

failed in the realisation of income-tax, and if we have the same machinery for realising the wealth-tax also, it is bound to fail and we cannot realise the amount that we expect to.

As regards the schedules, I submit that the initial slab of exemption is too high. It should be reduced to half for both companies and individuals. No exemption should be given to companies, because we know that these companies earn profit and there is no ground why this exemption should be given.

If the Government is serious about implementing the Plan, they should take steps to plug the loopholes; otherwise, mere lip sympathy for the Plan will not bring any results. Of course, from the different versions given by Shri Morarka and Shrimati Renuka Ray, we find that there is something wrong going on even within their party. Without going into those internal differences, I would only say that it also strengthens our view that really a doubt, a suspicion, has arisen in the minds of the Members who are reasonable in thinking, that this wealth-tax really could not be implemented to bring good to the country and also bring money to the Exchequer.

WORK-SITE CAMPS IN WEST BENGAL

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Now we take up the next item. Shri A. C. Guha to raise an half-hour discussion.

~Shri A. C. Guha (Barasat): This is in connection with a question of mine which was to be replied on 14th May, 1957, but then the hon. Minister for Rehabilitation gives me a reply that the information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House. Then on 6th August he has supplied this information wherein he has stated: (a) There

are no work-site camps in West Bengal and Tripura; (b) to (h): Does not arise.

In (b) to (h), I asked for certain details as to the time when they were established, the number of displaced persons in the work-site camps and the nature of work given to them, the annual income earned by them, the amounts spent on them and whether there was any rehabilitation scheme formulated for them. To all these questions, he gave an omnibus reply 'does not arise as the work-site camps are no longer existing'.

In the annual Report of the Rehabilitation Ministry for 1956, I find there are 44 work-site camps mentioned with full names and description, the number of persons accommodated in each camp—the total number being near about 43,000 in 44 camps in different districts of West Bengal. So I cannot understand how he has replied that there are no work-site camps in West Bengal and Tripura. I do not like to raise the question of Tripura, but as for West Bengal, according to the Administration Report which covered the period upto 31st March officially, there were 44 work-site camps accommodating nearly about 43,000 persons.

If my memory does not fail me, I think even in May there were work-site camps. I saw them with my own eyes. I do not know what has happened to them during this period of two or three months. I have nothing to say against work-site camps as such. I rather support the idea that these refugees should be made to work somewhere and Government should provide some work for them. In 1953, a committee was set up to look into the rehabilitation work in respect of East Bengal refugees. That Committee also recommended that work-site camps should be set up. But it specifically mentioned under what conditions the work-site camps should be set up. The Committee suggested that the DVC or some other semi-government organisation and the State Government also

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should be asked to give some contract work to the Rehabilitation Ministry who should get it done through the refugees. Work-site camps should be established in such places as would ensure some work for the refugees as also their rehabilitation and Government would supply the necessary work-load for them.

I have seen some of the work-site camps myself and I think that the idea has been completely ignored. People are simply taken to the rural areas and put there in the open without any enclosure or hutment or house. Some tents were pitched and they were asked to reside in them. The usual life of the tents is 9 to 10 months, but they are continued even for 18 months without replacement in time.

I have my fundamental objection to accommodating refugees in tents. I shall take that up tomorrow. Today I am confining myself to the work-site camps. On 14th March this year, when I was myself a Minister I wrote to the hon. Minister about a work-site camp. I found it a very fine exhibition of human sufferings and miseries. I concluded my letter to him thus.....

Shri D. R. Chavan (Karad): There is no quorum.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The bell may be rung—Now there is quorum. The hon. Member, Shri A. C. Guha, may continue.

Shri A. C. Guha: I was just referring to what I wrote to the hon. Minister on 14th March. I concluded my letter with this sentence:

“Spending lakhs of rupees every month simply to breed discontent is not a wise policy for any government.”

I felt very unhappy at the sight of these work-site camps. I have seen a number of them. That, of course, may not be quite in order for the present discussion.

My point is that the reply which the hon. Minister has given is quite

unsatisfactory and incomplete. I think he has evaded the main issues to be replied. When there is a mention of these work-site camps in the Administration Report of the Ministry, I do not know how he can say that there are no work-site camps in West Bengal. My question, as I said earlier, was scheduled to be replied on 14th May. Whether there were no work-site camps on 14th, is the main point. What has happened to those work-site camps which have been mentioned in the report of the Ministry? What has happened to the people—about 43,000 people were accommodated—in those work-site camps? If they have changed the names of these camps, I can understand that. But simply by changing names they cannot solve the problem. Even if they had removed the persons from those camps, I think he should have replied my question from (b) to (h), because even after 31st March, or after the date when the work-site camps might have been abolished, or the names might have been changed, the issues raised in (b) to (h) would be quite applicable and relevant. I think the hon. Minister should give his reply to all these points.

What is more important is, what has happened to those people who were residing in the work-site camps. As I have stated, one of my questions was whether any rehabilitation schemes have been formulated for them, if so what are they? This is a more important question to which I would like to have a categorical reply from the hon. Minister.

As I have stated earlier the position of the refugees in work-site camps is most miserable. I invited the hon. Minister to visit at least one work-site camp with me. He would have then realised the position of the refugees there. Simply by changing the name they cannot change the position, change the lot of the refugees.

What has been done to these refugees? That is a relevant question, which I hope the hon. Minister would answer.

Sir, I shall not take any more time as the hon. Minister might take some time and other Members also who have supported my motion for this half-hour discussion, might take some time. But, before I conclude, I would again say that I have no objection to work-site camps as such, rather I support the idea on which the work-site camps were recommended by the committee in 1953. But the work-site camps as they were being maintained in West Bengal, as I have seen with my own eyes and as stated in my letter, are simply an exhibition of human miseries and sufferings, and the Government was not at all wise in spending the money in that way. In one place I found that the local people also were annoyed because of these work-site camps. About 1,200 people were put in a particular village and the Government gave them for food only Rs. 12 a month each up to a limit of Rs. 60 per family, whatever be the number in each family, even if the number exceeds five members. With this Rs. 12 they cannot maintain themselves. What were they doing then? They were pilfering and robbing and doing all sorts of anti-social things in the villages. In a public gathering these things were said before me. One of the villagers was asked what offence they had committed to merit this punishment. One refugee stood up and said that what has been stated was perfectly correct, that there was nothing untrue in it. He added, "what can we do? We are paid only Rs. 12. We cannot subsist on this point" the local people also admitted that there are difficulties for the refugees, for nobody could subsist on such an allowance. The spending of few lakhs of rupees every year at that particular village did no good to anyone. The result was that the local people were annoyed with the Government and the refugees were annoyed with the Government. We are alienating the sympathies of the local people there and also of the refugees.

So, if the Government now change the policy as regards the work-site

camps, I should welcome it. But I would like to be enlightened on this point: what is the present policy about those people who were so long residing in work-site camps. With these remarks, I would like to resume my seat. I hope the hon. Minister will enlighten the House on these points.

Shri Harish Chandra Mathur (Pali):
I have associated myself with this demand for an half-hour discussion only to emphasize that it is not a regional question, but a national question in which we are all deeply interested. I hope the House is aware that the hon. Finance Minister, while speaking on the general budget on the floor of the House, stated that we have spent about Rs. 80 crores on the rehabilitation of refugees for West Bengal, but we have not been able to rehabilitate any. He was frank enough to admit that this is a very serious indictment against the Government. Shri Guha, in raising this question, has spotlighted the attention of the House on a very specific issue, and in fact, he brings our attention to a particular matter as to how this money has been frittered away.

It is obvious from the reports that there were 44 camps and the very name, work-site camp, indicates that these camps were really rehabilitation camps and not relief camps. As distinct from the relief camps, their very name indicates that they are camps meant to rehabilitate the refugees. But it appears that after these ten years not one refugee was rehabilitated. I do not know what happened. It appears there are no such camps now. The hon. Minister has stated that there are no such camps. So, they could not have vanished within a year. There were 44 camps and there were about 40,000 people in them. Mere changing of the name does not solve problems. As a matter of fact, it was expected of the hon. Minister that he would state what happened to those camps and what has happened to those people. The

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question was what has been done to rehabilitate these refugees. No answer was given. Rather, the answer was evaded and the answer was given that "there are no camps and the problem does not arise". I do not think we are going to solve this big, vital problem by saying that there are no camps and that the question does not arise.

As I submitted, the hon. Finance Minister himself made a clear statement on the floor of this House that this is a serious indictment against the Government. I think a fuller information should be given and I think better care should be taken in the future about the rehabilitation of the refugees and we should not permit ourselves to just waste all the money. I find that the hon. Minister, while speaking on the Demands relating to his Ministry, agreed that it was a human problem. Of course, nobody denies that there are difficulties in solving this problem, but the Government should have conducted themselves in a proper manner. I do not know; there are so many works going on.....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: If the hon. Member wants a reply, he must put the question and he should conclude, so that the answer may be given. What is his question?

Shri Harish Chandra Mathur: My question is, how these refugees have been rehabilitated: what has been done during all these years? This question has added importance because of the observations made by the Finance Minister. I want to know what has happened to those people and to those camps; how they have been rehabilitated and whether they were merely relief camps and now they have been dispersed.

The Minister of Rehabilitation and Minority Affairs (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna): The question that was asked by Mr. Guha was of a specific nature. The information sought from me was the number of work-site

camps in Bengal and Tripura and their names, when they were established and so on and so forth. This question was tabled sometime in the month of May. As very detailed and elaborate information was sought for, I said that the information would be collected and laid on the Table of the House in due course. This information was supplied to the Parliament Secretariat, I think, on the 6th August, 1957.

At that time I did not have a single work-site camp in the whole of West Bengal or Tripura. If the information sought related to the work-site camps previously set up, if it related to the 44 work-site camps, that information has been categorically stated in our annual report and is printed on pages 68 and 69. There, all the 44 names are given and we have stated that the number of persons in the work-site camps till the end of March, 1957, the period to which that report relates, was 42,822. That is the correct position. I thought very rightly, that the information is sought in connection with the work-site camps that existed on a particular date, the date when the question is asked. I am repeating myself. If the information related to the period which is covered in the report of my Ministry for the period 1956-57, that is given there. There is no question of seeking information on that score, because it would have been very easy for me to say, "I may refer the hon. Member to pages 68 and 69 of my report". But as the question related to the existence of work-site camps when that question was answered, so we sought the information from the State Government. According to the information given to us by the State Government, there was not a single work-site camp existing in the month of July or August either in West Bengal or Tripura.

What has happened to those work-site camps? Why have they been abolished? What has happened to

the population that was in the work-site camps? These are very relevant questions and I can answer them fully.

These work-site camps were set up in the year 1953-54 and they existed during 1955-56 and 1956-57. We provided the displaced persons with work to the extent possible every year and this went on. But on the one side the work dried up, because it was only work of the nature of filling, levelling and all that, which could be given to those people, because they are unskilled workers. You cannot give them any skilled job. On the other hand, the camp population in the West Bengal, unfortunately, shot up from 1.4 to 3½ lakhs. Unfortunately, work also dried up. There is no more work available so far as the State Government is concerned. I am grateful to the State Government for all that they have done all these 3 or 4 years in providing work for these people. If they have no work of the nature that could be given to these displaced persons, naturally, I cannot force the State Government to create work. It is not work of the type of test relief work or something like that.

Mention has been made that we are paying very little to each displaced persons. The amount may be Rs. 12/- But, that is not all. In addition to Rs. 12/- that we give to each person who is living in a camp, we provide medical relief, we provide shelter, we give education and it practically comes to round about Rs. 22 per head. The expenditure on an average on a displaced person in the eastern region comes to round about Rs. 22 per month per head. Our expenditure today, as I said in the House the other day, was Rs. 2 lakhs a day, on the maintenance and feeding of these displaced persons.

The work-site camp is a sort of relief camp. These people are in the relief camps. They are living there. We take them to a work-site camp where work can be provided. Not

even that. When we take a person there, knowing that the man cannot possibly earn on unskilled work more than Rs. 1-8-0, that is Rs. 45 per month, we take his family members into consideration. If the number of family members is three and the earning capacity of the man is Rs. 45, the question does not arise. If the man has got more than three members, what we are doing in the work-site camps is, with a view to see that no hardship is caused to the family, we give at the rate of Rs. 2-8-0 per family members per week to subsidise. So that, if the number is more than three, and there are two more family members, we would give Rs. 5 a week or Rs. 20 a month, plus Rs. 45, that is Rs. 65, which, we feel, should be adequate for a family of five members. More so, when accommodation, water, lighting, everything is provided free. When we are giving work to the people in the work-site camps, the idea was gradually to divert them from idle life in a camp to some kind of work. We gave this work for 3 or 4 years. That work, so far as the State Government is concerned, has dried up.

What happens to these people? They are in the camps.

Shri A. C. Guha: In the same places?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Will you please let me go on? They are in relief camps, as far as I can say. In case a specific question is tabled regarding any particular work-site camp, I should be glad to give that information. The information that has been supplied to me is this. Each person who was in a work-site camp, for whom no more work could be provided, is in the ordinary relief camp. The same facilities are given as are being given to any displaced person in any relief camp. There is no question of any hardship. If Shri A. C. Guha, feels that Rs. 12 per month is inadequate, I should have been very happy if he

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had raised the matter three months ago when he was in the Ministry of Finance. If he had given more money, I would have given more money. It is all right talking all these things today. I am only telling that he was my colleague. He was in the Ministry of Finance; I was in the Ministry of Rehabilitation. You are more sympathetic towards the cause of displaced persons than I am. If you felt, and very rightly too, that Rs. 12/- is not adequate, you should have written me a note. I would have taken it to his own Finance Secretary or Joint Secretary and told him, here is the note of your Finance Minister, please give more money.

I am prepared to pay according to the new formula. But it is rather a strange thing that if I feed them, I am accused of extravagance and waste. If I am spending more as Mr. Mathur has said, I am accused that I am spending more money. If I am spending less, then also I am accused. I am rather in a very difficult and embarrassing position.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): Give them gainful employment.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I am coming to it. Actually, all these matters were discussed at the time when the Demands relating to my Ministry were before this House. I told you—you were in the Chair—the steps that we are taking. We have done one thing very significantly, and that is this. After the work-site camps were abolished in Bengal we experimented a scheme, which we have tried in Faridabad and with success, of providing work to the displaced persons themselves, eliminating the P.W.D. and C.P.W.D. It is a very difficult job. What we are doing now is to give the work to the displaced persons themselves. They are my labourers, they are my group leaders and they are my contractors. We have done it with very great success in West Bengal. We have extended it to Tripura. They are doing even some kind of manual labour. I have seen

a colony a few months ago. There I saw school teachers and college students working on the construction of their own roads. On an average round about 4,000 persons were employed on the construction of this work in the end of March 1957. We had given them wages of nearly about Rs. 14 lakhs. Though in the three or four years' life of the work-site camp in West Bengal only Rs. 7 lakhs or Rs. 8 lakhs have been given as wages, during the period of about 8 to 10 months, under the construction scheme that we have started in West Bengal, we have given nearly Rs. 14 lakhs in the form of wages.

So, I can assure you that there was no question of my evading an answer because it is very simple for me to say: here are the 44 work-site camps, they are situated at such and such places. The number of persons is also given in the report. So, I thought that Mr. Guha wanted information about the present state of affairs, the situation prevailing there on a particular date.

Shri A. C. Guha: On a point of order. The hon. Minister has stated that in his reply he will give the situation on the particular day on which he replies. My question was scheduled to be replied on the 14th May. If he takes six months' time and then he gives a reply on the situation as prevailing after six months, is it correct?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: If the answer is given in August then, certainly, the hon. Member would be anxious to know the situation as it prevails on that day. If the hon. Minister had given an answer on the position as it existed in May, that, perhaps, would have been out of date. Many changes would have taken place.

Shri A. C. Guha: The original date was the date on which the information was to be collected. So the information related to the situation on that day.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Was there so much difference between the positions that existed on those two dates?

Shri A. C. Guha: I asked for the information on the 14th May.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It has been answered for both dates now.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: May I submit one thing for the consideration of the House? If you look at the question of Mr. Guha, you will find—rather I will read the question....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Is it necessary to read the whole question? Now only the answer is to be discussed.

18 hrs.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I was only submitting one thing: If you go into the nature of this question, it asks about the transit camps, which were 20 or 30 times the present number previously—it might take me years to collect the information—and the number of displaced persons in each camp area-wise. Then he wants information about all the transit camps and work-site camps in West Bengal for four years area-wise. He does not stop there. He also wants to know the nature of work given so far in each area and the work at present given to them and the per capita annual income every year of these persons. He has referred to 43,000 persons. I have to find out the annual per capita income of these 43,000 persons, even if the reply is restricted to 44 work-site camps, the amount spent on relief and rehabilitation on each camp year-wise. I can understand a question relating to a specific subject, relating to a specific period, relating to a specific number of persons, but if the post mortem is going to take place year-wise and I am going to find out the per capita income and the admini-

nistrative charges and all that, I shall try and supply the information. but I can assure you, and with your experience you will also bear me out, it will not take months, but it will take a year, because it is a question which relates to a long period, pertaining to a large number of persons and all that.

My hon friend Shri Harisa Chandra Mathur is very much worried about the rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan. I am grateful to him for his kind sentiments and expression of good wishes, but I may tell him that 40 lakhs of people have come so far, and as we do not know what may happen tomorrow and how many more will come, and since there is hardly any more space in West Bengal to accommodate more people, it is not an easy problem, it is going to take a little time. It is very difficult for me to say how long it will take. Whatever the Finance Minister may have said in the other House, Shri Mathur has conveniently forgotten what the Finance Minister said in this House. He remembers what the Finance Minister said in the other House because he was there, but he has conveniently forgotten that the Finance Minister made a categorical statement during the course of his speech here referring to what he had said there. I can assure him that the Government is not oblivious to this fact. We are doing our level best and the interests of the displaced persons are as near to our hearts as his or perhaps Shri Guha.

18.02 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday the 28th August, 1957.