

according to them, the original figure should be reduced to 90,600 in regard to those villages where water is not available within a depth of 50 feet and within one mile, and the others are about 33,000 ; regarding cholera and others, all told, it comes to 62,000 under various categories of health hazards.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHER-JEE : The Finance Minister has mentioned 1,30,000 in para 17 of his Budget speech.

SHRI UMASHANKAR DIKSHIT : It might have been the original figure.

FALL IN THE PRICE OF COTTON

*183. SHRI M. K. MOHTA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that cotton prices have slumped recently causing hardship to farmers ;

(b) whether the fall in prices is likely to affect sowing in the next season ; and

(c) the steps have been or are contemplated by Government to ensure fair price to the farmer and adequate production of cotton crop ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE) : (a) to (c) In recent months, prices of cotton/kapas have recorded a fall. Necessary steps are being considered to stabilise prices so that the farmer's incomes and the sowings of the next year's cotton crop are not adversely affected by the present falling trends. These include : purchases of kapas by the Cotton Corporation of India and a review of credit policy against stocks of cotton hypothecated with the banks.

SHRI M. K. MOHTA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, it would appear that although there is a crisis in the cotton market to-day, the Government does not consider the situation as warranting any immediate steps because they are still considering the position. I would ask the hon. Minister whether he has considered the fact (that price? to-day

are only 40 per cent of the prices which prevailed at about the same time last year and lower than the prices which prevailed two years ago, so that the farmer is getting a very unremunerative return on his crop and the sowings are definitely going to be affected. And it is extremely strange that on the one hand we are facing a glut of cotton in the market and on the other trade and industry are debarred from purchasing cotton because due to the stock limit prescribed by the government, industry is unable to buy a single bale more than that limit. Banking sector would not give them sufficient credit for that purpose. Is the government aware that there is agitation going on among farmers of the cotton producing areas ? Unless immediate steps are taken in both these directions, namely allowing the industry to purchase as much as they like and enabling the trade also to purchase more cotton, a serious situation may develop. I would ask the hon. Minister as to what is the government's thinking on these points.

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE : I appreciate the anxiety of the hon. Member and may I tell him that as far as my Ministry is concerned we share his concern. According to our reports, there has been accumulation of stocks in the market ? There are less purchases and there have been quite a large number of complaints from Gujarat, Mysore and other areas in this connection. We have, therefore, taken up this matter with the Ministry of International Trade and the Finance Ministry and Reserve Bank. I think there is need to modify the present policy in three directions. First of all the present credit policy needs to be modified. The question of restriction imposed on mills also needs to be considered. Again, proper marketing arrangements need to be made. May I say that this should dispel many doubts ? The Prime Minister addressed one letter to my senior colleague Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed saying that our country should attain self-sufficiency. The reply sent by him to the Prime Minister specifically mentioned three points. First of all, if production programmes are to be successfully implemented in this country, three things are necessary. One is that marketing arrangements have to be made effectively ; secondly, remunerative prices have to be paid to the farmers and thirdly our credit

policy should be formulated in such a way that the farmers do not suffer. These points have been mentioned in his reply to the Prime Minister. Unfortunately there is overlapping of responsibility here and there and sometimes the responsibility is that of the Ministry of International Trade and at other times it is that of the Finance Ministry. We are trying to arrive at some consensus and I hope that we will succeed in persuading other Ministries to protect the interests of farmers.

SHRI M. K. MOHTA : My second question to the hon. Minister is this. It has been the decision of the government that forward market should not be allowed to function in agricultural commodities, particularly in the case of cotton. Had the forward market been functioning, the farmers would have been able to sell forward and they would have been able to get some assurance of a fair price because when they have to bring the goods physically only, by the time goods are ready the prices fall and they do not get enough price. In this context, would the government re-examine its policy in connection with the establishment of forward market in cotton with a view to affording relief to the farmers ? Secondly, in this year we are fortunate to have a very good cotton crop. But we have been seeing year after year crop fluctuation so much so that there is neither stabilisation of price nor the industry gets enough to meet its requirements. Now is the time to have a buffer stock.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You are repeating buffer stock. Please put your question.

SHRI M. K. MOHTA : I am finishing. Would the government consider the question of having buffer stock so that even if cotton crop is less next year the economy would not suffer ?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE: Sir, I am sorry I am unable to agree with the first part of the contention of the hon. Member regarding the forward markets. In fact, if the hon. Member would like the Government's view, I would like to tell him that we do not accept the position that the farmers' interests would be protected by

allowing forward marketing. On the contrary, we hold the view that it would adversely affect the producers' interests and it would only help the speculators and not the producers.

As far as the building up of buffer stocks, etc. is concerned. Sir, as is well known to the hon. House, production is not adequate at the moment to meet our requirements and, therefore, we are partly importing also. So building up of buffer stocks can be taken up when production goes up. It is a helpful thing and it is helpful suggestion and it can be considered at the appropriate stage.

DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN: Sir, in this House, whenever the question of price of cotton or production of cotton has raised, the hon. Minister comes forward with the proposition that they have requested the Planning Commission for additional resources for the development of cotton. In this connection, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether his efforts for raising additional resources, particularly from the Planning Commission, for investing in long-term cotton production programmes, have born fruit or not.

I would also like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is contemplating any scheme for purchasing and stocking of cotton in order to support the remunerative prices for the cultivators. In this connection, I would like to know also...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do not put too many questions, please.

DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN: No, Sir. It is the same question. I would like to know whether they have reviewed the experience of supporting minimum prices in the case of rubber and coconut. In the case of cash crops, the prices are falling and the farmers are handicapped. All the schemes have failed in the case of rubber and coconut. Therefore, will the hon. Minister enlighten us whether they have any proper scheme for supporting minimum prices?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE: Sir, in regard to the remunerative prices, I have already submitted my Ministry's view and

ive do hold the view that unless the remunerative prices are paid to the farmers, worthwhile programmes of production cannot be implemented. Now, as far the development is concerned, I am sorry, the hon. Member does not seem to be aware of the number of steps taken by the Planning Commission and my Ministry for the development of cotton in this country. Funds are not coming in the way. We have provided large funds both on the research and the development sides for the development of cotton. Now, Sir, a new development has come up and uydrid-4 and other varieties of long-staple cotton are coming very well and development activities have been taken up in a number of States in South India. Then, we have taken up about 13 districts in the country where intensive cotton development programmes have been taken up and, as I mentioned earlier, a new direction to cotton development in the country has been given and we are identifying certain very suitable command areas, for example, in the Rajasthan canal area, in the Tungabhadra area and in the Nagariunasagar area, where the climate is very dry and very suitable for the development of cotton and we wish to concentrate on these areas. Therefore, we feel confident that within the next few years, if marketing arrangements are properly assured and if remunerative prices are paid to the farmers, then, Sir, the country would attain self-sufficiency in cotton.

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI : Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister one thing. In view of the fact that this year the crop is going to be nearly 6.4 million bales and we have already been saying that there is good crop for the last few years, I have not understood how the industry can be in trouble. On the contrary the industry should be happy with the position because the crop is available. What I would like to know from hon. Minister is this: In view of the fact that we have now 6.4 million bales, is the Government now thinking in terms of self-sufficiency and substitution of foreign cotton, because that is the need of the hour ? We want to save foreign exchange on the import of cotton which we are using and it is nearly Rs. 100 crores every year. In view of the fact that the hon. Minister has said that now we are producing different varieties of

long-staple cotton, is the Government planning to see that in future we will be reducing our imports so that in a couple of years, in about three or four or five years' time, we will attain self-sufficiency in cotton and will save foreign exchange to the tune of about Rs. 100 crores which we are spending now every year ?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : Sir, I would like to correct the honourable Member a little bit. He has given the estimate of 64 million bales. That is trade estimate, and not my Ministry's estimate. Of course, as I said, this year the production of cotton is very encouraging as compared to last year's 46 lakh bales. This year production is expected to be anything between 56 and 58 lakh bales, almost a million bales higher than last year. So far as cotton production programme is concerned, I think it is very comfortable this year as compared to the past. As I have mentioned, our effort is in the direction of attaining self-sufficiency. We cannot continue to rely on imports so far as cotton is concerned. We have a very large textile industry. We have also the export interest in textile market. Therefore, our effort is to attain self-sufficiency in cotton production and not to remain dependent on other countries in the years to come. We hope to do so within the next few years.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : I would like to know this particular point from the honourable Minister. Instead of reciting the usual pious hopes and repeating that ritual that the agriculturist and the farmers will be protected, I want to know whether the Agriculture Minister has taken any initiative when they knew that the crop is going to be more, whether there is the coordination required between the Ministries. I want to know why the Agriculture Ministry has not taken the initiative to see that all these weaknesses are removed in the interests of the farmer. That is my first question. In this connection, the Cotton Corporation of India's name has been brought in by the Minister on the last occasion also. I enquired and was told that only one thousand bales have been purchased in Gujarat out of about 22 lakh bales. Why then are these public corporations created when they are not going to help the cotton grower at all?

SHRI A. P. JAIN : That is why they are created.

(Interruptions)

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: My question was the Cotton Corporation has only purchased one thousand bales and the Minister takes protection that the Cotton Corporation of India would be brought into the picture. For what ? When 22 lakh bales. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please do not argue. Put the question.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : I am putting the question in the same style. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, no. You have your own style.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : Now, Sir, the point is this. Knowing all these things, the Government in the Ministry of Agriculture has really to take the very cautious steps from the beginning. They should take the initiative. I want to know why the Cotton Corporation of India is not asked immediately to go in for massive purchases, because otherwise, the prices will not be stabilised. Secondly, Sir. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : This is, your third or fourth.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : Whatever it is, Sir the the last question is the honourable Minister should tell us whether any action in going to be taken to solve this cotton problem, to see that cotton production and its distribution is handled by a single agency in this country.

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE : First of all, Sir, I would like to inform the honourable Member that we are not at all complacent. . .

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : What not at all complacent ?

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE : As regards the other point. I never made a statement that the purchases done by the Cotton Corporation of India are adequate.

I only made a statement that the Cotton Corporation of India has entered the market. I share the views of the honourable Member that the Cotton Corporation of India, if it is to make some impact at the marketing, must enter in a very big way. That is why we have taken up this matter with the Ministry of International Trade. In fact, if the honourable Member is interested in knowing the assessment of our Ministry. . .

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : Do not take up, please run to the Ministries.

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE : We know the problem. We are seized of the matter. Recently, for instance, the Secretary, Agriculture, has addressed a letter to the Reserve Bank and I would like to reproduce that letter—and this is the assessment of our Ministry—

"We have recently received complaints from a number of State Governments—Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore and Gujarat—that a very serious situation has developed because of the difficulties experienced by the cotton-growers. Heaps of kapas in many places is lying unsold in the market. Instances have come to our notice where cultivators are facing great difficulties, even in payment of cotton sold by them. These difficulties are mainly owing to the stringent credit restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank. . ."

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Shinde, could you not give the substance of it instead reading the whole letter ?

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE: We have been taking up this matter with the concerned agencies. And as far as my Ministry is concerned, there is no lack of seriousness on the matter. The only point, very important point, that has been raised by the honourable Member—and I think my experience bears out—is that the responsibilities are bifurcated in regard to the marketing of cotton in such a way that it becomes very difficult to take immediate action; therefore, the suggestion of the honourable Member is worth considering. My Ministry will take up with the other Ministries

particular point of some single agency taking up the whole thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Bhupesh Gupta.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Is the Minister aware that after the Corporation entered the market in Punjab the prices of cotton fell and huge stocks are lying without being lifted and there was demand in Punjab that the Cotton Corporation should come into the picture with a view not only to lifting the stocks but giving a reasonable, remunerative price? But the result was the other way round. May I now what steps the Government is taking in this matter to safeguard the interests of cotton growers?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : Sir, in the case of Punjab, because Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are border States affected because of the recent conflict, a number of steps were taken. The Cotton Corporation there purchased about 30,000

40,000 bales, and that helped to stabilise the prices. Credit restrictions were removed in that area. That also helped to stabilise the prices. . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : What I mean is that after the Cotton Corporation came into the picture the prices fell. I was there myself. I saw it.

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : The Member should appreciate that prices were not kept at a very high level. That will adversely affect the interests of export and textile industry as also the consumers. Last year because of the acute shortage the prices rocketed very high and there was need to arrest the high level of prices. We do not want a very high level of prices. Our effort was to stabilise the prices at some level which would be remunerative to the farmers. Some efforts were made in Punjab. They might be inadequate. But my assessment is that it helped the Punjab farmers to a considerable extent.

SHRI T. K. PATEL : Is the Government aware that in Gujarat, stocks of hybrid cotton are lying and are not being removed?

If the Government do not make any arrangement for lifting the stocks which are lying with the farmers, it is quite possible that the farmers next year may not come forward to grow more cotton. Is the Government aware of it? If so, are they going to do anything about it?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : The Gujarat Government brought this fact to our notice, and therefore we are taking it up with the other Ministries concerned and we would take care to see that the sowings next season are not adversely affected. An effort is being made in that direction.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Mitra. Last question.

SHRI P. C. MITRA : Sir, the Minister just now said that last year the prices of cotton had gone very high. At the same time the price of cloth also increased correspondingly. When now the cotton prices have slumped down, is the Government going to take any steps to see that cloth prices also come down?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : The hon. Member should kindly address his question to the Ministry of International Trade,

*184. [Transferred to the 5th April, 1972.]

Regarding Starred Question No. 785

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : Sir, on a point of order.

I have seen the statement that has been circulated in reply to this question, and I would like to have your ruling whether the reply to this question is appropriate and proper. Here the statement in reply to question on educational reforms undertaken by Government says :

"Government attach great significance to educational reconstruction and some of the major programmes it has in view in this context have been specifically referred to in the Election Manifestos of the Congress Party of 1971 and 1972 (relevant extracts are given in Appendix)."

Extracts from the Congress Party manifesto have been given in reply. My point is that this is the first time that I have seen a reply of this kind. The question did not ask the Government about the Congress Party manifesto. But the Congress Party manifesto has been circulated, I think this sort of thing can be done about every question.

My submission, Sir, is that there is a dividing line in Parliamentary democracy between the Government and the ruling party. Gradually this dividing line seems to be obliterated; it seems to be vanishing. And, therefore, I say that this reply is, first of all, irrelevant. It is tantamount to party propaganda through Government machinery. Surely, I think that this is a trend which needs to be stopped here and now. If the questioner had asked—as I had personally some time back asked in a supplementary-question about the plenary session of the Congress—about it, one can anticipate this reply. But the questioner has asked nothing about the Congress Party or its manifesto. A reply is given . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have followed your point.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : That is why I think that this statement should not be allowed.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY : Sir, on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let me first dispose of his point of order. I think the substance might have been given by the hon. Minister. The manifestoes are not generally mentioned in answer to questions.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : It should not be permitted.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, no. Please sit down.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY : Sir, on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN : What is your point of order ?

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY : My point of order is that it is a clear indication of doing away with parliamentary democracy. Never have we seen the Minister replying with references to the Congress manifesto.

MR. CHAIRMAN : This has already been disposed of. Please sit down.

DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN : Sir, it is a very serious matter . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Kurian, you are unnecessarily taking time. I have already disposed of that point.

DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN : This is a very serious matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Yes, yes, that is why I have disposed of this point.

DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN : We would like to know your ruling on this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, please. What is this ? Please sit down, Mr. Kurian.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR : Sir, I rise on a point of order. You have given a ruling which at least I do not understand. A Minister cannot base his reply on any manifesto or any such thing; it is all right, but it is a peculiar thing that a Minister cannot refer to the manifesto . . .

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please sit down.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR : Mr. Chairman, Sir, whether you are satisfied with the reply or not is a different question. I cannot understand the ruling that the Minister generally cannot refer to the manifestoes. Are the Ministers barred from referring to the manifestoes of the ruling party or the party to which they belong ? This is what I want to understand, because the manifesto indicates nothing but the policy of the party and the Minister is fully authorised to refer to his party policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now let me explain. (Interruptions). Now please sit down, I am standing.

What I said was that generally in this House manifestoes are not put along with the answers, the policy has to be given. The substance of the manifesto might form part of the policy which may be mentioned by the Minister and if reference has to be made to the manifesto, it would not be improper. But the manifesto itself has not to be put.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR : Our submission is that this is not a reference.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Dr. Mahavir, I have disposed of it.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : Sir, the trouble with Government is. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have already given my ruling and Dr. Mahavir repeated what you said. Others are repeating what you said. Is that the way to take up the Question Hour ?

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : Sir, it is going to become a precedent for ever. When you, as the Chair, say that it is not generally to be referred to, I am talking in terms of this specific statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No. no. I have already disposed of it.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : This is a specific statement. Is it allowed or not ?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : I say that a reference to the manifesto should be welcome. What is wrong there ?

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : What about my question ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, please sit down. Mr. Advani, I have already made the observation that the Question Hour should not be treated like this.

SHRI ML K. MOHTA : I have to make a submission to you that since this I

statement, according to you, is not proper, then the hon. Minister should make a reply without making a reference to the statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please sit down. I think you have put your question.

PROF. S. NURUL HASAN : Sir, what is your direction ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : You answer the question now.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Now if the Minister wants to be faithful to the electorate, he should be allowed. It is for the Government to say whether they are going to implement it.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR : The Chair should not grudge to the House some clarification. The Minister wants your guidance. The House also is equally confused about it. We would request you to clarify it. The Minister says that he wants your ruling. What can be more clear ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have made my observations for the future. In the present case supplementaries may be put.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY : We are expected to get a reply from the Government about its policies, not the policy of the Congress.

SHRI M. RUTHNASWAMY : May we expect a reply from the Minister on behalf of the Government and not on behalf of his Party ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Yes, I have heard you.

शिक्षा प्रणाली में सुधार की योजना

***185. श्री राम सहाय :**

श्री मान सिंह वर्मा :

क्या शिक्षा और समाज कल्याण मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

f The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Ram Sah ai.