

being conducted by the Planning Commission;

(b) if so, when this study is likely to be completed; and

(c) whether any interim report has been prepared in this regard?]

परिवहन तथा नीवहन मंत्रालय में उप-मंत्री (श्री भक्त दर्शन) : (क) से (ग) योजना आयोग में परिवहन योजना के संयुक्त तकनीकी दल के अधीन आसाम का तथा पूर्वी क्षेत्र, जिसमें पश्चिमी बंगाल, बिहार, उड़ीसा, मध्य प्रदेश के कुछ भाग और आन्ध्र प्रदेश आते हैं, का क्षेत्रीय परिवहन सर्वेक्षण किया जा चुका है। पूर्वी क्षेत्र की रिपोर्ट पूरी हो गई है और आसाम की रिपोर्ट को शीघ्र ही अन्तिम रूप दिये जाने की आशा है। कोई अन्तरिम रिपोर्ट जारी नहीं की गई है।

*[THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND SHIPPING (SHRI BHAKT DARSHAN): (a) to (c). Regional Transport Surveys of Assam and of the Eastern region comprising the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and parts of Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have been carried out under the aegis of the Joint Technical Group for Transport Planning in the Planning Commission. The report on the Eastern Region has been completed, while that on Assam is expected to be finalised shortly. No interim reports have been issued.]

12 NOON

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE FALL IN PRICE OF COTTON

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI (Maharashtra): Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Commerce to the recent fall in price of cotton and the reported loss consequent thereto to the cotton growers.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI MOHD. SHAFI QURESHI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, The Hon'ble Members would recall the statement which my colleague in the Ministry made in this House on August 10, 1967 on cotton policy for the current cotton year, which commenced on September 1, 1967. He had explained how the cotton year 1966-67 had not been a satisfactory one and the steps taken by Government to meet the situation. The cotton policy for the current year was formulated in the light of the experience of the previous year and the two principal objectives Government kept in view were, first to assure the grower a fair remuneration for his produce and secondly to assure the consumer supplies of controlled varieties of cloth at reasonable prices. This in turn implied supply of cotton to the industry at appropriate prices. I reiterate Government's adherence to these objectives.

2. For the year 1967-68 in response to the wishes of the farmer, the industry, and the trade, statutory ceilings on prices of cotton were removed. It was the general understanding that every effort will be made by all interests concerned to provide for cotton to be marketed in an orderly manner and to maintain as far as practicable a steady price level.

3. To provide an assurance to the farmer, minimum support prices were fixed at 5-10 per cent over the corresponding floor prices in the previous year. It was declared that Government would be prepared to buy whatever quantities were offered for sale at those prices. We stand by this declaration.

4. At the same time, in order to protect the legitimate interests of labour, the consumer and the industry, certain safeguards such as stock-control and credit control were

kept in operation. Stock levels were fixed at the beginning of the season at 2½ months consumption for mills at Ahmedabad and Bombay and 3½ months consumption for mills elsewhere.

5. Cotton crop for the year 1967-68 was expected to be better than the previous year and it was thought that because of the improvement in the supply situation, a reasonable level of prices would be maintained without recourse to statutory controls. For about the first 4½ months i.e. September, 1967 to mid-January, 1968, however, the prices of cotton had shown an upward trend and were on an average ranging between 30-45 per cent above the ceiling prices for the previous year. This was adversely affecting our export effort, and making it difficult to supply cloth to consumers at controlled prices. It should be borne in mind that comparable varieties of cotton are available to the competitors of Indian cotton textiles in foreign markets at lower prices.

6. From the third week of January, 1968, however, there has been some fall in the prices of cotton. This is largely due to normal seasonal factors. On February 14, 1968, these prices were, broadly speaking, still ranging about 10-20 per cent. higher than the last year's ceiling prices.

7. While Government are most anxious to safeguard the interests of grower, and do not wish the prices to fall below a level when it ceases to be remunerative, however, certain other relevant factors such as the need for enabling the industry to remain competitive in the export market, to sustain uninterrupted working of the industry both in the interest of production and labour engaged in the industry and supply of cloth to the consumer at reasonable prices, have also to be kept in view. The House will therefore, appreciate the need for prices of cotton, which constitute about 50

per cent of the finished product, ruling at more reasonable levels. I would, therefore, appeal to various sections concerned viz. the grower, the trader, the mill management and the consumer to view the price situation in a broad perspective in which the interests of all are to be so adjusted that none of them individually suffers a disadvantage. In fact their interests are mutually linked and inter-dependent.

8. I should like to assure the House that Government propose to keep cotton prices under close review and to take appropriate steps as and when necessary to ensure a fair deal to the grower. For the ensuing year, Government propose to concentrate attention on helping the farmer to improve the yield and the quality of the crop he grows.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Sir, may I draw the attention of the hon. Minister to this thing? He has rightly stated that when the statutory control was lifted, the two provisions, credit curb as well as movement controls were kept in case the prices go up. But actually the prices are going down and in the reverse gear. So why not relax those two conditions so that the growers can benefit? Similarly, Sir, some farm study has been made by the Agriculture Department of the Government of India. It has been stated that the return to the grower in Punjab is Rs. 40 per hectare, in Madras it is Rs. 20 per hectare and in Maharashtra it is Rs. 27 per hectare. This is not irrigated. As against that in irrigated it is Rs. 94 in Madras and Rs. 57 in Maharashtra. That means a paltry Rs. 25 per acre return is being given to the cotton grower and the Government is coming forward with the proposition that he is being given the incentive price and some 10 per cent. above the ceiling price has been given. I think that is quite fantastic and wrong; because these are the studies made by the Farm Students Department of the Agriculture

Department of the Government of India. Then, Sir . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don't make a speech. Put a question.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Is it a fact that this is because the Indian Cotton Mills Federation have not been given the price increase, for their cloth which ought to have been considered in other ways? I can understand that the Indian Cotton Mills Federation has got a case but there are various ways to help them. Here there is a voluntary discipline scheme whereby they are forcing the weaker sections of cotton growers not to trade their cotton by obtaining it from the market. Is that a fact? If that is so, may I know whether the Government will help the cotton growers by forcing either the Indian Cotton Mills Federation or the STC to come to the market for purchases? Secondly, Sir, may I know whether it is a fact that under PL-480 the American short staple cotton is being imported because the PL-480 contract is to be utilised before June? May I know whether the Government will consider staggering the import of short staple cotton to the next season because the American prices are the highest? An American cotton bale costs Rs. 2100 whereas in India Similar cotton costs round about Rs. 1600 or Rs. 1700. So why put the cotton grower to so much loss by artificially depressing the prices? So, I want to have some explanation on these two points, Sir.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI DINESH SINGH): Sir, a number of questions have been asked I shall attempt to answer them. But I would request the hon. Member to forgive me if I am not able to answer all of them because they have been put all together.

So far as the question of restoration of credit is concerned, these restrictions were placed only to give the best advantage to the grower, because it is not the grower who was making

use of these credit facilities. They go to the trader and if we are at this stage to give any relief in this respect, I would like the hon. Member to consider whether it will bring any relief to the grower or whether it will only divert more money into the pockets of the trader.

So far as the question of prices is concerned, the hon. Member knows very well that we had a discussion in this House and I was extremely concerned at the prices of cotton and the hon. Member as also other Members felt that if we removed the ceiling on cotton, the prices would not go up very much. Even today the price difference between the price of cotton as compared to the ceiling and the present prevailing market price is approximately, if we take the example of Virnar, 36 per cent. higher than the support price we have and 16.46 per cent. higher than the ceiling price which was given last year. It is a matter which concerns the House and the people in the country on the whole as to what should be the price of the cloth. The component of cotton price or the manufacture of cloth comes to 50 per cent. If we help in the rise in the prices of cotton, it will only mean that the same producers of cotton, the same peasant, the same people in the country would be expected to pay higher prices for the cloth they are wearing. Therefore, we have to bear in mind the relationship between the price that the House would wish the consumers to pay and the price which would then go to the producer of cotton. At present I do not think there is any matter of concern about it. The prices are still very much higher than the support prices. They are still higher than even the ceiling prices we had last year and as such, there is no anxiety. When the prices fall below the ceiling and there is a big range between the ceiling and the support prices, that would be the time for us to give serious consideration to see if they can be raised. At

[Shri Dinesh Singh.]

the moment the prices are in the range where the farmers would be able to get remunerative prices for their investment. I would therefore say that while we should see that the industrialists do not artificially depress the price of cotton to see that the farmers suffer we should not do something which will again give a spurt to the cotton prices where again we shall run into difficulties.

श्री आर० पी० खन्तान (बिहार):

क्या इस समय बहुत सी काटन मिलें बंद हो रही हैं और बहुत सी मिलों की आर्थिक हालत ठीक नहीं हैं और अपने रिजर्व बैंक की नीति जो एडवॉन्स करने की है वह ठीक नहीं है, जिसके कारण मिलें जितना स्टॉक रखना चाहती हैं उतना नहीं रख सकती हैं ऐसी हालत में क्या सरकार ऐसी योजना पर विचार कर रही है कि जिससे मिलें बन्द न हों और रुई के दाम ज्यादा घट न सकें।

श्री दिनेश सिंह : मुझे बड़ी खुशी है कि माननीय सदस्य ने रुई के भाव के बारे में इतनी दिलचस्पी दिखाई लेकिन रुई के भाव घटने को रोकने का मिलों के बन्द होने से कोई सम्बन्ध नहीं है, बल्कि मिल वाले तो कहते हैं कि रुई के दाम कम हों तो उनकी मिलें ज्यादा चलेंगी। जहां तक उसके स्टॉक का सवाल है हमारे पास कोई ऐसी शिकायत नहीं आई है कि स्टॉक की कमी की वजह से कोई मिल बन्द हो रही है। अगर कोई ऐसी कठिनाई है तो हम उसको जरूर देखेंगे।

श्री आर० पी० खन्तान : वह मिलें आर्थिक स्थिति ठीक नहीं होने के कारण बन्द हो रही हैं और आर्थिक स्थिति को हल करने के लिये क्या सरकार कोई योजना सोच रही है, जिससे आर्थिक स्थिति ठीक हो, जिससे मिलें बन्द नहीं हों, यह भी सवाल है।

श्री दिनेश सिंह : वह तो दूसरा बड़ा सवाल है सभापति महोदय। जरूर उस पर सरकार विचार कर रही है।

SHRI KRISHAN KANT (Haryana):

May I know if it is a fact that the profit that the cotton grower gets is Rs. 25 per acre and the foodgrain producer gets Rs. 120 per acre and the sugarcane grower gets Rs. 1000 per acre. If that is the position and if there is a reduction in the price, will it not handicap the cotton growers from growing more cotton crops?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Off-hand

I can never confirm or deny the figures that the Member has given. What the cotton grower gets is given in the Handbook of the Agricultural Prices Commission and this had been taken into consideration in fixing the prices which I had mentioned last time. Of course different growers of different cash crops get different prices. We have in this country people who grow saffron and also people who grow rubber and people who grow cotton. All these naturally vary according to geographical conditions.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA (Uttar Pradesh):

May I know from the Minister why it is necessary to import short staple cotton from America especially in view of the high prices which we have to pay? If his contention is that it is because of the contract already made, may I know from him what will be the damages to India if the contract is cancelled and whether those damages will be very much less than importing all the cotton which we have contracted for?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: The import of cotton is necessary because we do not produce enough cotton in this country. Even the short staple cotton that we are importing would be required for the manufacture of cloth and therefore it is not that import of cotton will create any glut in the market. This will not mean that there will be a surplus of cotton in this country. What is being imported is on the estimate that it will be fully consumed in the country and that we

had in fact consulted the Cotton Manufacturers' Association and they had felt that this cotton would be required and it was on their advice that these imports were arranged.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA (Maharashtra): I am not aware on what fact the Minister made the statement that as yet it is not a matter of concern. This is most unfortunate that this subject is being handled by the Ministry of Commerce and not by the Ministry of Agriculture. Is the Minister aware that the growers have been demanding since last year that support prices should have been fixed at the ceiling price that was then existing, that the support price which is fixed by the Government is not at all remunerative, that the Association of the Indian Mills Federation have taken a decision not to purchase cotton at the time of harvest so that there should be a great slump, that the Reserve Bank has also curtailed the advances? Is he also aware that the advances given to the traders are given on the basis of last years figures when the production was low and they are not prepared to give more advances to the agriculturists who have produced more as if those who have produced more in this country are criminals and are to be penalised for that by not being given proper prices? Under these circumstances, may we know from the Minister that due protection as was then assured on the floor of the House, will be given to those poor agriculturists through the S.T.C. or by instructions to the Reserve Bank to make due credit available to the agriculturists? There was a conference at Amaravati of the cotton growers and they have made these demands. In this context, instead of remaining on guard, he says that it is not a matter of concern. I would like to bring to the notice of the Minister that it is a matter of serious concern that the agriculturists are agitated and under the circumstances, will the Minister come forward and see that these agriculturists got due protection?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: I can assure the Member that I am equally, if not more, concerned than him about the interests of the agriculturists. I do not know whether he is an agriculturist or not but I am one.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: I am also one.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: I am very happy to hear that he is also an agriculturist and therefore we have a common interest in the matter. So far as I am concerned, I have given him the figures and I am sorry he did not listen to me when I gave the figures that even to-day the price of Virnar which is taken as the average is 16.46 per cent. higher than the ceiling price. Where is the question of the price having fallen below the ceiling? That is all that I said. It is 16 per cent. higher. There is no concern at this stage.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: For your information, the support prices which the Minister mentioned are not remunerative. That is why the farmers were demanding that the ceiling price then existing should be support price. Unfortunately the Government did not fix that ceiling as the support price and that is the main cause of the present tragedy.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: With the hon. Member's contention that if we had fixed this as the floor or support price, it would have removed all the crisis, I humbly beg to disagree.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA (Rajasthan): The bane of agriculture in this country whether it is of food-grain or cash crop is the wide fluctuation of the prices from year to year. Last year, when scarcity led to abnormal prices, Government had to stop in with some measures to keep the prices down. And this year, with a little increase in production, the prices, it is said, are tumbling. May I know Sir, whether the Government has any long-term policy with respect to cot-

[Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha]
 ton, which should include a reduction of P.L. 480 imports? We have seen it in the foodgrains situation also that the imports of these commodities under P.L. 480 have resulted in stultifying all productive efforts for cotton as well as foodgrains. So, number one, I would like to know whether the Government has any phased programme whereby there will be a gradual reduction from now onwards of this cotton, which is a short staple cotton, which is not a long staple cotton? we have plenty of short staple cotton in the country. Yet we export our short staple cotton and import short staple cotton from America at exorbitant prices. So my question number one is whether the Government is prepared to give an assurance that there will be reduction in P.L. 480 imports of cotton over the next few years.

Secondly, as regards the situation this year, there is the impression abroad—which has been voiced by the mills people—that the Government, that the Minister himself has told them not to buy cotton and stock it for use. Last year, when they were short of cotton, Government took certain steps; they put a ceiling on the holdings with cotton mills, limited them to stocks required for consumption during a period of 2 1/2 months and 3 1/2 months. Will the Minister kindly clarify whether he issued such instructions to all cotton mills this year and whether he is now going to ask them to buy their requirements at least for two or three months—this year—and thus avoid internal prices of the same cotton from getting depressed?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Sir, the hon. Member is quite right; we should make every effort to reduce our dependence on imported cotton, and it will be our effort, as my colleague has mentioned in the concluding part of the statement that we are contemplating steps by which we could as-

sist the farmer in raising productivity. The main difficulty is that our productivity is low, and it will be our effort in this Ministry—of course in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture—to do that.

So far as the question mentioned by the hon. Member—I am trying to recollect—is concerned, he said that if we were to allow the mills to buy more cotton, then it would increase, the pressure on the market . . .

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: No, reduce the pressure on imports. Last year you asked them to limit their buying and stocking of cotton to a maximum period of 2 1/2 months and 3 1/2 months, and this year you are reported to have said that that is not necessary, so that the mills now say that they do not want to buy cotton because the Government says that they have too much stock. Will the Minister please clarify if they have been given some instructions not to buy for stock? If we can allow three months' stocks with them last time why can't we now ask them to buy to that extent at least, induce them to buy their requirements to that extent at least?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: May I inform the hon. Member that the position is roughly the same as it was before, that the mills can buy stocks to meet 2 1/2 months consumption for those mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad, and 3 1/2 months consumption for those outside of these areas. In fact, we have given more facility for those mills which are manufacturing for defence needs, or exporting manufactures, to go up to four months' consumption. We are not restricting the mills from buying cotton which would be required for their consumption, but we are not in favour of the mills hoarding cotton, or for that matter anyone else hoarding cotton.

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): The hon. Minister has not answered that question which was

put to him a little earlier by Mr. Dharia. The question is this that as far as the agriculturists are concerned, particularly cotton-growers, they are not finding cotton-growing a remunerative job, because they are not getting the proper prices for cotton. Now the Government no doubt has put up a support price. But this support price can be effective, not merely theoretically effective but also practically effective, only if there is a kind of State Trading or something like that, through which the cotton growers can sell their produce, and through which alone the mills should purchase. If that is not provided for them what ever support price, etc. may be provided or may be laid down by the Government, the cotton-growers will not become more pleased. Therefore, will the hon. minister kindly assure the House that his Ministry has in contemplation any such machinery as the State Trading Corporation, or any such corporation as the Food Corporation which has been set up in centres of food production, through which only the cotton-growers can sell their produce, and through which machinery only the support price can be made realistically effective?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Sir, so far as remunerative prices are concerned, it is a matter which the Agricultural Prices Commission had gone into, and they had come to certain conclusions. We based our recommendations on the conclusions arrived at by the Agricultural Prices Commission, and there is no reason for us to believe that they had not looked into the question whether the prices that they were suggesting were remunerative or not. The whole point of their having gone into it was to see that the prices should be remunerative. So far as the question of purchase is concerned, at the moment we have made it quite clear that any farmer who wishes to sell cotton at the support price can do so and Government will buy it and, therefore, if the question comes up, we shall certainly set up the appropriate machinery. At the moment

the percentage is so much higher that we do not have to make any announcement at this stage. But, as it becomes necessary—I hope it will not be necessary—we shall certainly undertake to buy all the cotton that is offered to us at the support price.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bhandari. I shall finish with this half and then come to the other half of the House. Mr. Bhandari.

श्री सुन्दर सिंह भंडारी (राजस्थान) :
रुई के दाम निर्धारित करते समय यह तर्क दिया गया कि अगर उनके दामों में बढ़ोतरी हो गई, तो कपड़ा खरीदने वाले लोगों को मंहगा कपड़ा खरीदना पड़ेगा और इस तरह से एक 'विशाल सकिल' पैदा करने की कोशिश की गई है। आज बाहर से रुई जा रही है और हिन्दुस्तान के अन्दर उपलब्ध रुई तथा बाहर से आने वाली रुई के दामों में बहुत बड़ा फर्क है। पी० एल० 480 के अन्तर्गत जो कारखाने वाले रुई मंगाते हैं, उनके ऊपर यह पाबन्दी है कि वे वह रुई इस्तेमाल करें इसी वजह से जो अतिरिक्त रुई उनको बाजार से चाहिये, उसकी मांग घट रही है और यही कारण है कि इसकी कीमत नीचे जाने का सवाल पैदा हो रहा है। पी० एल० 480 के अन्तर्गत रुई मंगाना अनिवार्य है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि क्या रुई मंगाने की शर्त इसके साथ जुड़ी हुई है। दूसरी बात मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि पहले यह शर्त थी कि पी० एल० 480 के अन्तर्गत जिन बाहर के देशों से पहले रुई मंगाया करते थे, जब तक उनसे रुई नहीं मंगा ली जाती तब तक पी० एल० 480 के अन्तर्गत अमरीका रुई नहीं भेजता है और इस तरह से यह चेन बनी हुई है।

श्री दिनेश सिंह : मैं ममज्ञा नहीं।

श्री सुन्दर सिंह भंडारी : पहले यह था :

"Under P.L. 480, the USA law permits imports of cotton from

(श्री सुन्दर सिंह भंडारी :)

USA only after we import the cotton from our traditional suppliers in the same average annual quantities of imports of cotton from each of these cotton-growing countries."

यह नोट सरकार का तैयार किया हुआ है। तो अगर आज भी यह शर्त लगी हुई है कि अगर हम अमेरिका से रुई मंगाते हैं तो उतनी ही मात्रा में और दूसरे मुल्कों से भी रुई मंगानी पड़ती है और इस तरह से जो रुई की एबेलेबिलिटी कारखानेदारों के पास हो जाती है उसकी वजह से लोकल रुई के दाम घट रहे हैं। आज के जो घटे हुए भाव हैं वे इस बात के बहुत हद तक जिम्मेदार हैं। तो क्या सरकार इस बात को ध्यान में रख कर अपनी इम्पोर्ट पालिसी को मुक्त करा कर हिन्दुस्तान के साधारण उत्पादकों को ठीक दाम मिलें, यहां के कारखानेदारों को उस रुई की आवश्यकता महसूस हो, इस आधार पर अपनी पालिसी निर्धारित करेगी ?

श्री दिनेश सिंह : सभापति महोदय, जो सवाल पूछा है माननीय सदस्य ने उसके बारे में हमारे लिये यह बहुत आसान होता कि मैं "हाँ" कह दूँ, लेकिन जो उसके पहले उन्होंने एक व्याख्यान दिया उससे मैं पूरी तरह सहमत नहीं हूँ और इसलिये मुझे उसके बारे में उनसे थोड़ा सा निवेदन करना पड़ेगा। जो पी० एल० 480 के अंतर्गत रुई आती है वह हमारे ऊपर लादी जा रही है, ऐसी बात नहीं है। इसको समझ लेना चाहिये कि हमारे यहाँ रुई की कमी है, इसलिये हम रुई बाहर से खरीदते हैं। माननीय सदस्य के लिए यह कहना आसान है कि रुई बाहर से बिल्कुल न मंगाई जाय। कई भरतग हमने इस सदन में पूरे आंकड़े रखे हैं कि कितनी रुई की पैदावार हमारे देश में कितनी रुई की खपत हमारे देश में है, कितना कपड़ा बाहर जाता है, कितना कपड़ा यहाँ इस्तेमान

होता है और कितना कपड़ा हमारे देश में बनता है। इन सारे आँकड़ों को माननीय सदस्य देखें तो वे खुद समझ जायेंगे कि कितनी रुई की कमी है हमारे देश में और कितनी रुई हमको मंगानी पड़ती है। अगर सदन आज यह कह दे कि बाहर से रुई न मंगाई जाय तो हम को यह सोचना पड़ेगा कि कितने कारखाने बन्द हो जायेंगे, कितने मजदूर बेकार हो जायेंगे, कितनी कपड़े की कमी हम को होगी और जो हमारा कपड़े का निर्यात है, उसमें कितना नुकसान होगा। ये सब मामले सब तरफ से देखने होते हैं। अगर माननीय सदस्य चाहें तो मैं उनके साथ बैठ कर इस सम्बन्ध में बात कर सकता हूँ। लेकिन इस तरह की बात कहने से एक गलत फहमी पैदा होने का डर रहता है।

श्री राजनारायण (उत्तर प्रदेश) : श्रीमन्, मैं सवाल पूछने के लिये तैयार नहीं था, पर मंत्री जी के इस उत्तर से सवाल पूछने की हमारी इच्छा हुई। वस्तुतः क्या सरकार को इस बात की खुद जानकारी है कि सरकार कहाँ है। मैं चाहता हूँ कि सरकार खुद इसको जाने कि वह कहाँ है . . .

श्री दिनेश सिंह : माननीय सदस्य ने सवाल पूछा कि सरकार कहाँ है, तो मैं उनको इसका जवाब दूँ या अभी और पूछ रहे हैं।

श्री राजनारायण : अभी और पूछ रहा हूँ। क्या सरकार आकाश में है, जमीन पर है या विशङ्कु की तरह लटकी हुई है। श्रीमन्, रुई अपने यहाँ है। हमको राष्ट्रभक्ति का सबक दिया जाता है और विदेश से रुई आती है। कहा जाता है कि रुई इस लिये बाहर से आती है कि कपड़ा ठीक तरह से बने, मिलें ठीक तरह से चलें, मजदूरों की छटनी न हो और सारी आर्थिक स्थिति अपनी जगह पर ज्यों की ज्यों चलती रहे। 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966 के आँकड़े ले लो, 1967 के तो अभी

पूरे आँकड़े हैं नहीं, 1966 में सूती कपड़े के उत्पादन में वृद्धि हुई या कमी हुई, ऊनी कपड़े के उत्पादन में वृद्धि हुई या कमी हुई, कृत्रिम कपड़े के उत्पादन में वृद्धि हुई या कमी हुई और अगर कमी हुई तो इसके कारण क्या है क्या समझ है इसका रुई और सूत में इसे सरकार को पूरी तरह बताना चाहिये। मैं आपके द्वारा सरकार से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि क्या सरकार को इस बात की जानकारी है कि 1966 में 2.8 प्रतिशत सूती कपड़े के उत्पादन में कमी हुई है, 7.4 प्रतिशत ऊनी कपड़े के उत्पादन में कमी हुई है, 2.1 प्रतिशत कृत्रिम कपड़े के उत्पादन में कमी हुई। इसका अर्थ यह है कि मंत्री जी ने भंडारी जी को एक लेक्चर सुना दिया, लेकिन उनका कहना बिल्कुल सही है।

श्री दिनेश सिंह : सभापति महोदय पहला प्रश्न माननीय सदस्य का यह था कि सरकार कहाँ है। यह तो वे देख ही रहे हैं कि सरकार कहाँ है। लेकिन यह हम को मालूम हो गया कि माननीय सदस्य कहाँ है। वे इसी सदन में बैठे हुये हैं और उन्हींने सवाल भी पूछा है। जहाँ तक उनका दूसरा सवाल है कि कितनी पैदावार इन कपड़ों की हुई, अगर उनको दिलचस्पी है तो मैं उनको जरूर आँकड़े भेज दूँगा। यह बात जो उन्होंने कही कि कपड़ों के बनने में कमी हुई, यह बात सच है। पिछले सेशन में माननीय सदस्य ने इस बात को उठाया था। हमारे यहाँ दो तीन साल से खेती में कम पैदावार हुई जिस की वजह से रुई की पैदावार भी कम हुई और रुई की पैदावार कम होने से कपड़े की कमी हुई। इसी सदन ने सरकार को जिम्मेदारी दी थी जिस की वजह से हमने मिलों को रोका कि वे निश्चित समय से ज्यादा न चलें। यह इसलिये हुआ क्योंकि रुई की कमी थी और विदेशी मुद्रा की कमी से उसे बहर से हम अधिक आयात नहीं कर सकते थे। तो यह जाहिर बात है कि माननीय सदस्य ने कोई नई बात नहीं बताई है जिसे कोई खास फर्क पड़ता हो।

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS (Orissa): The tendency for a fall in the price of cotton is due to two reasons. The first reason is that there is a better harvest this time. The second reason is that the mill-owners have combined themselves and they are not purchasing just now in order to force the agriculturists to have a distressed sale in the market. As a result of this there is a depression in the market also. If the hon. Minister agrees with these two factors, is he prepared to enter the market just now to see that the agriculturists get a remunerative price? Secondly, when there is a tendency to fall in the price of cotton the mill-owners in India are already putting pressure upon the Government to raise the prices of controlled varieties of cloth. Will the hon. Minister give an assurance in this House that in view of the two factors that I have mentioned he is not prepared to consider the contention of the mill-owners to give them a slight rise in the prices of controlled varieties of cotton goods?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: This is exactly the problem, Sir, and I am glad the hon. Member has himself posed this problem. If the price of cotton goes up then inevitably the price of cloth will go up more. This is why we have been suggesting to the manufacturers that they should keep the price of cloth low. This balance we shall have to strike and all our endeavours will be to see that the consumer of cloth is not asked to pay an unreasonable price and at the same time the grower of cotton does not get too small a remuneration for his cotton. This is just the balance that we are trying to achieve.

SHRI S. K. VAISHAMPAYEN (Maharashtra): Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member over there had made a very practical suggestion to the hon. Minister, namely, that if the import of American cotton was inevitable at present, then these imports should be staggered. What has the hon. Minister to say to this very practical

[Shri S. K. Vaishampayan] suggestion? Is he prepared to consider it. If not, what are the difficulties in the way of his considering this suggestion? Secondly, the whole problem centres round the question of the support price for cotton. May I draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that a similar situation had arisen some two or three years back and it was suggested to the then Commerce Minister that the support price should be revised and the Minister had then assured and it would be done. May I know from the hon. Minister now why this was not done and also whether he will again consider the question of raising the support price of cotton?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Where is the question of raising the support price at this stage. I am sorry I am not able to understand. The price now is some 36 per cent higher than the support price. That being so where is the question of raising the support price? I would beg hon. Members to consider this question. When there is such a vast difference between the prevailing price and the support price, are we called upon to raise the support price? So far as the remunerative prices part is concerned, I have mentioned several times that the Agricultural Prices Commission had gone into this question and our recommendations have been based on that. In fact, if I may say so, we have placed a higher price in this regard. Therefore, I would beg the hon. Member to consider all these things before he asks me to raise the support price.

SHRI S. K. VAISHAMPAYEN: Sir, I had asked specifically what he had to say to the suggestion about staggering the import.

SHRIMATI TARA RAMCHANDRA SATHE (Maharashtra): Instead of allowing a rise in the selling price of cotton will the Government give

facilities to cotton growers, especially the small growers, in kind such as fertiliser, seeds, etc. to help them to increase the yield per acre so that the consumer will not suffer and the price line also will be maintained? It was said that long staple cotton is imported and I would like to know whether the Government will compel the manufacturers to produce finer textiles from this and export them and not to consume them in the country.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: If I may say so, the first part of the question of the hon. Lady Member is exactly the problem that we are trying to tackle; that touches the crux of the matter, that we have to raise the production of cotton which alone will, in terms of returns, be of value to the producer because we have also to look at the international price of cotton. Our own cotton prices are not very favourable as compared to the international price of cotton.

So far as the second point of the Lady Member is concerned, that is, export of finer variety of cloth, the House is aware, Sir, that the bulk of our exports in textiles is manufactured from short staple cotton. The long staple cotton material is not exported in large quantities. We are trying to go into the question of exporting garments made of cloth which would be from long staple cotton and that may help us.

SHRI NAND KISHORE BHATT (Madhya Pradesh): The position is that only 25 per cent of cloth produced from indigenous cotton is standard cloth while 60 per cent of the production is still available for free sale. May I know from the hon. Minister why the mill-owners should not be able to make good the loss out of the cloth available for free sale?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: I am sorry I cannot speak on behalf of the mill-owners.