

the pressure was to export. Now, still they are continuing the pressure. I would like to know one thing. They only say that 1,14,000 tonnes is an estimation. But the actual consumption is below 1,13,000 tonnes. In that case, do the Government export 20,000 tonnes of rubber to protect the interests of the small growers who form 80 per cent ?

MR. SPEAKER : Be very brief in your question ; do not give information and then at the end put a small question.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : As the consumers of the product, it may be the desire of a few industrialists to see that they could have the good fortune of operating in a surplus situation. They do not want the export to take place; it may be their desire not to export. But, as I categorically stated in the beginning, whatever is surplus, after meeting the reasonable indigenous demands, will be exported, and we will not yield to pressure of any industrialists at all.

SHRI VARKEY GEORGE : According to the Rubber Board, there is an annual excess production of 17,000 tonnes in this country. May I know from the hon Minister, instead of exporting 5,000 tonnes, whether the Government will decide to export 17,000 tonnes which is our excess production and which will in turn earn valuable foreign exchange for this country ?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : The hon. Member is fully agreeing with what I stated earlier. The production is expected to be 1,25,000 tonnes and the demand is about 1,12,000 tonnes. Obviously something between 15,000 and 17,000 tonnes may be available. It has to be recollected that export started only in August, 1973. In the early part there were losses incurred. Progressively we will go in for more exports.

SHRI DHAMANKAR : May I know whether the production of synthetic rubber has gone down to 20,000 tonnes per year and whether due to that the price of raw

rubber had gone up from Rs. 520 to Rs. 625 and also whether the total production of synthetic rubber and raw rubber is just enough for the manufacture of rubber goods in this country ?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : The indigenous capacity for production of synthetic rubber is 35,000 tonnes. There is only one factory and last year they had prolonged labour trouble there. Obviously their production was only 22,000 tonnes. We hope that the production of synthetic rubber will go to the optimum capacity. Taking together our production of synthetic rubber and natural rubber, we have not only enough to meet indigenous demands; we have a slight surplus.

Exemption from payment of Income-Tax

*567. SHRI JHARKHANDE RAI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal that all categories of non-ceiling retirement benefits of employees including Gratuity, Provident Fund and Pension Fund should be tax-free;

(b) whether Government are also considering that cash medical benefits, house-rent allowance, bonus and travelling allowance earned by employees should be tax-free; and

(c) if so, the salient features thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN) : (a) and (b). No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

श्री झारखण्डेराय : इस वर्ष आपने 6 हजार रुपये वार्षिक आय वाले को कर की राशि से मुक्त कर दिया है, इससे पहले 5 हजार रुपये की आयवाले कर-मुक्त थे, आजकल की कमरतोड़ मंहगाई को देखते हुए भी आपने 7200 रुपये की छूट भी नहीं दी। क्या सरकार आज की मंहगाई को दृष्टि में रखते हुए 10 हजार रुपये की आयवाले को कर की भ्रदायगी से मुक्त करने की बारे में विचार कर रही है ?

श्री यशवन्तराव चव्हाण : अभी तो इरादा नहीं है।

श्री शारदाचन्दे राय : मैं जानना चाहता हूँ क्या वित्त मंत्री जी और प्रधान मंत्री जी से इन विषयों पर कर्मचारी महासंघों के प्रतिनिधि मंडल मिल चुके हैं, इसी तरह से राज्यों और दूसरे संघों के प्रतिनिधि मंडल भी मिल चुके हैं और उन्होंने इस बात की चर्चा मिलते समय की है कि अगर सरकार उन की तमाम सुविधाओं की और भ्राज की स्थिति में पूरा पूरा ध्यान नहीं देगी तो उन्हें भी विवश हो कर रेलवे हड़तालियों के साथ भारत-बंध में शरीक होना पड़ेगा—क्या ऐसी सूचना सरकार के पास है ?

श्री यशवन्तराव चौहान : मैं समझता हूँ कि यह रास्ता गलत होगा।

श्री एस० एम० बनर्जी : अभी तो सरकार का ऐसा इरादा नहीं है कि एक्जैम्पशन लिमिट को 6 हज़ार से बढ़ाकर 1 हज़ार किया जाय—क्या माननीय मंत्री जी के ध्यान में यह बात लाई गई है कि जब से पे-कमिशन की सिफारिशें लागू हुई हैं तो पहले 5 हज़ार की एक्जैम्पशन लिमिट से जो फायदा कर्मचारियों को होता था, वह अब 6 हज़ार से भी नहीं हो रहा है ? क्या इस बात को मद्देनजर रखते हुए सरकार इस पर विचार करेगी ?

MR. SPEAKER : It is a suggestion for action.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : Is there any proposal ?

SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN : No, Sir.

Increase in Production of Natural Rubber

*568. SHRIMATI BHARGAVI THANKAPPAN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether in the light of the high prices for petroleum products and the scarcity of feed stocks for production of synthetic rubber, Government have taken steps for increasing the production of natural rubber in the country; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard and if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI A. C. GEORGE) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Adequate provision has been made for development programmes for rubber plantation industry in the 5th Five Year Plan. This includes replantation with high yielding planting material and new planting, as also bringing new areas suitable for rubber plantations in Tripura, Assam, Mizoram etc. under rubber cultivation. There is also a proposal to increase the replantation subsidy for holdings upto 4 hectares and those above 4 hectares. Research on developing new planting materials, improving productivity of present plants, improvement of cultivation practices, improvement of processing etc. will also be intensified during the 5th Plan Period and research results would be communicated to planters to increase productivity and efficiency.

SHRIMATI BHARGAVI THANKAPPAN : Sir, the Minister has said that there is a proposal to increase the replantation subsidy for holdings upto 4 hectares and those above 4 hectares. In this connection, May I know, is there any proposal to give subsidy to the small growers for new plantations ?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : Sir, the proposal in the Fifth Plan period, is to increase the replantation subsidy for holdings upto 4 hectares to the level of Rs. 7,000 per hectare and above 4 hectares, to the level of Rs. 5,000 per hectare. We have a proposal for introducing a loan scheme—not exactly subsidy—for new plantations also.

SHRIMATI BHARGAVI THANKAPPAN : May I know, whether the demand for natural rubber and rubber products has been increasing in the country and outside the country ? If so, what are the steps taken by the Government to increase the production ?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : Sir, it is true that in the light of the new international situation, the demand for natural rubber is likely to increase. Already, very encouraging results have been shown. It is precisely for this reason, we are trying to increase the production and in the Fourth