

The committee constituted may be such, which, without being influenced by the interests of trade and industry may make a proper application of the cess, firstly, to help the cotton growers in growing cotton and, secondly, to carry on such technological and agricultural research as to benefit cotton growers and give our country the wherewithal to improve the production of cotton. For this purpose some device should be found by which cotton growers would get wide representation in the committee. Secondly, I would urge upon the Government so to arrange the representation that trade and industry are not too heavily represented and, particularly, interests like the East India Cotton Association, who had been formerly guilty of illicit forward trading in cotton, and also the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, who have practically no interest in India, are not represented on this committee.

**Shri K. K. Basu** (Diamond Harbour): Mr. Speaker, Sir, though the amendment is a very short one and the Minister in the course of his introductory speech tried to pass on saying that it is a very innocuous sort of amending Bill, we think that he should have given some more detailed information as to the manner in which he proposes to improve the functioning of this particular Board.

Sir, you are well aware of the role of cotton in the economic life of the country and more so in our fight for national liberation. You are also well aware, Sir, that India, which was at one time very famous for her textile goods, used to export textile goods to Europe and other countries and her goods had very support in the foreign markets. When the Britishers came, through methods which were, as you know, uncivilised and barbaric, they deliberately tried to stop and injure practically our entire textile trade and the industry collapsed. Then, naturally, with the advent of the national movement, in 1906 the spirit of swadeshi was roused and we tried to

establish at least mills to produce cloth so that the Indian people can put on the cloth made in India and not those brought from Lancashire. After that, in 1920, when Gandhiji came and led the All India National Movement, there was a sort of a new feeling, a new impetus to this movement for the national liberation and to some extent this industry grew up in our country, especially in the western part of India.

Therefore, when we are discussing this provision regarding cotton cess, we should see to what extent the Government, after they came into power, had been in a position to utilise the cess that has been collected under this Cotton Cess Act of 1923.

Sir, shall I continue? I understand there is a half-an-hour discussion at six o'clock. It is already six and I am likely to take some more time.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. He may continue on the next day.

#### FLOOD-AFFECTED DISPLACED PERSONS IN AGARTALA

**Mr. Speaker:** We will now take up the half-an-hour-discussion. In a half-an-hour discussion the mover takes ten minutes, the Minister takes ten minutes and in between two Members may have five minutes each.

**Shri Biren Dutt** (Tripura West): Sir, with your permission I wish to raise a half-an-hour discussion on points arising out of answer given on the 16th July, 1956 to Starred Question No. 12.

6 P.M.

I wanted to know how many persons were drowned and how many houses collapsed. I also wanted to know whether any aid was given to the bereaved families. The reply was that that eleven persons were reported to have died and while two persons could be identified, it was found that those two persons were not displaced persons. It is not clear whether the remaining persons were displaced persons or not. It was said in reply to my supplementary question that no

[Shri Biren Dutt]

houses were washed away. I come from that very town of Agartala. Before the displaced persons entered that town, there were only 12,000 families. Now, 16,000 families are there. Expect the 12,000 families, the rest are displaced persons.

Just after the reply to my question was given, the Minister of Planning and Irrigation and Power has given a statement about the situation. He said in that statement that almost all the mud houses have been destroyed. But the Minister of Rehabilitation has stated that not a single house has been destroyed. In this House, whenever we ask any question, such conflicting replies are given.

I should also like to invite your attention and the attention of the House to another point. On the day when my colleague, Shri Desaratha Deb wanted to move an adjournment motion, the Home Minister himself tried to ridicule us before this House and before the official gallery and the visitors' gallery by saying that there was no flood. No Member of the Government was there to see the flood. But yesterday, it was said on behalf of the Government that, under your direction, information had been collected, that there was a flood and that 90 houses have collapsed, that many people have suffered and that the State Government were taking some steps to relieve the situation. If, in answer to our questions, the authorities deal with us in this manner and give answers in this way, we are afraid we cannot discharge our duties by coming to this House. We do not know how we can discharge our responsibilities by coming to this House.

With this background, I want to put certain questions straightway to the Minister. Firstly, I want to know how many houses have been destroyed in Agartala town which were built through the loan granted by the Rehabilitation Ministry to the displaced persons. I want to know how many

business shops have been washed away—the business shops which had been built with the loan granted by the Rehabilitation Ministry. How many petitions have been received by the Government of Tripura and by the Central Government from the loanees who had taken loans from the R.A.F. and who have started business in Agartala? I want to know whether any enquiry has been made on those applications.

**The Minister of Rehabilitation (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna):** I though we were dealing with the floods—the number of persons who had died and the number of houses that have been washed away, etc. He is referring to R.A.F.

**Mr. Speaker:** It may be made clear in the course of the reply.

**Shri Biren Dutt:** I was only trying to drive home the point that there was a serious flood in Agartala town. My purpose was to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister that some special measures ought to be taken to relieve the situation. But I was outright floored and was given the false information that no people died and that no houses collapsed. I want to know whether those loanees who had taken loans from the State Government and from the R.A.F. have applied for more loans and begging the Government not to take away the loans already granted to them—both the State loans and the R.A.F. loans. . . . I have got many copies of the applications which have been forwarded to me. I want to know whether any enquiry has been made. There are some cases where motor-cars which have been purchased have been washed away. Some rickshaws were purchased out of the loan given and they were washed away; some houses were washed away.

You may go through your colleague's report. The State Government or the Central Ministry has not given us any information about these cases. Also, there is a bazaar known as the Agartala bazar near the Howrah river. It has also been badly affected and almost all

the houses have been washed away. They went with me and approached the Secretary, Mr. Mathur, who was sent very recently to visit that area. I toured with him; he has taken a note of the damages and has assured that something will be done.

Displaced persons purchased plots of land and erected houses in Rampur, Ramnagar, Joynagar and Bomamalipur; but, these areas have been requisitioned for building an embankment for protecting the Agartala town from floods. Along with the devastation of the floods, they have been served with notices to give up the plots of land; but, they have not been given any aid to build houses elsewhere. I want to know how many displaced persons have been ordered to evacuate their places for embankment purposes and what type of special relief the Rehabilitation Ministry is considering for them, because only Rs. 1 lakh were sanctioned immediately after the receipt of the news that there was flood. That money also was not earmarked for the rehabilitation of displaced persons, but it was drawn into a general pool. I can say from Government records that *ex gratia* grants from 6 annas to Rs. 50 were given. This was the grant given for relief purposes. This is not my own figure. I am in the committee formed by the Government known as the Flood Relief Enquiry Committee; there we have discussed and collected all the information as to how the money granted was disbursed. It has been stated by the officers that grants of 6 annas up to a maximum of Rs. 50 were given.

Therefore, I would like the Minister to take serious note of these things. Within a week after the floods, seven people had to commit suicide. They were brought to the Agartala hospital for *post mortem* and it was found that they committed suicide due to starving conditions. This is no joke. So I urge upon the Minister to take special care. If you give some vague answers, that will not bring relief to

those people and that will not create any good impression. If you have got no information at present, you about all these things and tell us should try to get correct information how you are going to give aid to these suffering people.

**The Deputy Minister of Rehabilitation (Shri J. K. Bhonsle):** I should like to know from my hon. friend how many displaced persons, according to his information, have died, and also how many displaced persons have been given help at the rate of Rs. 0-6-0 by the administration.

**Shri Biren Dutt:** We in that committee requested the Government to give the name and list. According to one information from the community project area there were about 40 persons who were given Rs. 0-6-0 only. They were all displaced persons.

**Mr. Speaker:** How many died?

**Shrimati Renu Chakravarty (Basirhat):** He is not the Minister. Why should he answer?

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no. How many died according to his information?

**Shri Biren Dutt:** Eight plus three plus two one. I can give the names, and out of these there was *post mortem* of eight cases in the Agartala hospital.

**Shri Mehr Chand Khanna:** They are all displaced persons?

**Shri K. K. Basu (Diamond Harbour):** They are all displaced persons.

**Shri Mehr Chand Khanna:** Let the hon. Member say.

**Shri Biren Dutt:** Eight persons were displaced persons whose names were registered in the Agartala hospital and the other people were also displaced persons. I can give the names. seven more names of displaced persons.

**Shri Dasaratha Deb (Tripura East):** My hon. friend Shri Biren Dutt has dealt with . . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** The practice is the hon. Member may put one question, two questions, like that.

**Shri Dasaratha Deb:** The other day Shri Datar has given a reply to my question that the Government of Tripura was very alert about the flood situation, they were roaming from one place to another and they had examined the bunds and were also helping the people, but in another report which has been supplied by the Irrigation and Power Ministry it is said that "the happening was so unexpected and sudden that there was not adequate time to issue warnings to all those who were likely to be affected". May I know why these contradictory reports from the two Ministries?

There is another question regarding the Agartala flood. In reply to my adjournment motion, Pandit Pant said that there was no flood in Tripura State after 3rd June, but in another report supplied by the Irrigation Ministry, it is said:

"Due to heavy rains, the rivers the Deo and the Dhalai were in floods. Portions of Kalashar town were eroded by the Deo and road communications to the town were cut off. Communications to Kamalpur town were dislocated."

And further the Home Minister was also pleased to reply to me that after that there was a flood at the end of July and that flood continued up to 1st or 2nd August, like that. I want to know why the Home Minister did not even take care and take time to give the correct report to the House. He wanted to mislead the House and try to ridicule us. We represent our constituency. We know our people. We get telegrams. I read out the gist of the telegram, but the Home Minister asked: "Has anybody from this House seen flood in Tripura?" It is not a question of this Member or that Member seeing it. Whether actual flood took place in Tripura State or not, that was the question. It is the Minister who is responsible to get all this information and to supply it to this House.

I want to know why they have dealt with it like this.

Another question.....

**The Minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Shri Datar):** May I rise on a point of order? It will be found that so far as the question that has to be considered is concerned, it relates to flood-affected displaced persons in Agartala, not other persons, and it would not be proper for my hon. friend to go to the general question and make allegations.

**Shri K. K. Basu:** The reality is that two-thirds of Tripura's population is displaced.

**Shri Datar:** I can understand discussion about displaced persons, not all those affected by the floods.

**Shri K. K. Basu:** He does not know that two-thirds of Tripura's population is displaced.

**Shri Datar:** They are not in Agartala town.

**Shri K. K. Basu:** You cannot distinguish between displaced persons and undisplaced persons.

**Shri Datar:** Two-thirds does not mean one.

**Shri K. K. Basu:** It does not.

I know that. The Minister need not tell me that. (Interruptions).

**Mr. Speaker:** The first question is whether there were floods, irrespective of whether they affected displaced persons or non-displaced persons. The hon. Member complained that there were floods. But the Minister did not agree that there were floods at all. That is the first point.

The second point is whether displaced persons were affected. The third is, what relief has been given to the flood-affected persons. Now, the primary condition precedent is that there should have been floods. If there were no floods, then the other question would not arise at all. There is no

question as to whether they were displaced persons or non-displaced persons. In the usual course, they die, and they cannot commit suicide or be washed away by floods if there are no floods.

The whole complaint is that the Minister of Home Affairs had said that there were no floods.

**Shri Datar:** I never stated like that. That is incorrect.

**Mr. Speaker:** Not on that day; three days earlier, there were floods.

**Shri Datar:** In fact, I answered a question that there was a flood, which continued for two or three days. I might also point out to you that a long reply has been sent by the Home Minister himself to the hon. Member.

**Shri Dasaratha Deb:** That is later. May I point out that I am not referring to this answer? I am referring to.....

**Mr. Speaker:** I can only say this much. If, on that day, they did not have the information, and later on they had the information, there was no harm in that.

**Shri B. Y. Reddy (Karimnagar):** But they should not ridicule us like this.

**Mr. Speaker:** That was a motion of censure.

**Shri Dasaratha Deb:** May I say a word more?.....

**Mr. Speaker:** I have given two or three minutes to the hon. Member already. Now, I should call another hon. Member.

**Shri Sadhan Gupta (Calcutta South-East):** I want to know a few things. Firstly, we find that in the case of territories administered by Government, or areas administered by the Central Government directly, whether it is Tripura or Travancore-Cochin, what happens is that questions are put, and correct answers are never forthcoming, or the information is

never forthcoming at all. What is the reason for this?

In particular, regarding floods, we find that two Ministries never agree. The other day, my leader, Shri A. K. Gopalan had pointed out that whereas flood relief was actually given in some place in Malabar or Travancore-Cochin, the Home Minister, I think, said that there were no floods there at all. In this case also, we find that in the *Flood Newsletter*, it is mentioned that there were floods in Tripura. But before that, the Home Minister said that there were no floods after June. I would like to know why in the case of these Centrally administered areas, information does not reach in time. Who is inefficient in this matter? Secondly, in the matter of floods, why do the flood waters reach certain Ministries only and certain other Ministries are left high and dry?

**Shrimati Renu Chakravarty:** May I supplement what has been said just now? The House is aware that almost all enquiries regarding the Part C States of Manipur and Tripura have never satisfactorily replied to. Invariably, the answer is that the information is going to be laid on the Table of the House, or that no information has been gathered, or in case the information is gathered, it is contradictory.

I should like to know, and the House would like to know what the Home Ministry and the Government of India who are directly responsible for the administration of the Part C States are going to do to keep the closest day-to-day touch with the administration of these areas directly, and to make it their special responsibility, because there is no legislature in these areas up-to-date.

**Shri Datar:** I am rather in a difficult position, because the question related merely and solely to the flood-affected displaced persons. All the same, I desired that I should like to be present here to answer such questions as would arise relevantly out of the main question.

[Shri Datar]

I did not like that the hon. Member should have dealt at great length with the general administration there. I may point out here, that so far as the Home Ministry are concerned, they are always in touch with the Chief Commissioner, and on a number of occasions, we have given the necessary information, in respect of such happenings. Secondly, steps have been taken to see to it that there is immediate and prompt relief so far as the distress is concerned. Under the circumstances, I submit that there is no justification for making a general or roving charge that the Home Ministry is not taking proper steps. We are taking fully all necessary steps.

I might also add this. There was a flood. It is sought to be stated that there is some inconsistency or discrepancy between what the Home Ministry stated—what I stated or what the Home Minister stated—and what was stated by the Irrigation Ministry. Now, I would point out that so far as these two statements are concerned, they are perfectly in harmony with each other. What happened was that on that particular day when the floods came in, there, it was not possible to know beforehand because the whole thing was sudden. Therefore, all that was said was that it was not possible to give intimation or warning to all the persons concerned. The District Magistrate himself, as also the Superintendent of Police and other officers, actually moved in jeeps all around the town and gave information to as large a section of the population as possible.

Now, it is quite likely that inasmuch as the flood or the inundation was quite sudden and unexpected, a few persons might have remained without any such intimation. But we have got here the clearest statement that our officers—the high officers—went round and gave information. We are trying to find out from the Meteorological department whether timely intimation could be given because we are anxious that there ought not to be any damage

or loss to the people, and early intimation should be given. Therefore, we are taking full steps to see that whenever there is a possibility of a flood coming over, we should have some intimation, to the extent that it is possible, from the Meteorological department, and in all cases we give proper warning whenever such intimation is received. We are extremely anxious to see that no loss of life is caused, nor any loss of property.

Under the circumstances, I would submit that the questioner might have restricted himself only to the question of displaced persons, in respect of also I find that an answer was given on behalf of the Rehabilitation Ministry by my hon. colleague, Shri Abid Ali. That question was answered on the 16th July. Therein, it is stated:

(a) "Eleven persons are reported to have died in Agartala due to floods, two of whom, who could be identified, were not displaced persons".

Then in reply to (c) and (d), it was stated:

"A sum of Rs. 1 lakh was placed at the disposal of the State Government for giving relief to flood-affected displaced persons".

Thus, you will find that all necessary steps are being taken. It is unfortunate that needlessly charges have been levelled and especially exaggeration has been indulged in.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** How do you say it is exaggeration? (*Interruptions*).

**Mr. Speaker:** Will all Members of the Opposition simultaneously talk?

**Shri J. K. Bhonsle:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sorry that there have been unprecedented floods resulting in loss of life as well as extensive damage to property worth several lakhs and displacement of about 150 families in Agartala. I extend my heartfelt sympathy to the victims of this catastrophe, and wish to assure the House that so far as Government are con-

cerned, they have been doing, and are doing, everything possible to mitigate the sufferings of these unfortunate people. My hon. friend, Shri Biren Dutt, unfortunately, was not satisfied with the answer given to the question, No. 12 on the 16th of July. The information given then and any information that I am about to give, I must say, are not different. I can appreciate the hon. Member's anxiety and his effort in trying to focus Government's attention so that relief measures could be speeded up.

In raising this half an hour's debate, he has raised three points; firstly, the extent of loss of life from among displaced persons. In this connection, my hon. colleague, Shri Abid Ali, made a very categorical statement in this House that there were 11 deaths, of whom 2 were identified; and of the 2 and even the rest, there was not one displaced person. We have the latest information from the Government of Tripura. And, I find that reference to the death of any displaced person is not there. That goes to show (*Interruption*) that the 9 persons who were unidentified at that time were not displaced persons. The only other way of showing that no displaced person died would be either by taking a census of the whole population or a census of the D. P. population alone, a large number of over 36,000 or so. It is a big population and I am not quite sure of the figure.

**Shri Mehr Chand Khanna:** It is about 3½ lakhs.

**Shri J. K. Bhonsle:** I was thinking it to be about 36,000. Since no D. P. has made a report—in each agency we have a representative and if there were any deaths so far as D. Ps. were concerned, they would have reported the matter to Government—I can say to the House that as far as Government is concerned, we have nothing to hide. The facts as given and as stated are correct according to the report.

So far as the second question goes the number of houses built with the aid or loan from Government, I must

say that with the aid of Government, that is to say, the loans advanced by Government to D.Ps., 3000 houses have been built in Agartala. Out of this, as a result of the floods, 50 houses had been damaged. None of them belong to the refugees. These houses are what are called 'basha' houses, bamboo structure with plastered walls and cost between Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 excluding the price of land. The 100 houses that were damaged, according to reports, have been repaired. Therefore, there is nothing to suggest that, so far as the displaced population there is concerned, Government have not taken enough measures to see to it that they are quite comfortably set off.

In this connection I may also point out that the Government of India as well as the Rehabilitation Ministry have donated a sum of Rs. 7½ lakhs, and the breakup of this figure is Rs. 3½ lakhs as grants-in-aid, Rs. 2 lakhs as agricultural loans and Rs. 2 lakhs for relief works. In addition to that, the Prime Minister of India has donated a sum of Rs. 50,000 for relief purposes. From the official reports that we have received about the extent of damage caused, I might bring it to the notice of the House that there were three types of crops. One is called Aus paddy, and 3,550 acres of paddy land has been damaged to the extent of Rs. 3,69,200; then, Aman paddy, 650 acres, the damage estimated is Rs. 1,01,400; then jute, 820 acres, the estimated damage is Rs. 2,05,240; then sugarcane, 26 acres, the estimated damage is Rs. 10,400; all these represent a total loss of Rs. 6,86,240. The number of cattle heads lost is 86. The relief measures so far given by the Government are these:

Cash grants Rs. 3,40,000, including Rs. 2,40,000 under the works scheme; loans advanced Rs. 2,00,000, as agricultural loans for the whole of Tripura; Relief Stores supplied and their estimated value comes to about Rs. 1,50,000. Besides, the Government of Tripura have given three days free supply of rice to the flood-affected persons. So far as the seeds

[Shri J. K. Bhonsle]

etc., are concerned, they are preparing to borrow a thousand maunds of seeds from the Assam Government. Besides this, there are a number of philanthropic institutions and various bodies that have donated large quantities of stores such as clothes, rice, chira, salt, cotton, medicine and the like. If necessary, I am prepared to lay a list on the Table of the House.

The third point raised by my non-friend is about the nature of aid given to the flood-affected persons in Tripura. My hon. colleague has already said that so far as the Ministry of Rehabilitation is concerned, we have placed a sum of Rs. 1,00,000 at the disposal of the Tripura Government. It was suggested that this amount should go especially to the displaced persons. I might say in this connection that it is neither feasible nor advisable, when a catastrophe of this kind takes place, to segregate people and give in different proportions. So far as the Government of Tripura is concerned, they have pooled all resources received from various bodies and they have not made any difference in the distribution of their assistance so far as the displaced persons and others are concerned.

As my hon. colleague has said that since the floods have come almost all of a sudden,—I have read a report which goes to show this—all officers from the highest to the lowest have done their best, and I can assure the House that the report is very thorough and everything possible is being done. I am certain that the Chief Commissioner of Tripura, whom I know very intimately. . . .

**Shri K. K. Basu:** Maybe a Padma Vibhushan.

**Shri J. K. Bhonsle:** That is something. The Chief Commissioner of Tripura is a military officer who is quite capable and a man who could be trusted to act, in times of emergency like this, in a manner which would have no doubt in the minds of most of the people. I, therefore, beg the House to appreciate that so far as the Tripura Government and the Government of India are concerned, everything possible, as I have said before, has been done and will continue to be done hereafter.

6-35 P.M.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till 11 of the Clock on Thursday, the 16th August, 1956.*