

Shri B. S. Murthy (Eluru): I want one clarification.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: What is the point.

An Hon. Member: You may speak.

Shri B. S. Murthy: I am not speaking. I am only putting a question.

May I know whether the Minister is aware that there are several of these drivers and conductors who have been making requests that some facilities should be provided to them for their conveyance from their respective residences to the place where they must take out the buses? May I know whether the Minister will see that at least a special bus is provided to pick them up at four o'clock or five o'clock in the morning so that their inconvenience will be lessened?

Shri Alagesan: I have to inform that staff buses are provided to bring the operating staff from their houses. There are enough number of buses to bring these employees.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Now, there is an half-hour discussion.

An Hon. Member: We cannot be taking it for another ten minutes.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We will take it up and disperse five minutes earlier. There is no harm.

Shri Vallatharas (Pudukkottai): In the light of the statement.....

The Deputy Minister of Finance (Shri M. C. Shah): It was fixed for 12-45.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Now we have finished this. Am I to proceed then with the Estate Duty Bill?

Ch. Ranbir Singh (Rohtak): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: If I take up the Estate Duty Bill, I will have to close it at 12-45. We are at 12-35 now. If the hon. Minister has any inconvenience, I will put it off to 12-45.

Shri M. C. Shah: The Finance Minister is going to reply. He is not here. Anyhow, I am here. We may continue.

Ch. Ranbir Singh: May I speak, Sir?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: No. I will take up this half-hour discussion. There are barely ten minutes.

FAMINE AND DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN MADRAS

Shri Vallatharas (Pudukkottai): In the light of the statement of the Chief Minister of Madras State in the Madras Legislative Assembly in March last that the famine conditions and the suffering of the people had assumed very serious dimensions throughout the State that his Government could not cope with it and that the national plan for the State had been completely upset, I asked question No. 1362 which was answered on the floor of this House on the 16th April, 1953.

I had asked for information about the conditions and the nature of the famine and drought which made the Chief Minister make that desperate statement referred to above, and also the measures particularly adopted or proposed to be adopted for preventing or mitigating the situation. The answer given by the hon. Food Minister confined itself to a mere and bare statement of the districts and areas affected by the famine. Thus this discussion arises.

It is an admitted fact that the areas presently affected are the 13 districts of Tamil Nad. There are other areas about which I am not referring. The present malady has exclusively concentrated itself over the 13 districts of Tamil Nad, of which Tiruchirappally and Ramnad are the worst affected, and in Tiruchirappally my constituency of Pudukkottai is the worst affected. I made a detailed reference to the development of the famine conditions in my district in my speech on the Finance Bill last month and I emphasised the desirability of the urgent need for a revision of the policy of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to attend to and concede the immediate needs by permanent facilities of water for drinking and irrigation purposes for reclaiming once-cultivated lands but since lying fallow, to be provided with irrigation facilities instead of devoting attention substantially to reclaim new lands by mechanical cultivation.

The present famine conditions are not the creation of this year or the previous year. They had appeared a decade before, gradually developed without interruption and acquired

serious dimensions in 1950 and 1951 and have reached the crisis at the end of 1952.

It is painful to observe that neither the State Government nor the Central Government nor the leading political party in whose hands power is vested, have paid sufficient attention, and the little attention they had paid so far has proved to be ineffective, misguided, outside the purpose and practically ended in waste of money and official energy.

Ever since 1950, the State Ministers, economic experts and highest officers of the Centre had openly admitted the ever-growing menacing conditions of famine, but their expressions and promises, have proved to be empty words and time-serving statements. Neither the Centre nor the State have at least applied themselves earnestly to the problem since the statement of the Madras Chief Minister in March last. The Revenue Minister had clearly admitted in March itself that for six years there was no rain and to prevent mass mortality, 2000 gruel centre had to be opened in consonance with the view expressed by Dr. Shetty, the hon. Minister of Finance, when he presented the Budget in 1951. Now the present Finance Minister, Shri Subrahmanyam, had on the 14th March said:

"We were in the grip of an unprecedented famine and in the assessment of the magnitude of the disaster and the extent to which necessary relief measures would cut into our resources we had erred on the wrong side. As against an estimated outlay of about six crores, we have already spent ten crores on famine relief and expenditure continues to be incurred".

Then came the Chief Minister statement in the Assembly a few days later.

In my speech on the Finance Bill in April last, I pleaded for deputing a Minister of the Food and Agriculture department to go to the spot forthwith, study the things in person and do the needful to avert or mitigate the existing conditions.

Now the Commerce and Industry Minister had gone on a tour of the Tamil Nad area last week. Thanks to the Press, a good deal of information about his tour and his feelings are given. It was a grave disappointment to me when I read the news from one of his statements that he was visiting the distressed areas in the South to fulfil a tentative agreement he had with one of the leaders of the Tamil

Nad Congress party some four or five months ago and that he would probably once again come in the middle of June to cover the rest of the Tamil Nad districts which he was not covering now. Let it be aside.

I will give a gist of his utterances because they are very important and related to this question. He has said that he went to meet the people and understand their difficulties. These are his very words:

"I understand the Centre had rendered substantial help to Madras."

He refutes that the Central aid had not been to the extent required by the State, and that the expenditure of ten crores is a bogey raised by the State Government to get more money from the Centre. This latter portion is repudiated by the hon. Minister. He says, that the general opinion is that Trichy district including my constituency Pudukkottai division has been neglected both by the Centre and the State and that Pudukkottai division is worst affected, that ten crores were spent by the State but this amount had not produced much impression, and the condition of the people is still one of suffering, but the officers were doing extremely well, that the expenditure does not seem to have been of much avail, that they have to see what was the defect and what could be done to improve things and what further help the Central Government could give, and that the territory is in distress and thousands and thousands of acres are lying barren or with crops withering or withered; and drinking water is absolutely scarce. Then he says that he will return to the Centre and tell the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister what he had seen and see what could be done in this matter. He has also pleaded on behalf of the Government, that "famine is God-made and not man-made, and do not get angry with the Government."

These are the extracts from his statement. In the administrative and executive side there is something fundamentally wrong resulting in the expenditure of ten crores of rupees and which expenditure has not been helpful to ease the situation, to any extent. There is either a terrible waste by investments in wrong places where conditions are not bad or a terribly wrong and foolish policy pursued wherein the money has been mulcted without any decretion. This is a disastrous condition. So the position has been made difficult. Not only has there been not any improvement in the last two years, but during the last four months the Government have not done their duty.

[Shri Vallatharas]

Now, after many people have died or have suffered lingering deaths what is the use of thinking that we will be doing this thing or that thing in the future. Now, some urgent work must be done. The State Government has not got money; it cannot cope with the present circumstances. I must straightway say—because there is no *mala fides* in the State—I do not rush to make that charge—the conditions there warrant that the Government of the Madras State deserves to be assumed by the Centre and carried on by it for a few months at least. I do not attribute any failure on the part of the State Government. As a matter of fact they are incapable for want of finances. Ten crores have been spent. At the same time I am able to endorse my own previous statement that I made on the Finance Bill and the statement made by the present Minister who has toured that place that they have not left any trace or relief for any of the people there.

Now I give my suggestions. Locally, in every district, with the M. Ps, the M. L. As and the Collector, under directions from a Minister of the Central Government, preferably the Commerce Minister or the Food Minister, whoever he may be, a Committee must be formed, and in consultation with all of them, something urgent must be done: I gave an example already that I was prepared to co-operate with the Government and get the work done by the people i.e., digging a channel from Cauvery to irrigate lands in Pudukkottai division and Manapparai taluk. I met the hon. Minister of Agriculture and pleaded with him that we can even bear the entire expenditure of that scheme if really the Central Government felt the scarcity of money. We are prepared to co-operate with them. In every constituency, in every district, people are prepared to come to co-operate. I think the tour of the hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry should have given him an idea of how strong the feeling is that the Central Government should take the responsibility and do something. He has suggested in the course of his statement that some permanent work must be started so that permanent facilities may be granted. In these circumstances, I suggest two concrete things. One is, in my opinion, a Committee consisting of the M.Ps and M.L.As in every district, under the direct guidance of the Central Minister should consider what things should be done, and where and if any place the co-operation of the local people either in money or in labour is available, that

must be taken at once and irrigational work must be started.

The second is rural agricultural employment. There is no use granting money for removing silt in a tank or for having some road constructed. Unemployment must be relieved in a manner in which not only the purchasing power of the people may be increased but at the same time some benefit of permanent utility must be created for the benefit of the people there. Under these circumstances, I submit that the Government may be pleased to depute exclusively for this purpose for some time, at least for a month, a Minister of the Cabinet to be in charge of this matter and to see that the situation is remedied, or else I would preferably submit—without any ill-will or friction—that the Government of Madras should be assumed by the Centre, for it is a question that people may be dying. That is my humble submission. I am very serious in this matter. The hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry has said that he is a member of the South,—and he is also a leading Congressman. He should advise the Prime Minister as well as the Finance Minister—who is a Famine Minister—to come to the help of the South.

The Finance Minister is a Famine Minister. He wants money not only for these things, but also for the Five Year Plan. After many have died or suffered untold miseries of a lingering death, you cannot revive them afterwards. As Mr. Rajagopalachari has said, the Five Year Plan has broken down so far as Madras is concerned. Its entire structure has failed, when the Ministers fold their hands and cry aloud looking at the Himalayas: "Oh Shiva, come to our help: what are you going to do." So please come to our rescue, or else you will see 50 lakhs of people would face a very serious situation and people will say you are not doing anything even though you have got the resources.

Shri N. P. Damodaran (Tellicherry): May I know whether famine conditions are now existing in the coastal area of the Malabar district, especially among the fishing community and whether the Government is aware that the municipal councils of Tellicherry and Cannanore have by resolutions of the respective councils requested the Government to go to the help of the starving millions immediately? Have Government received any reports from the district authorities or from the State Government of Madras about the existence of famine conditions in Malabar? Are

Government aware that the leading Malayalam Daily *Mathrubhumi* has been publishing reports and writing editorials to focus the attention of the Government and the public on the famine conditions existing in the coastal areas of Malabar and requesting Government to go to the help of the starving people there?

Shri Nambiar (Mayuram): May I know whether Government have ascertained the reason why the number of gruel centres has been reduced from 2,000 to 800 during the last few months, though they are aware that the scarcity conditions in the Madras State have only deteriorated and the situation is very bad.

I also want to know to what extent the Five Year Plan is executed in the State of Madras, particularly what irrigation and water conservation measures are taken to relieve scarcity conditions, and the acute shortage of water which has arisen on account of the failure of the monsoon for the past five years in succession.

Shri B. S. Murthey (Eluru): When last year the hon. the Prime Minister visited Rayalaseema he made some promises. The Bhattacharya Committee had also gone there and submitted its report. But so far nothing substantial has been done. May I know whether the Government is serious about doing something by the people of Rayalaseema, who are subjected to untold miseries year after year.

The Minister of Agriculture (Dr. P. S. Deshmukh): A major portion of the speech of the hon. Member who raised this discussion was devoted to, I am constrained to say, the sphere of the State Government rather than that of the Central Government. I would like to reiterate that relief of scarcity areas is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments and it is very wrong to treat this House as a sort of substitute for the Madras Assembly. We at the centre are concerned only with certain items of expenditure. Especially, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture can, if there is scarcity of food stocks, rush food stocks there. We can also, if it is an extreme case of urgency, reduce the price of foodstuffs and make it available to them. We can also recommend to Finance Ministry to give them 50 per cent. of gratuitous relief. That might be done. We might also supply them with foodstuffs when and if any cheap price shops are to be opened.

Now, so far as these things are concerned, my hon. friend who spoke first had put in a question on the 16th April, and a fairly detailed reply was given. It has been complained that some of the gruel centres have been closed. My friend has just pointed this out. May I say that, although on humanitarian grounds we try to assist the State Governments wherever it is possible and wherever it is our policy to do so, we cannot after all—as has been pointed out by my hon. colleague the Finance Minister yesterday in the other House—make exceptions in many cases. It may be that in a particular State the circumstances are very pressing, the scarcity is very acute and something special has to be done. All the same I think the House will realise that we have to treat all the States on a basis of equality. And from that point of view I can assure the House that the Centre has done the utmost it could in the case of Madras.

I cannot understand the somewhat contradictory complaints. On the one hand it is pointed out that the Madras Government has been stating and that the hon. the Chief Minister also has been stating that this relief is beyond their capacity. If this fact is correct then the hon. Members of the House must admit that the Cabinet in Madras is thoroughly apprised of the situation, they know the gravity of the situation and they are pressing this Government for greater relief. On the other hand, more or less in the same breath, we have a complaint that the Madras Government is callous, incompetent, that it is not paying any attention, that it should even be taken over by this Parliament or by the Centre. This sort of no confidence to be moved in the Parliament, I do not know how far it is correct to do so or even to criticise the Madras Government in such language.

I do not wish to weary the House with any figures. I have got them and I am prepared to read them, what we have done, what relief we have been giving. My friend has said that although some money was given from here and the Madras Government also spent money it was all uselessly spent. Here also the Centre would not be the main arbiter or judge as to how far the money has been well spent or not. I personally think the individual opinion of an hon. Member is certainly entitled to respect, but all the same we cannot neglect the well constituted Government of Madras and accept his alle-

gation or his complaint. I do not think. I can take much more time because the Finance Minister is also going to say something.

Shri B. S. Murthy: Rayalaseema.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Are there any deaths? The hon. Member said there are so many deaths. Otherwise it will go on record.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: No, Sir. According to our information there is not a single death, and I do not think any situation would be allowed to arise where there will be any death. So from that point of view I am in a position to reassure the House that we as well as the Madras Government will certainly see that there is no starvation.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: What are the amounts spent? The House and also the country at large would like to know.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: Of course, this is based on the reply of 16th April. The Government of India have agreed to meet 50 per cent. of expenditure on gruel centres subject to a maximum of Rs. 48 lakhs. In this connection a grant of Rs. 47 lakhs has already been paid to the State Government. In addition, the Government of India have sanctioned a loan of Rs. two crores to Madras and have purchased securities amounting to Rs. 14.39 crores to enable the State Government to finance both their famine relief and capital expenditure schemes.

I would also like to point out that in order to give relief to the scarcity affected people, the State Government have opened 3306 fair price shops in the affected areas which are serving a population of more than 74 lakhs of people. The State Government are running 5184 relief works on which more than 3.5 lakhs of people are employed. Up to 15th March, 1953 the State Government have spent a sum of Rs. 326,01,078 on relief works, and have disbursed Rs. 203,65,869 under AGL and LIL Acts, Rs. 21,61,515 under subsistence loans, Rs. 28,50,919 for deepening of wells and Rs. 19,85,287 for pumping installations. In addition the State Government have spent Rs. 90,96,141 on gruel centres, Rs. 1,76,265 on fodder supply and have sanctioned an expenditure of Rs. 4,22,493 for public health measures and about Rs. 28 lakhs on drinking water supply.

The loan of Rs. two crores was sanctioned by the Ministry of Finance in October, 1952. The grant of Rs. 47 lakhs was paid partly in Feb-

ruary and partly in March, 1953. The Centre also purchased securities amounting, as I have already said, to Rs. 14.39 crores.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Finance Minister.

Shri B. S. Murthy: Nothing about Rayalaseema.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member need not take any particular point. The hon. Finance Minister.

The Minister of Finance (Shri C. D. Deshmukh): I have had occasion to explain the principles on which Central assistance is extended to States for the relief of famine or scarcity. So far as the actual appraisal of the situation is concerned, necessarily, we must depend on reports that we received, from State Governments in the absence, at any rate, of any statements to the contrary. It is only recently that such statements, shall we say to the contrary, are being made. It will be our duty now to put these observations to the Madras Government in order to ascertain what their view is in regard to the assessment of the situation. We have also had the advantage of a personal visit to that tract not necessarily for these purposes but also for other purposes by my hon. colleague. Now it may be that in a few days time, after we receive the views of the State Government, we shall be in a position to form a view as to what the extent of scarcity is, whether in the districts from which the hon. Members who have spoken have come or in any other districts whether in the south of the State or whether in the north of the State. So far as the north of the State is concerned, the problem is somewhat different and I shall come to it later.

Now, in regard to the actual relief measures, I think it is very unjust to insinuate that the Madras State has been entirely supine in this matter. I do not think that the fact their resources are somewhat strained would compel them to contract these elementary obligations. Now to what extent relief works have been undertaken has indicated by my hon. colleague. Here again there may be difference of opinion as to the extent to which such operations are required and that is a matter in which we shall have occasion to go especially when, so far as I am concerned, I get some quantitative idea from my hon. colleague in regard to the residual relief work that was to be done. I am persuaded to think that the addi-

tional requirements of the situation would not be very large and that by themselves, they would not pose a very unwieldy financial problem.

• 1 P.M.

Now, so far as the north of the State is concerned, as I said this morning, I am of the view that the immediate needs of the situation have been met because that scarcity has been with us for some time and the only question that is left therefore is the long-term question of how these recurrent famine and scarcities are to be eliminated. That question may arise in regard to the north of the State, as for instance the Rayalaseema area. It may arise even in the south. To what extent it arises in either of these two territories, it is not possible for me to say but I am conceding that for the moment, there is something that can be done which would enable us to deal with this long-term situation. As I had occasion to indicate before, it can only be done by the inclusion of the works that appear necessary in this respect in the Plan and to the extent to which they did not find a place in the priorities of the Plan, by reconsidering those priorities, if that is possible. And that is where again the State Government comes in. Because, unless the State Government indicates to us that on a reconsideration of the problem, they are prepared to entertain an alteration of any priorities, it is not for the Centre, even if they have the willingness to meet the wishes of the people, to make any change. After all, when the Planning Commission determines the Plan, it merely indicates the figure. It is not as if all the money is found by the Centre. The Centre gives assistance on a planned basis to all the States. So far as the Madras State is concerned, the total measure of assistance has already been indicated to them. To the extent to which assistance is not received from the Centre, it can only be substitution of one work for another. Therefore, other resources have to be raised by the State itself or the disposal of the assistance which they receive from the Centre has to be re-arranged, and that money has to be laid on certain other works. Therefore, it is not within our power to say that we shall now give you a loan only for this purpose and not for any other, because, that would immediately create a deadlock. Nor can we indicate to them that a certain work should be taken up if we are not prepared to say that we shall find the finance for it. Therefore, essentially it is a question of alteration of the priorities in the Plan, and it is a matter for the State Government and the Plan-

ning Commission to settle. To the extent to which such questions can be settled, so far as I am concerned, I should see no objection to agreeing that whatever assistance is given from the Centre shall be applied, shall we say, to minor work (a) in Rayalaseema instead of minor work (b) somewhere else. This position is generally true, but it has become somewhat complicated this year on account of the projected partition of the State. That is a fact which hon. Members must take into consideration. After all, it is no use Members of Rayalaseema asking me what exactly is intended to be done. By whom? Because the whole question.....

Shri B. S. Murthy: By the persons concerned.

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: That is where confusion arises. If the Centre is held responsible for almost everything, then, we must devise a unitary form of Constitution. It cannot be done under the present Constitution. We are prepared to bear our own share of the responsibility and we are prepared to give a certain amount of guidance either directly or through the Planning Commission.

Shri B. S. Murthy: What will happen to the people if you deny your responsibility and the Madras Government deny their responsibility?

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: It is not a question of denying responsibility. I say it is a question of exercise of responsibility by the proper State authority. So far as Madras is concerned, there are new State authorities which are about to emerge towards the end of the year. Till they emerge, it does not lie within the power, as far as I can see, of any Government, either at the Centre, or the present Madras State Government, to say that the following new works which are not included in the Plan shall be started. That is a proposition which, I think, has only to be stated.

Shri Lakshmayya (Anantapur): On a point of information, Sir, is there any chance of the high level canal of the Tungabhadra project being included in the Five Year Plan, in view of the promise made by the hon. Prime Minister, particularly for the benefit of the Rayalaseema and other adjacent areas?

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: I do not know about that.

Shri B. S. Murthy: He did make that promise.

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: I am only concerned with what is mentioned in the report of the Planning Commission. The hon. Member has not been listening to my arguments. It is not my case that anything is to be denied or that anything is not to be started. To me,—it means either to the Finance Ministry or the Planning Commission—it does not make very much of a difference. Here, I am speaking after making an examination of what the Planning Commission's feelings in this matter would be. If it appears to them, and if it is considered by them, that the elimination of famine and scarcity conditions has become a far more urgent and immediate issue, then I think they will certainly be very glad to agree that certain works be substituted for something else. Whether such a substitution is possible, it is not for me to say, and I am not saying that these works can be substituted only in the same field, viz. irrigation. It may be that room can be found for additional irrigation works by contracting something else, such as education, or may be transport, or tarring of roads, or any thing else. As I say, it is for the new State Governments that are about to emerge to first find out what their share of the Plan is and what the needs of the situation are in regard to this problem, which has somehow become a far more immediate and urgent problem, namely, the possible elimination of the recurrence of these scarcities. Therefore, if hon. Members will have a little patience, then I think that they will give a fair chance to the new Governments that will be coming in, and the matter can then be considered in a cool and dispassionate manner. But it does not indicate any kind of apathy towards the suffering of the people. As I have already postulated, so far as the immediate requirements of the situation are concerned, if there is any residual action to be taken, it will be our duty, that is to say, of the Central Government and the Madras Government, to sit together and find a way out. So far as long-term solutions are concerned, there is nothing very much that can be done till the new Governments are in the saddle.

Shri N. P. Damodaran: I put a question this morning about famine conditions in Malabar. It has not been answered.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I have no information. We have not received any representation. At least so far as I am concerned, we have not seen the municipal committee's representation. It necessarily concerns the

State Government in the first instance.

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: Is it the same question that was answered in the morning?

Shri N. P. Damodaran: Yes.

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: I have undertaken to find out if there is any distress among the fishermen community in Malabar. I have undertaken to find out what the situation is.

Shri Nambiar: What happens to the gruel centres which have been closed? Is there any prosperity of their being reopened?

An Hon. Member: Prosperity of their being reopened?

Shri Nambiar: I am sorry, Sir. I mean, is there any prospect or possibility of their being re-opened?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Hon. Members have heard the statement at length. If the local Government starts gruel centres, the Centre will bear half the cost. That is what has been stated. They should be satisfied with that. Why should they discount the services of the local M.L.As. and ask these questions here?

Shri Nambiar: Are we not entitled to ask?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: No, no. I am afraid hon. Members here are under the impression that they are the custodians of the whole of India, notwithstanding the fact that in the various States there are responsible Ministers and M.L.As. who have been elected under adult suffrage as much as we have been elected to Parliament.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: It is an encroachment on the rights of the M.L.As. from Madras.

MESSAGES FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATES

Secretary: Sir, I have to report the following two messages received from the Secretary of the Council of States:

(1) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to inform the House of the People that the Council of States, at its sitting held on the 14th May, 1953, agreed without any amendment to the Air Corporations Bill.