

has announced that it is setting up—rather strangely worded—this advertisement itself; “Perhaps the biggest offender of the family planning drive”—is adding thirteen hydel babies, each of 50 many megawatts etc., which addition of hydel power stations in Punjab is in direct contravention of the agreement of 1984 and is a direct assault on the interests of the State of Rajasthan. I would, therefore, ask, through you, of the Union Government to clarify this position, to make a reference to the Supreme Court and unless that is done, to ask the Government of Punjab to desist.

Hunger-Strike by Ex-servicemen to Press their Demands

SARDAR JAGJIT SINGH AURO-RA (Punjab): Madam Deputy Chairperson, I rise to voice the plight of ex-servicemen who are on hunger-strike and dharna near India Gate. Ex-servicemen are greatly exercised about the step-motherly treatment being meted out to them. This is particularly so far those who had retired before January 1973. A major complaint is about the inadequate pension. In the defence services, the Junior Commissioned Officers who retired before January, 1973 are getting less than the non-Commissioned Officers like Naiks, leave alone Havildars retiring now. Many are getting the minimum pension of Rs. 375 only. This means that they are living below the poverty line. Is this the way we should treat our gallant soldiers, sailors and airmen after they have retired? Unfortunately, the Government deliberately misconstrued the Supreme Court's judgement about the pension and so worked out the pension for the Junior Commissioned Officers that they were to get less than what they were already getting, after this judgement. And then they very magnanimously decided to give the difference as a special allowance to make up the reduced pension. I have

recently attended a couple of rallies and talked this matter over with many ex-servicemen. Their resentment is now turning to defiance and loss of faith in the Government. They feel that the Government only bows to coercion and not to disciplined soldiers, even ex-soldiers, for their rightful demands. This loss of faith is not good for the country. The servicemen of today will be the ex-servicemen of tomorrow. Today we have the ex-servicemen on hunger-strike sitting in dharna near the India Gate where Jeevan Jyoti is kept lit in the memory of those who have laid down their lives in the defence of the country. Our Government does not seem to realise this poignant situation. I find that the Government has no moral right to deny the rank-for-rank pension which has always been done before. And this highhanded treatment I very strongly condemn. I can assure you that many an exservicemen and their widows especially are living in terrible penury. This must be put right. The Government in their own interest must grant rank-for-rank pension without delay and assure the ex-servicemen that their other demands will also be fulfilled expeditiously. The continuance of this hunger strike is a blot on the fair name of our country.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh): Madam, while associating myself with the Special Mention made by General Aurora, I would like to quote a saying—“In times of war, and not before, God and soldier all adore; when the war is over and everything is quiet, God is forgotten and the soldier slighted.” That is the plight of the ex-servicemen today. There are 55 lakhs of these people who have given their best to the country and its defence. And if you take their families, there are four crores of people involved in this. Their only demand is that they should get the same pension as per the rank, irres-

[Shri Parvathaneni Upendra]

pective of the date of retirement or irrespective of the length of service; all those retired in the same rank must get the same pension. They are Defence personnel and they are quite different from the civilian employees of the Government of India. The same rules cannot be applied to them because the Defence personnel retire at a very young age, when they are still physically fit and mentally alert; the resettlement after their retirement is also very poor, very slow. Therefore, the Estimates Committee in 1980-81 and the expert high-level committee in 1984 strongly supported the plea of the ex-servicemen for the same pension depending on the same rank. But the Government of India, for unknown reasons, has been consistently denying this legitimate demand on the plea that it was giving ad-hoc assistance and all that and that it would have a repercussion on the civilian side. As I pointed out earlier, this problem has to be viewed separately, not linked with the problems of civilian employees. Defence personnel must get, the ex-servicemen must get the pension on the basis of their rank. I believe the cost involved is about a hundred crores of rupees or so. That is what I was told. But you are having a budget of about Rs. 13,000 crores for defence. To grudge payment of this amount to those lakhs of people who have given their best for the country's defence is unfair. I demand that the Government of India must immediately accede to their demand. It does not present a good show if people who have defended the country sit in a dharna or hartal. That does not give credit to this country.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Rajasthan): It is extremely gracious of you, Madam Deputy Chairman, to permit me to associate myself with the sentiments expressed by my gallant colleague, General Aurora. I would say just two words: Madam, firstly, that I was a member of the high-level committee which was instituted by the

late Prime Minister to go into the total aspect of benefits for ex-servicemen. It is a matter of regret to me that the recommendations of that high-level Committee still remain unimplemented. There are three very simple demands which, if implemented, would go a long way in ameliorating the conditions of the Ex-Servicemen.

Firstly, one rank, one pension.

Secondly, guaranteed employment till the age of 58, which is a benefit that everyone else has. And—

Thirdly, uniform treatment to Ex-Servicemen irrespective of the State that they come from.

Thank you again, Madam, for permitting me to associate myself with this Special Mention.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI (Maharashtra): Madam, these people can serve only for fifteen years and I think their grievances are very genuine and the Government must look into them because those who have fought for the country and retired just after fifteen years should be given some kind of consolation and this should be done by giving some type of pension which others are having in the normal way. Thank you, Madam.

SHRI M. A. BABY (Kerala): Madam, with your permission, I also would like to associate myself with this Special Mention. Thank you, Madam.

Need for Setting up a Doordarshan Kendra at Tirupati

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA (Andhra Pradesh): Madam, I associate myself with this Special Mention first, especially in view of fact that these people have to retire much earlier than the normal age of retirement.

Now, I come to my own Special Mention, Madam, and I am also equally raising an issue which is very important.