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CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORT THAT THERE WILL BE AN INCREASE IN THE SELLING PRICE OF WHEAT AND WHEAT PRODUCTS WITH EFFECT FROM MARCH 1, 1969 AND THE CONSEQUENCES FLOWING THEREFROM

SHRI N. SRI RAMA REDDY (Mysore): I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Food and Agriculture to the report that there will be an increase in the selling price of wheat and wheat products with effect from March 1, 1969 and the consequences flowing therefrom.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE): Sir, the report that prices of wheat are to be increased from 1st March, 1969 is not correct. A scheme was under consideration for the supply of a portion of the wheat quota of the roller flour mills in the form of white wheat. As the Government issue price of white wheat is higher than the Government issue price of red wheat, the scheme envisaged an upward revision of the prices of wheat products also with effect from 1st March, 1969. The scheme has been postponed for the present and there is not going to be any increase in the prices of wheat products manufactured by the roller flour mills with effect from 1st March, 1969.

SHRI N. SRI RAMA REDDY: It is very heartening to note that there will not be any increase in the prices. Is it the case in the case of imported wheat as well as indigenous wheat or is there any difference between the prices of indigenous wheat and the imported wheat and wheat products?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE: The hon. Member will be interested to know that the issue price of wheat at present is Rs. 70 per quintal for red wheat and Rs. 85 per quintal for the white wheat and Rs. 95 per quintal for the superior wheat. The Member may be aware that in order to help the farmers last year when large surplus came into the market, we assured on

the floor of the House and a number of times the hon. Minister for Food mentioned—that we are prepared to purchase all the foodgrains offered by the farmers at the procurement prices. We purchased all the wheat, whether red or white, at the procurement prices, namely, Rs. 76 for the red wheat and Rs. 81 for the superior wheat. The red wheat which is indigenously procured at Rs. 76 is being sold at Rs. 70 per quintal. That means we are incurring a loss of Rs. 6 on indigenously procured wheat. The idea was that the imported wheat as well as the indigenously procured wheat should be pooled together but the difficulty is, we are not in a position to dispose of the white wheat which is with the Food Corporation. That is why it came up for consideration. For the time being this has been deferred. Therefore the Member should not have any anxiety over this.

SHRI N. SRI RAMA REDDY: What about the prices of other foodgrains apart from wheat?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can find out about this outside the House.

SHRI SANDA NARAYANAPPA (Andhra Pradesh): May I know whether any representations have been made regarding the increase in the price structure of wheat and wheat products to the Government of India?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE: There was no question of representation being received because this matter was discussed with the representatives of the roller flour mills by the Secretary, Food Department, and naturally the various points were discussed and the difficulties of the industry were brought to our notice.

SHRI N. PATRA (Orissa): May I point out to the Minister that it is not only in the case of wheat that a rise in the price is contemplated but in to-day's paper we find that the DMS is going to raise the price by ten paise for milk. There is a tendency on the part of the people holding some ingredient to charge a higher price and the Government is conceding this. In this case

[Shri N. Patra.]

also they have almost conceded but afterwards they thought there will be some agitation and there was this Calling Attention Notice also given. In the case of the Milk Scheme they are going to raise the price. What is the Government doing about these?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM) : The point is whether we can go on subsidising whether it is milk, wheat or wheat products and if we have not to incur heavy losses on the sale of these products, certainly we will have to charge an economic price whether it is milk or wheat or wheat products. As it has been explained, in the case of wheat when we issue the white wheat to the roller flour mills, it costs higher than the red wheat. Naturally the price of the wheat products will proportionately rise. About the DMS I have not the details but if the procurement price is higher, certainly the DMS will have to see that they do not incur losses and they charge from the consumer an economic price.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI (Maharashtra) : On a point of clarification I wanted to know from the Government whether there is any representation made by the roller flour mills? Because of the minimum economic capacity, because all these mills have been imported from abroad, it has been found necessary that they be licensed for a capacity of 25 to 30 tonnes due to machine design. The capacity installed is round about 50 to 75 tonnes. May I know whether, in order to employ the maximum capacity, as these have been established at a great cost in foreign exchange, the Government has a scheme to feed these roller mills with whatever wheat and at whatever price is favourable to the Government because all that *atta* can go to the hotels or to the industry for starch manufacture? So, why is the Government not giving more wheat at any price to them so that their capacity can be fully utilised?

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE : An export committee has gone into this and

come to the conclusion that the established capacity is much more than actually required. Actually, the hon. Member being such a knowledgeable person, must be knowing that some of the mills are finding it difficult to dispose of their products when only 50 per cent. of their capacity is being utilised. The installed capacity is 3,88,000 tonnes and we are issuing them just 1.8 lakh tonnes—which is about 50 per cent. but this capacity we find is enough to feed the existing needs of the various types of consumers.

SHRI K. CHANDRASHEKHARAN (Kerala) : The price of wheat every year has been on the increase. We have also been importing increased quantities of wheat every year. May I know whether the importing of wheat from outside has anything to do with the price relation in this country in regard to wheat? What is the percentage of wheat imported from outside in relation to the total quantity of wheat required in the country? May I also know whether there is any prospect of decreasing the price of wheat in so far as such wheat is distributed through the ration shops particularly in the non-wheat eating areas in the country?

SHRI ANNASAHAB SHINDE : The Member may be aware that our wheat production is going up and naturally the imported component of the total wheat available is getting reduced. We have to see in this connection that we have to reconcile the interests of the consumer and the producer and from that angle the Government is pursuing a policy and as has been expressed by the Minister, we cannot go on indiscriminately subsidising the distribution of food because our economy will not be in a position to bear such a heavy burden for such a vast population of this country.

श्री दयाल दास कुर्रे (मध्य प्रदेश) :
सभापति, महोदय, मुझे प्रश्नकर्ता के प्रश्न करने की भावना को देखकर अफसोस है। श्री रामारेड्डी मरीखे व्यक्ति, जो कि अपने को किसानों के प्रतिनिधि समझने हैं, जो पार्लियामेंट के मੈम्बर ही नहीं हैं बल्कि

फार्मर फोरम के भी मेक्रेटरी है, उनकी तरफ से इस तरह का प्रश्न आना कि गेहूं की कीमत में वृद्धि हुई है, इस बात से मुझे बहुत ही अफसोस हुआ है।

SHRI N. SRI RAMA REDDY : He has not understood the question at all.

श्री ब्याल दास कुर्रे : सम्भाषित महोदय, मुझे इस बात का हार्दिक दुःख है कि मिनिस्टर साहब ने जो जवाब दिया कि गेहूं की कीमत में कोई वृद्धि नहीं हुई है और इस बात को सुनकर श्री रामारेड्डी को जो सन्तोष है। मुझे इस बात का भी दुःख है कि जब सारे देश में यह राष्ट्रीय भावना है कि गेहूं का उत्पादन तथा अन्य चीजों का उत्पादन बढ़ाया जाय और किसानों को उनकी पैदावार का उचित मूल्य मिले। किसानों के प्रतिनिधि को इस बात का दुःख है कि गेहूं की कीमत में क्यों वृद्धि की जा रही है, इस तरह की जो भावना है, उसका मुझे बड़ा दुःख है। इसके बाद मैं कुछ नहीं कहना चाहता हूं।

SHRI N. SRI RAMA REDDY : His accusation as far as I have understood him has no meaning. I was only asking for the selling price of wheat. So far as the Government was concerned, I was not standing in the way of increasing the purchase price.

श्री निरंजन वर्मा (मध्य प्रदेश) : श्रीमन्, क्या आपको मालूम है कि किसानों को इस बात पर असंतोष रहा है कि जबतक किसानों के पास उपज रहती है तबतक बाजार में गेहूं के मूल्य बराबर मस्ते रहते हैं। जैसे ही उनकी उपज साहूकार के पास चली जाती है वैसे ही गेहूं के भाव क्रमशः बढ़ने चले जाते हैं। इस बात को ध्यान में रख कर क्या आप इस बात का आश्वासन देने के लिए तैयार हैं कि जब तक किसानों के पास गेहूं रहेगा तब तक मूल्यों का स्तर एक जैसा रहेगा और अप्रैल या मई में उसके दाम नहीं

बढ़ाये जायेंगे। है अगर आप इस तरह की बात करेंगे तो किसानों को टोटा रहेगा और दूकानदारों को मुनाफा रहेगा।

श्री जगजीवन राम : माननीय सदस्य न तो प्रश्न को ही समझे और न ही उसका उत्तर समझे। यह बाजार में गेहूं का दाम बढ़ाने का सवाल नहीं है। प्रश्न यह है कि हमारे भंडारों में जो गेहूं है, जो किसानों से लिया जा चुका है, जिस को बाजार में बेचना नहीं है बल्कि फलावर मिलों को देना है। अब तक उन्हें 70 रुपये क्विंटल के हिसाब से लाल गेहूं दिया जाता था। हमारे पास सफेद गेहूं का काफी स्टॉक है और उस स्टॉक को खपाने के लिए हम कुछ परमेंट सफेद गेहूं 85 रु० के हिसाब से देना चाहते हैं। इस तरह से बाजार में गेहूं के दाम बढ़ाने का सवाल ही नहीं उठता और न प्रोक्योरमेंट प्राइम बढ़ाने का सवाल उठता है।

श्री निरंजन वर्मा : क्या आप आश्वासन देने के लिए तैयार हैं ?

श्री जगजीवन राम : जैसा मैंने कहा कि आप प्रश्न ही नहीं समझे। इसमें दाम बढ़ाने का सवाल ही नहीं उठता है। हमने तय किया है कि जहां तक होगा हम किसी भी अनाज के दाम बीच में परिवर्तन नहीं करेंगे और यही हमारी नीति है।

SHRIMATI LALITHA RAJAGOPAL-AN (Madras) : The selling price of any article, specially the selling price of an essential commodity always rises up when there is a shortage of that commodity, or there is a tendency for the existing stocks to fall. So the rise in the price of wheat is attributed to many factors. Is it not a fact that the wheat stock position fell to the dangerous level of 5 to 6 lakh tons by the middle of November and that, when a substantial part of the buffer stock was hoped to be built up to the extent of 6 million tons from imported PL-480 wheat, only 3.5 million tons of such grain were

[Shrimati Lalitha Rajagopalan.]

received, leaving nothing for the buffer stock? So may I know, Sir, from the Government what steps they are going to take to meet the situation and in what way they are going to try and control the price not only of this commodity but of other foodgrains as well?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : I would like to dispel the fear of the hon. lady Member by saying that at present there is no problem to fear. The problem now is really how to dispose of our stock of white wheat and there need be no undue anxiety that there is no adequate availability of food in this country.

श्री मानसिंह (उत्तर प्रदेश) : माननीय खाद्य मंत्री जी के स्पष्टीकरण के बाद, मैं अब कुछ पूछना नहीं चाहता हूँ।

SHRI GODEY MURAHARI (Uttar Pradesh): I would like to know from the Government whether their attention has been drawn to a report in the newspapers that the ECM countries have decided to destroy certain stocks of foodgrains because they have a surplus. And if that is a fact, I would like to know whether the Government of India would make some representations to the ECM countries that when there are so many starving millions in countries other than their own there need not be any destruction of their surplus foodgrains.

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : I do not know; at least it has not come to our notice.

SHRI GODEY MURAHARI : I can give you the press report.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (West Bengal) : May I know, Sir, from the hon. Minister whether there has been any rise of price of foodgrains including wheat distributed through the public distributive system and, if so, the reasons thereof, and whether also the Government is in a position to assure us that, now that the procurement is almost over on the basis of the price fixed by the Government, there would be no further

increase in the prices of the foodgrains distributed through the public distributive channel?

SHRI ANNASAHEB SHINDE : I have already explained that foodgrains are being issued at these prices. For red wheat it is Rs. 70 a quintal, for white wheat it is Rs. 85 a quintal and for superior wheat it is Rs. 95 a quintal. That decision was taken quite a few months earlier and thereafter there has been no change as far as these issue prices are concerned.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : Sir, I have not got the answer. My question was this. The price has been fixed for the procurement. Now the hon. Food Minister says that they are not in a position to subsidise. Now, since the price has been fixed for procurement of wheat and other foodgrains, there should be no further increase in the issue price, because already the foodgrains have been procured at the fixed prices. Is the Government in a position to assure this House to this effect?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM : As I explained—the House is aware—our procurement price for the indigenous red wheat is Rs. 76. That is only the price that we pay to the farmers; establishment charges, overhead expenses, interest and godown charges are separate. But our issue price is Rs. 70. It means that for every quintal we are losing 10 to 12 rupees. Now there may be an occasion when, without revising the procurement price, the issue price may have to be revised. I will not give any assurance that the issue price will not be revised.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : That is the question.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM : Yes, of course. The question of procurement price may arise again for the next season and the decision may have to be taken in the Chief Ministers' Conference, Chief Ministers of the *rabi* States.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR (Delhi) : I seek a clarification, Sir. The reply given by the hon. Mr. Shinde was that the scheme to

raise the price has been deferred for the present, whereas the hon. Food Minister stated हमने फैसला किया है कि हम किमत नहीं बढ़ायेगे Now I suppose there is a contradiction between the two and so I would like to know if it is the idea that we have deferred a decision only for the present and we are thinking of taking a decision when the situation is more convenient, when particularly—one may think—the Parliament is not in session for example. Number two is regarding the question of subsidy and there I wish to ask the hon. Minister if up till now the effort was to provide wheat at a controlled price to the whole population of the country. Now, if that becomes difficult, the subsidised sale price, if every person, high and low, is covered and is charged the same subsidised price, if that becomes difficult, and if only people with low income or with fixed income, or the poorer class of people, if they only are to be supplied with foodgrains at subsidised prices—it is only they who need to be helped—does the hon. Minister not accept the proposition in that case that Government should undertake to subsidise the sale of foodgrains to that class only and leave the upper class to get their requirements of foodgrains from the open market at the prevailing prices? As things are at present, there is also the free open market. Now is this concept of subsidy acceptable to the Government, or not?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM : The hon. Member has not tried to understand the two answers given by me and my colleague. There is no contradiction between the two. What I have said in reply to Mr. Varma's question is that we do not propose to revise the procurement price during a season once it has been fixed earlier, and what my colleague answered is that any scheme to raise the price of the wheat products consequent upon the probable supply of white wheat to the roller flour mills has been postponed. It is not that we will be introducing it at a convenient time; every time is a convenient time for any just cause, and if we issue white wheat to them,

there will be an increase, whether Parliament is in session or Parliament is not in session.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

PAPERS UNDER ARTICLE 151 OF THE CONSTITUTION

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI) : Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following papers under clause (1) of article 151 of the Constitution :—

(i) Appropriation Accounts of Railways in India for 1967-68 (Parts I and (II).

(ii) Block Accounts (including Capital Statements comprising the Loan Accounts), Balance Sheets and Profit and Loss Accounts of Indian Government Railways, 1967-68.

(iii) Audit Report, Railways, 1969.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT—61/69 for (i) to (iii)].

ECONOMIC SURVEY, 1968-69

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI : Sir, I also beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Economic Survey, 1968-69. [Placed in Library. See No. LT—63/69].

NOTIFICATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS (POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS BOARD)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND COMMUNICATIONS (PROF. SHER SINGH) : Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following Notifications (in English and Hindi) of the Department of Communications (Posts and Telegraphs Board) :—

(i) Notification G.S.R. No. 2037, dated the 15th November, 1968, publishing the Posts and Telegraphs Department Operator-cum-Mechanic for French Digging Machines Recruitment Rules, 1968.