

[Shri Rajendra Singh]

actual problem is to raise the yield per acre. I agree. But, who has been responsible? Has it been the Opposition? Who has been responsible for not bringing in any rise in the production per acre, of sugarcane?

Shri D. C. Sharma: You have been responsible.

Shri Rajendra Singh: In fact, it is the Congress Government which has been responsible, the Congress Government which has been in power for 14 years, for not bringing about a situation where they can help agriculture production. The hon. Minister can say whatever he likes. But, he has not done justice to the subject.

Shri D. C. Sharma: You are not doing justice yourself.

Shri Rajendra Singh: I know he is a very talented Minister; he has the talent to flood the House with his eloquence. But he has not done justice to the subject (*Interruptions*).

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Should I put the amendment to the vote?

Shri Braj Raj Singh: Yes, Sir; let there be a voice vote at least.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

That at the end of motion, the following be added, namely:—

“and recommends that—

- (a) ex-factory price of sugar be fixed at Rs. 32 per maund;
- (b) control on distribution sugar be relaxed in view of the extra production of sugar;
- (c) sugarcane price be fixed at Rs. 2/- per maund; and
- (d) Markets for export of sugar be searched but the consumer of sugar in India should not be made to pay the losses on export of sugar”.

The motion was negatived.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Now, I will put the motion.

The question is:

“That this House takes note of the present position in regard to production, distribution and export of sugar.”

The motion was adopted.

17.22 hrs.

P. L. 480 FUNDS FOR WEST BENGAL*

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta—Central): **Mr. Deputy-Speaker,** Sir, I wish to raise a discussion in this House in regard to the unsatisfactory nature of the answer which was given to Starred Question No. 137 on the 16th November 1960. Sir, the answer shows indifference to a problem which if it is not tackled urgently would land the country in ruin.

There had been reports that the P. L. 480 counterpart funds might be utilised for the Calcutta region. I personally have some doubts about the manner of the utilisation of the P. L. 480 funds as enjoined in P. L. Agreements. But that is not the point. The point is the challenge of mounting problems in Calcutta to which special attention has been drawn by the report of a World Bank Mission, and the imperative urgency of the answer to that challenge. I am not prepared to be content with the Finance Minister's bland reply last time that no proposal in this regard was under the consideration of the Government of India. If it is not, it is more than time that it should be.

The Centre appears to be peculiarly blind wherever the problems of Calcutta have cropped up in recent times. We all remember the Prime Minister referring to Calcutta as a nightmare

city, a derelict place. But, leaving out epithet-mongering, the fact remains that there is little interest in high places in regard to placing Calcutta in a proper position to pull her out of the present morass.

Calcutta has been seared by partition and the refugee problem; it bleeds in a thousand wounds; and the World Bank Mission has pointed out how in Greater Calcutta there is a population of 6 million or perhaps more in contrast with the population of 3½ million in 1948. And, of these, at least 800,000 or more are refugees. The World Bank Mission has also referred to the shortage of adequate water supply, the lack of sanitation and other health facilities, to terrible overcrowding and unemployment, to deficiencies of transport and other public utilities. It is also particularly and emphatically asserted how Calcutta port which is the greatest in the country and from the point of view of exports the most important is practically facing a breakdown. So, misfortune has piled one on the other in the last decade and a half over Calcutta and something ought to be done about it and to that attention had been drawn by this report of the World Bank Mission.

I feel that verily the sins of a nation are being visited upon a city. The influx of refugees and the resultant breakdown of urban facilities which cruelly accentuated what had happened during the World War II were the direct results of the decision taken by the national leadership to partition the country thirteen years ago. It is easy enough to blame the Corporation of Calcutta. There is no doubt that it is a very inefficient body elected on a very restricted franchise but it can hardly do anything on development. There is the Calcutta Improvement Trust depending upon subsidies of the West Bengal Government which has even less resources. The West Bengal Government, of course, might do something about it but in this regard the World Bank Mission itself has remarked—I am quoting:

"The Government of India tends to regard these problems as wholly the concern of the Government of West Bengal... The very magnitude and challenge that Calcutta presents to the conscience and political commonsense of those in authority no doubt in part explains the inadequacy of the response. Everybody admits that more ought to be done about it. Nobody is ready to do it."

This is what the World Bank Mission says in regard to this matter. I feel, therefore that it is the national responsibility of the country to come to the aid of Calcutta and rehabilitate the Calcutta region. The whole country will benefit from the industrial concentration which has continued since the launching of the Five Year Plans.

A high proportion of the jobs in industry and transport in the Calcutta region are filled by workers from outside West Bengal. In the dock labour force, Bengalis number only sixteen per cent., or so. Calcutta, that is to say, is a national asset and there is no alternative to Calcutta as a port or as a financial and administrative centre. On this point, the World Bank Mission says:

"There is no alternative to Calcutta as a port, financial and administrative centre and major market for the heavy and light industries that should develop, and are in fact developing on the basis of the coal/steel complex in West Bengal, Bihar, and adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Calcutta is also the hub of India's two principal export industries (jute and tea)."

The World Bank Mission has suggested that some Rs. 200 crores or something like that figure would be necessary and it has asked the Central Government to accept direct responsibility for this job and in this regard the World Bank Mission has drawn attention to a very major problem caused by the silting of the river Hooghly which has made the position

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of Calcutta port almost impossible. In this regard, it is found that as early as 1958 when the World Bank made certain loans to the Port Commissioners of Calcutta, because of the progressive silting of the Hooghly ships with a draught of 26 feet could not usually enter the port which meant that modern vessels with a displacement of 10,000 tons and above were practically shut out. Since then conditions have deteriorated and the figures here show that even ships with a draught below 26 feet find it very difficult to come into the harbour. The World Bank Mission, therefore, suggested, with the port of Calcutta having reached almost its maximum handling capacity and conditions being difficult there, a new port further down-stream at Haldia ought to be constructed as soon as it is possible, particularly because it will not cost an undue sum; about Rs. 25 crores or so would be necessary for this purpose.

There is also another matter to which the World Health Organisation has devoted its attention and that is in regard to the water supply of Calcutta. I have here a speech made in 1874 by a well-known engineer, Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Cotton who spoke on "Irrigation Works in India" and who says here that in about 1871 Calcutta from the point of view of water supply was more salubrious than Manchester or Liverpool. Now conditions have deteriorated so that recently a World Health Organisation Mission came to Calcutta region and they reported on the need for a drastic change in the water supply organisation.

In reply to Starred Question No. 1217 on 1st April, 1960 on the Table of the House a paper was laid stating the recommendations of the W.H.O. team in regard to this matter. Among the recommendations, it is mentioned that the matter of the rehabilitation of the Hooghly river was absolutely important. It is said:

"...it would be delinquent in not recognising the great impor-

ance of this dying river as the 'life line' for the entire area. Hence, early solution and recapture of the Hooghly for all purposes of the area must have emphasis; otherwise, we may succeed in providing supplementary water facilities for a considerably reduced population;"

The World Health Organisation envisages a considerably reduced population in the Calcutta area if the problem of the silting of the river is not tackled quickly enough; that is to say, there might even happen a kind of depopulation.

If things are allowed to drift a far too heavy price may have to be paid, and in this regard I am quoting from the *Economic Weekly* of Bombay, dated 1st October, 1960, where they add an addition of economic argument saying:

"One may even add a solid economic argument, from the national point of view, for the Government of India's acting now. If things are allowed to drift in the present manner, it is likely that in about ten years' time economic and social overheads would completely break down in Greater Calcutta. Established industries would then have to move out, and the attendant social cost would be so great as to wipe out the country's industrial progress in the intervening period."

I do not know what exactly is to be done about the Farakka Barrage project, but even if that project is undertaken in the near future that would take a great deal of time and something more requires to be done.

I say, therefore, let the money be found from somewhere and let the work start, let the Central Government co-operate with the West Bengal Government and other agencies and let the people be taken into confidence. The Finance Ministry holds the purse

strings, I know. Quite frequently, we find that the Government here is rather allergic towards Calcutta. But to spite Calcutta would mean hurting the country's own interests and, therefore, measures are imperative, which in view of the recommendations of the World Bank's Mission should be adopted as soon as ever that is possible by the Government of the country.

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I shall put only three questions. Firstly, will the Government agree to set up a study team to draw up an integrated project for the Calcutta area, especially in view of the World Bank Mission's realistic appraisal of the dangers of delay in taking up such work? Secondly, this House has been told of schemes like a Calcutta-Asansol express way or a new wide road from Dum Dum, India's busiest airport, to the city of Calcutta. Such schemes required to be fitted into a comprehensive plan. Will such a plan be expedited? My third question is, cannot the U.N. Special Fund and, of course, the World Bank, the I.D.A. and such other agencies be requested for help in the preparation of necessary blueprints and also for their implementation?

Shrimati Ita Palchoudhuri (Nabadwip): Sir, I want to ask only one question. May I know whether in view of all that has been said the Government would consider whether some of these funds, if it is possible to use them, could be used not only for Calcutta and Greater Calcutta but also to a certain extent for the small district towns where the same problems crop up as they are near Calcutta? In places like Shantipur, Nabadwip and Krishnanagar, the problems of Calcutta exist in a concentrated form, and I would like to know whether the Government would consider using some of these funds for these small towns also.

The Deputy Minister of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Member has raised this question

because for sometime past, a misrepresentation and a misapprehension was being created both in the press as well as in certain other sectors that the problems of Calcutta are being neglected and although there are some funds available under the PL 480 counterpart funds, they are not being made available for utilisation for the development of Calcutta.

Although it is surprising, I welcome the change in the attitude on the part of the hon. Member, now that he gives respectability to the opinion expressed by the World Bank team. In the past, he has been very critical, rather uncharitably critical, of such reports but, all the same, it is a good augury. He has accepted that there are merits there. (*Interruption.*)

There is also one point which puts me in a little difficulty, because the hon. Member has said that the answer given to this question on the 16th November is unsatisfactory. Then he himself said that although he is only concerned with the utilisation of PL 480 funds or the manner of its use, he wishes to take this opportunity of bringing to the notice of the House the importance of the problems of Calcutta and he then goes on to underline the various problems connected with the Calcutta area, along with the question of Haldia port as also the Farakka barrage. I would plead that all these questions are not part of the answer given on that day. I would like to point out that so far as the question of the development of Calcutta area is concerned, there is no difference of opinion in regard to the importance and urgency of the problem. The way Calcutta has grown and the important problems that it poses is a challenge that any Government has to accept. Whether in the West Bengal's third Plan or in the plan for the rehabilitation of refugees or the development of these concentrated industrial areas, we have provided resources with a view to meeting these problems.

But, as far as the specific nature and the way the hon. Member wants it to

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be done is concerned, it has so far not been included in the West Bengal Government's plan of Rs. 250 crores which has been approved by the Planning Commission. The Haldia project is already being included and it given a very high priority. So are the other projects. So, to say that the Central Government is ignoring the problems of Calcutta is a very uncharitable charge laid at our door. We want to repudiate it. We are alive to the problems. But we have the limitations of resources and other things, but within the capacity that we have, we are trying our best to do it.

So far as the question of utilisation of PL 480 funds, which is directly germane to the answer in the question, is concerned, I would like clarify the position that PL 480 funds have already been taken into account in assessing the resources for the third Plan and this should be borne in mind. So, for any project or a scheme which is at present not included in the third Plan, whether of the departments of the Government of India or the State plans, no resources for them can be provided at this stage unless the Plan is enlarged or expanded to include some of these projects.

In this connection, I would like to refer to the draft outline of the third Five Year Plan. On page 49 of the report, it has been stated that in the third Plan an amount of about Rs. 608 crores under the recent agreement with the U.S.A. has been included. This includes Rs. 200 crores which represent buffer stocks (four million tons of wheat and one million tons of rice). So, this PL fund has already been taken into account in assessing the resources for the third Plan, and therefore, no new schemes can be taken on the ground that this fund is available. Hence, this should be made absolutely clear, and this is apart from the merits of any project. Whether it is the problem of Calcutta—it is very important—or it is any other problem that is facing the country, apart from the merits of the case, in the position

in which we are situated, we cannot earmark any resources out of the PL 480 fund, unless it is included in the Plan.

Shri Tangamani asked whether any study team has been set up to study the problem of Calcutta, whether there is a comprehensive plan or blueprint for that and whether any special U.N. fund has been requested to provide assistance.

Actually, all these relate to one question whether we are doing anything to study in a scientific way the problems of Calcutta, so that we know the dimensions of the plan and we may tackle it in a more planned manner. To this I would say that although the Third Five Year Plan of West Bengal, which has been considered recently by the Planning Commission, does not contain any separate proposals from the West Bengal Government for solving the special problems of Calcutta and the industrial belt, we have requested U.N. Special Fund to assist the West Bengal Government in undertaking a survey and investigation of the potable water-supply resources and associated sewerage and drainage schemes of Greater Calcutta.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal recently mentioned to the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission his intention to arrange for the preparation of a Master Plan for Greater Calcutta. Thus it will be seen that the proposals relating to Greater Calcutta are at present being explored in a preliminary way and the stage for making any formal allotment or provision of money does not arise now. But we are trying to study the matter, get the blueprints and when the Master Plan is ready, certainly it will come to the Planning Commission for consideration and dealing with the situation in whatever manner they think proper. So, it is as yet too early to say what would emerge out of all this. But to say that we are ignoring

the problem or we are not earmarking any funds which are lying unutilised for such an urgent and pressing demand is a charge which does not hold water, which is misinformed and, to say the least, is hardly justified.

17.43 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, December 8, 1960/Agrahayana 17, 1882 (Saka).
