

Shri Nagi Reddy (Anantapur) On a point of information, Sir The Business Advisory Committee has recommended, in today's business papers that we have received, certain motions for discussion I would like to know what has happened to the motion for discussion which we had given on the Mathai affair and about which certain papers were laid on the Table of the House Quite a number of us had requested for a discussion on it here

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha. This was not on the agenda of the Business Advisory Committee yesterday, as you are aware

Mr. Speaker This motion relates to the agenda that was disposed of yesterday He wants that the Business Advisory Committee's report may be accepted So far as the other motion is concerned, the motion is still with me I am considering as to what steps ought to be taken in that regard If I admit it, it will come up for discussion

12.00 ½ hrs.

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FORTY-FIRST REPORT

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha) Sir, I beg to move

"That this House agrees with the Forty-first Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 20th August, 1959"

Mr Speaker The question is

"That this House agrees with the Forty-first Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 20th August, 1959"

The motion was adopted

12.00 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE RISE IN FOOD-GRAINS PRICES

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Sasaram) Sir, I rise to raise a discussion on the situation arising out of rise in food-grains prices in the country with special reference to West Bengal where levy and price control on rice has been withdrawn

The problem of food at present is very acute and it is exercising everybody's mind It is not so much because of the non-availability of food as the production during the last season was quite adequate as has been disclosed by the Government, which has been due to the efforts of the peasants in the country, but it is because of the high food prices which are not within the reach of the common man Every one of us knows that the price of rice is somewhere near Rs 30 per maund practically in all the big cities in the country Even coarse rice is selling at about Rs 26 to Rs 28 per maund in Delhi. In Bombay, the price is Rs 30 per maund In West Bengal also, the same price prevails Even in paddy producing areas where paddy and rice were procured or purchased by the Government at controlled price—for instance, paddy was procured at Rs 9 per maund and rice at about Rs 16 or in between Rs 16 and 17 per maund—the price of rice at present is somewhere near Rs 25 per maund I am talking only about coarse and medium rice, mostly coarse rice This morning I heard that the price of indigenous wheat is above Rs 30 per maund in Bombay

This indicates that the situation of food in India is not very happy at present despite the fact that we are importing enormous quantities of foodgrains from foreign countries and have purchased also a significant amount of foodgrains this year Why is it so this is the main problem Is it because of the faults of the producer or because of the faults of the consumer or because of our defective

[Dr. Ram Subhag Singh]

government machinery which is not in a position to keep the prices at a proper level?

This is a planned era in our country. We have, as the Government has disclosed, successfully implemented the First Five Year Plan and are also succeeding in the implementation of the Second Five Year Plan. But, we have virtually failed in tackling with our food problem. Because, every year, even a slight flood in Bihar or an earthquake in Assam or some natural calamity anywhere practically disrupts the entire activity of food movement and we are not in a position to control the food prices.

In the south also, just like Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta, the price of rice has gone up practically by Rs. 20 a bag. Not only that. It has been reported in the papers that price of idly and dosa has also gone up. If you will permit me, Sir, I will read out....

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members have got accustomed to eat them also?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Not accustomed. I do not want to leave out your part of the country

Mr. Speaker: That is why prices have gone up.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: There, the people are feeling the pinch as much as in any other part of the country. Therefore, I want to be fair to everybody including our hon. Minister

Prices usually go up only during war time, because all efforts are directed towards the production of goods which are generally not consumed by the people—I mean armaments, etc. At that time, Government spending also increases and the money income of the people, therefore, increases. In that contingency, it is natural that prices of foodgrains go up. But, during a development period, it is not necessary that prices should go up, especially when we

claim that our production has also gone up. I do not fully share this argument of the Government, because the trends of production in the country have not been very happy, particularly about the production of paddy and wheat.

Since achievement of freedom, our acreage under paddy and wheat has gone up by about 5 million acres. But, production has not been proportionately increased to that extent, because the trends of production show, though this relates to 1957-58, that compared to 1949-50, paddy production or medium rice production increased only by 1.6 million tons and wheat production only by 1.3 million tons. This is insignificant because our acreage has enormously increased by about 5 million acres. All these indicate that our agricultural policy as well as our control policy were not as good as they should be.

I should also say that our agricultural policy and our control policy are not policies, because they are, virtually, a conglomeration of various steps taken from time to time to deal with certain situations. They were never planned or they are not at all based on any scientific study or on any practical considerations. This is a great handicap and it is because of this that the producers also complain, the consumers also complain and the Government is not in a position to deal with the matter.

When I was telling about war time, in the war time, the price and control policy was accepted and they succeeded to some extent because from 1943 to 1945, production went down and the Government succeeded in keeping the prices at a particular level despite hoarding and black-marketing. Compared to 1939, the prices prevailing in 1943 and 1945 were not very high. After 1947, they have increased enormously. If we take 100 as the basic price of paddy and wheat in 1939, the price of rice has increased to about 700 during this year and the price of wheat by Rs. 500

during 1950. When we take this situation of our planned development, on the one hand, we are enlarging the scope of investment and, therefore, one can safely claim that the money income of the people has gone up. But, the money income of the people has not gone up if we compare it with its purchasing capacity, because the prices have increased so much that all the income which might have gone into the pockets of the people is eaten up by the price increases. About producers also, there is usually a claim on the part of some uninformed people in the Government and some professional type of persons, because certain sample surveys are taken from time to time. This morning also the hon Minister was referring to some sample survey in which some students might have been sent to certain areas where they took some samples and said that the peasants in Bihar pay wages in maize to their labourers for paddy cultivation. But these surveyors do not know

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain): That is absolutely incorrect. I never said that farmers in Bihar were paying wages to labourers in the form of maize. I referred to Madhya Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, normally farmers used to pay labour in the form of gram, now they are paying in the form of wheat.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: I do not want to repudiate the hon Minister. But, I want to say that if he is shifting his position so suddenly that in one hour, he has gone from Bihar to Madhya Pradesh, I can only leave it to him to decide.

I still claim that if any sample surveyor says that the producers have hoarded produce of rice and wheat, neither that surveyor knows the conditions, nor are the persons who put forward any claim on that basis well acquainted with the situation. For, everybody knows that even so far as Delhi is concerned, milk, meat and other things come from the neighbouring localities, milk comes even from

Meerut, while wheat and gram come from Gurgaon, Hissar and other neighbouring districts, in fact, even from Rajasthan. Similarly, in the case of Calcutta also, rice and other things come from places three hundred miles away; even from Buxar, rice goes to Calcutta. So, paddy and rice usually go towards Calcutta not only from the neighbouring villages but also from the neighbouring States. If you create conditions whereby such a natural flow of supply is restricted, then, naturally, your policy is not going to succeed anywhere in the country. Similarly, this natural flow of supply has been restricted in Bombay or even in Kerala. Therefore, our difficulty is becoming acute.

As I said, during the war-time, the price was kept under control by certain measures. But immediately after the war, we relaxed the price control policy, and soon we found that the prices were going up. So, again, this control was resorted to. After some time, the Korean war came; then the recession followed, and after that, again, the prices went up. But, due to good monsoon, there was good production, and so, the prices again started falling. Then, the price support policy came.

Today, Government are not having an adequate quantity of foodgrains as a buffer stock, for, I am informed—I do not know, again, I would not claim that this is a correct figure, because this information was given to me on telephone—that while on 1st January, 1958, the buffer stock with Government was 7.47 lakhs tons, on 1st January 1959 it was 5.24 lakhs tons.

Shri Yadav (Barabanki): Who gave this information?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: This is the stock with Government. Of course, Government may say that they can get so many shiploads every month, and this stock might up to a million tons in one day, that can happen.

[Dr Ram Subhag Singh]

Sir, I was referring to the price support policy, even in 1954-55, Government could have easily purchased millions of tons of foodgrains had they cared to purchase it from the farmers. Even this year, the price was so low that many people approached the Prime Minister and made representations—the price of rice was somewhere between Rs 4 and Rs 8 in Madhya Pradesh at that time—Government could have purchased millions of tons of rice and rushed it to Calcutta or to any other place where scarcity was being felt. But that did not happen. I do not want to blame anybody even for this, but that could have been easily done.

Then, there is the question of the export business also. In the case of sugar, last year, we resorted to export. Whenever there is good production people think that they are in a dream land and they start exporting, but soon they realise the folly of that but ultimately the country suffers due to the wrong policy which Government resort to.

Now, the situation is that everywhere in the country, from producer to consumer, everybody is suffering. Only a little while ago, the Minister of Community Development was referring to blacksmiths. They also get something from the farmers either in kind or in cash. So, even people like blacksmiths, dhobies, barbers etc, are also suffering a lot because rationing and price control has not been introduced in the rural areas.

It was introduced in the rural areas to some extent, in Bengal, but, they have miserably failed in implementing this levy and price control order. This levy and price control order particularly, in regard to levy, was there in Bengal for a long time. But the price control on wholesale dealing in foodgrains came in February, 1958. This year, in January, they introduced both levy and price control and

they had it until June this year, and they removed it on 24th June this year. I do not understand why this levy and price control system was introduced, and why the Government of India advised the Government of West Bengal to introduce this system if they knew that this system was not going to be implemented effectively. At least, we could have said 'Half' to the West Bengal Government instead of saying that we did not like it, still, we advised them to go ahead and accept a wrong policy.

Whatever may be the authority of Government or of any particular individual, nobody should be allowed to go according to his whims, because ultimately it is the people who suffer as a result of a wrong decision on the part of any individual or any group of individuals.

Within six months after the introduction of the levy and price control system, they found that this system was not working. They say that the producers were withholding the supplies to the rice millers. And since the rice millers were not having adequate quantity of rice with them, therefore, they wanted to remove this. Similarly they say that the producers were withholding the supplies because the producers were feeling that a day would come when their stock would fetch better prices, particularly, during the lean season. If that be so, then what was it that compelled the Government to resort to such a policy? After all, it is quite natural for anybody who has to depend only on the sale of one or two maunds of rice or wheat or anything, to think that he should wait until a time comes when his produce will fetch a better price. But it is not always so, because the producer is a person who has nothing else to depend upon, I can say this about at least 99 per cent of the producers, because, in India, agriculture is not an industry, but it is only a way of living, most of the farmers are subsistence farmers, and they are having very little margin,

and it is out of the sale proceeds of that little margin that they are paying off their revenues, they perform marriage ceremonies, death ceremonies and whatever other ceremonies they have in their houses, and educate their children etc. So, nobody should be under this impression created particularly by the survey report, that the people are withholding the supplies.

Considering it from another point of view, at present, on the basis of a 2 per cent increase in our population, we should have about 80 million tons of foodgrains for keeping our population going; and even these 80 million tons will not suffice for ensuring a good amount of calories to each individual, as compared with any other country. Even for keeping their lives in their bodies, it is necessary that we should have at least 80 million tons. But the best production that we have this year is only about 73 million tons. Even if these 73 million tons are left with the people, they are going to be left with a population which constitutes about 70 per cent of our total population. From this angle also.....

Shri Kalika Singh (Azamgarh): Is this figure of 73 million tons a tentative estimate or a final estimate?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: This is what Government have announced. It may be wrong or it may be right; I do not know. My argument is that we cannot go to the extent of leaving it with the people. Even then, that is not going to solve our problem, because we need about 7 million tons more. We are going to import only about 3 or at the most 4 million tons. Still we will be requiring about 3 million tons more of foodgrains. Only if we can arrange to have this quantity, will we be solving the food problem of our bigger cities. But we have by cordoning or by our zonal system, or whatever system we are having at present, created surplus and scarcity areas. Due to our recent policies, which are not based on any

sound principle, as I indicated, we are also suffering because in scarcity areas, the people are made to pay higher prices, not because of their fault but because of the fault of the policy-makers. In the surplus areas also, the producers are made to suffer, not because of their own fault but because of the fault of the policy. I do not want that they should get a black-market or exorbitant price, but they should at least be given a fair price.

So I want that there should be a clear guarantee on behalf of Government that we are not going to have any haphazard price control or levy policy, but a clear price policy, for the agriculturist. Similarly, we must guarantee to the consumers that we are going to give them their requirements at a fair price. That fair price need not have a margin of Rs. 15 or Rs. 20, as it obtains today. In Bombay in respect of wheat, the difference between the price which the producer is getting and the price which the consumer is paying is about Rs. 20. This difference of Rs. 20 compels even the persons who are wholly with Government to say that their management is completely defective.

So we should have a clear price policy and a good agricultural policy. Therefore, I want that Government should have at least advisers, because now nobody knows how the Government are being guided, at least in agricultural and price matters.

So there should be a guarantee to the country at large that we are not going to have any of this sort of price control, because somewhere we are having fair price and in that very area we are having a free market. They say that the fair price will be Rs. 15-8-0 for atta in Delhi. But it is not available at that price. So the fair price is not going to influence the free market price. Therefore, I want that Government should follow a policy under which the supply must be in a position to keep pace with the demand and the fair price must be

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in a position to influence the free market.

All these matters should be scientifically studied not by students who carry on their sample survey, on the basis of whose reports they frame their policy. Government are mostly guided by persons who do not know anything about agriculture and other matters. So I suggest that for long we need not be guided by policies which are not real policies. We must formulate a policy which must bring prosperity to the country.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty (Basirhat): Mr. Speaker, we open this food debate in the background of the most brutal repression that has been let loose by the West Bengal Government to crush the people who, fed up with the corrupt and despicable pro-hoarder policy of the Congress, specially in West Bengal, and its Food Minister, Shri P. C. Sen, have started this movement to change that food policy.

Shri A. P. Jain: On a point of order Is the hon. lady Member within her rights to refer to a person who is not present in the House, in these deprecatory terms?

Shri Muhammed Elias (Howrah): Of course, without that reference, nothing can be discussed.

Mr. Speaker: I would urge upon all hon. Members not to refer to any other Government or its change of policy. Nor can they urge that they have not got an efficient policy. If that Government has got the right to impose certain restrictions or remove those restrictions, unless this Government is charged with any responsibility in the manner, there is no good accusing that Government here. They are not here to answer. Here hon. Members are entitled to refer to the hon. Minister here and ask him questions.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: I would urge for your consideration that everything that has been done in West Bengal for the last two years has arisen out of the Essential Commodities Act and out of complete concurrence between the Union Minister and our State Minister. I will show that item by item.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is entitled to accuse the Union Minister.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: I will show that he has concurred with every act of the West Bengal Government, which, I say, has gone against the policy of control of food prices.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is at liberty to do so. I do not restrict her; she can say that this hon. Minister has not discharged his duty but has allowed that Government to proceed that way. But let her not accuse that Government. I have no objection to allowing her to say anything she likes concerning this Government.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: It is a concurrent subject. The two are intricately bound up. He has said here—I can quote to you what he has said—that he takes the responsibility for every commission of the West Bengal Food Minister. He has stated it himself here.

Shri A. P. Jain: Then condemn me. Do not attack the West Bengal Government.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Minister has said that he is in favour of what the hon. Minister did there, let the hon. Minister here be condemned. It is open to any hon. Member here to take to task a Minister who is responsible to this House, for his action, but not a Minister who is responsible to that Assembly. Therefore, even if that Minister has erred, if the Ministry here is not responsible, hon. Members must brief some other persons there to quarrel with that Minister in that Assembly. But I will allow her to say

anything—of course, in parliamentary language—against the Ministry here

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: It is parliamentary language

Mr. Speaker: I will allow any amount of accusation against this Minister, but not against any other Minister elsewhere

Shri Tyagi (Dehra Dun) That is very hard

Shri Sadhan Gupta (Calcutta-East) On a point of order Under article 105 of the Constitution, we have freedom of speech which can be restricted in case of defamation. It is understandable that we should not abuse our freedom of speech in such a way as we could not have indulged in outside. For instance if we want only defame a person under the shelter of freedom of speech here, it is certainly a very regrettable thing and we should control it by our rules and procedure—and you are there to control it. But accusations against a Government or against any person for the matter of that in terms in which accusations are being levelled here are not defamation. We can go outside in Delhi, to any place and proclaim it from the house-tops. The law can not have us. The law allows us to do so. Then why should you restrict that freedom of speech here? After all it is not a court of law, it is not that every charge must be answered here. There is the Press Government can answer it there when we make it here. The only thing is that we should not assassinate the character of a person. That is what should be prevented. As regards accusation when it is allowed outside, why should we not allow it here?

Mr. Speaker: He need not make an elaborate statement. I am aware of article 105. We are working under a Constitution, under which there are State Legislatures also with representatives of people there. Under the Constitution, subjects have been

divided between the Centre and the States. There are some concurrent subjects. To the extent of their responsibility, they are autonomous, to the extent of ours, we are autonomous.

Article 105 does not enable any hon Member to abuse any Minister of any of the State Governments. If that Minister misbehaves, it is open to the Members of the legislature there to accuse him, and he is entitled to reply. If they are not satisfied, they can send him out of office. Similarly, this Minister holds office at the pleasure of hon Members here. If they pass a vote of no-confidence against him, he is bound to go. He is bound to go if he is not able to answer properly. All that I am saying is that hon Members may even condemn this Minister as the person responsible for all the havoc that has occurred in Calcutta. I have no objection to that. But I won't allow any hon Member to say that those people who are there in that State are despicable etc. Article 105 does not empower us to do so. We must not abuse the State Legislatures and all the Ministers there for what they do from day to day. It will become impossible for us to get along here in this House. Therefore we have not allowed it. It is not that the law allows. The law clearly does not allow our referring to the conduct of any Minister who is responsible to another legislature. He is not responsible to us. Let us take to task any Minister who is responsible to us.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: If this House is responsible for the supply of foodgrains to the State of West Bengal, then at every stage whenever there has been shortage—and these shortages, these figures, these amounts are varied from time to time—it is absolutely necessary for us in order to convince the House as to the way things are moving in West Bengal and why there are shortages, to refer to these things. I think the West Bengal Government has been given something like 26

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lakh tons—I shall give you the exact figure—of foodgrains last year. They have given the highest amount to West Bengal, and even now, this year the West Bengal Government has given us three different figures of deficits at different times. Are we not then to discuss here what is happening in West Bengal, because the whole of India is now interested in this matter?

Mr. Speaker: I am giving my ruling on this point. It is open to the hon Member to say that the West Bengal Government complains that as sufficient quantity has not been given to the West Bengal Government for distribution, it will be the default of this Government if the Government has undertaken to supply, to procure and supply or otherwise supply to West Bengal or any State for the matter of that. If that responsibility has been undertaken either under the Constitution or under rules or even by convention, I will allow any amount of discussion on that matter and to say that the West Bengal Government has not been provided with sufficient quantity of grain. But if it has been supplied, the responsibility of this House is over. And if they mismanage, for every Member of this House there are at least five Members in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly to take up that case and fight that battle and dismiss that Minister.

Therefore, let us be clear. I am not going to allow this. It is not one of first impression. The hon Member is entitled to say that sufficient quantity of food has not been given to the West Bengal Government for distribution there, and therefore they are starving. If the hon Minister satisfies the House that he has given but that that Government has not distributed it and so on and that he has not committed any default, it is for those Members to take that Government to task or it is open to this hon House to advise the Government not

to give anything more to that Government if they are not able to account properly. Beyond that we are not to go into the details of management of the West Bengal Government here and accuse those Ministers.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: You better rule whatever you want when I am speaking. There is no other way.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. The hon Member is exceeding her limits. Yes, certainly I am entitled to rule. Somebody must rule, and I am ruling. What is the meaning of her saying "you are entitled to rule"? That is not the way in which the hon Member should treat the House or the Chair.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: You have not heard what I said.

Mr. Speaker: I heard her.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: What did I say?

Mr. Speaker: I will repeat what she has said. She said that I am entitled to rule whatever I want.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I said.

Mr. Speaker: That I am entitled to rule what I want.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: You please be a little patient. I think you are frightened that we are going to throw out Shri P C Sen from here.

Shri Kamalnayan Bajaj (Wardha): It is a charge on the Chair.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I said: you please rule wherever I am outside the purview of your ruling. Because, I am not very clear. It is very difficult to make a distinction between where the purview of the Centre ends and the purview of the State begins. That is what I said.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. But to say "whatever you want to rule" is a different matter.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri (Berhampore): Sir, you just now

ruled that if this Government has supplied all that was to be supplied to certain Governments, the responsibility of this Government ends. But are we not entitled to criticise this Government for having supplied certain Governments with huge quantities of food stocks and for not seeing whether they are being properly utilised or they are going down the drain.

Mr Speaker: If it is the jurisdiction of the House, hon Members can say that all that is being given to that State is not being utilised. It is that Government which has to be responsible to those Members. But it is open to this House to say that this hon Minister need not give anything more or shall take steps to see that they are utilised properly. If those directions are not given, certainly it is open to them to say those things. But to go on saying that those Ministers have misbehaved and so on is not right. If they say that it has been given but it has not been utilised or that it has not been given sufficiently and so on, I have no objection. But beyond that, to accuse each individual Minister or those Ministers as despicable and other things is not right. Then there will be a boomerang.

Shri Muhammed Elias: Sir, you have very kindly allowed this discussion on the food prices throughout the country, especially the food prices in West Bengal. Therefore, without referring to the situation in West Bengal how can the discussion be held here?

Mr. Speaker: Very well. If I had only known that this hon. Minister of the Central Government has supplied the West Bengal Government sufficient stocks, I would have hesitated to allow this motion to be brought up here. I thought that it was the default of this Minister in not procuring sufficient quantity and sending it there. All that the hon. Minister can do is to send quantities to the various States, and it is the responsibility of

the State to carry on, and if it does not do so all that can be said is "you don't send them anything more" or "give directions". We cannot supersede every government.

Shri C. D. Pande (Naini Tal): May I point out that the hon. lady Member while speaking said, "despicable Mr Sen".

Mr. Speaker: That word "despicable" if it has been used against Mr Sen will go out of the records. And I would urge upon the hon. Member not to refer to any individual member of that Government.

Shri C. D. Pande: Lack of manners.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: May I just ask you to look into the *Hansard*? (Interruption) I know English well enough.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I said: "despicable policies of Mr Sen".

Shri C. D. Pande: You said "despicable Mr Sen".

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I said "despicable policies of Mr Sen"—as a matter of fact "the despicable and pro-hoarder policy of the Congress Government"—that is what I said.

Shri C. D. Pande: You can say that, and you have been saying that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I shall deal with this matter. The hon. Member is not entitled to criticise that Government saying despicable policy or otherwise. She is entitled to criticise this Government to any extent, provided of course the language used is parliamentary, and she can give directions to this Government to take particular steps to see that there is fair and proper distribution to the extent that they are responsible. Beyond that, let us not go into the conduct of that Government. She can say that it has not been distributed properly. Beyond that it is not proper to go into that matter. The hon. Member may now proceed.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I am glad. I hope you will see, Sir, that fifteen minutes have been taken away

Mr. Speaker: What can I do?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I did not bring it up. It was the hon Minister who intervened and Mr. C D. Pande and others who have been wasting the time. I would like you to note that fifteen minutes have been taken away. I am glad to see that I have touched the soft spot, the sensitive spot of Members opposite

Shri Tyagi: That you always do

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I know that the policies which are being carried out, the pro-hoarder policies which are being carried out by the Government, (that is the sensitive spot, and therefore the wonderful gentlemen on the other side are so touchy about it

The special background in which we are discussing this is not the situation of food scarcity. We have been told by the Prime Minister that it is a period of record production, and we are told that when we have more production there will be greater prosperity. We know that there is overall deficit, but every year we are told that our production is going up. But what is the result? The result is that we see more scarcity, higher prices and greater starvation.

I do not know, Sir, whether you will rule it out or allow it, but take the deficit figures which have been given to us from time to time. I would like the House to consider is this the type of planning that we want for our country? The deficit figures are manipulated whenever it is required to cover the Government's inability to check their corrupt policy which is bringing so much starvation. In May 1958 the Central Government says that the total deficit in West Bengal is seven to eight lakh tons. What do we hear from the West Bengal Government's Agricultural Department forecast? I do not know

whether you will allow it, but they say that it is twelve lakh tons. The Statistical Department says that the figure is different, that it is between six to seven lakh tons. What happens? This is the way things go on. Not only that

On the 9th of May 1958, the Centre promised to give 5 to 6 lakh tons of wheat and 1,75,000 tons of rice to meet the deficit of West Bengal, when the Centre said their deficit was 7 lakh tons I think actually 258,000 tons of rice was finally given. What happens? We find that in Calcutta the price of rice rose from Rs. 23/75 in June 1958 to Rs. 27/50 in September 1958.

These are the figures given. Now, let me take certain other figures that are now being given. We were told in January this year by the Chief Minister that the Agriculture Department estimated that there would be a production of 40 lakh tons and then they said that the requirements would be 47 lakh tons.

Mr. Speaker: What would be the requirements?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: First they said that the production would be 40 lakh tons and the requirements 47 lakh tons. That means a deficit of 7 lakh tons. After that they said that the first estimate of production was found, on further experience, to be not correct. The Agriculture Department's point of view was that paddy production in the State seemed to be good but actually it was not found to be satisfactory. In February 1959 we were told that it was 38 lakh tons and so the deficit increased. And, in August, now we are told that the deficit is 15 lakh tons. That is the latest. That is the statement that is given on the 16th August. Once they calculate it on the basis of 15 ounces and now calculated on the basis of 20 ounces and the deficit is 15 lakh tons. I do not know if you would permit me to put what we want to put before the House. It is not a question of our

not wanting the West Bengal Government to get anything. But our point is that this paddy belongs to the entire people and whatever is being rushed to any part of India which is needed for the people of that State must find its way to that State and to the people of that State, to the poor people of that State, to the starving people of that State. It is our sacred duty to see that this is done. And I do not think we should stand on any technicalities. This is a concurrent subject and it is our duty to see that the policies for feeding the people, both by the Centre and by the State machineries, should be functioning properly.

This is why I stated that these policies are going wrong. The Prime Minister tells us that we must increase production. If there is more production then we seem to see more food crisis. I will take up what has actually happened. I will take a short review from what has been happening since the Asoka Mehta Committee report saw the light of day in November, 1958 to show that it is the food policy that is going wrong. It is not a question of 2 or 3 lakh tons here or there. If there is an agitation we get a few lakh tons more here and there, a little bit more of rationing cards come in, and maybe for 2 or 3 weeks regular supplies are given. I will take what happened in December 1957—the harvest of 1957-58—which was a year of bad harvests. I take first the year of bad harvests. Cordonning order is promulgated under the Essential Commodities Act.

How is this cordonning actually implemented? No effective steps are taken. Actually, we find that very few check posts are put up; check posts are not there. There is no machinery to follow the smugglers from one district to another. The district magistrates have said that smuggling is going on but they look on helplessly. It is not only a case of Siddharta Roy making these allegations. Even the committee formed

by Congress MLAs have come to the conclusion that cordonning has been a failure. They say that they have come to the conclusion that if it had been strictly enforced there would not have been this position. Not only did this cordonning not taking place effectively but special permits were also given. Reasonably, special permits should be allowed from surplus districts to deficit districts. We find the Ministry coming in and the directorate coming in and giving special permits to people.

Shri A. P. Jain: I am sorry I have to intervene.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: We find that the Central Government moves in at this moment of time.

Shri A. P. Jain: The Central Government did not issue the permits. Whatever permits were issued were issued by the State Government.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry the hon Member must resume her seat. I definitely ruled that we are not entitled to go into the conduct of the State Government. All that can be urged here is that the Central Government should not send so much to the State. We can say that whatever has been sent must be utilised in a different manner. Utilisation is not in the hands of the Centre. We can give directions to the Centre not to send any more foodgrains or to give a warning to the State Government that cordonning should be enforced. If that Government has not done so this is not the forum. Hon Members must go to the State.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: How then did the Central Government ask that cordonning must be done away with? That is the statement of the Food Minister of West Bengal. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker: The hon Member may accuse this Government for having done that.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Cordoning was imposed under the Essential Commodities Act. What I am trying.....

Shri A. P. Jain: We have never issued any permits. With regard to the giving or not giving of permits, the responsibility is not ours. We have imposed cordons; if the cordons have to be removed it is done by us. The giving of permits and other things is not our responsibility at all. It is done by the State Government.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: The Central Government imposes cordoning. The Centre asks the State Government to impose cordons. The State Governments by-pass the Central Government's order and issue permits and all that. Already two Chief Ministers are sitting there. I am not criticising them. But I ask, how do these things happen?

Shri A. P. Jain: That may be a good reason for throwing out that Government but not for criticising me.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: We are going to throw you out. If you find that your order does not run in the country you should not occupy that seat.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister is entitled to give them directions as to how this deficit that is being met by the Centre ought to be utilised. To that extent he can give directions to them. If he gives directions to them to impose cordons, it is the duty of the hon. Minister also to see that these directions to impose cordons are implemented. If they are not followed in an indirect manner by the issue of permits and so on, then he must either do something which is satisfactory or he must wash his hands off. If the imposition of cordons is not effective he must pursue that matter and not merely rest content by saying, 'I no doubt imposed cordons but they go on breaking it'. So the hon. Member is right when she says that cordoning

is useless. Therefore, either do it or do not do it.

Shri A. P. Jain: Sir, may I explain the position? It is the State Government that suggests that cordoning should be imposed. We impose them legally. After that the giving of permits etc. is their responsibility. I cannot interfere. I have no power to interfere and say whether the State Government should or should not issue a permit in a particular case. No Central Minister can discharge the functions of dealing with permits because permits are being issued from day to day. All that I can do is to remove the cordon. I cannot interfere in the day to day operation of the State Government in issuing or not issuing permits (*Interruptions*).

Dr. M. S. Aney (Nagpur): Aid is given by the Central Government under the impression that it is likely to give good effect to the food policy that it wants to follow. If the hon. Minister finds that that policy is being defeated by the State Governments by certain other policies or things done by them, is it not the duty of the Members of this House to bring that fact to the notice of this House?

Mr. Speaker: Very good, but let it be done without ill-will (*Interruptions*).

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I will put it this way. Cordoning was done in such a way that it proved ineffectual. I will not raise the question of the permits which were given *ad lib* to the various favourites. I need not raise that.

After that what happened? (*Interruptions*)

Shri Kalika Singh (Azamgarh): I say that the word 'favourite' should be withdrawn. 'Permits to the favourites of the Government were given'.... (*Interruptions*).

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Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: On the 11th February 1959 when the

aman crop—which as I have already said is the main crop—had gone out into the market into the hands of the big trade and rice mill owners, with the concurrence of the Central Government the levy system was imposed—a 25 per cent levy. Here again, I may mention that we had stated that it should be more and not only 25 per cent. Our West Bengal Minister has said that it is the Central Government which is insisting; it did not agree to more than 25 per cent. Now, what happened as a result of that? Firstly, it was brought in at a time when there was no surplus in the hands of the peasantry at all. Not only that. The statutory price control order came only in the end, in January 1958. The State Government had given the figure of 1,58,000 tons to the Central Government for internal procurement. They procured only 65,000 tons last year.

I do not want to go into the conclusions of the Food Enquiry Committee of the Congress but I will now show you in this record production year with a harvest of 73.3 million tons what happened. On the eve of the harvest, we have been told by our Deputy Minister, Shri Krishnappa we are going to get very good rice crop. The National Development Council meets in November and says, now, more and more, we are going to slowly take over the wholesale trade progressively. Even in the West Bengal Food Enquiry Committee Report, one of the conclusions was that the minimum price of paddy and rice must be fixed, otherwise whenever there is an increase in the price, it is the middlemen, the hoarders and the rice-millowners who actually make the profit. What happened in December, 1958? There was no floor price of paddy given with the result that when the poor peasant had to sell, he had to sell at any price. In spite of the fact that we have been clamouring that there should be a floor price and that there should be a minimum of Rs. 12 and a maximum of Rs. 13, Government gave a price at which it was not possible to procure—

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Rs 10. There was no floor price. Again, we wanted that five lakh tons should be procured and they said that they would procure only one lakh tons. Our Minister here, Shri Jain has also said that the rice prices were falling. On the 1st of January, the price control order was issued, after the big bulk of the aman crop had come into the market almost for more than a month. We find that the trader starts his profiteering trade and rice begins to disappear. In spite of the decision of the National Development Council, we find in April, 1959 that our Food and Agriculture Ministry in the Centre says that in the interim period the wholesalers will be permitted to function as licensed dealers purchasing at their own rates on their behalf and that the State has a right to acquire whole or part of it at controlled prices and that they are at liberty to sell the rest. Now, what happens? In May rice goes underground. We are told in June by the West Bengal Minister that fifty per cent of the rice produced in Bengal was actually fine rice and yet the price which had been put for the procurement at controlled price was the price at which only medium variety of grain could be procured. Naturally, procurement could not be done as expected. Now, what is the result? The trade has rice in its hands, it starts going underground. At that time we are told consumers you must organise a buyers' strike. But there is no rice in the ration shops. Can people starve? We are told that so many ration cards are given for every district, I can give figures. If you say that in a particular place there are 700 people with ration cards, I can point out that there people do not even get ration for 200 people. You say "We are giving ration for 148 lakhs of people" but the people of West Bengal know the State of rationing and how few of them actually get their rations. This House is deluded by figures, time and again they are deluded by figures. Then it is also a fact that atta is sent for test relief and atta goes into black-market. When the poorest of the poor, the agricultural labourer works on test

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relief and goes to get atta, he finds that much of it has gone into black market. You go anywhere, you will hear it. You will actually get documentary proof of it. Therefore, people in May, 1959 start de-hoarding operations. The retailers say they are helpless because price control does not apply to the retailers because they are getting at higher prices from the wholesalers and the control price is only applicable to wholesale prices. The public is able to dehoard 400 or 500 maunds here and there but it is not very successful because it is already June. We find that the women and children are coming to Calcutta streets and begging. But you are coming here and telling this House that you are giving higher amounts of food to West Bengal than the whole of India. You have given a higher amount, I do not deny. But where is it going? That is the question we ask. Out of the target of one lakh tons for procurement this year in West Bengal, a year of record production we find only 48,000 tons have been procured. You have bettered the last year's record, which was a year of bad harvest. Then we had procured 68,000 tons but this year in June, the procurement comes up to only 48,000 tons and the rice prices shoot up between Rs 25-30. On the 13th of June, our Ministry in the Centre rushes its Principal Secretary to Calcutta. For three or four days the people of Calcutta and West Bengal are looking with baited breath as to what is happening behind the closed doors. We have heard at times that there is difference of opinion between the Centre and the State Government and we find that there is a critical reference by the Principal Secretary to the way the State Government has functioned but then finally he comes out and says there is complete unanimity as to what should have been done. Then on the 23rd of June, what had been tried to be promulgated by the West Bengal Cabinet earlier—the price control order—is withdrawn. This is one of the biggest victories for the wholesale

traders and for the policies of the Swatantra Party because this is going to lead people to the conclusion that State trading is bad; it cannot be carried on. I do not subscribe to that policy. I say that State trading needs to be taken up and done in a sincere way. We have got to act at the right time and we have got to give the real prices which are fair and announce them at the time when it would benefit the peasantry. We have also got to take stringent measures against hoarders and we have to take people's co-operation. After the price control we were told that things will improve. Figures have been given to us. I do not want to waste the time of this House on that. Everybody in this House is fed up by these statistics given to us. I have also written to all our districts and we have also got prevailing figures which are very high. You are telling us today, after the Famine Resistance Committee has come into the field, that the prices are falling. Why is it? Till about a few days ago, the prices were going up to Rs 29, 30, 32, 35 and so on—not below Rs 28—beyond the purchasing power of the people. You tell us that 140 lakhs of people are going to get ration cards. Most of it will be paper cards and they will hold it on for hours in front of the ration shops. Out of the 300 lakhs of people a very large percentage of people do not have the purchasing power to take even the rice which you may or may not supply. I can say that the prices which are given here do not show the correct picture; the prices are higher.

Shri C. K. Bhattacharya (West Dinajpur): May I ask the hon. Member to state whether she draws her rations from the ration shops? (Inter-ruptions)

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: Personally, I do not have a ration card.

but I know and I can tell you. But I do not know why this personal question is being asked.... (Interruptions.)

Shri C. K. Bhattacharya: She does not draw her own rations from the ration shops. . . (Interruptions)

Shri Muhammed Elias: I draw my rations from the ration shop. I have got twenty ration cards.... (Interruptions)

Shri Tyagi: How is it that one gentleman has got 20 ration cards?

Shri Muhammed Elias: There are twenty family members—my mother, my brother, my children—everybody is there. It is a very big family .. (Interruptions)

Shri Sadhan Gupta: He has not got a westernised family

Shri C. K. Bhattacharya: At least these ration shops give food quite sufficient to keep Shri Elias in such good health (Interruptions)

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I hope that Shri Bhattacharya's speech will be read by the people of Bengal. I do not think many of them will laugh because they know what pinches them and this is not the way in which we should indulge in cheap jibes when people are really suffering (interruptions)

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. She should conclude now.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: After all this interruption, Sir

Shri C. K. Bhattacharya: I may say, Sir, that I draw my ration from the ration shops and it is a good supply.

Mr. Speaker: The hon Member will have an opportunity

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: It is only now the movement has been started. It is being repressed. Preventive Detention Act is being used which was never used against the hoarders. We will be going tomorrow and we may also be arrested,

possibly on charges of violence and so on. But the point is, some people have asked: "Will the movement bring you food?" I would like to answer that question. One of the objectives of this agitation is de-hoarding, because neither the police nor the policies of the Central or State Governments have helped in this. They have always helped the hoarders. As a result of this programme, all big wholesalers rushed to Writers Buildings and met the Chief Minister on 19th August. They told him that de-hoarding is going to take place and asked for police protection. The Chief Minister has promised them police protection. Then a little rice started coming in. Immediately it was reported in the papers that a record crop is coming into the market, the prices are falling and, therefore, there is no legitimate reason for an agitation

The Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas): And you were distressed

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: But, Sir, the people who are coming from West Bengal cannot be so deluded. They know that after East Bengal has gone to Pakistan the aus crop coming into the market has no substantial effect on the prices. It is the aman crop which is the main thing. That is why today even a small threat to the hoarders is bringing out rice. This is the greatest justification to show that it is your policy, your pro-hoarder policy, your anti-State trading policy, your policy of really helping those black-marketing traders who are actually controlling the market and squeezing the poor people and holding the community to ransom, it is that which is responsible. Unless this policy is changed now, when the new aman-crop comes in, however big the crop may be, our people in West Bengal will continue to suffer. That is why, Sir, it is an agitation both within this House and

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also outside for a change in the pro-boarder policy of the Government

Sir, in the papers it is said that the Union Minister has offered to resign. Well, he has every reason for it. I think it is good that he has realised even so late as this that there is something very seriously wrong with the implementation of his food policy and people in the country and the hon Members who represent them in this House are critical of him. But I only say that the real culprits are there also in the States, those whom he has aided, abetted and protected and I say that even those State Ministers have to go

Some Hon Members rose—

Mr. Speaker Shri Tyagi—I would like to give preference to hon Members coming from Bengal—one from this side and one from there

Shri Tyagi Sir, food is a very important question not from the point of view of Bengal alone but from the point of view of the whole of India

Shri C D Pande It is not a political question either

Shri Tyagi. Sir, I was put to shame, indeed, by a fellow passenger in a train. A beggar who was very able bodied and hefty was going about begging. I started asking him "Why are you begging? You must take pains and do some labour." A friend of mine sitting by asked "What about your Minister? He is begging about in the whole of the world." I then realised that it was a matter of shame really, for India that immediately after we were free we took the beggar's bowl and went round the whole globe begging about for bread and money. The Minister who brings more is congratulated. In fact, I am ashamed that we should not have been able, by now, to put our own house

in order. We are beggars in the line of big nations with whom we compete for dignity and all that

Sir, the problem really is not so serious as we have made it, that is my impression. It is not that production cannot be increased, but the difficulty is that all our manner of propagating the increase and development of agricultural activities is based on borrowed wisdom. We either borrow from the statistics of the visionaries or borrow from some foreign countries

13 14 hrs.

[MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

Shri Kamalnayan Bajaj: As long as we do not have to return it, what is the harm?

Shri Tyagi: Sir, there is the Planning Commission which plans how to effect more and more production. They give some plans. But I am prepared to make this challenge. If they are shown two blades one of wheat and the other of barley I bet that none of them will be able to distinguish between the two. Such are the people who plan for our agriculture. Have they got any agricultural talent? The practical talent is lacking in them. It is only the urban people who have come together—the statisticians, the scientists, the theorists and others. It is they who give the wisdom. I am afraid that my hon friend over there and his senior colleagues, from end to end, they all depend on that wisdom and do not try to draw any wisdom from the soil. In fact, the practical wisdom must be had from the rural areas where agricultural operations are undertaken. Even an illiterate peasant, I bet, would give you more wisdom about agricultural production than what your theorists would do in Delhi.

The problem is basically a rural problem. But it seems to me that the prices are generally high because they

take shape in cities, in the big markets which are now tending to further increase. The cities are expanding like anything. Population is simply rushing into the cities because in India, let me frankly confess, the villagers are considered like self-going about. They must give you the crop, whatever they reap, at a fixed price of say Rs 10 a maund. We are not ashamed of that. We fix the price for the peasants, Rs. 10 a maund for paddy, as they are the serfs in India to give food to the urban people. A peasant has to labour and toil in the field and yield the result of his labour at Rs. 10 a maund. For whom? The ration is meant for the urban people, not for the rural people. The urban people must live because they are "citizens of Rome"

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: We have ration in our districts also

Shri Tyagi: That is very good

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty. But they do not get it

Shri Tyagi: That is what is happening now. The towns are growing and they want more food. Prices are no doubt, evolved out of the formula of supply and demand. But because the cities are growing their demand is also increasing. If they do not get enough the prices go up. It is also published in the papers, that the prices have gone up—with the result of that the whole of India is affected, even the rural areas are affected. In most cases high soaring prices are the effect of concentration in towns and increase in demand. They do not get from the neighbouring villages so much as they eat. Therefore the prices go up there. Once the prices go up there the papers say that the prices have gone high. The whole of India takes note of this and the prices go up everywhere.

Prices depend upon the market. The market is always a bit too nervous. It is sensitive and there is much psychological effect upon it.

Once it starts going high, it goes up higher and higher. That is the usual trend.

Therefore, prices are not a factual indication of the question of supply and demand. A lot of other factors also come in. As my friend here says, the question of foreign exchange, industrial relations and all those things come into play.

Production is the only cure. We have tackled production only by means of propaganda. Our production methods mostly have been the Rabi Campaign which involve quite a few lakhs of rupees, for the Government. For this rabi campaign the urban people go. Those who have not touched a spade before publicly touch a spade and a photograph appears in the Press. They do not smile but they just wear a fictitious smile before the photographer. Even an emotion, Sir, has now become a commercial commodity. Smile is God's best and the purest emotion even this is now adulterated with artificiality. That is what is done in the case of rabi campaign, when a Minister or a high dignitary goes for inauguration of the rabi campaign. That neither enriches the soil nor irrigates the fields. That also does not give any fertilisers. That only gives a sort of tamasha. But that is one of the means that we have adopted and we seem to think we have done enough. We are satisfied with that.

Another way is through the community projects. That is some other type of propaganda. There is the "grow more food" campaign. All those people in the community projects, if you just have a survey, believe more in sample surveys and not in virtual surveys. Virtual surveys are again based on Mahalanobis' rule today. Therefore, through these sample surveys people gather wisdom. But, unfortunately, they do not consume it. My fear and grouse is that that wisdom, even if they draw it from

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the sky or the air, they do not consume. Every month there is a Press conference. There are monthly courses of Press Conferences, and there all that gathered store flows out. That is what is happening. Even that wisdom is not actually conserved or used.

Then, for some time India was mad after the Japanese method of cultivation. Now I understand we have switched on to another, the Chinese method. Perhaps they feel that people have faith in new ideologies. There are ideologies of theirs which we follow; even a whisper of a magic slogan, we think, perhaps will do more good than the fertilisers. They are enamoured very much of China. I have heard the Prime Minister once saying—I laughed at it while he was making a speech or an announcement—that China had solved all her food problems. I am simply surprised. They say that China has taken a very big leap. I want the House just to peep into their leap. It is said to be too deep. They said that the Chinese plough their fields five feet deep. That is what they say. Perhaps it is a little less than five feet.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Four and a half feet.

Shri Tyagi: Nearly five feet. I have a photograph of their tractor. The Shanghai agricultural machinery plant has turned out a kind of deep ploughing for the 27 H.P. tractors. It can plough as deep as one and a half metres. That means nearly five feet. "Here are agro-technicians measuring the depth of the soil ploughed. Photo by Haia-Tao-ling",—their official agency. I have seen this plough. The height of this plough will come up to or indeed below the human belt. That is the height. It cannot be five feet, unless the Chinese are about 15 feet tall.

But then there are our friends going by these things, because they are so

thirsty and are starving for wisdom, and so they can believe all these things blindly. I am surprised how they can plough five feet deep. I come from a peasant family. I hope you, Sir, also know about agriculture. We generally plough one foot deep.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The man behind the plough might not go so deep as the plough.

Shri Tyagi: We do not believe in deep ploughing. If all the soil or the richness of the soil is allowed to percolate with water down below even one foot, the whole field will be spoiled. That is our knowledge. Why do they want the shoots to go down below the richness of the soil? The plants do not go down very much. Our paddy root does not go five feet down. What is the use of ploughing five feet when the root will not go so deep? I cannot understand. But my friend over there wants to do what China has done. He has read about red China, and my friend is a little dark in colour. Perhaps he wants to borrow their colour. Is it because of that?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: China may go red by its own choice, but the Minister has not gone black on account of that!

Shri A. P. Jain: That is Nature's gift.

Shri Tyagi: Our people believe all this not because it all comes from China! Here, we are not starving for wisdom. Are we living purely on plagiarism or absolutely borrowed wisdom and on nothing of our own? Cannot we go to the villager and talk to him. Even an illiterate villager will tell the authorities, all about agriculture and its development. "For God's sake, do not shout these slogans of ploughing 55 inches deep and all that." People will laugh at us.

Then there is another aspect about the problem. I have read about it and it is confirmed in their own literature.

It is said that in China they had produced 190 million tons in the previous year and it jumped up by 100 per cent. this year; that is, the production now is 380 million tons. They claim to have produced at the rate of 358 tons per acre. That is their production. I have made some calculations about this. It means 162 lbs. or two maunds per square yard. It means a heap or a layer nine inches high, spread over the whole field. This is the quantity which they are said to have produced, and my friend believes it. He is sending a delegation and not only that; his leader, the Prime Minister, says that they have solved the problem in China. (*Interruptions*). If this is the method of production which we are going to adopt—this is exaggeration,—I can solve the problem of India in one minute. In fact, their paddy does not seem to grow, it seems to breed. The breeding just goes on. How can that be possible otherwise?

On the top of all this we have information that there is famine in China today. The rations have been reduced in China. My lady friend was just enquiring about it and the hon. Prime Minister said that production had increased this year. Why there should be a famine then? We have just borrowed all these formulae from the Red countries. We cannot help it! This increase in foodgrains has been published through their statistics; not in the fields.

An Hon. Member: It is 3·58 tons; not 358.

Shri Tyagi: Ask the Minister. He has got the report. He must be having the report.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That would not make much difference.

Shri Tyagi: Yes; that too would not make much difference. But there is famine. The ration has been reduced. There are no chickens and poultry. There are cats and dogs today.

Shri Muhammed Elias: May I know the source of your information? The

U.N.E.S.C.O. report is absolutely different. (*Interruptions*).

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member is giving his facts.

Shri Muhammed Elias: What is the food situation in India? Discuss that. Why are you bringing in China here?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Can I ask him not to mention China?

Shri Muhammed Elias: was referring to China, because . . . (*Interruptions*)

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We should listen to the hon. Member patiently. He is just giving us certain facts according to his belief. He must be responsible for the sources that he has and from where he got his facts. We have to listen to him. If his points are to be rebutted by any subsequent speakers, that can be done at the proper time.

Shri Tyagi: I was submitting that . . .

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member perhaps gives his facts in a lighter mood as if he is not serious about it.

Shri Tyagi: I thought I might tell the truth howsoever bitter it may be. Now, attempts are being made in China, in famine conditions, asking the army to reduce their three courses of meal. They are not prepared to reduce it, and my fears are, perhaps the same condition might be repeated here. Sometimes you may ask the army to reduce their courses or those who have power in hand may ask them to reduce their courses. That is the condition of famine there in China. There were communes opened and there were community kitchens also opened. There are food riots in front of the kitchens. So, it is not a question of management alone, and it is not the same thing here, as in China. I sympathise with them. I do not want to make fun of them because those people are also in trouble. I can sympathise with them, but the facts and circumstances are such that they cannot always be settled or

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arranged by means of controls alone. That is what I wanted to say.

An Hon. Member: By paper.

Shri Tyagi: Yes; by paper. It is said that China has solved the problem. But I tell you, you do not send your delegations to China, because I do not believe in their method of solving the problem. Please send your delegation to the villages and the villagers really will give you the wisdom.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: But would it not be useful for the hon. Member if the delegation sent to China also corroborates what he says?

Shri Tyagi: Then they must send me. The National Development Council is a representative Council. Representatives of the whole country come there and sit. My fear, however, is that they only put their seal—I have attended once or twice the meetings of the National Development Council, mostly they put their seal of approval on the proposals which are put up from the Planning Commission. I propose that real decisions must be taken by persons who are directly concerned with the operation of agriculture.

They decided about controls and State-trading. State-trading is a good thing, but State-trading requires complete control and a big machinery. If it is fool-proof, I am in support of State-trading, but no good measure can be effective if it is done half-heartedly. I think it is wrong; let us not try to compete in slogans until we are prepared to implement them. I accuse this Government of coming with nice, polished slogans, knowing that they will not be able to implement them. I consider this objectionable. I think they must think twice or thrice, and first try to find out whether they have the machinery to implement these measures, and then only come out with those slogans. They decided in November last that wholesale dealers will be licensed.

They have not been licensed all over the country up till now. They said, prices must be controlled. Some of the States announced price controls and some did not. The Government would take over as much as they liked. That will be one of the provisions. Then, purchases from villagers will also be controlled and that will be done through the co-operative societies. But they knew jolly well that within 9 or 10 months, they will not be able to organise co-operative societies in all the villages. How will they purchase from the villagers? They should have made all the arrangements first.

I think the responsibility lies not only with this gentleman, but the whole team which decided these policies and failed to implement them, deserves to be condemned by this House and not one man only. Let truth be told and let the nation know where the fault lies. It is not a question of accusing one person or the other, but I want to accuse the whole lot of us, the whole party. We are responsible for it. I am also prepared to share it, because we have not stopped them from slogan-mongering and they have not implemented them.

An Hon. Member: You are speaking not for the whole party.

Shri Tyagi: I speak for myself, I am a member of the party and I know there are people who differ from me. But by speaking in such terms, I give them a chance of opposing me and thus coming into the sight or notice of those persons whom they wish to please. It is a very good idea; I give them a chance to oppose me, so that people might note and recognise them. I am annoyed at it because decisions were taken and they were not implemented. I am also bound by discipline and considerations like that, I have also got some loyalty to the party, but the party will be stronger if the people at large knew that there were people who do some

introspection. It is no use saying, everything is O.K. I cannot say so before the hungry. If I were to say that, with what face can I go to Calcutta? The situation today has arisen because you started the slogan with the result that all the natural flow of foodgrains which used to go to the towns and mandis suddenly stopped. Unless you had made alternative arrangements, you ought not to come with that policy. I am in favour of that policy. I believe that State-trading must be done. But do it seriously, do not do it only for the purpose of publicity.

Previously there were two or three States in a zone. Now those zones have been squeezed, and they have become State-wise. Each State has become a zone. If Rafi Ahmed Kidwai succeeded, I was then associated with the Finance Ministry and I remember it is not divulging a secret—he gave me the mission to canvass Rajaji who was then Chief Minister. I canvassed Rajaji and said, "Could Rafi come to you? Will you make a statement that you are opposed to this zonal control, etc." He said "Yes" and he started for Madras and there they both hatched the conspiracy to lift the zonal controls. That was the position. Factually there are still a number of people who think that the zonal arrangements are the evil genius of all the controls, etc.

If there is scarcity, let the whole nation face it squarely and suffer equally. It is not fair that the scarcity areas only will suffer and Bengal alone will suffer and not the other surplus areas. Why should people of one State eat more and those of another State less? The whole nation must suffer uniformly. If there is surplus, let all citizens like members of one joint family enjoy the benefits of a better harvest. If there is a loss of harvest, let everyone suffer. I would very much like to do away with zones. If you organise State-trading, do it completely. I am one with you. But please do not tinker with the problem. Let there be free

communication. I would go to the extent of asking the Railway Minister to announce that foodgrains will be given first priority in the allotment of wagons and freight on foodgrains will be halved, so that wherever there is scarcity foodgrains may naturally be rushed from one corner to another and thus the market will look after all scarcity. Either you do it completely or let the natural forces do it themselves.

In Bombay whenever there was a deficit, Andhra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan used to supply. Now everything is locked in watertight compartments. Only because the National Development Council borrowed wisdom from some visionaries and they did not bother about the practical wisdom of the problem, because that man, the villager, is not worth sitting with you, he is not well clad because he comes from the village, he cannot understand English and so he cannot speak about planning matters, because he does not know anything except his fields, bullocks and the plough. You can ask him to give his views before the Planning Commission and he can say, what is possible and whether we can do that or cannot do that. But they are not consulted.

Now, Bombay is in trouble, because all the resources of Bombay have been closed perforce on them on account of your cheapish policy. The result is that Bombay is a scarcity area thus prices there are apt to go high and prices are rising everywhere. So is the case with Bengal. Control orders were announced. I am surprised at it, whether it is the Chief Minister or somebody else who is responsible for it. But the fact is a fact. It was announced that even the price at which a peasant can sell his produce shall be controlled. What a dictatorial order it was! No peasant can sell his produce at a price higher than the price fixed—Rs 10 or so.

Shrimati Bena Chakravarty: And there was no minimum price fixed.

Shri Tyagi: All peasants and growers were under control, as if the Government had such a big machinery to control. All the retail sellers and wholesalers were controlled. Control orders were given, but the Government did not bother whether they were carried out or not. This is a thing which is bringing lawlessness into the country. If one law is disrespected, all laws are disrespected. All laws, with the whole family of Acts, go together. Respect of one law means respect of all laws. If one law is disrespected, take it that the whole prestige of the legal machinery has been disrespected. The prestige of Government is going down, because you pass laws which you are not in a position to implement. I beseech and pray, for God's sake do not pass laws which you cannot really implement.

I do not want to take more time, because I am really angry with what is happening. So, I want to lodge my protest against this policy of coming out with big policies and not implementing them.

Sir, may I lay on the Table* this tractor?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Would the Table be able to bear all that?

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy (Kendrapara): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, exactly a year ago, on the 20th August we had a discussion in this House on the food situation and Members expressed their dissatisfaction, as they are doing today, from all sections of the House. Ultimately it was so hot for the Minister concerned to stand to the accusation of the Members that the Prime Minister had

to intervene and say, "I own the responsibility for what is happening. The entire policy matter is not decided by the Minister alone, but by all of us in the Cabinet". He wanted to protect his Minister—that is but natural for him but I want to know what steps actually have been taken in the course of the year to improve the position. That is the question at issue. But we are confining our discussion today to the question of prices. On the 15th August the Prime Minister, while speaking from the Red Fort, giving his message to the nation, has stated:

"This rise in prices cause us deep anxiety. This problem has not been brought under control although we are trying. This was in the main the result of a trait of selfishness in some people."

Who are these "some people"? Are they not the Ministers and the Congress? Who are the selfish interests? Does it exist with the producers? It is the flight of imagination to suggest that producers do not want to sell their produce. Then, is it with the hoarders? If it is with the hoarders, under the Act that you have passed how much have you been able to bring out from the hoarders? You have not given any facts that under the laws that you have passed, with the policy that you have followed under the leadership of the Prime Minister, you have been able to bring so much quantity of rice from the hoarders. It is only just a white-wash to accuse the people, to put the blame on others when they themselves are to be condemned and blamed in the country today.

If we look into the achievements of the Food Ministry we will see that it is a Ministry of bungling and inefficiency and nothing else. It is not a question of whether the Minister resigns or not. I read in the papers today that he has offered to resign. So also when we were discussing the

* The document was not treated as laid on the Table as the Speaker subsequently did not accord the necessary permission.

food situation last time there was some such feeler news. It is disgraceful for him to continue. If he fails to come up to the expectations of the people, it will be graceful for him to go out. We should not regret it if he goes out and sets up a good precedent.

I am saying this because he has been acting in a most complacent manner in the administration of the food portfolio. Even in this House, on the 12th of August when the question of the rise in prices was raised, he said—I have got the answer here—that there has been no increase of price in the country. Then he said that there may be some increase here or there but not in the country as a whole. But I will place facts before him from the records of his own Ministry, from "Agricultural Situation in India" June issue, where it is stated

"During May the prices of wheat and maize declined further, while those of most other foodgrains viz rice, jowar and bajra rose to some extent

The price index of rice, on the other hand, rose from 95.0 in April to 98.4 in May. During this period, the index of Jowar rose from 107.5 to 111.7 and of Bajra from 124.9 to 126.4"

So, I accuse the Minister for concealing facts even from this House. Therefore, there is no justification for him to continue. When he himself admitted that there has been increased production why is it that Government have not been able to arrest this abnormal increase in prices?

Some time back we heard that the Prime Minister expressed much concern about the failure of the food policy and that he had written to the States concerned stating that the Chief Ministers themselves should take charge of the portfolio of food and agriculture. If that is so, why not he himself take up that portfolio?

I think this problem is more important today than the External Affairs Department. We are not very much concerned with the cold war between USA and USSR, but we are concerned with our hungry people, thousands who have become beggars and do not get food. So, if he really feels that the country should progress and the Plan should succeed then it is time he took up this subject in his own hands and gave the subject of external affairs to somebody else. Because, as has been very rightly pointed out by friends who spoke before, this increase in price of foodgrains will have its repercussions on the entire economy of the country. This instability in the food front will create instability in other sectors also, including the industrial sector. That is a great bottle-neck for us. Therefore it is a depressing picture.

I will again refer to the same "Agricultural Situation in India" It would be seen from the table that I have been able to prepare from this magazine that not only in the case of rice but also in the case of wheat, gram, jowar, maize, potato, sugar and gur there has been a substantial increase in the price from May 1958 to May 1959. I am surprised—and I ask some explanation from the Minister concerned—to see from the magazine that while the comparative figures of all the food articles are given, there is no comparative figure so far as rice is concerned. They have cleverly managed to see that no comparative figures of rise in price of rice are given in "Agricultural Situation in India". But I find from *Industry and Trade* journal that even for coarse rice there has been an increase in price. Whereas it was 22.72 in May 1958 it was 25.25 in May 1959. There has been a little decrease in the rates so far as super fine rice is concerned. But that is because the people are not able to afford to buy super fine rice.

So, there is a paradox in our country today that whereas there is

[Shri Surendranath Dwivedy]

increased production there is this abnormal increase in prices also. This may not be new and this may be quite natural for a developing economy. But this phenomenon is existing in our country for the last so many years

The Minister is always quick to place before this House the comparative figures about the achievements regarding production. But I accuse him for not placing the figures before us to show how much, during the last 12-13 years, the prices of foodgrains have increased. It is only when those figures are available that we will be in a position to judge his achievements. I say that the rise in prices has been steady, especially after the commencement of the Second Plan. It is continually rising, whereas before that there was some fluctuation in the price of rice

Again, if you take 1939 as the base year with a figure of 100, the relevant figure for 1956-57 was 388.9, an increase of 93.4 per cent. For 1957-58 the relevant figure was 417.8, an increase of 100 per cent. In the Foodgrains Enquiry Committee Report they have stated that in April 1957, over 1955, in the price of rice all along there was an increase to the tune of 40 per cent. When the state of affairs is such, would anybody ever believe that the Plan is going to give more food and it is going to succeed? The figures show that the situation is deteriorating or worsening day by day. This again shows, as my hon friend, Dr. Ram Subhag Singh has pointed out, there is no single policy but there is a conglomeration of policies. I say that there is no co-ordinated policy

Shri A. M. Thomas: The hon Member comes from Orissa. May I respectfully ask him the level of prices in Orissa?

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: I am coming to that. You just please wait. Orissa is not the whole of India. I am coming to that.

So, what I submit is that if we want really to achieve our goal there should be a co-ordinated food policy for which three of our requirements have to be satisfied. We should have a purchase price. We should have sufficient stocks in hand. There should be fair price shops to distribute food so that it may be available to the people. The Foodgrains Enquiry Committee which was appointed specifically to examine the causes and the trend of food prices since about the middle of May 1955 and to make recommendations with due regard to the interests of the consumer and the maintenance of reasonable cost structure in the economy, went into this matter very carefully and gave its recommendation. They have made certain suggestions which, I think, are very sound because they did not recommend any rigid formula. They said that it will vary from day to day. There is no rigid formula anywhere in the world but certain practical policies should be taken up. That is what they suggested. They suggested a price stabilisation board. They suggested socialisation of the food trade. There should be a proper price of agricultural commodities—cash crop and the food crop. There should be some relationship between the industrial sector and the agricultural sector. They say that all these things should be taken into account while fixing a price by the establishment of a price stabilisation board.

What was his objection? He did not say that this is a wrong policy or that this is a wrong recommendation altogether. All right, we agree. But how can this Government delegate its function to a body of officials who will sit in judgment over the economic policy? No, no, we are not going to do that. What did he propose instead? He said that the Cabinet and its economic committee would always be keeping constant vigilance. As Shri Tyagi has pointed out, those who

know nothing about agriculture or food or villages will be keeping constant vigilance (Interruption) I come from a village I belong to an agricultural family I am as much a peasant as Shri Choudhury is They say that they will look after this But in order to satisfy this demand they say, "We will just appoint a committee and they will make recommendations from time to time"

But what has been its recommendations and what has been actually the achievement? I will not infer any opinion of my own This is the opinion very recently expressed by the Ford Foundation Team which went into this matter of agricultural production Its report has been published in April, 1959 Now, what do they say? They admit that there will be fluctuation of a price policy

"Even with these qualifications," they say, "the price disparities have been unreasonable"

Then, about your achievement, what do they say?

"Indian experiments with price control in recent years have been aimed at checking excessive price rises or falls rather than achieving any continuing price stability These temporary programmes of expediency fail to protect adequately the interests of either the producer or the consumer"

I do not know with whom he is fair

"They lead to " what?"

"They lead to speculative activities

The Government is serving the interests of speculators in this country

"They lead to speculative activities and do not provide the proper basis for the planned progress which is fundamental to growth"

They suggested as a beginning

"As a beginning we suggest that minimum prices be established only for rice and wheat on an

all-India basis, and other important grains on regional basis"

They also said

"Floor price be announced before sowing time and remain in effect for one full year"

This has more or less been the demand of all sections of the House from the very beginning and this Government has been refusing to consider that demand They have also taken into account all these difficulties and they have suggested a machinery which will do that They have also suggested

"The major need for price stabilisation is a systematic and continuous effort to maintain food-grain prices at the desired level This can be accomplished only by a permanent agency which can formulate price policy and implement this policy with the required action"

These are the words of the Ford Foundation Team which went round this country and produced such a valuable report

Mr Deputy-Speaker The hon Member's time is up

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy I have two or three more points and then I shall conclude

As regards State trading, at long last the Government decided it, although at first they hesitated to announce their policy But when they were driven by circumstances, when hoarders were actually caught under the eyes of the people and they were not able to control them, they started State trading But what has been the result? As Shri Tyagi has rightly said, you started this State trading policy also half-heartedly You yourself perhaps did not want that this should succeed, because the main object

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The records would show that I was guilty of that.

Surendranath Dwivedy: It is all impersonal. When I refer to you, I refer to the Government. My 'you' refers to the Government.

Shri Tyagi: You represent everyone of us.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: The object of State trading was to eliminate and the Government could go to the villagers and the sellers direct so that there would be direct contact, the money of the State would be saved to a great extent and some benefit would be available to the country. But what has been the achievement? Again they complain that the hoarders today also are hoarding. It is the same thing. And who is their agent? It is the same wholesalers, the same black-marketers. Have they prohibited a license or a permit to a person who has been caught for black marketing before or being appointed as an agent of State trading anywhere? No, Sir. They also are given this license and they continue to function as they were doing before. So what is this policy? The private traders and hoarders act as before. They still have the monopoly and control the prices.

He was referring to Orissa. We are suffering in Orissa as anything. What have they done? After various representations very recently the Government has only increased the price to Re 1 per maund in Orissa. In whose pockets does it go? It goes to the pockets of the hoarders and the mill-owners, who have already purchased rice from the producers. They did not announce it five months back or two months back. They have announced it when all the rice has gone from the producers and has come to the mill-owners. Now they will very handsomely—my Congress Party friends will excuse me—donate to the party in power. That is the purpose. That is how you are feeding them.

I want a clarification. Now there is a contemplation that State trading would function only in surplus areas and the deficit areas would be left

out. What will happen as a result of this policy? It is a dangerous policy. If really this policy is followed, what would happen is that the people in surplus areas will suffer. They will get less and less, whereas black-marketing and rise in prices will rule as before in the deficit areas. This is a very dangerous policy, if it is going to be pursued. I will say that it is a suicidal step if they are contemplating because of their own inefficiency to change this policy like this. I was told that there is someone who has said this present difficulty arises mainly because the producers have not given the rice. I want to know whether this is happening.

Mr Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member's time is up.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: One word about West Bengal and I conclude and that is this. There was much agitation on account of the withdrawal of the Price Control and Levy Order. I have read very carefully the statement of the West Bengal Chief Minister and the Government. I have found that six months was not sufficient time to come to a judgment and the entire Price Control and Levy Order had failed because from the Chief Minister's account itself it shows—he has admitted that—that while availability of rice in March and April had improved—it was promulgated in January and in March and April, he admits there was some improvement and prices in many areas were almost at par with the control price—that also he admits—in May they again rose. This is not sufficient time. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* commenting on this has said:

Its miserable failure has to be attributed not to its basic defects but to the evident weakness of the Government in implementing it with as much promptness and vigour as it called for."

That is what is wanted. It seems there is nothing wrong with it. The

whole thing seems to be that there has not been proper distribution. The distribution machinery in that particular State has failed although the Central Government has been conceding demands which, I know, have increased from seven to nine and to eleven now. They have agreed to supply them that much. Still if it is failing, it is failing because the distribution machinery in that State has completely failed. So, it is time that the Central Government should take over the distribution machinery in West Bengal if really they want that the food policy should succeed.

Shri N. E. Ghosh (Cooh-Bihar)
Mr Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the food position in the country is certainly very acute and I can fully understand why so much heat is being introduced in the debate. But I think that that is not a correct approach. If it is a very acute problem, we should approach it with a sober mind.

Many things have been spoken against the West Bengal Government. Now I come from West Bengal and I tell you that the people there believe that the Ministry there has made and is making every earnest attempt every sincere attempt to alleviate the miseries of the people. I know that some of the leftist parties do not hold this view.

14 hrs.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri Is this in order, Sir? If we cannot criticise the West Bengal Government, is it in order also to go out of our way to praise it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker It was criticised just now.

Shri Tyagi. On a point of order Sir, I want to clarify. Praises can be offered in the absence of a Member or any person, but not criticism.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker. We do not allow even praises to be offered here. But, now, because it is a question of the responsibility of the State and the Centre, both are being criticised. Just now, we heard that the distribution machinery in the State has totally failed. Therefore, if some other hon

Member gets up and says that it has tried its best, it is not out of order.

Shri N. E. Ghosh: It is most unfortunate that our miseries are exploited by certain political parties. I have noticed it in the case of the refugee problem. I am noticing it now when there is distress in the country regarding food. It would have been much better if these questions—the distress of the people—had been put above parties. That is not being done. It is being utilised for party purposes. I would submit that we should have a detached view of the subject.

Much has been said about marketing of foodgrains. But, what are the facts? How much of the foodgrains is actually marketed? I shall read from page 98 of the Ford Foundation Report.

By far the largest portion—over 75 per cent—of India's foodgrains production is never marketed. Most of the cultivators have small acreages, and since their yields are low, their total production per farm is not great. Foodgrains comprise a major portion of their diets and many cultivators consume all that they produce and may even buy additional supplies. Also, in the villages, labour is commonly paid with foodgrains for both agricultural work and other services. Additional supplies are retained for seed."

The accompanying table summarises the estimate of marketable surplus for foodgrains for several years.

I shall read only two lines. So far as rice is concerned, in 1956-57, 6.9 per cent was marketed. So far as wheat is concerned, only 3.3 per cent was marketed. In 1957-58, in rice 7.8 per cent was marketed and in wheat only 2.7 per cent was marketed. Therefore, if everything was not all right regarding marketing, that does not even touch the fringe of the question. The problem is elsewhere. We must look at it squarely with an unbiased mind.

[Shri N. R. Ghosh]

The real problem is that our country is not producing sufficient foodgrains and that ought to be given the top priority. Here also, I may be permitted to read out a few lines from the same report

"We believe that the crisis in food requires action at the highest levels of Government."

I agree with the views expressed by some hon. Members who spoke about it.

"But, there must be follow-through at all levels. Legislative as well as administrative branches of Government must be aware of the urgency of the situation. Decisions which are binding on all Ministries of Government and on all levels of Government and which are supported by political leaders, must be made. The crucial role of agriculture must be recognised and the best technical knowledge on food production must be brought to bear on the problems without equivocation or delay.

Far-reaching centralised authority with a clear line of command and execution, alone can meet the challenge of growing more food."

This is the crux of the problem. Unless we increase our food production, all these noises about faulty marketing will not solve our problem.

A criticism has been levelled why the West Bengal Government tried to control even retailers' prices. I can tell you that the people of West Bengal including the leftist parties wanted that. If you want to control, you must go the whole way any you must control also the retailers' prices. Certainly that was a wise decision. But, I admit that the West Bengal Government or any Government, perhaps, in this country, has not the necessary machinery to implement this. That might have been a mistake of judgment. That was a *bona fide* mistake. There was nothing wrong in it. We do sometimes make mistakes;

but we should not accuse the Ministry unjustly and for nothing.

As regards the removal of the Levy and Price control, that was also because the people of West Bengal wanted it. From the market all the foodgrains evaporated. Some people who are now loudest in their accusation, perhaps had some hand in it. The people of West Bengal under the circumstances wanted that this ought to be de-controlled. That was done. It was unfortunate, but there was no help.

I believe there are many vital things to be done on the question of the food problem, and the Central Government certainly will consider all these questions and come to an integrated policy which may solve it. It must be given top priority.

As regards regulating the market, we ought to have a regulated market. But, as the machinery of the Government stands at present, many people seriously doubt whether control is actually any solution. We know the war time situation of food and the immense difficulties and corruption prevailing at the time and the whole country breathed a sigh of relief when the late Shri Kidwai withdrew controls all over India. I would submit that if really you want to have state-trading, you must have the complete machinery for it. Otherwise, half-heartedly if you go into it, it will not succeed and if, on the other hand, you can produce sufficient foodgrains, there will not be any necessity of any control whatsoever. The ordinary trade channel would then very well look after it. Again, to come back to the food question, I may be allowed to read a few lines from this Report.

"Many leaders and administrators are aware of the critical importance of increasing production. Others, unfortunately, have an air of complacency—".

as has been pointed out by some of my friends—

"not warranted by facts."

"It is clear to us that food production increases at the rate required to reach a 110-million-ton target cannot be realised unless an all-out emergency programme is undertaken, and adequate resources are made available. This means that agricultural development must be given the highest priority among all the categories of development for the remainder of the Second Five Year Plan and for the entire Third Plan period."

Therefore, I would submit that all this requires an integrated policy.

So far as West Bengal is concerned, that is an unfortunate State. You know there is the refugee problem. Millions of people have come from East Bengal and the population pressure there is almost unbearable. As a result of partition most of the districts which were the granaries of Bengal we have lost. Under these circumstances, it is a peculiarly different problem. The hon. Minister must look at it from that angle of view. It cannot be looked at in the same manner as he would deal with the other States, because the problem of West Bengal is a different problem altogether. Therefore it is no good accusing the West Bengal Government or certain Ministers. We know that actually all these talks and all this agitation have a different purpose. They want to exploit its miseries for political purposes and I would submit that that would never solve the problem. That would only worsen the problem.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: Mr Deputy-Speaker, the previous speaker began with some complimentary reference to the West Bengal Government.

An Hon. Member: No harm.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: No harm! I am just stating a fact. He did it. He need not do it. (*Inter-ruption*)

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Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Order, order. He may continue.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: . . . and ended also with a praise of that Government and condemned the agitation that has started. But one patent fact stands out, namely, that from the very day the agitation started, the prices have started coming down. The hoarders have taken fright, they all went to the writers' building, as one previous speaker has pointed out, asked them for police protection, and got promises of police protection.

Shri C. K. Bhattacharya: Is that a compliment to the agitation?

Shri Sadhan Gupta: Yes.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: My hon. friend has another way of looking at it. I have my way of looking at it. Immediately, the prices started coming down.

But before I take up the West Bengal food situation, I want the House to consider very calmly the position and the policies of this Government for the past three years, that is, since the beginning of the life of this House.

In 1957-58, we had a rather bad production. In 1956-57, in spite of satisfactory production, the prices started going up. It was to meet that contingency and to suggest a programme of constructive policy that the Foodgrains Enquiry Committee was appointed, and after four months of labour, that committee produced what I should say was a very competent report, and made very sensible and practicable suggestions. But in May 1958 the hon. Minister came forward before the House during the budget session and gave his arguments as to why the recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee could not be accepted, and why the policy of State trading, as suggested by that committee, could not be accepted.

The whole crux of the problem was that the committee suggested that there should be an overall price policy in regard to foodgrains, and on the basis

[Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri]

of that, there should be a reserve stock or a buffer stock at the disposal of Government so that Government can come to the market from a position of strength and influence the market by releasing stocks when prices would go up, and by purchasing from the market when prices tend to fall down. The committee pointed out, and we also know, that this was not a very revolutionary suggestion. Many other countries, very dignified and honourable capitalist countries, are having that system. The committee mentioned Canada, for example. Even our neighbour Burma is having that type of food administration.

But, anyway, the Cabinet in their wisdom decided that they could not accept that policy. They could not decide upon a fixed price level; they could not give this responsibility of fixing foodgrains prices to any other independent or autonomous body. They said that the whole Cabinet, sitting with the Planning Commission, which is the economic committee of the Cabinet would decide these things. This was in May. The Cabinet decides in May that there is no need to change the policy. But within the course of a few months, in the National Development Council, the very same Cabinet with the very same people decides that there should be State trading, there should be nationalisation of whole-sale trade; and immediately, an atmosphere is created, a climate is created in which we almost feel that we are going towards socialisation of foodgrains. But after months of labour when Government announced this thing, when Ministers went about making speeches, they knew very well—and I charge this Ministry and this Cabinet—that they did not have the machinery and they did not have even the plans ready and they appointed a working group. The working group, after months of labour, after mountains of labour produced a mouse. And we just got a plan which was not very much different from what we were having. And State trading was the

name given to the sort of procurement or to the type of procurement that was being done in different parts of the country. That was the name given to State trading. The whole idea of State trading, and nationalisation of whole-sale trade in foodgrains was sabotaged from within. There must be some powerful liaison between the foodgrains trade in this country, or the whole-sale trade in this country and people high up in Government, and they saw to it that the policy determined upon by the National Development Council was sabotaged. They can thank themselves, and they can pat themselves on their backs that they have successfully done it.

Now, we find that the gentlemen sitting opposite are coming and accusing Government, "Oh, you ought not to have done this sort of thing, without first preparing your plan; the policy was good, the people wanted it, but you ought not to have done this thing without preparing your organisation, without preparing your machinery, you did not have this type of machinery or this type of organisation. So, it was a mistake, and, therefore, you must scrap the whole policy at least for the time being."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Here, in this House, we address all the Members either as hon Members or as Ministers; we do not address them as gentlemen or as persons or as others.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: I am sorry.

It was the same policy on a smaller scale, but with more serious and disastrous results, that was adopted in West Bengal. I do not really know whom to accuse, because I happened to be a member of the All-Parties Food Advisory Committee appointed by the West Bengal Government, and I know some inside story; I also happen to be a member of the informal consultative committee constituted by the Prime Minister; there also, we came into possession of certain facts.

It has been the contention of the West Bengal Government that whatever they have done with regard to price control and levy was done with full concurrence and approval of the Central Government, and they have even lamented that they could not proceed even one step with regard to the fixation of prices without the concurrence or the approval of the Central Government, because the Central Government has the whip hand, West Bengal is a deficit State, it cannot have its own way without the concurrence of the Centre, because the Centre gives it the supplies that it requires. So, I cannot believe that it is only the West Bengal Government whom we should accuse for adopting this price control policy. This price control policy which was imposed in January was a control, and as Shri Tyagi has pointed out

Shri A. P. Jain: Did the hon Member object in his capacity as a member of the advisory committee?

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: We did object, and not only that we even said when they wanted to control price at all levels and fix a certain price for procurement from the peasants, that that price was too low, they said that we should go with the Central Government.

Shri A. P. Jain: My question was a different one, namely, whether the hon Member objected to the principle of imposing controls on prices and levy. Did he or did he not object?

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: It is not a question of our objecting to the principle because, as Socialists, we accept that principle. The question is of the whole set-up, what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. To that extent, I accuse this Government in that they permitted this policy, even knowing that it would fail. They either impelled the West Bengal Government or compelled it or were persuaded by it to take up that policy.

And what was the result? The result was that within six months, they came out with all the arguments which ought to have been known to that Government even in January. In June, they say that it is a deficit State, in a free market, it is very difficult to impose controls at all levels, they did not have sufficient stocks, that their distribution machinery was inadequate, that they could not rely on their police administration properly etc. Were these things not known either to the West Bengal Government or the Central Government who gave approval to this policy in January? And what has been the result? As everybody knows, in West Bengal due to the pressure of population and the smallness of the farms in the possession of agriculturists, roughly one-third of the population in the villages not only live on starvation level but live in perpetual slavery, because they were forced by this law to sell away their produce since they could not wait. They, having no margin or saving to fall back upon, were forced to sell whatever grain they had produced immediately at the control price of Rs 9-8 per maund. At the present moment they are purchasing it, because they have to purchase from mahajans or beoparis, at Rs 18 per maund.

Shri Bibhut Mishra (Bagaha): What is his suggestion? To purchase it from the producer?

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: Yes. We suggested that the procurement price should be round about Rs 12 per maund.

Shri Sadhan Gupta: Rs 12 per maund minimum and Rs. 13 per maund maximum.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: It has always baffled me why this Government fights shy of a procurement price that it will pay to the producer. What should be the minimum price that the cultivator should get? On various occasions, I tried to raise this

[Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri]

question and it beats me why the Government could not calculate the cost of production and the expected remuneration over the outlay that the peasant made. Where is the difficulty? Why is it that from year to year a procurement price or a floor price cannot be announced beforehand, as the Ford Foundation Committee had suggested? But this has not been done, either for the whole of India or for the State of West Bengal. We now find there a situation where people have started suspecting that there must be some collusion between people who decide policies and the foodgrains trade—the millers, hoarders and profiteers. It is very easy to suppress a movement by adoption of repressive measures and sweeping arrests under the Preventive Detention Act. But if past experience has any meaning and significance for us, a movement that starts with the flame of hunger in the stomachs of people ultimately burns everybody who may be in the pedestal of power, whether that is our hon friend, Shri A P Jān here or other hon gentlemen who are his counterparts in other parts of the country. Know it for certain that the whole edifice, your Constitution, your democracy and the new society that you are going to build up, your plans—all will crumble down if we cannot solve this problem, the basic problem of all, the king-pin of our whole society and whole economy.

Shri Barman (Cooch-Behar-Reserved-Sch Castes) Mr Deputy-Speaker, there are two questions involved in this discussion today. First of all there is the question of the price of foodstuffs that obtains today, both as regards rice and wheat throughout India. Secondly, and more particularly, is the question regarding the levy and control policy that was once imposed and later withdrawn by the West Bengal Government, and the effect that it has ultimately led to. We have to consider the basic factors which have led to all these things.

As regards the general matter, that is, production of foodgrains in the whole country, there are no two opinions that our country is heavily deficient in food supply. No argument is necessary for that because year after year, we are importing millions of tons of wheat as well as rice wherever obtainable from outside. Therefore, when Members say that the basic problem for us is how to increase food production in this country and how to devise means,—both at the Centre as well as in the States, either by the Agriculture Ministry alone, if that be sufficient, or with the help of all other Ministries working together to solve that problem, there is no dispute about it. That is the basic problem and we must solve it; otherwise, other problems which are dependent on that remain in this confused state year after year and we shall face such problems as have now arisen in West Bengal. I will not dilate on that broader issue any more, but I shall have to deal with the problem that has arisen in West Bengal particularly, in some detail, and for that I crave your indulgence for some more time.

It has been said by the hon Member Shrimati Renu Chakravarty, that she had heard that the Centre was supplying all that was asked for by the West Bengal Government, but after the cereals—rice and wheat—had reached the State, they had not reached the consumers properly. She has not expressed clearly what she meant by that. I think what she wanted to say was that these lakhs of tons of foodgrains were somehow or other hoarded by some people or passed on to somebody wherefrom they could not be brought to daylight, so that they were not distributed properly but had gone to hoarders who had sold it at black-market prices. I think that was her statement which I must certainly controvert because I, being a resident of West Bengal just as she is, have also some connection with the Food Relief Committee, with which my hon friend, Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri, is also associated.

I know about the proceedings of a few meetings that were held in West Bengal in which this food problem was discussed month after month and how the policies were conducted from day to day. It was not that this West Bengal Government, which now belongs to the Congress Party, is alone responsible for the policy. All the political parties in West Bengal are associated in coming to some of the decisions and how the policy should be conducted. Therefore, she cannot say that she does not know what is happening there.

The Food and Relief Committees had been formed at the State level. Then there have been Food and Relief Committees at the sub-divisional level. In all these committees all the political parties that count in West Bengal are associated. Therefore, it cannot be said, when they are being associated with all these committees at the State level as well as the sub-divisional level, that they did not know how the vast amount of cereals that were sent to West Bengal could not reach the consumers.

I shall place certain facts how during the last year as well as this year serious situation has arisen in West Bengal. It was not so two years back or before that. Now, with regard to the question whether it is mismanagement of the Government which has been managing this food problem since 1948 and whether suddenly there has been some lapse on their part or they had gone astray in certain matters in the management of this food question, or whether it is due to something else, on that I want to dilate by citing some facts and figures before the House.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That he might do the next day. We shall now take up the Private Members' Business.

14.32 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

FORTY-SEVENTH REPORT

Sardar A. B. Saigal (Janjgir): Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House agrees with the Forty-seventh Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 19th August, 1951".

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Motion moved:

"That this House agrees with the Forty-seventh Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 19th August, 1951"

There is an amendment by Shri Vajpayee.

Shri Vajpayee (Balrampur): Sir, the Committee has allotted two hours for my resolution, and I have tabled an amendment that the time be extended by one more hour. I think the question of Tibet issue being referred to the United Nations is an important issue.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He might not advance further arguments. If that be the will of the House it can extend it just now, or the Speaker has always the discretion to extend it by one hour if he finds that that is the desire of the House, and it can be done at that moment. So the hon. Member need not move his amendment. We will see as the debate advances, and if the House wants we can extend the time.

The question is:

"That this House agrees with the Forty-seventh Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 19th August 1951".

The motion was adopted.