neither the Government has taken any step nor expressed any concern in this regard. Therefore, Shri Deshmukh has presented this Bill in discharge of his duties as an hon. member of the House.

I would like today one more thing that there are basic defects in our Agriculture policy. It is because of it that agriculture workers are passing through such condition at present. Had there been a coordination and cordial relations between farmers and agriculture workers then their interests could have been protected. There would have been no need of introducing this Bill. Basically, this situation has been created due to defective system. Worker, Working in other than agriculture sectors whether they are engaged in stone crushing or in road construction or they are bank employees or railway employees or even coolies they are all organised but not the agriculture workers. Though, the number of coolies in agricultural produce market is only 15-20 yet unitedly they can force the farmers to accept their demands at any time. But there are lakhs of agricultural workers, they can't ask farmer to accept their demands. The agricultural worker can't do injustice to the farmers because he is naturally associated with farming and

[Dr. Laxminarayan Pandeya]

thinks that by doing so he will be doing injustice to farming and the land. I think that the Government has certainly made statements in this regard but has done nothing concrete in this regard. the economy of the country is not as based on agriculture, as it should be so our whole system is defective. Our economy can move ahead in right direction if it is properly based on agriculture and it can also make progress in healthy direction.

But even now economy is not based on agriculture. It is also a defect. It should be looked into whether agriculture is an important part or basic foundation of our economy and whether agricultural production or income from this sector has important contribution in our economy. When agriculture has an important contribution in the economy of the country then matters related to it should also be looked into the same manner. A comprehensive approach should be adopted while discussing this Budget. A provision should be made by considering the agriculture as the backbone of our economy this Agriculture workers Bill is also included in it. But the Government is not thinking in this direction. I should think per it., Today, the farmer is in difficulty why is he in difficulty? Last week as well as now the hon. Members said that the farmers in difficulty and is depending on god's will. He is happy if it rains on time and is good crop and his house is filled there farm produce. He is always affected by some or the other problems like natural calamities, its; cold wave, hailstorm or draught,. In such situation he dines himself very disappointed. the farmer shelled get reasonable price of his produce. If reasonable price is not given to the farmer than how he will be able to give proper wages to the agricultural workers. The Government should think in this regard and while fulfilling its duties towards social welfare it should do some arrangements in this regard so that workers working in such circumstances may get their wages on the basis of the rates fixed as minimum wages. The government has fixed the land ceiling, but it has

not fixed the minimum limit of land. To avoid further division of land which is being divided into small pieces which is a matter of concern.. (Interruptions) I was requesting to you as to what is the position of land reforms and it is an important matter. The Central Government should considerate. It is the basis of our economy. 80- percent population is depending on agriculture. when a person finds notice of no vacancy in any factory for office then he returns to village to try his luck in farming and he gets job there. He does not get full time work throughout the year there. Such a provision should be made that he may get full time job. Such provision is essential which is not there in the existing law., this Bill has been brought keeping in view that the Government would make such provision but there are a number of shortcomings in this Bill, therefore, an appropriate Bill should be brought., some points of the Bill introduced by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh are worth considering:

[English]

"The appropriate Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish an Agricultural workers welfare Authority."

[Translation]

The government should establish an authority appropriately for the conveniences and welfare of agricultural workers. He said his points in this regard.

[English]

'The Central Government shall constitute a fund to be called the agricultural workers welfare fund for the welfare of agricultural workers.:'

[Translation]

This is the second point he has made that a welfare authority should be constituted which would identify the problems of agricultural workers and find their solutions, as also steps to be

taken and laws to be enacted in this regard. It has also been stated that a fund should be created so that assistance may be provided to the needy persons from this fund, whenever such problems occur. Bihar and Orissa are affected by famine and so is Madhya Pradesh. When farmers themselves are not in a good position how can they improve the lot of agricultural workers. Therefore, a welfare fund should be created with a view to save their lives. The third point has made,

[English]

There shall be set up an Advisory Council by the Central Government to advise the appropriate Government on the implementation of the provisions of this Act."

[Translation]

The Government should constitute an Advisory Council to implement the provisions of this act. Today the farmers are not organised. Even the organisations of the farmers are not capable of organising them completely. Today the demand of farmers are suppressed immediately. Everyday the members say that the farmers should get support price for their produce. The Government has fixed support price for wheat, grain and all other process by they don't get the same. If they get anything, it is Rs. 100-125 less than the fixed price.

How can a farmer give good wages to the workers when he himself gets price of this produce much less than their cost. Therefore, there are co-related matters and they can't be regarded different from each other. If agricultural workers have to be paid reasonable wages, the farmers should be paid reasonable price for their produce. I don't say that they should get only support price of their produce they should be given remunerative price. The owner of a cement factory himself fix the process of cement and the owner of factory fixes the force of the pertones set, then what is the reason that the farmer can't fix prices of his produce. The

millionners fix prices of per quintal sugar and Khandasari the farmer must have right to fix prices of their produces as to what should be the prices of grambarh and wheat. If once, he sells garlic at the rate of Rs. 3000 per quintal he has to sell the same at the Rs. 150-200 per quintal on the next time. You may see the difference therein. We have never heard concern not have thought about it. So it should be considered in to. Hence the farmers are unhappy and when they raise their voice time and again, it proves cry in the wilderness and is ignored because they are not organised and that do not have any lobby. Now-a-days sugar lobby cement lobby and steel lobby but these are no farmers lobby. It is for this reasons that there should be a farmers lobby through which they may raise their voice and get the demands fulfilled. If we improve the condition of the poor farmers, the condition of agricultural worker who are linked with them, will also improve. Therefore, adopt this Bill. If you not adopt it then you should bring such a Bill which can protect interests of agriculture workers and farmers by solving their problems. It is necessary to hold a thorough discussion on this.

With these words, I conclude.

[Translation]

SHRI UPENDRANATH VERMA (Chatra)
Mr. Chairman Sir, I rise to support this Bill. Before saying anything I would like to draw the attention of the august House towards certain points mentioned in the Economic Survey of India 1993. It clearly mentions that in the present circumstance, there can be no security to service and salary. It further states that the industrial laws enacted in the interest of industrial workers are proving to be a hurdle in the path of industrial development which will have to be replaced. While drawing your attention towards these two sentences published in this book, I would also like to know about the psyche of this who have been in the limelight of politics and society? What steps do they intend to take? It has been clearly written in Economic Review that in the present circumstances one cannot talk about

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wages This should be kept in mind. Secondly, is there any difficulty in enforcing the laws enacted for this purpose? I can say that 90 percent of laws like Minimum Wages Act are not being implemented. Why they are not being implemented? The responsibility lies on those who are supposed to implement them, be it the Government officials or other persons. These officers do not come from the labour class; they represent the class which do not intend to pay the labourers their wages and thus exploit them. Therefore, they have made up their mind that they will not allow the implementation of the laws enacted in this regard. Now we have the biggest challenge: how to get the laws implemented strictly.

Thirdly, apart from the existing laws for welfare and providing facilities to labourers, new laws should be enacted in this regard. You cannot imagine the extent to which this thing has deteriorated. The labourers in villages are being paid less wages and moreover, atrocities are also committed on them. As a result, there of one can hear blasting bombs as well as firing of shots in the areas where labourers are being paid less wages and where they are being subjected to social and economic oppression, be it Bilaspur or Bastar in Madhya Pradesh, Kanam Nagar or Rangareddy districts of Andhra Pradesh, Marathwara in Maharashtra, Kalahandi in Orissa or Central Bihar in Bihar. With the rising of atrocities on poor in these areas, the resentment and anger among poor is also on the increase. What went wrong? When we attained independence, our leaders, politicians, bureaucrats prepared their plans on the lines of affluent foreign countries like U.S.A. and Russia in order to make India prosperous. Russia has a land area of 224 lakh square kilometers and a population of 29 crores. Whereas our land area is 33 lakh square kilometers and population is 87 crores. Like-wise America's land area is 94 lakh square kilometers and its population is 25 crores. It means that these two countries have more land area in comparison to their population, whereas our position is just the reverse. We have less

land area and more population. In these countries, machines are cheaper and manpower is dear and on the country we have cheap manpower and costlier machines. In our country, nobody took this aspect into account and while imitating others, we were ruined.

When we achieved independence, we were in a sound position financially as England was our debtor. At that time, we had a deposit of Rs 1190 crores in the RBI and the amount of standing balance was credited in the Account of India. But gradually, that amount was exhausted. By the beginning of 1950, India had a foreign debt of Rs 32 crore. Since then, the amount of this debt is increasing by leaps and bounds. Whenever a budget is presented, we find the amount of foreign debt is much more than what it was in the previous year. This year, we have to pay Rs 38,000 crores as interest of the principal, whereas it was Rs 32,000 crore last year.

On the one hand, we took foreign loans on a continuous basis and on the other hand, we could not utilize the loan amount in a proper way. The Five Star Hotel culture and luxury flourished in this country, the burden of which is being put on the people. I would like to state that our rural economy has completely changed and traditional professions of barber, washerwoman, blacksmith and potter have almost disappeared. They do not have any alternative. It is causing resentment among the villagers, which is increasing continuously at present. There is no work for the labourers.

The new economic policy and the ensuing one will deteriorate the situation in the next 4-5 years. The agricultural labourers will not get any work and instead, they will be subjected to more atrocities and exploitation. The Government will not be able to arrest this trend. Therefore, I urge you to make arrangements for those labourers right from now. The first step in this direction will be to entrust the job of implementing the laws enacted till date in the interest of labourers to the officials who also belong to the labour class. Secondly, a watch should be kept whether the money

337 *Agr. Workers (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill 1991* (SAKA) *Wages and Welfare* Bill 338 sanctioned for them is actually reaching them or not. It is generally done on paper only. If you see, you will find that during last ten years from 1980 to 1990 Rs. 25,000 crore were spent for providing hobs in rural areas but how many persons got employment? We express our satisfaction on looking at the figures that we have spent this and that much amount on rural development but what is the truth? When you go to a village, you come to know about the truth. During last ten years, an amount of Rs. 50,000 crore was spent on primary education at Centre and State levels but one cannot imagine the deplorable condition of education. Today they have made a declared policy which is very clear that instead of rural areas, whole attention should be centered at Delhi on providing educational facilities. The schools in which wards of M.Ps Ministered High Officials and rich people is study noun will not find even a single vacant post of a teacher but in rural areas, teachers are not provided for 2-3 months period.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the condition of Navodaya Vidyalayas are even worse which come up in the name of improving education. More than one thousand sanctioned posts are lying vacant in Navodaya schools. A number of posts are lying vacant in every school. There are no school buildings and no hostel facilities and moreover the money spent on providing food to a child has also been reduced to Rs. 200-250 from Rs. 400. But their report says that its performance is better. You can well imagine that how half the funds can better their performance? But on paper everything is fine. We should think on the as to how we can avoid such paper work.

Mr. Chairman, Sir agricultural labourer are illiterate. Even today illiteracy is about 85 per cent. In such circumstances, I would ask you to pass this Bill and also given our attention towards proper implementation of this law, otherwise it will further deteriorate the situation in the country. With the se words I conclude.

SHRI PALA K.M. MATTHEW (Idukki) :
Sir, I thank you very much forgiving this oppor-

tunity to speak. Because of the time constraint, I will try to be as brief as possible.

I am happy to express my appreciation about the principles, the spirit and the basic approach of this Bill - the Agricultural Workers (Minimum Wages and Welfare) Bill, 1991 introduced by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh.

As has been repeatedly pointed out here, ours is an agricultural economy. Therefore, top priority for agriculture has been given by the successive Congress Governments during the last years. We have completed a good part of the land Reforms though much remains to be done. Regarding the Land Reforms, the agricultural labours should have been given a more prominent and important part. There are 160 million agricultural laborers in this country, who are unemployed. On an average, they get only 180 days of work in a year. In certain States like Kerala, the average is around 270 days. But the All-India average is only 180 days. That means, this can be interpreted in two ways. Either 60 million people, that is, the agricultural workers are without work or all the 160 million agricultural workers are getting only partial work. So, this can be interpreted in either of these ways.

In our country, only 10 per cent of the population is organised... A few years back I have seen some statistics published by some experts. In that it has been stated that about 5 per cent of the organised population forms part of the monopolists, industrialists and other top people.

18.00 hrs.

And the five per cent consists of industrial labour. That means, the total is only ten per cent. 90 per cent of the population is unorganised and it is mainly the agricultural labour, the rural sector which is unorganised and this is mainly because of the dispersed nature of the farms and also the scattered position of the workers in different areas and regions of the country. Now because of the magnitude of the problem faced by the agricultural labourers and also the vast

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number of agricultural labourers in the country the central legislation is long overdue It should have been done much earlier

Now to put it very shortly to put it in a nutshell what are the real problems faced by the poor people I mean the rural agricultural labour? They are the lowest paid in the country Most of them are living below the poverty line Most of them are either bounded or are doing some kind of slavish work they are the most exploited and poorest sections of the people Now taking into consideration all this what should be the aim of the Government or the reformists to ameliorate the lot of these people? Generally speaking it should be employment generation and secondly it should have built up infrastructure opening giving opportunities for the rural labour Thirdly it should be aimed at improving their service conditions and wages and of course social development also with a view to do all these things a 12 member ministerial committee has been formed two years back to go into

the recommendations of the National Commission on Rural labor for Central Legislation for unorganized agricultural labor The recommendations of this Commission should be implemented without further delay Now as has already been suggested by some of my friends from Kerala the Central legislation can be based on the Kerala model In Kerala the land reforms as well as certain very important measures for the rural labour as been taken by various Government sets especially by the Congress Government and that can form a model Mr Chairman (Shri Peter G Marbaniang) Mr Mathew time is up You may again continue when we meet next time

The House stands adjourned to meet on Monday the 26th April 1993

1804 hrs

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till
Eleven of the Clock on Monday April 26
1993/Vaisakha 6 1915 (Saka)*