

full cost of education up to the end of the first degree course of the dependants of all personnel of the defence and para military forces killed or permanently disabled during the current hostilities. Government will also meet the full cost of such dependants who are at present undergoing post-graduate courses.

We can enact laws, but it is the outlook of the public which makes all the difference. Public behaviour towards the handicapped should not be affected by old prejudices. On the contrary, we must all help to make them self-reliant again. No longer need such a handicap prevent a person leading a full life.

I am glad that actuated by the same considerations as the Union Government, several State Governments have taken up schemes to assist servicemen and their families through land allocation, cash grants, educational stipends etc. I hope that this governmental effort will be reinforced by the widest measure of popular support.

14.48 hrs.

ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL—Contd.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the outset I say that I support the Bill but while supporting the Bill I must point out to the hon. Minister that the prices of essential commodities have risen and not only in Delhi, but in other places too.

As pointed out by my hon. friend Shri Indrajit Gupta when he was speaking on the Defence of India Bill, after the budget, prices went up; taking advantage of this emergency some of the unscrupulous businessmen have increased the prices of practically all the essential commodities.

In Delhi the prices of vegetables had gone up; the price of sugar had gone up by 20 paise or more in several places, though we were assured in this House by the hon. Minister Shri Ahmed that the price of sugar would not go up. The price of kerosene oil fixed at 61 paise per litre has gone up to 67 paise in some places. People are forced to pay through their nose because it is used in houses for preparation of food, etc. There was no question

of any torch cell being available unless somebody paid at least fifty per cent more than the actual price. It is not available even then.

During the black out people had to use candles in their homes, but no candle was available, it was available only to those who were prepared to pay more. Then, the prices of some of the ordinary medicines used regularly by some of the patients went up. The first answer of the chemist to enquiries was that the medicine was not available. Then he would say he would find out if something was left, and it was made available if the customer was prepared to pay more.

The price of meat has risen from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 a kilo. The price of fish in some of the markets has risen from Rs. 7 to Rs. 9 a kilo. The price of eggs has risen from Rs. 3.50 to Rs. 4 a dozen. The cost of lunch, breakfast and dinner has increased in ordinary restaurants by at least 25 to 30 per cent. We are the only fortunate persons in this House and the other House who have to pay only Rs. 4.20 for a good lunch in the imperial sense, because it is highly subsidised. So, we are enjoying, whereas in a city like Delhi people have to pay 25 to 30 per cent more.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the cost of an ordinary crude blanket, not a fine one, has increased by Rs. 5 to Rs. 7, and the cost of flannel and other woollen goods have increased by 10 to 25 per cent in certain places even by 30 per cent.

It is quite clear that some of the businessmen, I do not accuse every one, have minted money even during this emergency at the cost of the entire nation. That is why some of the people still feel that the war should have continued, so that they are able to sell goods at exorbitant prices.

This amendment was to expire on 31st December, 1971. It is now sought to amend section 12A to provide that it will have operation only for a period of two years with suitable saving provision. What is the use of having it if we have not been able to punish these guilty people? Powers have been given to officers not only to seize contraband articles like gold but even the aircraft carrying them, but what happened in the past? When gold was found, neither the gold nor the BOAC

[Shri S. M. Banerjee]

aircraft carrying it was confiscated. Gold may not be an essential commodity, but it is essential for many people. So, I would request the hon. Minister to tell us how many people have been punished during this period of emergency after the Budget was announced. It is no use passing legislation. We know what is happening. We discuss the railway accidents, and there are more railway accidents. We discuss the floods, and there are more floods in the country. We discuss the rise in prices, and prices rise more. Do we take it that it is better not to discuss these matters, because we give vent to our feelings but our suggestions are not implemented by the Government ?

I hold the Government responsible for the price rise. Even though the hostilities have ceased, prices are bound to increase further. Let Government take note of it and issue certain instructions to those who can possibly control prices to see that prices are not allowed to rise. The prices are to be stabilised at a reasonable level. But what is a reasonable level ? Is it the 1947 level or 1957 level or 1967 level or what ? The Government should see that some deterrent punishment is given not only on paper put also in actual practice, so that it may be an eye-opener to those who are actually enjoying at the cost of the nation.

श्री पन्नालाल बाबुपाल (गंगानगर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं एक सूचना देना चाहता हूँ। श्री बनर्जी ने मूल्यों के बारे में जो बात कही है, वह ठीक है। मेरी पत्नी ने आज मुझ से कहा कि इन डिठकारियां ठाला मूला मुनाफाबोर व्यापारियों को गोली बंदी नहीं लगी और हमारे जवानों को लगी। उसने कहा कि राष्ट्रपति भवन में जो दुकान है, उस पर वजन बढ़ाने के लिए चीनी पर पानी छिड़क कर बेचा जा रहा है, कम तोला जा रहा है और बीस पैसे ज्यादा लिए जा रहे हैं। मैं चाहता हूँ कि इस बारे में अभी जांच कराई जाये।

* SHRI C. CHITTIBABU (Chingleput) : Hon. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to you for giving me an opportunity to say a few words on The Essential Commodities

(Amendment) Bill. I welcome this Bill because it deals with essential commodities required by our common people. It is the primary duty of a developing country that the essential commodities like foodgrains, edible oil, medicines and so on are made available to the common people at a moderately reasonable price level and then only the common people will be able to appreciate the development efforts made by the Government. If the Government want to secure the willing cooperation of the common people in their efforts to raise the standard of living of the people, then it must be ensured that the production and distribution of essential commodities are controlled legally so that the common people are able to secure the basic necessities of life.

14.59 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Sir, 58 commodities have been listed under this law as essential commodities. I would like to point out that the Government have recently levied an excise duty on newspapers, which comes to two paise per newspaper. But the newspaper owners without any compunction have raised the price of newspapers by 7 paise or 8 paise. It must be remembered, Sir, that the common people of the country cannot afford to have the mass media of communication like Radio or some other luxuries of the present day like frequenting cinema which are normally within the reach of people in a developing country. Even the poorest of the poor try to buy a newspaper and get some information regarding the happenings in the country. With the increase in price of newspapers, they are deprived even of this facility. I would appeal to the hon. Minister that the newspaper should also be declared as an essential commodity so that the newspaper owners do not raise the price according to their whims and fancies. The Government with the noble objective of accordung succour and relief to millions of Bangla Desh refugees levied an excise duty of 2 paise, but the newspaper owners have raised the price by 10 paise. I would urge upon the Government that newspaper should also be listed under this Act as an essential commodity.

15. hrs.

Sir, certain provisions contained in the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

*The original speech was delivered in Tamil.

1964 will be in force only upto 31.12.1971. In particular, the provision regarding the process of conducting summary trial in the case of violation of special orders issued by the Government, is now sought to be put on a permanent basis under this amending bill. This is to be welcomed by all of us, especially when more than 22800 offences were committed in the year 1970. This bill has been introduced at the appropriate time.

I would say here that there is no meaning in just controlling the essential commodities. I say this because adulteration in the country has gone up by leaps and bounds. The producers and the merchants know that the people will have to buy their essential requirements and they exploit this dependence to their full advantage. They take several devious ways of adulterating the essential commodities and try to become rich quickly by selling such adulterated essential commodities. I would request that the hon. Minister should implement more stringently the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and then only the people will be benefited by the provisions of Essential Commodities Act.

While replying in Rajya Sabha to the point regarding fixation of procurement price on the basis of post-harvest price, the hon. Minister referred to the activities of Food Corporation of India in the country which are aimed at securing fair prices to the small producers. So far as Tamil Nadu is concerned the Food Corporation of India has procured only 500 tonnes of *kuruvai* paddy. While there is procurement potential available in the country, we see that foodgrains are imported, that The hon. Minister may say the State Government has not been extending enough co-operation in this activity. I would point out that the State Government of Tamil Nadu is not only interested in the procurement activity of the Food Corporation but also in the welfare of small cultivators and producers. The State Government is not only interested in its survival but also in the survival and welfare of the people of the State. I would stress that the Food Corporation of India should intensify its procurement activity in Tamil Nadu.

I would also refer to the fact that under this Bill the notifications issued under this Act are subject to review every two years. I am not able to comprehend that, when the

Government want to put certain provisions on the statute book on a permanent basis, they should seek a provision which will enable them to review the notifications issued under this Bill. I feel that this is contrary to the intentions of the Government. I would request the hon. Minister to clarify this point in his reply.

Before I conclude, I would stress that newspaper should also be declared as an essential commodity. I would also suggest more vigorous implementation of Prevention of Food Adulteration Act so that the people are able to derive the advantage from the provisions of Essential Commodities Act.

SHRI GHANSHYAM OZA : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, while the hon. Members by and large welcomed these amendments, they have utilized this opportunity to express their concern about certain things like price rise, non-availability of certain commodities and, as was pointed out by my hon. friend, Shri Barupal, adulteration also. The hon. Member belonging to the DMK, who spoke last, while welcoming the amendments, expressed the desire that notification under Sec. 12 A should not have only a life of two years. I am afraid he has not properly followed the provisions of section 12 (a), which relates only to summary trials. Orders are issued under Section 3 and if any order issued under Section 3 is notified as a special order, then the courts are entitled to try those offences in a summary manner. We have got the Criminal Procedure Code ; we have got the Criminal Jurisprudence. Every accused is supposed to be innocent. When he is held up before the court, he is given every opportunity to defend himself and there is a laborious procedure by which he gets an opportunity to prove that he is innocent. (Interruption) I am coming to that. So far as the essential commodities are concerned, we say, these crimes are not against persons and that these crimes are against society and, therefore, they should be dealt with more firmly, drastically and in a summary manner, so that we can quickly dispose of these cases. But we should not forget that, after all, it is a stringent provision in law and, whenever a stringent provision in law is made, we must have some safeguard.

We do not say that these provisions will not be continued after two years. If after two

[Shri Ghanshyam Oza]

years it is found that in view of the prevailing state of commodities being available, the price rise, etc. we should extend the period, the Government is authorised to extend the period of notification. We shall not have to come to Parliament for extending the period of notification. After two years, the Government will review the position as to what is the position about supply of essential commodities, what is the price trend, etc. All these things can be taken into consideration. If we find that in the larger interest of the community we should extend the period of notification, we shall do so. These powers are with the Government. We have not to come to Parliament for that. We have made this particular provision and I am sure this will satisfy the hon. Members.

Then, some hon. Members showed concern about the price rise and I share their concern. The Essential Commodities Act is a permanent feature of our economy. We know that constrains are bound to develop. The way in which we are fast developing, we are raising resources and diverting them to certain production sectors and we have formulated several plans, in doing so, occasions are bound to arise when there will be short supplies and there will be constrains here and there. Therefore, we have to put the Essential Commodities Act on a permanent basis on the statute book to deal with the situation as we are facing today.

There is Emergency now and we have got the Defence of India Act and the Defence of India Rules framed thereunder. We can take more effective measures. As the House knows, in Delhi, we have put so many persons behind the bar. So many other States have taken drastic action. Apart from the Defence of India Act and the Rules made thereunder, even under the Essential Commodities Act, all these powers have been delegated to State Governments. We are always writing to State Governments to utilise the powers so that supplies are maintained and that undue rise in price does not take place and that hoarding does not take place. There is the power to get things dehoarded. All these powers have been delegated to the State Governments. We are constantly in touch with the State Governments to see that supplies are maintained. Whenever we find that a certain commodity is in short supply,

we rush it to a particular area if other things permit us to do so. We have to look to the defence requirements also. Certain commodities have to be diverted for meeting the immediate needs of the army people.

We have alerted the State Governments to keep a watchful eye on the commodities which are essential for the purpose of the community and see that the prices are properly maintained. As the House knows the Delhi Administration has alerted itself and it has appointed so many inspectors and it has opened so many fair price shops and these fair price shops have been forced to display prices in their shops at which the commodities will be available. All these measures are having some effect. But I must tell the hon Members that by merely putting a law on the statute book we should not derive satisfaction and that if the law is there on the statute book, everything will be all right. We cannot be complacent about it. That thing will not do. In the society we have also to be very watchful. For that purpose, Consumers' Resistance Movements have started. Citizens' Council is also there. Women's Council is also functioning and with the co-operation of all these bodies, we hope that at the present juncture we will be able to maintain the price line. This is all what I would like to say.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER. The question is :

"That the Bill further to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : There are no amendments to the clauses. So, I will put all the clauses to vote.

The question is :

"That clauses 2 to 5, Clause 1, the Enacting Formula, and the Title stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clauses 2 to 5, Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI GHANSHYAM OZA : I move :

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The question is :

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

15. 12 hrs.

**STATUTORY RESOLUTION
RE. PUNJAB STATE ELECTRICITY
BOARD**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI K. R.
GANESH)** : I beg to move :

"Whereas in pursuance of sub-section (3) of section 65 of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 (54 of 1948), the Government of the State of Punjab has, with the approval of the Legislative Assembly of that State, fixed by its Order No. 8268-21&E/64 dated the 28th April, 1964, the sum of rupees twenty crores as the maximum amount which the Punjab State Electricity Board may at any time have on loan under sub-section (1) of the said section 65 ;

And whereas the Government of the State of Punjab proposes to increase the aforesaid amount to rupees fifty crores ;

And whereas the Legislative Assembly of the State of Punjab has been dissolved ;

And whereas under the Proclamation, dated the 15th June, 1971, issued by the President under article 356 of the Constitution, the powers of the State Legislature are exercisable by Parliament ;

Now, therefore, it is hereby resolved that the Lok Sabha do accord approval to the proposal of the Government of the State of Punjab to fix under sub-section (3) of section 65 of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 (54 of 1948), the sum of rupees fifty crores as the maximum amount which the Punjab

State Electricity Board may at any time have on loan under sub-section (1) of the said section 65."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The question is :

"Whereas in pursuance of sub-section (3) of section 65 of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 (54 of 1948), the Government of the State of Punjab has, with the approval of the Legislative Assembly of that State, fixed by its Order No. 8268-21&E/64 dated 28th April, 1964, the sum of rupees twenty crores as the maximum amount which the Punjab State Electricity Board may at any time have on loan under sub-section (1) of the said section 65 ;

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The motion was adopted.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Mr. Vidya Charan Shukla.

AN HON. MEMBER : He is not there, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : If he is not there, I am helpless.

There is no other business. So, the House stands adjourned till 3.30 p.m.