

DR. B. GOPALA REDDI: No, Sir.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Why, Sir? He said, 'No'. When the decision has been taken that organisations will not be allowed to hold meeting either without paying any rent or at a very low rent, in view of the fact that this is supposed to be available for bona fide public functions, why Sir, in the case of Ministries exception is made and why that particular Ministry of the Government should lose?

DR. B. GOPALA REDDI: It is essentially a Government institution managed by the Government built for Government purposes. Of course, when it is available it may be given to some cultural associations. The workers and other people can go to other theatres in Delhi and New Delhi.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, they talk of a socialist pattern of society and when it comes to Vigyan Bhawan, why do they tell the workers to go to other places? They know where they should go. May I know why, when in other countries, even in France and other places, such halls are made available to popular organisations like workers' organisations, peasants' organisations, students' organisations, etc., in the larger public interest this should not be made available to such organisations here who do not have the power of money?

DR. B. GOPALA REDDI: The whole hall is air-conditioned and we have to incur some expenditure for air-conditioning equipment and other things and so we will have to recover some rent from non-official organisations if it is made available to them. Anyway, we are not thinking in terms of giving it to non-official organisations generally.

SHRI DEOKINANDAN NARAYAN: May I know if anything is charged for refreshment halls?

DR. B. GOPALA REDDI: It goes along with the main hall and the Committee rooms.

SHRI FARIDUL HAQ ANSARI: It is a fact that some time last year an international peace conference was held in Vigyan Bhawan and if, so, how much money was charged from the people who sponsored that conference?

DR. B. GOPALA REDDI: I have no definite information about it. Perhaps, they have paid the usual rent.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Now, the hon. Minister said the hall is air-conditioned and therefore the workers cannot go there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. He did not say that.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: What did he say then? The implication is there; otherwise how does the air-conditioning business come in? Everybody knows that it is air-conditioned. Now, may I know why it should not be possible for the Government to make concessions in the case of poorer organisations provided they are bona fide organisations and charge those people who are rich, like the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, higher rents for holding their meetings and thus meet the cost of maintenance of this building? Why should it not be possible?

DR. B. GOPALA REDDI: The workers must be able to patronise the other halls in the city.

*205. [The questioner (Shri Babubhai Chinai) was absent. For answer vide col. 1758 infra.]

WRITING OFF OF LOANS TO REFUGEES

*206. SHRI BAIRAGI DWIBEDY: Will the Minister of REHABILITATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to write off loans advanced to refugees; and

(b) if so, what will be the total amount involved and the principles on which such loans will be written off?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF REHABILITATION (SHRI P. S. NASKAR): (a) and (b). The Government of West Bengal have made proposals for remission of certain types of loans advanced to displaced persons from East Pakistan. The matter is still under consideration.

SHRI BAIRAGI DWIBEDY: May I know whether any of the refugees whose loan is going to be written off or is going to be considered for being written off have been permanently settled and, if so, whether they have any permanent income?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: As my colleague has just stated, the whole matter is under consideration. I might inform the House that we have advanced loans ranging between Rs. 50 and 60 crores to displaced persons in the eastern region and the amount advanced in West Bengal comes to roughly about Rs. 35 to 40 crores. When I talk of the eastern region, I take into consideration Assam, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, etc. About 75 per cent. of the refugee population is in West Bengal and about 25 per cent. in the adjoining States. The financial implications of the proposals made to the Government of India are likely to be—if the proposals are accepted—large and a big sum of money is going to be involved. It may be anything between Rs. 30 and 40 crores. It is not a small matter. All aspects of the matter have to be taken into consideration before a big decision of this nature can be taken.

SHRI BAIRAGI DWIBEDY: What is the balance of such loans to be realised from each State in the eastern zone?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: Sir, if Rs. 100 were due, I think realisation is hardly one or two or may be 3 per cent. I am talking from memory. I think about Rs. 15

to 20 crores are already due but only a small amount has been realised. Hardly anybody is paying back any money in the eastern region so far as loans are concerned.

SHRI BAIRAGI DWIBEDY: May I know when the decision is going to be finalised?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: I am making every possible effort but it is a big policy decision which is involved. Loans have been given all over India. It is a question of accepting the principle of writing off loans ranging between Rs. 50 and 60 crores and all aspects of the matter have to be taken into consideration. We cannot deal with this matter in isolation.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Although the amount is big, individual loans are not big. In this particular case many people have taken these loans and is it not a fact, Sir, that most of these people who have taken these loans are not in a position—generally they are not in a position to pay and it is not as if they had no intention of repaying but they are not in a material position—to repay such loans? In view of this fact why should there be any delay in writing off these loans as a matter of policy, when loans given by the Rehabilitation Finance Administration—it was the earlier one which gave big loans—have already been written off even loans given to big people?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: I have as much sympathy for these unfortunate friends as Mr. Bhupesh Gupta has. That is No. 1. Secondly, in the earlier stages when loans were given I am prepared to concede they were given in small quantities, in driplets, but in the last five or six years loans of fairly big amounts have been given for specific purposes and as far as we are concerned, we see that there is some force in the consideration of this matter, but I am sorry I am not in a position to give a final reply that loans to such a big extent can be written off. That is

what I am trying to urge before the House.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Do I understand that the hon. Minister and his Ministry are considering this matter of writing off sympathetically?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Always sympathetically.

SHRI P. S. NASKAR: Definitely, Sir.

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: I have always been sympathetic to the displaced persons. I am one myself and I know what the difficulties of the displaced persons are. I have always dealt with this question on a human plane and not on a political plane.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: That is all right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all right, along with the suggestion.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I would like to know what is the biggest individual loan that has been given in the eastern zone?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: There are two types of loans. One is the loan given by the Ministry of Rehabilitation through the State Governments and normally a loan does not exceed Rs. 5,000 per family. The other is the loans given by the Rehabilitation Finance Administration and they can be for big amounts but that Administration is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Finance and not that of the Ministry of Rehabilitation.

Now, the hon. Member there just stated that the loans given by the Rehabilitation Finance Administration have been written off but I think that is not correct.

SHRI BAIRAGI DWIBEDY: May I know the main heads under which such loans have been given in the eastern zone?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: Loans are of two or three different types, agricultural loans, urban loans and a sort of semi-agricultural and urban loans. Previously these loans were being given in different parts but for the last five or six years, we sanctioned loans as one scheme taking all the components of the different parts into considerations, and only one loan is given.

SHRI BAIRAGI DWIBEDY: Who are the refugee industrialists who were advanced such loans?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA: I am sorry, the hon. Member is now going to the Rehabilitation Industries Corporation. If that is his idea, then we have set up an entirely different organisation for the purpose which is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. They advance big loans to industrialists to set up industries with a view to providing employment to displaced persons.

LOANS TO TEA ESTATES

*207. SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to advance loans to the Tea Estates through the Tea Board or otherwise;

(b) if so, the basis on which the loans will be advanced;

(c) whether the foreign plantation owners are also entitled to these loans; and

(d) if so, the circumstances in which such loans to them became necessary?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI N. KANUNGO): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.