

Now, Sir, if you kindly see the General Clauses Act, section 3(7) (b) says "an Act made before such commencement by the Governor-General in Council or the Governor-General, acting in a legislative capacity." Now, Sir, we know that the Governor-General had several legislative capacities, and in one of those capacities, he could promulgate an Ordinance.

DIWAN CH AMAN LALL: There are two types of Ordinances and one type of Act under the Governor-General's special powers.

DR. W. S. BARLINGAY: That is true. But of those two types of Ordinances one was an Act and not an Ordinance. That is the whole point. There were two types of Ordinances undoubtedly. But one was not really an Ordinance in the ordinary sense of the term. It was an Act. Now the point is that this was not an Ordinance.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We need not go into all these things now.

DR. W. S. BARLINGAY: I do not want to waste the time of the House. But the argument is very simple to mind. Supposing it had been the case of an amendment to the Indian Penal Code. . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dr. Barlingay, all this is superfluous at this stage. We are now in the third reading stage of the Bill, and you are raising these points which have already been discussed here.

DR. W. S. BARLINGAY: Very good, Sir. I will end by saying that actually the point is so very subtle that I must congratulate the Law Minister and the Drafting Section of the Law Ministry because they have so carefully gone into this whole matter, and have drafted it extremely carefully.

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI: Sir, I have nothing to say beyond telling my 48 RSD—4.

hon. friend to the right that he can always expect

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: But nobody has spoken from that side.

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI: He does not know that some hon. friend spoke just now. He was absent-minded for once at least. So, Sir, I only want to tell my friend to the right that we have always been very respectful to the opinions expressed by this honourable House and we do whatever we can and whatever has to be done. Whatever we cannot do, we respectfully say "We won't be able to do it."

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be returned." The motion was adopted.

MOTION REGARDING FOOD SITUATION

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal) : Sir, I beg to move:

"That the food situation in the country be taken into consideration."

Sir, since the time I gave notice of this motion, an important event has taken place, namely, the resignation of the Union Food Minister, Shri Ajit Prasad Jain. This resignation, as is well-known, has been welcomed throughout the country. Under him, Sir, the Food Ministry became an inefficient, spineless and pro-hoarder institution with an astonishing capacity to prevaricate and bluff. If the resignation means an opening of some window in that Ministry for some new approach or some fresh ideas to enter, then naturally everybody would be very happy. But then, Sir, the crux of the matter is not the resignation of a Minister and his replacement by another. What is important

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.] in the present context is a radical change in the food policy of the Government of India after a critical review of what has been done during the past three, four or five years. Yet, Sir, this resignation has some significance for us. In the first place, it is a confession of failure without the person responsible for it clearly owing it up. At the same time, Sir, it also means some validity of the arguments and criticisms that we from this side of the House have made from time to time against the food policy of the Government, criticisms, which, I must say, have also been shared, to a large extent, by the Members opposite, I mean the Members of the Congress Party.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dr. Barlingay, you should not show your back to the Chair.

DR. W. S. BARLINGAY (Bombay): I am frightfully sorry, Sir.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: We have worked towards the common end of finding some solution to our food problem. On many occasions, Sir, you will have noticed in the course of discussion that party barriers had disappeared, and we were trying to hit upon some right solution to this problem. Now, we will see how his successor, Shri S. K. Patil, who is supposed to have a great deal of ability in organising elections, organizes or reorganizes, shall I say, the Food Ministry.

SHRI M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH (Andhra Pradesh): Or further disorganizes.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: He may do that also, I have my fear, because when one is an organizer, he may deliver good things and he may commit considerable mischief also. Whatever he does, it will be of an enormous character. Before I pass on,

we have got an exchange of letters between the former Food Minister and the Prime Minister in which it is said that Prime Minister writes to him:

"I know well from personal experience how earnestly you devoted yourself to the difficult tasks and how, by your careful management, you succeeded in overcoming many of our past difficulties."

Only I ask him, why then it became necessary to accept the resignation? It is customary with the Prime Minister of this country to pat on the back of people whom he likes and loves, irrespective of their faults. In Britain you sing a chorus—in the English poems it is there—"With all the faults, Britain, I love thee." Whether it is Mr. Mathai or Mr. Jain, whomsoever he likes, he pats them on the back but it is a good thing that at least in this case, the Prime Minister was not weeping as he was in the case of the former Finance Minister, Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari. Anyway, that is beside the point.

Coming to the assessment of the situation, I would like to give an over-all assessment of the food situation in the country for the consideration of the new Food Minister and in particular I will try to say something about the food situation in West Bengal. Not only is the situation very grave there, but repression has been launched to suppress a movement on the issue of food. Four thousand people have already been arrested. One hundred have been arrested under the Preventive Detention Act including 17 Members of the Legislature and still arrests are going on. You can understand the seriousness of the situation. Delegations of Members of Parliament from both sides have gone there. Therefore, I will have to spend a little time on that but to that issue I will come later. Let me now give an assessment of the all-India situation.

First of all, I will give an idea of how we look at the food situation for him to consider. Only the other day we observed the twelfth anniversary of our Independence and it will be admitted that in these twelve years, we have not been able to solve the food problem at all and we are nowhere nearer the solution of the problem. The difficulties are mounting and the problem is becoming acute day by day. We have spent nearly Rs. 1000 crores for food imports by now and it seems we shall be spending several hundred crores in the next few years or so. Under the Second Five Year Plan it was estimated that the foreign exchange component for food imports would be Rs. 48 crores annually. Now, we are spending, I think, at a higher rate and we are importing 3 to 4 million tons of foodgrains per year costing Rs. 130 to 140 crores. This in itself is a sad commentary on the state of affairs on the food front. Now, apart from its being a heavy drain on our economy, it makes us considerably dependent on foreign doles. Now, an important point has arisen. Previously, we were meeting these foreign exchange liabilities on account of the food imports because we had some sterling reserves and other reserves. They have been exhausted today and I do not know how the Government will be meeting the situation. We are told that they will be somewhat helped by P.L. 480 but even so, heavy payments in rupee will have to be made here and money is not available to us for our national development projects. I understand that under P.L. 480 some monies will be loaned to us by them for projects which are endorsed by the U.S. authorities. This is one aspect of the matter. The dependence remains.

Now, in the matter of production, instability and deficits continue to dominate. I will give you an idea here. In 1953-54, we produced 68 71 million tons, in 1954-55 we produced 66-96 million tons, in 1955-56 we produced 65-70 million tons, in 1956-57 we produced 68-7

1957-58 we produced 62 million tons. In 1958-59, that is, last year, the estimated food production is 73 million tons. It has reached, what they call, an 'all-time' peak but we should not be misled by the so-called all-time peak. You will see that in 1953-54, we were producing almost 69 million tons. Now, it is only 4 million tons more. In 1956-57 we were producing again 68 to 69 million tons. So, the increase is only 4 million tons. So, more or less we remain where we

were, sometimes a little better, sometimes little worse for us, but we remain in a state of deficit and instability. Here we were told that at the end of the Second Plan our output would be 80 million tons. I doubt if in a matter of 2 years, or less than that, we are going to attain that target. It has also been said that at the end of 1966 our output should be 110 million tons. I do not accept that, if the present trends in production and policies continue, we shall be in a position to stabilize food production in 1966 at 110 million tons at all. These are all moonshine talks on the part of the Food Ministry without having the backing of corresponding policies and measures. What is more important in this connection is the question of prices. Rains or no rains, bad crops or bumper crops, rice prices go on increasing. This is another feature of the food situation in the country. Take 1958-59 when we had the record production of 73 million tons. Here you find that whereas in July 1958 the price was 115 points, this year in July it went up to 118 points, a slight rise in the price despite the increased production of food. The same thing happened in the earlier years. In 1956-57 the food production went up by 3 million tons compared to 1955-56 but the price went up despite the increase in production by 10 points. I am quoting official figures but there again you will find that we have entered a new phase and it is this that even the price in the surplus States is rising. Andhra and Punjab, I shall presently show, are registering a rise in prices despite the fact that

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.] both are surplus States. In the case of Punjab, the surplus is estimated to be about 13 lakh tons. In the case of Andhra it is estimated officially to be 6 lakh tons or so.

Coming to the prices, I have got telegrams from West Bengal and I have got material from all over India and I can give you some idea. In Assam the controlled price is Rs. 20 per maund but the actual price is Rs. 30. In West Bengal the price is ranging from Rs. 28 to Rs. 35 a maund and in some cases even Rs. 40 a maund. The price in Bombay is very high and the exact figures I cannot give but reports are there in the newspapers that the prices are running high compared to last year. In Tripura new rice is sold at Rs. 25 a maund whereas the old crop is being sold at Rs. 35 a maund in Agartala. At Nagpur coarse rice is sold at Rs. 18 or nearly Rs. 19 per maund and medium rice is sold at Rs. 22½. In Tamil Nad, there is no problem there of scarcity but the problem there is one of rise in the prices. In Dindigul, for example, per bag of 60 Madras measures, in the beginning of the year, that is in January, the price was Rs. 45 to Rs. 46 but in July the price has gone up to Rs. 63 to Rs. 64. In Madurai the price of a bag of 54 Madras measures has gone up from Rs. 22 in February to Rs. 32 last month. Other figures are there of Madras but I need not go into them. Generally it seems in Madras that the price of rice has risen this year to between Re. 1 to Rs. 1½ per measure compared to 11 annas and 15 annas last year. There is over-all rise that we note in Madras. In Delhi coarse rice is selling at Rs. 28 per maund and those of the South generally taking rice say that the price of rice per bag has gone up by in some cases Rs. 20. This is the position. In Punjab you will see that compared to last year, this year the price per maund of wheat is Rs. 14 to Rs. 17 as compared to Rs. 12 to Rs. 14 last year. Now, it is two or three rupees more

per maund. I have got some figures here. In Amritsar it is Rs. 22 per maund and sometimes even 27 per maund and Punjab is a surplus State. Reports come from Gurgaon where we see that prices are rising. Wheat sells at Rs. 20 per maund and paddy is not available at all. Prices are rising in Bihar and in Mysore the situation is grave. About that the P.S.P. Members made a statement and you coming from Mysore, Sir, know how the prices are rising in Mysore as well. The prices are rising in Srinagar also where in the ration shops recently in last July the price of wheat had risen from Rs. 10 to Rs. 13½ per maund.

Sir, I have given you a rough idea, an all-India idea, as to how prices have been rising, irrespective of whether the place is a deficit one or whether the place is a surplus one or whether it is one where production matches consumption. This is the general trend. Why should prices rise like this? This question has to be gone into.

I say deficit financing is one of the main reasons for this rise in prices and I submit the Food Minister should take up this question with the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission, because it is an important question. You will find that in the last three years deficit financing in the Five Year Plan has been of the order of Rs. 798 crores and already the estimated expenditure in the Second Plan according to the latest reappraisal of the Plan is Rs. 1,245 crores. Therefore, there is an upward trend here. You will notice that it was said in the reappraisal report that deficit financing on any significant scale can be contemplated only if food production increased substantially and food prices were maintained at stable levels and this led the National Development Council to take certain important decisions

of which the following may be specially mentioned. The very first item is that the State should take over the wholesale trade in foodgrains and a scheme of State-trading in foodgrains should be worked out. And this matter came up for discussion last year in the National Development Council and the National Development Council agreed to a measure of deficit financing provided food prices were kept at a certain level and food production could be stepped up. Nothing of that sort has been done, while deficit financing has been indulged in. The result has been this adverse effect on the price of foodgrains. In other words, prices are rising due to the expansion of the currency. The Food Minister sat quietly as if he had nothing to do with the matter. They on their side did not fulfil their obligation at their level in order to counteract the adverse effect of deficit financing. Now, unless deficit financing is drastically restricted if not altogether reduced, this upward trend in prices will continue. And here another aspect of the matter comes in, for it is not merely a question for the Food Minister; he may have to fight with other Ministries. I don't know whether it will be the graveyard of anybody's reputation, I feel it will be the grave-yard of the cherished hopes of the country of being able to turn the corner as far as the food front is concerned. This is one aspect of the matter.

Then again, private business has been taking advantage of the bank credits offered to them. These have been in favour of the speculators and hoarders and that also has a bearing on the rise in prices. To some extent, due to pressure of public opinion, it has no doubt been restricted now, but even so, bankers are interlinked with the speculators and hoarders and they are in a position to draw upon the credit in the banks in order to finance their speculations and profiteering in foodgrains. That aspect of the matter also has to be carefully gone into. There is no room for

complacency at all, whatever may be said by the Governor of the Reserve Bank or some other authorities in the financial world.

Then comes the question of State trading. One thing they have done successfully and that is, they have sabotaged State trading. Literally, they have sabotaged the scheme that was drawn up by the National Development Council. The Nagpur Resolution endorsed it and said eloquent things about it and we thought that State trading in foodgrains would be undertaken on a large scale and in a vigorous way, in order to build up stocks; not only to build up stocks but also to acquire some kind of control over the food situation so as to regulate prices and so on. But nothing of the kind has been done. Whatever has been done is merely an apology of what should have been done. Many States repudiated openly the scheme of State trading. Some accepted it nominally but refused to implement it. I ask the hon. Minister; where is the difference in practice between him and the Swatantra Party? The Swatantra Party says there should not be any State trading and you accept it without launching such a scheme of State trading. Therefore, it is just a sort of conflict of words between the Minister and the Swatantra Party. Well, by all means criticise the Swatantra Party, but back up your professions by your practice. It is most unfortunate that it should have been so scuttled. I submit, Sir, that a searching enquiry into the reasons why this State trading scheme was not implemented should be made. It should not be just left at that. There should be a searching enquiry in order to find out who was responsible for scuttling it and sabotaging the scheme of State trading.

We had been told that there was no machinery to work this scheme, that therefore it was a slogan. But we

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.] I have very often seen that we have a j slogan and we adopt a policy and I then set up the machinery to work out that policy. If the machinery is not there, who is responsible for the absence of that machinery? I submit, blatantly and deliberately and after full calculation, some authorities at the Centre and in the States saw to it that no machinery came into existence so that they could plead that due to the absence of such a machinery State trading could not be undertaken. Sir, it is a serious thing. In England, there would have been a Royal Commission of Enquiry on such a failure to implement a settled policy of the Government. But here nobody bothers about it. The thing is not seen through. Why should it be so? Therefore, I would demand a proper enquiry into it by a Parliamentary Commission, if necessary, a commission to go into the question as to why this State trading failed in this manner and who was responsible for wrecking it.

Sir, the result has been serious. We have no control either over stocks or on the market. We are still having high profiteers and hoarders. I will show you how this has affected our stock position. Last year in January, we had a buffer stock at the Centre of 74 lakh tons. This year in January the stock was 5.54 lakh tons, that is to say, it is less by about 2 lakh tons. This is the position. There is negligible buffer stock in the hands of the Government.

In this connection, I would like to refer to the zonal system. Sir, it does not require much wisdom to suggest that Andhra rice should not go to Punjab. But what have they done under this zonal system? Have they stopped smuggling? Have they regulated prices? Have they launched on a scheme of purchase so that stocks could be built up within the zones in order to help the needy in the zone? Nothing of that kind has been done. The zonal system was made into a

kind of farce, a kind of window-dressing for the hon. Minister to talk about.

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As you know, Sir, we passed the Essential Commodities Act in 1955 and this Act was amended once. This Act was passed for the purpose of empowering the Central Government to issue orders for purposes of production and supply of essential commodities named in the Act. One particular section of this Act clearly lays down the responsibility of the Centre in this matter. There can, therefore, be no shirking of the responsibility, the statutory responsibility imposed upon the Centre. What have they done? They have put this measure in cold storage with the result that food prices have gone up and there is no food in the market. From an answer given to a Starred Question in the Lok Sabha, I find that the total quantity of foodgrains seized by the Centre in 1958 under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act amounted to 3-16 lakh tons throughout India. Then comes the question of the procurement by the Centre and the States. The Centre and the States together procured only 57 lakh tons of foodgrains that is, less than one per cent, of the total production was procured by the Centre and the States working together under the Essential Commodities Act and otherwise. Is this the way to tackle the food problem? Where have the stocks gone? They are with* the hoarders and profiteers, and the masses of the people suffer. The rich people are not affected very much by this rise in prices because they can meet it, but it upsets the family budget of the poor man who has to spend sixty to seventy per cent, of the family budget on food items alone. Deficit financing has become the means of exploitation of the common man. Rise in prices is the expression of such exploitation, the means of such exploitation. I mentioned the figure about buffer stocks. The procurement policy of the Government has totally failed because they would not buy.

They would not buy because they would not like to harm the hoarders and the profiteers. Therefore, I say that the Central Government is pursuing an anti-people, pro-hoarder-profitteer policy in the matter of food, and this policy has to be abandoned lock, stock and barrel if we want to improve the food situation. This is a very serious thing. They say that they are not responsible. Whenever we ask them, they say, "It is not our responsibility. It is the responsibility of the States." If your responsibility is merely confined to storing some foodgrains and sending supplies, call yourself the Minister for Godowns or the Minister for Storage, why have that flamboyant name of Minister for Food and Agriculture and do nothing about it? Now, the Constitution provides for concurrent jurisdiction in such matters. Whenever it suits them, they go into it but when it does not suit them, they sit back, throw their hands in despair and tell the world, "We have nothing to do". Sir, this kind of running with the hare and hunting with the hound in the matter of food must be given up.

As far as the States are concerned, the Centre in the Union Food Ministry has given no leadership whatsoever. On the contrary, it has condoned the misdeeds of the State Ministries. It has allowed them to go their own way when it was its duty to direct them, guide them and condition them to a proper policy. Nothing of that kind was done. State trading in foodgrains should be brought in compulsorily and Government should take other measures for increased production like land reforms, ceilings on lands and so on. I need not go into all that now. The Essential Commodities Act should be applied vigorously and adequate stocks should be built up at the Centre and supplies should be moved to various States in need of foodgrains, like West Bengal and Kerala. We must get a big proportion of the marketable

surplus. This is the crux of the problem and that you cannot do until you develop the mechanism of State trading.

As far as the food situation in West Bengal is concerned, we do not know how much is the deficit. Some say that it is eight lakh tons while Dr. Roy says that it is about fifteen lakh tons. Whatever it is, it should naturally be met. The more important thing is the administration in the States. The "Statesman" editorial has said that Mr. P. C. Sen should go. We also feel that he should go. The Congress Parliamentary Party and the Prime Minister should direct Dr. Roy to see that Mr. Sen does go. They give advice to us and I do not see why they should not give advice to their own partymen in this matter. The important thing is that there is maladministration there, apart from the deficit. A permit system was introduced and permits were freely given to all kinds of people, the favourites of the Food Minister. They were fed on money but no food came in the market. I can give you one example. One Mr. Dhiren Bhowmick was given a permit but do you know, Sir, that he was not in the trade at all? He is the Managing Director of the "Jana Sevak", the daily organ of the Congress Party. They have got an Editorial Board there of which Mr. Atulya Ghosh is the Chairman. This man has been given permits for food, cement and everything. Some people handle permits that way and, therefore, stocks are cornered there. Last year, they themselves put a levy on mills of 25 per cent. We said that it must be 55 per cent, of the mill stocks but they would not agree. They expected to get 1,75,000 tons but actually they got only 68,000 tons because there was no physical verification. The mills gave wrong figures and got away with it. This year also they had a levy of 25 per cent., but they got only 48,000 tons because they did not set any target. On the 23rd

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.]

of June, this *levy* order and the price control order were abolished. Prices started shooting up. That is the situation today. These orders were abolished because those people had demanded and they held the food economy to ransom, pressurised the Government. They were in collusion with the Government and they succeeded in getting all these restrictions withdrawn with the result that the West Bengal people are suffering today. Now, this is another aspect of the matter which should be carefully gone into. The Union Food Secretary, who went there, had no business to sanction, on behalf of the Union Ministry, the abolition of these orders, the Price Control Order and the Levy Order, in that manner. I do not know under what circumstances he did it, but clearly the Union Food Minister agreed with the policies, the disastrous policies that are being followed there today. There are no stocks there. For the first time the Chief Minister says that the deficit is of the order of fifteen lakh tons. He has never said this before. I myself met him several times along with Mr. A. P. Jain, and always the figures mentioned were of the order of four lakh tons, eight lakh tons or even nine lakh tons, but now he says that it is fifteen lakh tons. Anyway, whatever it is, that should be given by the Centre and the Centre should also see to it that the foodgrains are distributed properly because distribution is the crux of the matter in West Bengal. In West Bengal, modified rationing is being restricted whereas there must be an expansion of the modified rationing scheme to cover all categories. So far as I understand, West Bengal Government has decided to reduce the number of people covered by modified rationing to 48 lakhs instead of 1,33,00,000 as at present. This is how they are controlling the situation. The theory is that in a deficit State we cannot procure but it is being put forward by the Chief Minister there and it is being declar-

ed from the housetops that West Bengal cannot procure because we have got a deficit there. Whatever the deficit, by all means we want that deficit to be made up but, at the same time, I consider it our duty also to see that we make every effort to garner every single grain so that we can meet our requirements as far as possible from the internal sources. In the beginning of the year came the Price Control Order. We wanted that that Order should be enforced, the stocks should be seized from the hoarders and that the mills should be compelled to sell to Government as otherwise, we felt, this Order will not bring in anything. Nobody listened to us although Mr. Sen said that he would take every possible measure. Then, Sir—after the foodgrains had passed into the hands of the hoarders, profiteers and speculators during the first four or five months of the year, we were suddenly told that the Control Order had been withdrawn. The peasants suffered while selling. We demanded a minimum price of Rs. 12 to Rs. 13 but that was not given. They fixed Rs. 10 and the result is the hoarders got a little more. So, the peasants suffered while selling and they are again suffering because the prices are going up. So, both ways the peasant suffers. Sir, it is robbery; it is a colossal crime. Sir, I maintain that there cannot be any improvement in the food situation in West Bengal until you follow the example of the Centre, that is until, the West Bengal Food Minister, Mr. Sen, quits office. Sir we are carrying on a movement there and 4,000 people have gone to jail, as I have told you. And on the 3rd, next month, if this policy goes on there will be a general strike in West Bengal. We do not want that people should suffer but there is no other way. What can they do? Are they to starve? How are we to impress upon the Government that the demands of the people of West Bengal who are suffering from a hundred wounds should be met? This is the position. (*Time bell rings*). Sir, you have-

been good enough to ring the bell. ¹ I would, therefore, make this propo- I sal to the Food Minister. He should go himself to West Bengal. I wrote two letters to the Prime Minister; one letter I sent on the 7th June and another note I sent to him on the 4th July and there I gave an account of the food situation in West Bengal. He took no notice of it. I asked him to come to Calcutta, meet the leaders, discuss the situation and come to some solution. Nothing of the kind happened. Now I am told he is talking to Mr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh. But remember that in this matter there are two parties who must come together. One is the Congress and the other is the Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee repre senting all leftist parties there except the P.S.P. A joint statement was issued by Mr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and Dr. Roy and the next day they started a policy of repression. That statement provided moral justification for Dr. Roy to carry out 'mass arrests. It is regrettable that the leader of the P.S.P. went in for such a statement. Now, they a're talking with the Prime Minister. I do not know whether there are any political moves behind all these. Sir, I can tell you that this kind of thing will not deliver the goods.

SHRI D. P. SINGH (Bihar): It is a very irresponsible statement that has been made.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You come to West Bengal, your party men are leaving everyday. (*Time bell rings.*) You are ruining yourself. As a colleague in the United Front in West Bengal, your going away and leaving the movement and . then signing the joint statement has provided an excuse to Dr. Roy to hit out and adopt a policy of wanton repression. Sir, the food situation has to be viewed from different angles. Let there be a good beginning. Let him take in hand the West Bengal situation. Let him start there. Go there, show that you have a new approach, discuss the thing with

all of us. We do believe in that and I extend my hand of co-operation. Although my colleagues are in jail, although many of our party members are in jail, although I know we are facing terrible repression and suffering, even so I extend on behalf of my party the hand of co-operation to the Government if the Government acknowledges the seriousness of the situation, is prepared to come to a proper understanding and a proper solution of the problem. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Motion, moved:

"That the food situation in the country be taken into consideration."

SHRI M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH: Sir. I move:

"That at the end of the Motior. the following be added, namely:--

'and having considered the same this House is of the opinion that Government should initiate consultations with the representatives of all parties to bring about drastic changes Tn the policies of Government and the administration of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture with special reference to such matters as (1) regulation of prices (2) State Trading and procurement fay Government (3) dehoarding of foodgrains and distribution at cheaper prices to the consumers and (4) co-operation of all political parties and others at all levels';"

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The motion and the amendment are before the House.

There are 18 speakers before me. So, necessarily, the time has to be' rationed and two Ministers are intervening. So, I request that no Member should exceed 15 minutes. Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt.

3 P.M.

DR. NALINAKSHA DUTT (West Bengal): I have listened to the very forceful speech delivered by my hon. friend and it seems that he has lost his temper. I agree with what he has stated as far as production of foodgrains is concerned. It is an admitted fact that it has not gone up very much during these two Plan periods. As far as the prices are concerned, he should remember that there has been a rise in the prices of all kinds of goods and you cannot check the price of rice alone or of other food products. He was recommending the use of the State Trading Corporation. He does not know the ins and outs of the working of this Corporation. As soon as the State tries to purchase rice from any of the markets, the market goes up. Actually, the rise in the Bengal market was partly due to this fact. When it was found that the Government of India had entered the market to procure rice, the price shot up. Thus procurement becomes very very difficult either for the Central Government or for the State Government and their coming in really disturbs the market. Today the high price is due to State trading and the attempt to procure rice from the market. And it is rather surprising that my hon. friend does not realise that it is the State trading which causes this disruption in the ordinary market.

Now, he thinks that deficit financing is wrong. For large scale development undertakings no economist will say that deficit financing is wrong. Deficit financing has got to be done but within limits. There may not have been sufficient development on the food front but there has been development on the industrial side. He said that the bankers helped the hoarders but he does not know that there are clear instructions to all banks not to advance any money for food transactions. Therefore, the argument that he has been stressing so long with great force does not carry much weight.

Sir, he has lost his temper, particularly, with reference to West Ben-

gal and so I shall confine myself to West Bengal. My first question to my hon. friend is whether the speech that he has delivered or the movement that has been launched by his party and the Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee in West Bengal is to ameliorate the condition of the distressed people or it is a counterblast to the discomfiture suffered by the Kerala Government at the hands of the people in general. It is rather unfortunate that for the sake of getting an upper hand in politics, our friends generally try to create discontent and by creating discontent they are practically exploiting poverty and the sufferings of the distressed. They also take advantage of the numerous refugees who are still there in Calcutta and in the suburbs. Practically, every time when the Communist Party comes out, they do not come out to help the people to get food; they simply come out to have some sort of political agitation. They trade upon the distress and sufferings of the people. That is the main grievance that the people of Bengal have against his party. In West Bengal all-party committees were formed at all levels but it was seen that these committees did not work very well. They resigned on flimsy grounds of Government intransigence. It appears that they could not make any constructive suggestions nor could they help to solve the food problem. They wanted to solve the food problem by mere slogans and by the unfurling of red flags—not the national flag—and by street processions. I do not think any hon. Member will contend that the Congress Ministers or Members are not as keen as the Opposition to see that the people get their food in adequate quantities. Sir, we are no longer under the British regime to witness the dire famine of 1943. We are aware how vigilant our Government are and how prompt they are in sending relief to the places affected by flood or other natural calamities. I do not think anyone—even in the Opposition—would say that the Government is careless about the food of

the people. There are however limitations to everything human. There is unfortunately a rapid growth in population but not adequate production of foodstuff. It is not possible for everybody to take as much food as he wants.

Now by this agitation that has been organised in West Bengal the Opposition has been causing immense economic loss to the State. We have seen that there is frequent interference with industrial labour; there are strikes and processions of clerks of banks and merchant offices almost every month. Calcutta is so much disturbed that practically all the important private companies as well as companies in the public sector are being shifted from Calcutta to Bombay and elsewhere. Calcutta which was one of the premier cities of India has become a neglected area bringing about large scale unemployment among the middle classes. It is all due to the Communist agitation, and it will bring more harm to West Bengal than good and practically help other centres, by starting agitations in West Bengal every other day.

As regards the demands of the Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee, I shall just take up their first point, namely, the demand of this Committee that the people should get rice at Rs. 17-8-0 per maund and that they should get 1½ seers of rice and one seer of wheat every week, that is, about 11·5 oz. per day. This is lower than the Government estimate of 15·3 oz. per day and one ounce less than the all-India average of consumption. This demand of the Committee has been, I should say, nearly met by the West Bengal Government, as will be evident from the following figures. From January to July 1959, the total number of people who were having ration cards rose from 58 to 119 lakhs. It has recently increased, with the increase in the Central allocation up to 148 lakhs, practically half of the total population of West Bengal. To this we should add 66 lakhs who are

growers of rice. And so, they should be excluded. Then, there are another 8 lakhs who get food from relief operations. There remain only 87 lakhs. Those 87 lakhs are in a position to buy rice from the open market. Practically, rice is available everywhere in the open market. Only the price is high. Therefore, the Government has practically met the first condition laid down by this Committee, namely, the Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee. Even now the Government is prepared to supply wheat to the full extent that the Bengal people will demand, but unfortunately Bengal people have an aversion to wheat. They lay emphasis on rice only. It is an admitted fact that West Bengal cannot produce enough rice to feed its population. It needs 47 lakh tons of foodgrains, whereas it produces only 38 lakh tons. There is an impression that the Centre meets all the deficit. That is not actually the fact. In 1958, the Centre allocated only 2½ lakh tons and this year 4 lakh tons. Now, it has been increased to 11 lakh tons, 4 lakh tons rice and 7 lakh tons wheat. Assuming that the consumption is at this level of 15 oz. per day—actually in some cases it goes up to 20 oz.—it is not possible for any Government to meet this perennial deficit. Hence, there are two ways to solve this problem. One way is to start propaganda among the people to change their food habits—to take less and less cereals—and suggesting new types of food as against purely cereals. I have just received a letter from Siliguri, where the wholesalers say that they have got ample wheat and pulses, but they want rice. They want me to impress upon the Government to give an immediate supply of rice. The trouble is this. Though there is no shortage of foodgrains, there is shortage of rice.

Similarly, while I agree with Mr. Gupta in saying that there should be an emphasis more on intensive and extensive agriculture, the Government has provided irrigation facilities in Bengal. Now, the acreage has increased¹ from 3½ lakh acres in 1947 to 12

[Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt.] lakh acres in 1958. It has also reclaimed some of the water-logged areas and has made them cultivable. Therefore, you can see that the extension is going on and the Government are doing their best, but not to the ideal or expectation that the people have. Both the Government and this Resistance Committee should give more attention to this aspect of the problem. They should go and approach the cultivators to produce more, to cooperate. But on the other hand, they just do the opposite work. It is a complete lie to say that there is hoarding of foodgrains. Well, had there been any hoarding of foodgrains, then after the lifting of controls more rice would have come out to the market. Actually, there cannot have been any hoarding very much. It has been closely watched not only by the police, but also by our Communist friends.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Here is a photograph of hoarders' godown protected by police when the procession approached it.

DR. NALINAKSHA DUTT: The West Bengal Government, besides struggling hard for the supply of food, is also giving relief by way of cattle purchase loans to the extent of Rs. 24 lakhs this year, agriculture loans to the extent of Rs. 62 lakhs. Also, they are withholding warrants for the realisation of overdue agriculture loans.

Now, from the 1st January 1959, with the concurrence of the Centre as well as the support and blessings of the Opposition, the Price Control and Levy Order was imposed. But what happened to this Order? Our friends, the Communists, sent emissaries to all parts of the country, to the farmers, to the agriculturists, to the wholesalers, asking them to hold back their produce and so the object of the Government was frustrated. SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I strongly dispute this.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Has he got any proof?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order. Nobody disturbed you, when you spoke.

DR. NALINAKSHA DUTT: On the one side they ask the Government to impose control and on the other side they participate and teach people how to evade control. In this way they are working in a two-faced manner and they are not exactly happy that the country or the people should get their food. There were all-party committees at all levels, of farmers, wholesalers and millers, but all these were of no avail because they worked with a different motive. It is, therefore, evident that the object of the Opposition is not to see the people get their food, but make them suffer, so that they may rise against the Government. Our Chief Minister is intelligent enough to see this move and has taken all possible steps to counteract this sinister move, for which reason a number of persons were arrested by the West Bengal Government, even though it is much less than that imprisoned by the Kerala Government. (Interruption). The general consensus of opinion now is that State trading in foodgrains is only possible when there is full control at all stages. Now, my friend, Mr. Gupta, was saying, 'I would immediately start State trading'. But he does not know what it means. State trading means control of the farmers, control of the retailers, control of everybody. Therefore, practically we have to revert to our old rationing system. Even in that rationing system there were lapses. If we want to have proper State trading, throughout the country, we have got to go in for a large number of controls and a tremendous amount of staff. Therefore, the Government, I think, would do well to scrap the State trading idea. This really is undesirable. The State of West Bengal has done very well by lifting the control on prices and as a result now we are getting ample rice and wheat. So,

this in short is the position. I do not want to take further time, but from the emotion with which my friend has spoken it seems that he is very much angry with our Ministers. He wants them to leave the chair at once, but I regret that they will be unable to oblige him, and his fulminations will not have any effect on them.

Thank you, Sir.

' SHRI ROHIT M. DAVE (Bombay): Mr. Deputy Chairman, the House is considering the food situation with special reference to West Bengal, and while initiating the discussion my hon. friend, Shri Bhupesh Gupta, had something to say about the role which the Praja Socialist Party played in West Bengal. Before coming, therefore, Sir, to the food situation proper, I think it is my duty to say something with reference to the attack which he has launched against the P.S.P. in West Bengal and against the P.S.P. leaders.

Sir, my hon. friend, Shri Bhupesh Gupta, is in the habit of contradicting himself again and again in the same speech, and therefore it is not quite surprising that he should contradict himself with reference to his general attitude and his general reading of the situation from time to time which we gather from his speeches. If I remember it correctly, it is the contention of my friend, Shri Bhupesh Gupta, that the P.S.P. does not count for anything especially in the State which he hopes to rule some day.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I did not say that. All I said was that you are alone and all the opposition parties have combined.

SHRI ROHIT M. DAVE: I am talking of your general attitude. On the debate on Tibet, for instance . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sometimes people count for a lot of mischief.

SHRI ROHIT M. DAVE: Especially in the State which he hopes to rule some day we count far less still. Under the circumstances the P.S.P. leadership, which was with the Communist Party on some of the important problems which these parties were trying to solve these days, because it thought and because of its reading that a particular situation called for some solution other than that suggested by our Communist friends in West Bengal, has suddenly become the tools of the ruling party, has suddenly become the henchmen of the ruling party and has suddenly become the villain of the piece. This, Sir, is the situation which one need not take very seriously into account, and the accusations that have been levelled need not be taken so seriously into account but for the fact that these leaders are not present in the House to defend themselves and therefore someone has to do so.

Sir, as far as we are concerned our policy is quite clear. We realise that in West Bengal a serious food situation has arisen. We realise that it is the duty of all the political parties to see what could be done so that the sufferings of the people of West Bengal could be minimised. With that aim in view, Sir, our party there had decided to take action. Whenever, however, we take action, we do not just do so by offering challenges and by projecting ourselves on the centre of the stage. What we try to do is to see that the sufferings are alleviated. We, therefore, made such a recommendation to the Government of West Bengal. And as it happened, there were certain points on which the P.S.P. leader in West Bengal and the Chief Minister of West Bengal could see eye to eye as far as partial solution of the food situation in West Bengal was concerned. They were quite justified in issuing a statement wherein that agreement was recorded. Nothing more had been done. Our party is anxious to see that the food situation in West Bengal is eased, and our party is also anxious to see that suitable steps

[Shri Rohit M. Dave.] shall be taken in that direction. If these steps are not forthcoming, our party is quite free to take any action it chooses in order that these actions might be forthcoming. Therefore, there is no question of our becoming stooges of anyone. There is no question of trying to take a particular attitude in a given situation which might be political in character. Our purpose there is simply to see if we can help in some little way through suggestions, through recommendations and, if need be, through direct action, in seeing that the situation is eased.

Having made the position of the P.S.P. in West Bengal, as far as I can see, quite clear, I would now come to the food situation generally. As far as the food situation is concerned, we are rather handicapped in discussing it because the hon. Shri S. K. Patil has just taken over as Food Minister, and it has appeared in the press that the whole food policy is being considered—I will not say reconsidered, but it is being considered.

AN HON. MEMBER: Reviewed.

SHRI ROHIT M. DAVE: I am thankful to my friend; it is being reviewed. In the first week of September they are meeting again and thereafter it is possible that a food policy will be announced. In the absence of any data, indeed as has been stated in that announcement, when the new food policy is likely to embrace all the aspects of the food situation, namely food production, food distribution, food prices and allied subjects, we are rather sitting in a post mortem examination, and all that we have got before us is the food policy as it was and is still this day. As far as that policy is concerned the Food Minister who preceded the hon. Shri S. K. Patil, I mean the hon. Shri Jain, has himself castigated it so eloquently in the Lok Sabha that I do not think that I can add anything to it. The first point that he made there was that the food situation in the country was at cross-roads. When the country is at

cross-roads as far as the food situation is concerned, the Food Ministry is divided in its opinion as to whether there should be more control or whether there should be less control. The amount of control that exists to-day according to both the schools are either inadequate or infructuous. Therefore, this control has to be reconsidered. Either these controls should be intensified, increased and integrated into a whole control system or they should go.

Secondly, Sir, even with reference to the little policy decisions that they have taken—as one important Congress Member in the other House described them as just a string of certain decisions which they have taken over there and which they described and glorified as a food policy—even as far as these decisions are concerned, there is no machinery in existence which might implement all those decisions. Here I have the authority of the speech of the ex-Food Minister himself as well as the statement of the West Bengal Government. In the statement of the West Bengal Government as well as in the speech of the ex-Food Minister in the Lok Sabha we had been told that the food policy was not succeeding because of the fact that there was no machinery adequate enough to implement even the controls that were in existence. Sir, they decided to have State trading. State trading demanded a particular policy. Sir, whenever there is any problem or any difficulty, we have got one very easy solution, namely that there should be co-operatives. If there is State trading, it can ultimately be implemented when there are co-operatives. Co-operatives were nowhere in existence and therefore the Food Ministry decided to avail of the wholesale merchants who were already in the field, and with the help of these wholesale merchants they wanted to implement a policy which was opposed by all the -wholesale traders and their associations tooth and nail. That shows a tendency to implement a policy which it was the avowed declaration of that

machinery to oppose and to show that it was not in the interests of the country. Obviously, that particular policy was bound to fail, and then suddenly they found that it had actually failed. Whenever any de-hoarding measures are taken, we are told that cereals completely disappear. The dehoarding operations themselves have taken place with the help of the machinery which it would not have been possible for the Government to utilise effectively for this purpose. Had they utilised some other machinery or had they waited and created a machinery which would have undertaken these policy decisions successfully, this particular problem perhaps would not have arisen. The results, therefore, are that the ordinary channels of distribution and trade have been disturbed, the ordinary channels of distribution and trade have been antagonised, and at the same time the Government is depending only on those channels in order to implement its policies. People, therefore, have to suffer. Prices rise and fall periodically and there is absolutely no possibility of finding out what would happen to the food prices. If the food prices are rising or falling according to the laws of supply and demand, perhaps one would have understood and some intelligent anticipation would have been possible, but because it depends upon the decisions of the Government and the capacity of the Government to implement those decisions and also because there is no measure whereby it is possible to find out what the next decision of the Government will be and whether it will be in a position to implement a decision after it has been taken, it is absolutely impossible to anticipate what would happen to the prices. Because it is difficult to anticipate what would happen to the prices, it is not possible to take counter measures to see that those dislocations are minimised.

There are food stocks available in certain warehouses. When they have to be moved from one place to another, transport difficulties arise.

It is not possible for them to plan the transport or transport the food from one place to another as and when required. It is not possible even to decide what would be the fair price and what would not be the fair price, what would be the fair price as far as the peasants and farmers are concerned, what would be the fair price as far as the urban population is concerned, what would be the fair price in the deficit areas and what would be the fair price in the surplus areas. It is impossible to measure any of these things because prices ultimately depend upon demand and supply. But then in this particular case, demand and supply do not depend upon production, but upon the policy that the Government adopts and the capacity of the Government to implement that policy.

SHRI M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH: In your opinion, is fair price a contradiction in terms?

SHRI ROHIT M. DAVE: No, it is not. My contention is that it is very difficult to define fair price. I am not talking of a theoretical fair price, I am talking of the practical side.

Lastly, Sir, there is the question of certain broader decisions regarding food prices, namely, zonal arrangements, and certain restrictions on the movement of foodgrains from one place to another. When this House discussed the food situation in the last session, we were supplied with a particular pamphlet called 'The Food Situation'. In that pamphlet it was stated that the zonal system was introduced in order to control prices by controlling movements. The other day in the other House the ex-Food Minister stated that because of this very cordoning off of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, Bombay is today suffering from very high prices and an acute food shortage. Sir, the very process and the very measure that they take in order to control the prices, on their own admission, aggravates the situation, and we have not got any redress or even any explanation for the things that are moving

[Shri Rohit M. Dave.] in this direction. I would, therefore, only hope that when an integrated food policy is announced after due [deliberations perhaps in the middle of September, we will have a clear picture of what the Government wants to do, how the Government wants to do, what it wants to do, as a result of their policy and the machinery that they are going to employ in order to implement that policy.

Thank you, Sir.

SHRI KHANDUBHAI K. DESAI (Bombay): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, when I was listening to the mover of this motion, in the initial stage I thought he was going well. He was trying to analyse the food situation during the last so many years. He also quoted real statistics and everything. I thought he was going well, particularly in view of the fact that the food policy and the food situation are under review at this period when we are discussing this problem. The Food Minister has resigned a few days back. He has said what is wrong with the food policy, a new Minister has come and therefore it is up to this House—to whatever party we belong—to make constructive suggestions to him to be taken into consideration in framing a policy for the country. But, as usual, in the end Bhupesh Babu began to give a political colour to the whole discussion and probably whatever good impression he created in the initial stage had naturally been spoiled, and therefore his approach, as the mover of the motion, according to me, has fallen flat. Anyway, now that he has given us an opportunity to say something on this situation, I would like to make a few constructive suggestions for the consideration of the Food Minister.

We must believe that in a large country like India, there are deficit States in food and there are surplus States in food, and when the food question is being discussed or is being decided as a policy, it should be considered on a national basis and not on a disintegrated State-wise basis,

because from the facts which have just been placed before this House, we find that the prices of wholesale cereals for the whole country are either the same as they were last year or are a little more—two to three per cent as somebody has quoted. But if you look at the prices which are obtaining either in Bombay State or in West Bengal or in a part of Bihar or in Delhi, they show a different trend. The prices in industrial areas like West Bengal and Bombay are 30 to 40 per cent, higher than those obtaining either in Andhra Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh or Punjab. Are we running the food policy on a State-wise basis? I think now the time, has come when we must base our policy on national consideration and not on parochial ones. That must be fully considered. We, in Bombay State, are unfortunately deficit to the extent of about a million tons of foodgrains every year. But we are surplus in two commodities, that is, cotton cloth and salt. Bengal is deficit to an extent in the matter of food, but it is surplus in the matter of jute and engineering goods. Of course, engineering goods or jute or cotton cloth or salt is no substitute for Food. Similarly, I can say about every other province.

I personally feel, Sir, that the question of State trading had been placed before this country without the proper organisation and mechanism attached to it. Had these things been there this situation would not have arisen.

Then, Sir, comes the question of transport of food from one State to another under the zonal system. The zonal system also, as it was planned about a year back, has undergone considerable change. Previously, there were surplus areas which were attached to some deficit areas. But they were changed, with the result that whereas the prices in the deficit areas are very much higher, the prices in the surplus areas are very much lower. And, probably the margin has not gone, if I may say so, to

the cultivator. Much of the margin must have gone to the interme--diary, the brcker between the producer and the consumer. That also, in my view, requires consideration ou - the part of the Government.

'Here I may make a suggestion. As far as the millers are concerned, it must be made a condition for them to use only the imported wheat. To that extent the load on the market foi- indigenous whe^t would be lighter. There is another suggestion which I would like to make in this connection. •Of course, there is nothing wrong in the principle of State trading. State trading in a developing economy i; essential. It is bound to come in food and other essential commodities which we use, to keep consistent equilibrium between the issue of money for the developing economy and the supply of commodities for consumption. There fore, some sort of a regulation with which the Government can control, and which gives Government the capacity tn control and regulate should always be there, framed under a legislation, whenever it is necessary. Therefore, to begin with, I would - suggest that land revenue collection and irrigation revenue collection should be done in kind throughout the country. Tbat, to becin with, is the essence of State trading. I ex-"pect—as I couM see,— about Rs. 150 crores of revenue to come from both irrigation cess and land revenue. That will account for the rjurchase of^ armut th'ee million tons of grams. To begin with. I think, this arrangement will be found enough.

Sir, another suggestion wh'ch I would like to make is this. Our consumption of grains will go on increasing and one cannot be sure that we will be out of the woods immediacy. which may very well take a few years. Therefore, the policy that the Government should place before the coimtrv shouM be a long-range policy. We should not be complacent when th#re is good ram. As it happens. in 'tne summer of 1955 we said we were

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out of the woods, and we had to go in for price support. A similar situation might arise . again. One doas not know. Last year was a good year. This year may be a good year and possibly the Government may have to go in for price support. But then it should no': be complacent. Therefore, Government must build up good buffer reserve from foreign imports. There should not be any sentiments or emotions about the whole thin?. Again. if we are able to get long-term credit from outside, we will be well-advi=ed. in mv view, to build a gra'in reserve to meet an emergency whenever it arises.

Incidentally, I would like to point out to this House how sometimes we take decisions the implications of which are not pre-considered. For example, it is said that we are short of foreign exchange, and in order o earn it we exported some of the commodities whi^h we required for our own consumption. I refer to edible oil and oil-seeds. On this item we get about Rs. 8 to 10 crores foreign exchange. But unfortunately t'e quota for export is decided always at *he wrong time and in a wrong way. If the high price of edible oil paid by the consumer went directly to t'e producer, there would have been some consolation that somebody deserving got it. But what happened? In order to earn the foreign exchange, the internal prices for six +o eight months went up by 30 to 40 per cent. The House would be surprised to knw what it wa: worth. The consumer had to pay in some year; not less than Rs. 30 crores as the price for earning 8 crores of exchange. I wouH request the House to consider this figure. Is it wo>"thwhi'e 'hat in order to earn a foreign exchange of Rs. 8 crores our consumers, who are ordinary people and who get fat content only in edible oil, have to pay Rs. 3") crores in the course of a year? I thin't we had be'ter do awav wi<h tMS foreign exchange. It would be muh better e->en to slow down 'he process of our industrial development by cut-

[Shri Khandubhai K. Desai.] ting down one project, but we should not call upon the consumer to pay Rs. 30 crores like this. Now, where do these Rs. 30 crores go? It does not go to the peasant at all. I have been studying the figures for the last, four or five years. Invariably, it goes to the intermediaries—the wholesalers or the exporters. These are some of the points which I have placed before the Food Minister for his consideration. Particularly, Sir, with all the force at my command I would request the Minister to consider the question of collecting land revenue and land cess in kind. This would be a good beginning and I think that will ensure equitable distribution.

DR. R. P. DUBE (Madhya Pradesh): Or prices should be fixed.

SHRI KHANDUBHAI K. DESAI: It is obvious that the prices have to be fixed. Sir, I do not feel that we would be out of the woods within the next few years. We are developing our economy. We are increasing our expenditure. There is bound to be deficit financing and there is bound to be restriction on imports. The prices are bound to go up. Therefore, I would tell those who are in favour of *laissez-faire* that free economy in this country is not going to be with us for a number of years to come. At the same time it should not be regimented economy. The Food Ministry would have to find out some *via* media between these two extremes. That is the only way in which the country can progress. Nothing else is possible. With these words, Sir, I request the Food Minister to consider the few suggestions I have made before this House.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Rajasthan): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the House should be beholden to Mr. Bhupesh Gupta for raising this question, because the new Food Minister has just taken over, and by the discussion that is taking place here in

this House let us hope that he will be greatly benefited.

Sir, for a long time—in fact, since the time we attained independence—we have been faced with a very acute food problem. Leaders of all shades of opinion have been discussing this question. Of course, the approach of some leaders has been only agitational. But there are others who genuinely desire to solve the problem, which affects the teeming millions in this country.

Sir, these efforts, as in the past, according to some of us, are not likely to bear much fruit unless the present land policy is radically changed and completely dissociated from political considerations, and the problem is viewed purely from the economic standpoint. On the side of the Government, Sir, there are three functionaries who are concerned with the food policy of our country. First of all, we have got the Food Ministry. We have been noticing that the Ministry feels that our present propaganda is sufficient to produce food. Then, Sir, we have also been noticing—and it is a fact also—that our Prime Minister, by his unique personality in this country, has been dominating as far as the Food Ministry is concerned, and his expressions with regard to food policy, at times, govern the steps which the Ministry takes. The result is that our food policy is generally very unrealistic.

Sir, we all know that as long back as 1951, our Prime Minister passed a decree, so to say, to the effect that within two years our country will not only be self-sufficient in food, but we will be in a position even to export food. That was in 1951.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Later on, he said, he had eaten his words.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Today, Sir, we are in the year 1959, and if anything, our country has been going through its worst times. Eight years have elapsed. Let alone our being self-sufficient in foodgrains, I do not

think that in the meantime or the Members who are present here we can hope to export any foodgrains from this country.

SHRI SHEEL BHADRA YAJEE (Bihar): Because you are producing more children.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: If the Congress says that it believes in producing more children, I think that is more correct rather than to say that we are producing more foodgrains.

Then, Sir, comes the Planning Commission. It feels that if it fixes a certain target and puts it in the Plan, there will be sufficient food production in the country. The first Plan, Sir, as we know, was a 'food' Plan. And what has been the result? The result has been 'Nil'. The Planning Commission now says that at the end of the Second Plan the target of food production will be 80 million tons, it further says that at the end of the Third Plan the target is to produce 110 million tons. Well, if wishes were horses, even beggars could ride. What is actually happening? Every year, Sir, we get into some deeper and deeper mire.

Then comes our great National Development Council which feels that if it passes a resolution and if the Government's propaganda machinery is seized of the matter, the whole food problem will be solved. Now, Sir, the latest decision of the National Development Council is to go in for State trading of foodgrains. Sir, the Council just passes a decree that there will be State trading in foodgrains, but it does not give even a moment's thought to the question as to whether the country has sufficient administrative machinery or whether the country has got sufficient buffer stocks which might be needed for this purpose. It just announces that our country will go in for State trading. Sir, on the National Development Council all the Chief Ministers are represented. They attend these meetings, and when they go back to their

respective States, some obey the Council's decisions and others do not. The Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Bihar did not implement this decision, whereas all the other States have entered into this State trading. I do not know the facts in other States. But as far as the State of Rajasthan is concerned, well, the whole thing has become a laughing stock. I am not exaggerating it, but I am telling you the truth, and I hope the hon. Minister will kindly bear it in mind.

Now, Sir, what is happening in Rajasthan? In the first instance, they have no warehouses where the procured food could be stored or where our farmers and producers could store their foodgrains. Secondly, Sir, the officers have been appointed straightaway. The Ganganagar District of Bikaner Division is the granary of Rajasthan and the Ganganagar Mandi is one of the biggest mandis in the country. Only about three weeks ago, Sir, I was in Ganganagar, and I can say that those officers were themselves laughing at the whole thing. The whole scheme has become a laughing stock. And what is that scheme?

Of course, Sir, they are not concerned with those producers. The system there is that after the harvest food is brought to the mandis. And in those mandis there are foodgrains magnates. The officers there tell these magnates "All right, you give us only 50 per cent, of the grain which is in your possession and you are free to export the rest anywhere." In the case of smaller mandis, Sir, they have even allowed the railway stations to book foodgrains. And what is the result? In such mandis where they are not procuring, foodgrains, foodgrains are taken by road transport. And in places where 50 per cent, of the foodgrains are procured, the result is that on the remaining 50 per cent, the traders and businessmen are making very good profits, and they are profiting so much that they can afford to give even 50 per cent, to the Gov-

[Shri Jaswant Singh] ernment. And when we put a question to them privately, they say that there is not much profit, because at the time of getting licences and on other occasions too they have to part with a good amount of money towards Congress subscriptions. So, illy, poor fellows, they have to make as much money as they can when the sun shines.

Sma M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH: That is not only with Rajasthan but with many States.

Sma JASWANT SINGH: As the time is short, I cannot reply to ray hon. friend. The result is that a strange phenomenon has set in where, when there was less production in the country, the prices were not so high, but now that we have been told that every year the production is increasing, the increase in the price is also keeping pace with the larger production. This is a thing which cannot be understood and I hope the new Food Minister will kindly bear this in mind.

Again the position is a very peculiar one which a lay-man or an ordinary man cannot understand. Who is pleased with the food situation? There are three parties concerned. One is the agriculturist. I can definitely say that in my part of the country the agriculturists are not at all happy. They are as a matter of fact, very unhappy and they are cursing the Government. Then there are the traders. They are also not happy though they can manage, because they are very clever people, to make some money, but then the demands on their pockets have increased so much and the taxes and other things have also gone up so high that even they are cursing the Government. Then the other party is the consumer. Most of us are consumers here and we know to our own bitter experience what we have to go through to get good foodgrains at a reasonable price.

If we were living in a proper democratic country, as it is properly understood, and not in a country where there is one party only, I am sure our friends who are sitting in the Tribunes would not have been there because very nearly we are on the verge of dictatorship. It is only on Mr. Nehru's personal prestige that the Congress is holding its position and the country is holding its position but the question is already being mooted as to 'what after Nehru.' But in regard to policies of this nature, certainly it is a very serious thing which we have to think over in due course. (Time bell rings.)

I wanted to give a reply to Mr. Khandubhai Desai, but as there is no time for me, I will come to the last point. Sometimes the Ministry gets such fantastic ideas that it is very difficult for a common man to comprehend and then they regret about it later, but at the cost of whom? It is at the cost of the poor consumers and the people generally in the country. Here was the question of zones. When two years ago they made Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bombay into one zone, we requested the predecessor of the hon. Minister, Shri Jam. For God's sake, don't go on with this". He said 'No, it is the national interest that should be taken' and he went in for this. In the Committee which the Prime Minister called 'The All-Parties Committee' I raised the question and they said 'It has to be done'. Now, it has been withdrawn but after ruining Rajasthan what happened? What happened was that the foodgrains produced in that locality were shunted off to Bombay side. The prevailing prices were Rs. 15 a maund and in Bombay they got Rs. 30 a maund or Rs. 35 a maund. The local produce went to Bombay while the foreign foodgrains which came from outside and landed at Bombay, were brought to Bikaner. It is a thing like carrying coal to Newcastle. We agree with the hon. Minister, but he would not listen. Eventually we

reached a kind of revolution stage and a sort of revolution was to take place; shops were about to be looted and then they had to yield but not when we spoke reasonably to them.

Take the question of gram. The Ganganagar district produces practically 90 per cent, of the produce of Rajasthan. This gram they procured at Rs. 10/8/- a maund last September while in the Punjab the gram was being sold at Rs. 21 a maund. May we send our gram to South India and Delhi. Now, they began to restrict its export. The people asked, 'What to do?' But these traders are very clever people. They can always hoodwink the Government and get what they want. They began to turn this gram into dal and there was no restriction on dal and then when some other traders protested, these people said 'We have dal mills and the labour will be idle if they are closed and so we should be allowed' and then it began to be allowed. Then they began to sell it at Rs. 30 a maund. Again we approached the Food Minister, but he would not listen. These people have made tons of money and they said that they had given donations and taxes. Therefore, in the end, I would submit that these are the matters which the hon. Food Minister might take into consideration and have a realistic policy. I had certain other suggestions to give, and since my time is limited I cannot touch on them. With these words, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

SHRI B. SHIVA RAO (Mysore): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, in the first place, may I congratulate my hon. friend Mr. S. K. Patil on the courage with which he has stepped into a seat where some of his predecessors had come to grief? I am certain that he is under no illusion as to the formidable nature of the task he has undertaken. I am sure he has the good wishes of every section of the House and of every party in the country in attempting to solve the problem

of food in this country. I hope he has already seen this 'Report on India's food crisis and step to meet it', which was prepared by the Agricultural Production Team sponsored by Ford Foundation. I will only lead to the House two brief paragraphs which indicate the nature of the problem which my hon. friend has undertaken:

"We have reached the inescapable conclusion that a rapid increase in production of food is India's primary problem in achieving human welfare, social justice and democracy over the next seven years.

The report of our findings and our proposals are for emergency action. . .

We have recognized, as have India's leaders, the stark threat of 28-million tons shortfall in foodgrain supplies by the end of the Third Five Year Plan (1966) unless rates of increase in food production are immediately accelerated to three times their present speed."

Of course, the authors of the report express their confidence that this crisis can and will be prevented and I hope their confidence is well placed. I do not expect the Food Minister who has only just taken charge of this portfolio, to be in a position today to give us a comprehensive and realistic picture of the policy he is going to pursue, but I would like to suggest that, between now and the next Session of Parliament, when I hope we shall have a proper food debate, he will see to it that a White Paper is issued, somewhat on the lines of this pamphlet which was given to us last year, on the food situation in the country. One indication which he has given already, soon after taking charge of his office, I welcome. I am judging from newspaper reports of a statement which he is said to have made immediately after taking charge. He is believed to have said that he would strive for the co-ordination of the efforts and policies of some of the Central Ministries, and in particular,

[Shri B. Shiva Rao.] the Ministry of Irrigation and Power, the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Over and above all that, I would like to suggest that he should strive for similar co-ordination of effort and policy between his own Ministry and the State Ministries of Food and Agriculture. I say this because I think, Sir, that one of the main weaknesses, one of the structural weaknesses, if I may so put it, of the administration of food in this country, has been that while all-India policies have been shaped and announced from New Delhi, no doubt with the consent of the State Ministries of Food and Agriculture, for their implementation we rely entirely on the State Ministries. And it is there that I think, his predecessors have come to grief.

As an example of what I mean, I may refer to the zonal system. In this pamphlet to which I referred earlier, it was stated last year: that the main strategy of the Food Department has been—

"to create more or less self-sufficient zones and to segregate heavily deficit areas or other important consuming centres, where Government could release adequate stocks of foodgrains from the central reserve."

And then this pamphlet goes on to say that the creation of the southern zone has practically solved the problem of Kerala. Similarly—I am again reading from the same report—they say:

"the creation of the wheat zone has been very useful."

Sir, it seems to me that these have been rather facile assumptions and they have not been justified by the results. The State Governments are not at all agreed today either about the demarcation of the boundaries of the different zones or as to their scope and functions. Deficit States naturally would like to have surplus States,

their more fortunate neighbours, included in the zone, whereas these surplus States would like for equally understandable reasons, to be left alone. What has complicated the situation with regard to the zonal system has, of course, been the decision in favour of State trading. On this vital point, the Food Minister who has just gone out of office, made some very disturbing remarks in the other House. My own comment on them is that I wish he had realised the implication of that system much earlier and that he had taken the action that he did a few days ago, as soon as State trading in foodgrains was introduced. I would like to suggest to Mr. Patil that the manner in which far-reaching decisions like these are taken, should be carefully examined.

I would here draw his attention to a report which was published, I think last year, about which not much has been heard. This is a report of the Agricultural Administration Committee, which was published in October, 1958. Sir, having regard to the limited time at my disposal, I will only content myself with inviting the attention of the Food Minister to one or two salient recommendations which this Committee made. It drew the attention of the Government to the growing tendency of depending for stimulus from the Centre—they say it with reference to the State Ministries—for taking action concerning subjects which are the responsibility of the States. And then they go on to say that the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture which are almost 30 years old, have not yet been undertaken, that a very large number of temporary posts are still there, some 30 to 80 per cent, of them still exist in the State Departments of Agriculture and so on. And there are a large number of other recommendations. I would like the new Minister to tell us when he gives his reply either today or in the White Paper which I suggested he should issue, after ascertaining from the State Ministries, how many of these

recommendations have been implemented and how many yet remain to be carried out.

Sir, I referred earlier to this pamphlet on the food situation. On page 2 reference is made to the caloric value of the food consumption in this country and to the very low standard of living, and it is pointed out that according to the F.A.O. the per capita consumption in India should include all food items. Here I would like to draw the attention of the Food Minister to the fact that although there has been a great deal of discussion about things like fisheries, 'actually very little has been done and I hope he will give more attention to the development of fisheries both on our seas and in our inland waters.

There is another point in this pamphlet to which I would invite attention and that is with regard to our food statistics. On page 2 there is a reference to the increase in food production. In 1953, it was 49.2 million tons and in 1957 it was 60.83 million tons, and I believe the latest figure is 73 million tons. I raise this point because I am not at all certain about the accuracy of our food statistics. I say this because about a year or two ago I made an attempt to secure confirmation of the statistics—given to us on the floor of the House from certain officials attached to the Planning Commission and I got a very remarkable statement in reply. I was told that in one State—I do not want to name the State—the preliminary estimate of food was 1.1 million tons whereas the Planning Commission's estimate was 19 million tons. At the end of the year it was found at the final stage that the actual figure was much nearer the estimate of the Planning Commission. In another State, a neighbouring one, the State Ministry's preliminary estimate was 1.5 million tons whereas the Planning Commission's estimate was 2.2 million tons and the final figure was just a little over 2 million tons. These wide disparities in food statistics, I think, must be presenting a very serious

problem for the Central Food Ministry. I would like the Food Minister to ascertain how far the State Ministries are adequately equipped for collecting statistics and how far they deliberately understate their productions, for obvious reasons.

While on the subject of statistics, I would like to invite the attention of the Food Minister to the fact that sometimes we have been misled by astronomical claims made by countries like China. In 1957 we were told—I am quoting this figure from an official publication of the Chinese Government—that the per acre production of rice in China was 250,000 lbs. In 1958 the figure jumped from 250,000 lbs. to 8 lakhs pounds, and that has been quoted by one of the Ministers in this country. Rather than pursue these fantastic figures abroad, I would like to suggest to the Food Minister to pay more attention to what is being actually achieved in this country. Sir, I have here a statement made by a landowner in Tanjore district. He has a plot of 11 acres on which in 1952 he produced 24,000 lbs. of paddy or an average of a little over 2,000 lbs. per acre. And then through the use of green manures, improved seeds and a certain amount of chemical fertilizers, in five years he has been able to raise the production from these 11 acres from 24,000 lbs. to very nearly 55,000 lbs., an increase, as he points out, of more than 125 per cent. I think the Food Minister might do well to pay more attention to what is being achieved in this country by practical farmers who realise the value of these new experiments rather than send delegations abroad. (*Time bell rings.*)

One last point, Sir, before I sit down and it is this. I hope the new Minister will pay much more attention to such things as minor irrigation projects, clearance of silt from tanks and channels, improvement of tank bunds and catchment areas. I mention this with particular reference to South India because it seems that at a very little expense you will be able to augment food supply much more

[Shri B. Shiva Rao.] than by any of the large-scale schemes that we have so far undertaken.

SHRI T. S. PATTABIRAMAN (Madras): Mr. Deputy Chairman, we have been talking about food scarcity for a very long time and it is a paradox that we are not able to solve it and though we have gone through twelve years of freedom and nearly two five Plans, the food problem remains the problem of the country. I hope we will come to a final solution very soon.

Sir, during the Budget discussion and in the food debate held in May last, the Food Minister announced in this House that due to bumper harvest and increased import of foodgrains, prices of foodgrains were likely to come down very much and that there would be an easing of the situation. In support of this contention, a lot of statistics was shown to fortunately in regard to rice, more especially in the South, the prices have gone up from Rs. 30 per maund then to Rs. 40 per maund now. I do not know what is wrong or where it is wrong or whether the Food Minister was given wrong hopes or false statistics.

SHRI BHUPKSH GUPTA: Or, false hopes or wrong statistics.

SHRI T. S. PATTABIRAMAN: . . . or whether he misread the situation or even whether the Department misled him but the real fact is that prices have gone up beyond the capacity of the ordinary consumer and millions in this country are in a very difficult situation to adjust their budget. Nearly eighty per cent, of our people, whatever may be other sources, will have to depend on rice as a staple food in the South. The entire economy of our country depends on agriculture and if prices of foodgrains go up, then automatically prices of other articles also go up. In an agrarian economy like ours, food constitutes the backbone and the lifeline of the people. As such, un-

less we, solve the problem of food to the satisfaction of all concerned and bring down the prices to a reasonable level wherein the common man can always purchase, our economy is to founder in the near future. Sir, there are certain things over which we have no control, just like drought, floods or famine but there are certain other things which we can and must control. In that respect, Sir, I think that the present-situation . . .

SHRI M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH: There is the policy calamity.

SHRI T. S. PATTABIRAMAN . . . in the South could very well have been avoided, at least to a great extent, if the Centre had been more careful and had accepted the advice of the States. I am firmly of opinion that the problem of food should be the main and sole concern and responsibility of the States. They know how to tackle the situation; they know their own resources and the responsibility of the Centre should only be the co-ordination and guiding part of it. The Centre should help whenever required. I hope that the present Food Minister will take a bold decision and create each State as a zone by itself. Why I say this is there has been much interference by the Centre in this matter even against the wishes of the States sometimes. The Centre also could not help the States to the extent needed. We were self-sufficient in Madras. In 1950, we produced seventeen lakh tons and in 1959 our production is thirty-two lakh tons. In Andhra also, there has been a similar increase but in Kerala for the past 24 years they have not increased their production. Most unfortunately, the progressive producing State and the static State have been clubbed together and prices of paddy and rice were fixed much earlier in Andhra and in Madras. The harvest had been harvested, paddy had come into the market and merchants were purchasing paddy and rice in the market but even then the price was not fixed.

Kerala with the result that most of the paddy in Andhra and Madras went to Keraia and Madras was depleted to the extent of four lakh tons of rice with the result that foodgrain prices shot up in the producing areas while it became cheaper in the *(I)* Areas. Even in spite of repeated protests of the State Government, no 'bund' was constructed by which this movement could have been checked which would have resulted in a stabilisation of the prices. On the other hand, the Central Ministry was very benevolent to Kerala and wanted to give the Communists all the help. As a result of this, Madras State which could have been self-sufficient was depleted of its stock. Why I say this is to point out that in spite of our best efforts to increase production by fifty or sixty per cent., we are still in a difficult position which is due to the policy of the Central Government. If the Centre had acceded to the request of the State and had created zones comprising of individual States, Andhra could have given five lakh tons, Madras could have been self-sufficient and Kerala could have been guaranteed the supply of rice from Andhra and other sources. I would request the Food Minister to consider whether it is not too late to abolish the existing Southern Zone and instead create one zone for each State. I understand that the Government of Madras has put in a very strong plea to the Government of India and that it is likely to be considered. I am sure that the new Food Minister will be able to come to a decision more quickly and that too a favourable decision. This way, Andhra would be able to supply its surplus rice to the Centre, Madras would be self-sufficient and Keraia would get all the requirements of foodgrains either from import or from procurement from other surplus States. If that is done, a lot of difficulties would be overcome.

I welcome the policy of State trading in foodgrains. I am one of those people who believe that food should not be toyed with like this. After twelve years if you

are not able to give food to the common people at reasonable rates, I think many people will think that freedom after all has not got any very great meaning. There is no point in believing in the ordinary idiosyncrasies. I have no belief in the fair-play of these people. It is very necessary that the Government should take a bold decision and take into its hand the trading in food-grains, both retail and wholesale. The State should take over the responsibility of feeding the people in the remotest villages by opening departmental shops which would supply grains at reasonable rates to the people throughout the year. The main point is the supply of foodgrains throughout the year. Some months after the harvest, the position becomes difficult and the villagers must be assured of a continuous supply at reasonable prices and the quantity which they require. The villager has not the means of buying the entire quantity required for a year. The only way to achieve this is for the State to take up the entire trade in foodgrains, not only wholesale but retail also. If only wholesale is taken up and retail trade is left in the hands of the private traders, this problem will continue to remain with us. If Government is to enter the field and take up trade in foodgrains, then it should take up both the wholesale and the retail sectors in order to see that ordinary people get foodgrains at reasonable rates. I appreciate the difficulty. I know it is colossal; it is almost an impossible task but it is worth doing because that is the only way of satisfying millions of people in this country, people who have no other means of increasing their income. If that is done, it will be better. Otherwise, there is no use. State trading in foodgrains was tried in a half-hearted manner. Who gained by this? The agriculturists did not profit; the State got all the bad name and the merchants, the intermediary classes, were the only people who made a lot of money while all the blame was put on the Government. We were unable to reply to these things properly.

[Shri T. S. Pattab'raman.] I am sure that the new Minister will be able to evolve a policy by which he will guarantee people food at reasonable prices even in the remotest villages throughout the year. The Centre's responsibility should also be minimised. Each State should be able to make its own arrangements for production and distribution of food. Leave all the minute details to the States. It should be for the State to decide whether to ban movement by lorry from one State to another State or from one district to another district. Each State should be given the liberty to arrange its own matters but should submit in advance the figures regarding production and demand. If there is a deficit, to that extent the Centre should guarantee supplies either from imports or from the surplus stocks acquired from other States. Beyond that I think, Sir, it is not necessary; it is not in the interest of the food control itself, in the interest of the food policy itself, that the Central Government should commit itself and then burn its fingers and get all the bad name. I do not blame the ex-Food Minister for the failures. It was the policy that he pursued, it was the wrong advice that his experts gave him, that was responsible for his downfall. I hope the new Minister will take a lesson and will be able to work independently of his advisers even though they may be at times correct.

Sir, I would only like to mention one point about sugar production. In North India the sugar problem is a serious problem and to that extent Madras and other areas have also been affected. But I wonder whether sufficient attention has been paid to the production of more sugar in the country. Of late, there has been a short-sighted view of not licensing more sugar mills. I know that about nine or ten cooperative sugar mills have applied for permission and the Madras Government have recommended the opening of 10 or 12 sugar mills in the Southern area. Similarly, Andhra also has made applications but the experts here

in the Department have said that the over-all production at present is quite sufficient and that no more mills are necessary. And when they are faced with a crisis like this, they try to shift the blame elsewhere. Sir, it is time they decided that the southern area can produce more sugarcane. As a matter of fact there the yield per acre of cane is nearly 30 to 40 tons whereas in Uttar Pradesh it is only about 20 to 25 tons and the sugar content in the cane is also much higher in Southern India than in Uttar Pradesh. Why should you stand in the way of more sugar mills being opened in the South? Why should the Government stand on rigid formalities and refuse permission for sugar mills to be opened at least in the co-operative sector? I would request the hon. Minister to review the policy of licensing of sugar mills especially in the southern region. Sir, with these observations I conclude.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI A. M. THOMAS) : Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I am glad that by and large there has been a proper understanding of the food situation in the country as reflected in the various speeches delivered today. I am not at the same time ignoring the very fighting speech of my hon. friend, Shri Bhupesh Gupta, and also the somewhat cynical speech of Mr. Jaswant Singh.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Thank you.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I will come* to the various points raised by them.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I gave a fighting speech for a fighting man.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: My friend, Shri Bhupesh Gupta, in the course of his very eloquent speech said a very nice thing that as far as he was concerned and as far as his party was concerned, they were prepared to extend the hand of "nir"ism to the Government in spite of the fact that many of his comrades were in jail

AN HON. MEMBER: Whkh hand?' Eight hand on left hand?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, it is not by a mere expression of sympathy or by mere expression of words that the hand of co-operation is extended. The test of the pudding is in the eating of it. My hon. friend from West Bengal Dr. Dutt, said that although the Communist Party and some of the other leftist parties . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: All others - except the P.S.P.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: . . . which are co-operating with the Communist Party are making a hell of a noise -about the rise in prices, about dehoard-ing operations, about procurement from the producers and other things, from his personal knowledge he has been stating that as far as the necessary co-operation from the cultivators was concerned, the Communist Party was putting obstacles in the way. Sir, I did not believe it; I found it very difficult to believe that. Last year while I was in Tripura complaints Were made by the Communist Party that the Government was not procuring from the Ziratia tenants, that is, Pakistanis who had lands in Tripura. I went into the question and then I was faced with the position that it was the very same party which was complaining about non-procurement of paddy or rice as the case may be from the Ziratia tenants that was putting obstacles in the way. I found it very difficult to believe that but that was the answer that was given while I was in Tripura.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Because your Food Minister took certain . . .

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, I respectfully ask my friend whether co-operation lies in quitting the All-Parties Committee that was formed by the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

Sim BHUPESH GUPTA: Because n<v one sugession was accepted and therefore they resigned.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I am n«t j yielding. I have only limited time. Sir, the Prime Minister in all good faith formed an All-Parties Committee here and my hon. friend also happens to be a member. And he also wrote to the various Chief Ministers that they must also form similar Committees at the State level and I understood that almost all the States followed suit including West Bengal. Now instead of giving co-operation and working in that Committee, my friends have left that Committee. If this is the kind of co-operation . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: The Food Minister of Bengal made a farce of it.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I do not know what sort of co-operation we can expect from them.

Sir, my friend was referring to the agitaidh in West Bengal and also to the resignation of Shri A. P. Jain and saying that the resignation indicated that he had not done well, as has been stated by the Prime Minister in his letter to him. But I must state for the information of the House, although hon. Members know about it, that we had soma very difficult years after the attainment of independence. We had certain very good years; we had very bad years also. We had floods; we had droughts and the last year, 1957-58, was perhaps the worst year among the last four or five years. There has been a drop in production to the extent of 6.7 million tons. Sir, I ask the honourable House, does it not lie to the credit of Shri A. P. Jain and his Ministry . . .

SHRI M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH: Better bring him back.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: . . . that in spite of this very heavy shortfall ir production, by and large he has been able to tide over the situation? There might have been rise in prices in certain areas but by and large he has been able to tide over the situation satisfactorily. Sir, I ask whether any person in post-independent India has died of starvation. There have been

[Shri A. M. Thomas.] some reports here and there, but all those cases which have been enquired into have proved that they were all ss and I would say that it is to the credit of post-independent India . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Now I understand that the Deputy Minister should go.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: . . . that nobody has died of starvation, although in my friend's own State, in pre-independent India, people died in lakhs like rats.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI M. V. KRISHNAPPA): What was Mr. Bhupesh Gupta doing at that time?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

SHRI M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH: We were thinking of exports of foodgrains to other countries.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I will presently deal with the general position with regard to food that is now obtaining. I may at the outset state that although there is the paradox of record production and rise in prices, the food position in the country is not so alarming as is made out to be.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: It is only beyond one's power.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I am not ignoring the States of West Bengal and Bombay, but I shall deal with the other States first and then find out whether the position is bad or the position is satisfactory. Sir, the production of all foodgrains taken together has reached, as the hon. House knows, the record of 73.5 million tons. My hon. friend, Shri Shiva Rao, was raising some doubts with regard to the statistical position. I do not claim that the statistics with regard to food production are absolutely correct and that there is no scope for improvement. In fact, as to how

far improvement can be effected in the machinery which is engaged in the collection of statistics, is always being enquired into by us and necessary steps are being taken. The Asoka Mehta Committee was appointed in 1957. As the House knows, as far as the year 1956-57 was concerned, it was a good year for us. The production was 68.7 million tons. Then also there was this apparent paradox of high production and rise in prices. They felt a doubt that the statistics relating to food production might not be quite correct and they made their own assessments. They made their own checks. The Committee came to this conclusion and I shall just read one or two sentences from page 42 of the Report: —

"In view of the recent rise in prices some people doubt whether the increase in production in 1956-57 had in fact taken place. The results of some special field investigations carried out on our behalf by various research institutions, over and above our observations and enquiries in the course of our tour of the country, however, seem to confirm that an increase in production in 1956-57 over 1955-56 did take place. For instance, special surveys carried out on our behalf by the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission, the Agro-Economic Research Centres and other non-official organisations show that the production of foodgrains in 1956-57 has been, on the whole, higher than in 1955-56."

They came to the conclusion that by and large the statistics of food production should be correct. All the same, there is this paradox which we face even now and I may say that one explanation for the high prices, in spite of our record production, is the fact that in the previous year, we had a drop, which I just now explained, namely, a drop to the extent of 6.7 million tons. Last year, the prices of wheat during the pre-harvest period even touched the unprecedented level of Rs. 26 to Rs. 27 per maund and the rice prices also reached very high.

levels. This year, in Punjab and Rajasthan, the wholesale price of common *Dara* quality of wheat now ranges between Rs. 14.50 and Rs. 15 per maund, in Madhya Pradesh the price of *Plssi* wheat is Rs. 15 to Rs. 15.50 per maund and in Uttar Pradesh the retail prices of common variety of wheat range between Rs. 17 and Rs. 19 per maund. The all-India index number of wholesale prices of wheat which had touched the peak figure of 130 during the pre-harvest period is now 95.8 as compared to 98.3 during the corresponding period last year.

The position with regard to rice also is not so bad as has been pictured by some of the hon. Members. In Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, which are heavily surplus States and are cordoned off, the prices are fairly low, being Rs. 15 to Rs. 16 per maund in Madhya Pradesh and Rs. 15 to Rs. 17 in Orissa for common rice. In Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the prevailing prices of rice, generally speaking, are appreciably lower than those which prevailed during the corresponding period last year. In the South as my friend, Shri Paitahiraman has pointed out, the prices have been generally higher than those during last year, but a downward tendency is clearly noticeable. And, of late, although my friend said that rice prices prevailing may come to Rs. 30, according to the figures I have got it seems that in Madras for common rice, the price ranges from Rs. 28 to Rs. 23. In Kerala where the rice prices should be the highest, the latest reports are to the effect that the prices have come down and there has been a reduction to the extent of from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4/- from the peak prices that were obtaining in the months of June-July.

SHRI M. V. KRISHNAPPA: After the fall of the Communist Government.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: So, there has been some improvement in the South also and the position, as far as

the South is concerned, is not so bad now at least, as has been stated by my friend, Shri Pattabiraman. I may also say that with the harvesting of the Kant crop in Kerala, the *Basangi* crop in Andhra and the *Kuruvai* crop in Madras, the prices may go down further.

In the States of Bombay and West Bengal, the position is not very satisfactory. I may at the same time invite the attention of the honourable House to certain facts and figures that are obtainable in respect of West Bengal as well as Bombay. I will first deal with the case of West Bengal. It is true that the over-all food production in the country has reached the record figure of 73.5 million tons and the rice production is 29.7 million tons, but as far as West Bengal is concerned, the picture is a little different. In 1956-57 West Bengal produced 45.73 lakh tons of rice; in 1957-58, it went down to 43.07 lakh tons. As I have already stated, 1957-58 is the worst year from the point of view of agricultural production in this country. Sir, in 1958-59 the production had come down still further from the year 1957-58. The production had come down to 40.53 lakh tons. There has been this considerable shortfall in production, and the effect of this shortfall was aggravated by the uneven incidence of the decline in production over different areas of the State. Although the overall drop in production from the previous year has only been 5.9 per cent, in the districts north of the Ganga, most of which are deficit districts, the production was to the extent of 33 per cent, more than that of 1957-58. In the southern districts the shortfall was to the extent of 14.8 per cent. The southern districts are normally surplus and they take unto themselves the major urban and industrial areas of West Bengal. Now, we can easily understand the position. Now, in the normally deficit districts, that is the northern districts, there has been 33 per cent, increase production; whereas in the southern

[Shri A. M. Thomas.] districts there has been 14-8 per cent reduction in production. In the normally deficit district; there has been some increase. In the normally surplus districts there has been this reduction. So the result is that there has been a substantial drop in the marketable surplus.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: No, no. What is the overall drop?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: 59 per cent.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: According to Dr. Roy it is 15 lakh tons.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Because of this disparity obtaining, that, in deficit areas getting a little more and surplus areas getting very much less, the result has been that the marketable surplus has been reduced considerably. There has been an acute situation in the urban and industrial areas, and as the honourable House knows, it is variations in marketable surplus, variations in production, which will have a considerable effect on the price structure.

Sir, much has been stated about the policies that have been followed by the West Bengal Government. I am not going into detail; regarding them.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: West Bengal's Food Ministry is a managing agency of profiteers.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, West Bengal was in a position in which the alternatives were whether there should be availability of rice for which higher prices would have to be paid or there would be this controlled price on paper and there would not be any availability of rice at all. That was the position that was facing the West Bengal Government. They gave very serious thought to the situation and finally came to the conclusion that under the present circumstances it was availability that was more impor-

tant even if the consumers would have to pay a little higher price.

Sir, my friend was saying what considerable difficulties the consumers in West Bengal were being put to. When these controlled prices were existing, it would be interesting to know that in Calcutta out of 54-5 lakhs of people 52 lakhs of people were having their ration cards—out of 54-5 lakhs. 52 lakhs. The situation was such that the higher income groups were prepared to give anything for getting the rice of their choice. They could not get the rice, and those persons also had recourse to these ration cards. Normally, high salaried-officers need not go in for ration cards, but in Calcutta the position was reached when officers 'drawing high salaries like Secretaries to the Government, Judges- of the High Court, etc., also began to apply for ration cards because rice was not available at all. In the districts also you will find that about 63 lakhs of people . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Am I to understand that 52 lakhs of people" are made up of Judges and Secretaries to Governmr

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I do not think that Calcutta is such a poor city as is depicted by my friend. Sir, in the districts about 63 lakhs of people are drawing their supplies from the fair price shops or what are called the modified ration shops. And out of a total population of 240 lakhs in the districts of West Bengal, about 90 lakhs fall, in terms of the various categories .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: The population has increased.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: . . . they fall in category 'A', that is those who are entitled to rice ration. What I am making out is this. As far as the low income groups are concerned, as far as the poor people are concerned, they! could have their rice from the moat-| tied ration shops.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: How much?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: One and a half seers of rice and one seer of wheat.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: One seer of rice and one and a half seers of wheat.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Whatever it be, for one adult I think, on the basis of a 12 ounce ration, that will be sufficient. So, this was the position, Sir. As far as the low income groups were concerned they could get their supplies from the modified ration shops. As for the better income groups, that is people who could afford to pay and who insisted on certain qualities of rice, they did not mind paying a little more in the open market and purchased the rice which they wanted. We have therefore to consider this question from this larger context, whether the low income groups or the poor people suffer now. They do not. In all humility I submit . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Are you saying it seriously?

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA (Uttar Pradesh): May I know whether the Government are not in duty bound to take some measures also for the control of prices for those people who are to purchase from the open market
(*Interruption*).

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: So, Sir, the Centre has made available the necessary supplies to the West Bengal Government so as to meet the entire requirements of the low income groups through the modified ration shops. They can draw 1½ seers of rice and 1 seer of wheat . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You should check up the figures. It is 1 seer of rice and 1½ seers of wheat.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Even then that will be sufficient if you based your ration on 12 ounces per head. So, what I want to emphasise is this that there is no hardship. The deficit of West Bengal was calculated to be to the extent of 8.5 lakh tons. By our supplies in the next one or two months, we may be supplying to the extent of about 11 lakh tons to West Bengal. That is the case, Sir, as far as West Bengal is concerned.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Has the hon. Minister's attention been drawn to the statement that it is 15 lakh tons?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, in the other House it has been mentioned that an agro-economic survey has been conducted, and they have now come to the conclusion that no significant stocks seem to have been built up by wholesale traders. They also say that the price consciousness of the producer has combined with his capacity to withhold his produce. They also analysed the various reasons for the low arrivals in the markets. The large producers especially have got a better hoarding capacity and that is also made clear in this report. It is true that we have put a squeeze on bank credit on this account. But the same credit available to the producer has increased substantially in recent years, and I find that the loan advanced by primary agricultural credit societies in 1957-58 was Rs. 96.08 crores. In 1958-59 the estimated amount is Rs. 130 crores, so that there is this large expansion of co-operative credit. I do not say that the expansion of co-operative credit is solely responsible for this. There are other factors—the developmental expenditure, partly the deficit financing, the increase in population and so many other circumstances have added to this.

I shall just say a word or two about Bombay which has been made mention of by my friend on the opposite side. Sir, the problem of Bombay has been a difficult one.

LShri A. M. Thomas.J

High prices of foodgrains are existing there now. The main reason for these high prices is that the normal internal resources of rice and wheat to Bombay State have been cut off as a result of the zonal restrictions on the movement of rice and wheat. Bombay, as you know, Sir, is a wheat zone. It was originally coupled with Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Also for rice it was depending mainly on the supplies from Madhya Pradesh. Those sources have now been cut off. Bombay has now, therefore, to depend on its own resources and upon the supply that the Centre is giving it from its Central reserves. In 1958 1,65,000 tons were supplied to Bombay from the Central stocks. We have promised to make available 2,30,000 tons in 1959, although the supply this year will be more. But the fact remains that the Government of India have not been able to meet the requirements of Bombay State for rice fully. But even then, there is a considerable balance left out of the quantity that we have promised, and we believe that in the next two months, with a more liberal supply to the Government of Bombay, the position will ease, and by November, the main Bombay rice crop will be in to arrive. With regard to wheat, the position is a little peculiar. We are now supplying to Bombay fifty to sixty thousand tons of imported wheat to be distributed monthly in the Bombay State. We have also promised the State Government that we would be prepared to supply any quantity of overseas wheat if— «M»W1V thruoh fir nrice shop-. But there is, however, a strong preference for indigenous wheat in Bombay although from the point of view of nutritive value, imported wheat is as good as the indigenous wheat, if not better. And some people think that the imported wheat, especially the red wheat, has more

price, and it is not a riot going

into that aspect. But in Bombay there is a strong preference for indigenous wheat. Although imported

wheat is being issued at Rs. 14 per maund and is being sold by dealers at, between Rs. 10 and Rs. 16 per maund, a substantial percentage of the population of Bombay State prefers to purchase indigenous wheat at the higher price of Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per maund. The distribution of imported wheat is to meet the need of the poorer sections of the population. Though the lower income group is getting its supplies of imported wheat at the low price of Rs. 15 to Rs. 16 per maund, it is only the better placed person who can afford to spend a little more money on wheat and who actually purchases indigenous wheat at higher prices.

My friend, Shri Khandubhai Desai, was raising the question that as far as flour mills are concerned, we must make it a point to supply them with overseas wheat, that is, imported wheat. As far as possible, we have also been sticking to that policy so far as Bombay is concerned where the flour mills cannot purchase indigenous wheat and for their requirements they have to be satisfied with the overseas wheat. But in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan the flour mills can purchase indigenous wheat. Both these States are having a surplus and this year has been a year of record

production as far as wheat 5 P.M. is concerned in these two

States. So, we thought that it might not be quite proper to ask the flour mills to be content with overseas supplies, and out of the procured stocks we also wanted to build up some reserves which could only be done if some indigenous wheat was procured by the Government. That is the position with regard to supplies to the flour mills.

Shri Khandubhai Desai made some very nice suggestions which, of course, will be duly taken note of by the Minister, and I am sure my senior colleague when he replies, will also be referring to the suggestions that he has made. He said that as far as revenue collection and

the collection of irrigation cess were concerned, it would be better if we made collections in kind. This suggestion has been under the consideration of the Food and Agriculture Ministry, and we try to work this out in the matter of the fertilisers that we sell to the producers. But there has been considerable resistance to this from the State Governments, that it will be very difficult to work out this step. We have also to realise the practical difficulties in this matter. But all the same, these suggestions would be engaging our very earnest attention certainly. Sir, I will take only one or two minutes more.

Considerable emphasis was given in the various speeches to the matter of State trading. I am not saying anything in a spirit of justification of the steps that we have taken. But all the same, I may say that the scheme of State trading which we placed before this House as well as the other House contemplated two schemes—one the interim scheme and the other the final scheme—and the final scheme required the building up of co-operative organisations at various levels.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: The interim scheme is left to be sabotaged by the final scheme.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: We even then mentioned in our scheme which we placed before this honourable House:

"The Government are aware of the difficulties in the way of undertaking full-scale State trading immediately, in particular of the absence of an adequate administrative organisation, the lack of sufficient storage accommodation and the want of adequate buffer stocks. The scheme therefore falls into two parts—the ultimate pattern and the interim scheme."

Sir, we have encountered some difficulties in this matter and we are
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trying to solve them and the first task to which my senior colleague will be devoting his attention will be how far we can solve the difficulties with which we are confronted in the matter of State trading.

The matter of zones was raised by my friend, Shri Pattabiraman. Zonal arrangement and State trading are intimately connected. Whether there should be a separate zone for each State, whether there should be sufficient zones created and whether there should be purchase operations in both the surplus and deficit States, all these questions are engaging the very serious attention of the Ministry.

Sir, I have done.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is still a large number of speakers and three of them are going away tonight. I would like to give them opportunities to speak. The House may please sit for another forty or forty-five minutes, if necessary.

SHRI B. D. KHOBARAGADE (Bombay): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, only a few months back, the ex-food Minister was exuberant and jubilant and declared that during the last harvest, we had a bumper crop and that was the reason why during the current year the question of food shortage would not arise.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI DAHYA-BHAI V. PATEL) in the Chair.]

But in the course of a few months, we have seen that the food situation in the whole country has worsened. There is an acute shortage of foodgrains in most States of the country. In some parts of the country, particularly in West Bengal, the situation is worst. Prices have gone high and they are soaring every day. From the reports we read in papers it is clear that the prices of foodgrains in West Bengal are higher than they were in 1943 when there was a great famine and about 35 lakhs of people died of

[Shri B. D. Khobaragade.] starvation. The situation in West Bengal is worse than what it was in 1943. The ex-Food Minister stated some time back that we have a bumper crop this year and there would not be any food problem. In spite of that what is the reason for the food shortage that we are experiencing in some parts of the country? In my opinion the answer to this question is the bad distribution system. No efforts were made to distribute the surplus foodgrains on a proper basis to such areas where there was deficit. In view of this bad distribution system the rise in food prices that we are experiencing today could not be averted. In my opinion it could have been averted but the Government did not take proper measures to implement the policy that was formulated by them.

Sir, we were told that the Government would take up trading in foodgrains. But according to the statement of the ex-Food Minister no proper machinery was established. Therefore, we are doubtful whether the Government really wanted to solve this food problem by adopting measures of State trading in foodgrains. If the Government were sincere and honest, they would have implemented their policy and established a proper machinery to carry out this policy. But it seems that the Government want to divert the attention of the masses from the problem by placing before them certain slogans only. But such slogan-mongering is not going to help the nation or solve the food problem that is before the country.

Apart from that, the schemes formulated by the Government to raise production are not being properly implemented. It was stated that the tenants would be given all facilities and their tenancy would be protected. Sir, in all the States tenancy laws were passed, but unfortunately the tenancy laws were not properly enforced and the tenants could not

get any benefit from these laws. When the tenants were being ejected by the landlords no protection was given to the tenants. Therefore, all these schemes and slogans are formulated by the Government only to divert the attention of the masses and not to solve the problem.

Sir, I am rather sceptical about State trading in foodgrains. I wonder if it will be at all successful. As suggested by the ex-Food Minister, to implement this policy a large number of officials and a good machinery are required. If we take into consideration the past experience, it will be noticed that as we have not got officials of integrity it will be "very difficult to implement this policy. Some time ago an Enquiry Committee was appointed by the West Bengal Government to enquire into the food situation there. What are the findings of that Committee? They have publicly stated that the Government officials, and even Ministers, are not able to implement the policy because they are corrupt. The Committee referred to certain allegations made against those officials and Ministers, particularly allegations made by the ex-Minister, Mr. Siddhartha Ray. Those allegations were found to be true by this Enquiry Committee. Therefore, in the absence of a proper machinery and people of integrity it * will not be possible for us to implement the policy of State trading successfully. And, therefore, before we try to implement the State trading policy we should try to find out the proper machinery and proper people to carry out this policy successfully.

Apart from that, as we have noticed in the past year, it is not a question of production alone. Of course, the question of production is also there. But we know that production cannot be increased over-night. During the past few years we have been making efforts to increase production but we have not succeeded. For that purpose we have to devise better distribution measures by which proper distribution

will be made throughout the country. Although we want to make our country self-supporting, we would not be able to do so for some more years. For that purpose the Government should import some foodgrains, particularly rice from Burma and wheat from the United States or any other foreign country so that these surplus foodgrains can be distributed in deficit areas. Then only we can tackle this problem a bit successfully.

Then, Sir, the Government should build buffer stock by procuring foodgrains. Our procurement policy also was a miserable failure this year. We have been able to procure about less than 1 per cent, of the total foodgrains produced in this country even though we had a bumper crop. In order to solve the food problem we should procure at least 10 per cent, of the foodgrains produced in the country. Apart from that, we should augment our buffer stock by importing foodgrains which in turn should be distributed in areas of acute shortage.

About increasing our production I would like to make a few suggestions. Nowadays we are having certain projects in every block area for increasing production of foodgrains. But, unfortunately, if we take into consideration the constitution of the District and Regional Development Boards, we will find that they are manned by people belonging to the party in power. Only those people are found in those committees. In other words, only Congress people are found in those committees. In reply to a question raised in the Bombay Assembly, the hon. Chief Minister of Bombay Government had to say that all the Vice-Presidents of six Regional Development Committees belonged to the Congress Party. That is the situation.

SHRr DEOKINANDAN NARAYAN (Bombay): No, no.

SHRI B. D. KHOBARAGADE: My friend says, "No, no." But facts cannot be suppressed. I will quote a pecu-

liar instance of Brahmapuri tehsil in Chanda District where only family members of Shri Nagmoti, the local congress M.L.A., are the members of the local committees. His brother is the President of the Janpad, *i.e.*, local board. His wife is the President of the Social Welfare Board in that block area. His two brothers-in-law and sister-in-law are the members of that Social Welfare Board. Sir, there may or may not be any progress or development in the Brahmapuri tehsil, but there was some development and progress so far as Nagmoti family was concerned. In this way you cannot improve. Unless we try to get the co-operation of the Opposition parties, it will not be possible for us to enthrone the cultivators to produce more. I would urge upon the hon. the Food Minister to take 'these points into consideration.

In this connection I may refer to another point. For higher production Mr. Bhupesh Gupta just now suggested intensive and extensive cultivation. I may inform you, Sir, that in spite of our demand for waste cultivable land to be given to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe landless labourers during the last four or five years we have not been able to get any land from the Government. We could not get a single acre of cultivable land for them. Ultimately, we had to start our agitation to get cultivable waste land. We started our agitation in West Khandesh, in East Khandesh and in Nasik districts of Bombay State. Thousands of persons have offered Satyagraha and courted arrests. Well, if you give that land, you will be able to solve your food problem and there will be more and, more foodgrains produced. Why don't you give that cultivable waste land to the landless labourers? By that, Sir, not only will you be able to increase your food production, not only will you be able to solve your food problem, but you will also be able to solve the problem of those landless labourers belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and to certain other backward communities.

[Shri B. D. Khobaragade.]

Then, Sir, there is another problem which has been referred to by my friend, Shri Rohit Dave. I think some Congress Member also referred to it. The zonal system that is prevalent at present is not a proper one. These zones should be reorganised and regrouped. So far as the Bombay State is concerned, it has been cordoned off from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and so far as the rice zone is concerned, it has been cordoned off from Madhya Pradesh. And what is the result? In the Bombay State the foodgrain prices have soared high, whereas in Madhya Pradesh the foodgrain prices have gone down. When in the Bombay State, Sir, we are agitating for reducing the prices of foodgrains, in Madhya Pradesh the agitation is going on that the local cultivators and dealers should be allowed to export rice out of Madhya Pradesh and they should be allowed to get some fair price for their crops. Therefore, Sir, I would suggest one thing. So far as these zones are concerned, Bombay and Madhya Pradesh should be formed into one rice zone so that the surplus rice of Madhya Pradesh could be diverted to the Bombay State. And so far as wheat is concerned, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bombay should be formed into one zone so that any surplus in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan could be sent to Bombay. I think the object of having this zonal system is to balance our deficit and surplus position, so that wherever there is a surplus, that surplus can be transferred to certain deficit areas in order to balance the demand and supply position. Therefore, Sir, I would urge upon the hon. Food Minister to consider this suggestion and to form one zone, so far as rice is concerned of Madhya Pradesh and Bombay, and so far wheat is concerned of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bombay. Thank you.

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : आदरणीय उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, जहाँ तक अन्न का सवाल है, हमारी हालत दो सौतेली माताओं के

बच्चों की सी है। एक माता है स्टेट गवर्नमेंट और दूसरी माता है सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट।

श्री जस्पत राय कपूर (उत्तर प्रदेश) : दादी है।

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : स्टैप मदर के पास शिकायत लेकर जाते हैं तो वह कहती है सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट के पास जाइये, सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट के पास जाते हैं तो वह कहती है कि यह मेरे अस्तित्व में नहीं है, स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के पास जाइये। और, होता क्या है कि जब दो मातायें होती हैं तो एक स्टैप मदर होती है किसी न किसी बच्चे की, और कितना भी

श्री अमोलल चंद (उत्तर प्रदेश) : दो मातायें नहीं हो सकती हैं, एक माता होगी एक विमाता होगी।

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : They are both called mothers, though one of them is a step-mother.

तो मेरा कहना यह था कि जब दो मातायें होती हैं और बच्चे जुदा होते हैं तो किसी एक के साथ स्टैप मदरली ट्रीटमेंट हो ही जाती है, वह चाहे या न चाहे। आज वही हालत इस अन्न के सवाल में हो गई है। अलग अलग प्रान्तों में देखियेगा तो कहीं सस्ता है, कहीं महंगा है, जबकि हम एक ही देश के रहने वाले हैं।

श्री हर प्रसाद सबसेना : कहां सस्ता है जरा बता दीजिये।

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : आप सुनेंगे तो मैं बतलाऊंगा, जरा ठहर जाइये। बीच में न बोलिये क्योंकि मेरा समय हो रहा है। तो किसी प्रदेश में सस्ता है तो किसी प्रदेश में महंगा है। नतीजा क्या होता है कि स्मॉलिंग बढ़ती है। मैं जिस राज्य से आता हूं उसी को ले लीजियेगा। बम्बई राज्य डेफिसिट राज्य है। जो हमारे व्यापारी

भाई हैं उनसे हम अपेक्षा नहीं कर सकते उदारता की, भलमनसाहत की। वे खुद अधिक कमाना चाहते हैं, अधिक पैदा करना चाहते हैं और भले ही कोई एरिया डेफिसिट रहे उनको क्या दुख होता है, क्या परवाह रहती है। तो मैं बम्बई राज्य का उदाहरण देना चाहता हूँ। वहाँ आज गेहूँ पच्चीस से तीस रुपये मन के भाव बिक रहा है और गू० पी० में वह १५, १६, १७, १८ रुपये मन से ज्यादा नहीं बिक रहा है।

श्री हर प्रसाद सक्सेना : गलत कह रहे हैं।

श्री देवकीनन्दन नाशायण : गलत नहीं कह रहा हूँ। मैं अभी हाथरस से आ रहा हूँ जहाँ अठारह रुपये मन गेहूँ बिक रहा है। दूसरी बात, आप मध्य प्रदेश को ले लीजिये। वहाँ भी १६, १७, १८ रु० मन गेहूँ मिलता है। जहाँ मैं रहता हूँ वहाँ से दस मील दूर जगह पर मध्य प्रदेश में १६ रु० मन गेहूँ मिलता है और मेरे यहाँ २८ रु० मन मिल रहा है। फिर आप कहते हैं स्मगलिंग न हो। कैसे आप यह संभव समझते हैं, जब कि चार मील जा कर एक बाउंडरी होती है, नदी होती है या पहाड़ होता है और उसको लांघ कर लोग इधर से उधर चले जाते हैं? किस तरह से आप स्मगलिंग को रोक सकते हैं? इंसान और इंसान की हरकतें जब तक मौजूद हैं, तब तक ये बातें जो इतनी विषमता पैदा करती हैं, उनको रोका नहीं जा सकता। और, अभी सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट ने बम्बई की निस्वत क्या किया है वह मैं आपसे कहना चाहता हूँ:

Non-movement belt for 5 miles just near the boundary of the Bombay State adjoining Andhra and Madhya Pradesh States is created.

तो पांच मील का बैन लगा दिया गया है, यानी उस पांच मील से इधर चावल, गेहूँ लेकर आ नहीं सकते और उधर जा नहीं

सकते। मैं पूछना चाहता हूँ कि पांच मील पर क्या आप पुलिस का पहरा रखने वाले हैं ताकि कोई आदमी न आ सके न जा सके। स्मगलिंग को आप रोक नहीं सकते, भले ही आप नॉन मवमेंट बेल्ड क्रिएट करते रहें। मैं समझ सकता हूँ ज्यादा से ज्यादा दो रुपये मन का फर्क हो सकता है। १८ रु० की जगह २० रुपये हो सकता है। मध्य प्रदेश में १६-१७ रु० मन गेहूँ बिक रहा है और बम्बई में, जो कि बिल्कुल बगल में है, वहाँ आज २८-३० रु० मन बिक रहा है। फिर आपने जोन्स पैदा किये हैं। मैं बहुत अदब से कहना चाहता हूँ कि इसमें भी फूड मिनिस्ट्री की इतनी बदलती हुई पालिसी रही है कि हर चार महीने में जोन्स बदलते रहे हैं। जुलाई, १९५७ में एक जोन पैदा किया, सदर्न जोन बना, जहाँ से चावल बाहर जाना बंद कर दिया गया, यानी सदर्न जोन से बम्बई में चावल का आना बंद हो गया। फिर सितम्बर, १९५७ में पंजाब से आना बंद कर दिया गया और फिर २०-१२-५७ से मध्य प्रदेश से जाना बंद कर दिया गया। यदि तीन-तीन, चार-चार महीने में आपकी पालिसी बदलती रहेगी तो सर्वसाधारण जनता क्या करेगी?

यह तो चावल के बारे में है। अब गेहूँ के बारे में लीजिये। १३-६-५७ को सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट ने बम्बई शहर को छोड़ कर बम्बई, मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान का एक जोन बना दिया, उसके बाद १५-४-५८ को बम्बई शहर से बैन निकाल दिया। ७-२-५९ से यह पश्चिम जोन तोड़ दिया और बम्बई, मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान के अलग अलग जोन बना दिये गये। बारह महीने में बम्बई, मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान को दो बार बदला गया। और, अब जो जोन बना है वह बम्बई का एक स्वतंत्र जोन है और पड़ोस में एक है मध्य प्रदेश का,

[श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण]

जिसकी वजह से स्मगलिंग इतना हो रहा है कि चाहे पुलिस खड़ी कर दें, चाहे फौज भी खड़ी कर दें लेकिन स्मगलिंग रुक नहीं सकती है क्योंकि १६ और ३० के भाव में बहुत भारी फर्क है। इसलिये मैं यह कहना चाहता था कि जब डेफिसिट एरिया और सरप्लस एरिया में आप इतना फर्क रखेंगे जैसा कि आज मध्य प्रदेश और बम्बई के बीच है तो कैसे कहा जा सकता है कि हम सब एक देश के रहने वाले हैं, हम सब भाई भाई हैं? जब हम एतराज करते हैं, इस चीज की कम्प्लेंट करते हैं तो हमसे कहा जाता है—मुझे खुद एक मिनिस्टर ने कहा—कि हम क्या करें, मैं चाहता था कि यह न हो पर पंजाब वाले मानते ही नहीं हैं। अरे, पंजाब मानता क्यों नहीं जब वे एक ही हिन्दुस्तान के बाशिन्दे हैं। यानी यहाँ दो सिटिजनशिप चल रही है। एक सिटिजन को तो अनाज सस्ता मिलता है और दूसरा महंगाई से मरा जा रहा है। क्या आप समझ सकते हैं कि आज बम्बई स्टेट को क्या हालत है?

इसके बाद देखिये, आप स्टेट ट्रेडिंग की बात करते हैं और उसमें आपको रास्ते कई दिक्कतें दिखलाई दीं तो आपने प्रोक्योरमेंट की पालिसी चलाई। आपने जो प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी चलाई है वह हर स्टेट के लिये अलग-अलग है। यू० पी० की अलग है, पंजाब, मध्य-प्रदेश, उड़ीसा, आन्ध्र प्रदेश और इसी तरह से दूसरे स्टेटों की भी प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी अलग अलग हैं। यू० पी० में क्या हुआ?

"In U.P. wheat arrivals in the surplus markets have been negligible in June and July in spite of the bumper crops."

नैग्लिजिबल् प्रोक्योरमेंट हुआ। काफी क्यों नहीं हुआ, यह मैं नहीं कह सकता। लेकिन यह कहा जाता है कि इस साल वहाँ पर बम्पर क्राप हुई लेकिन वहाँ की गवर्नमेंट की

जो प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी है वह ऐसी है कि जिसकी वजह से जून और जुलाई के महीने में नैग्लिजिबल् प्रोक्योरमेंट हो सका। यू० पी० गवर्नमेंट की प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी में यह कहा गया था कि जो किसान अपना गल्ला बाजार में बेचने के लिये लायेगा उसमें से पचास टका सरकार को कंट्रोल दामों पर बेचना होगा और आधा वह बाजार भाव पर बेच सकता है। जो पचास टका किसान सरकार को बेचता है उसकी मेक्सिमम प्राइस आपने चौदह और पन्द्रह रुपया मन रखी जब कि बाजार में गेहूँ १७ और १८ रुपया मन बिक रहा था। जब किसान ने देखा कि उसका पचास टका सरकार सस्ते भाव पर खरीद लेती है तो उसने बाजार में गेहूँ लाना ही बन्द कर दिया। इसके साथ ही एक अजीब बात यह है कि सरकार इस गल्ले को खुद नहीं खरीदती, वह व्यापारियों द्वारा इस काम को कराती है। व्यापारी किसान से पचास टका गल्ला तो सरकार के लिये खरीदता है और पचास टका अपने लिये खरीदता है। मैं अभी हाल में यू० पी० की एक मंडी से आया हूँ तो मैंने इस तरह की चीज देखी। इसका नतीजा यह होता है . . .

श्री श्या० सु० तन्खा (उत्तर प्रदेश) : आप यू० पी० सरकार को क्यों ब्लेम कर रहे हैं?

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : मैं यू० पी० सरकार को ब्लेम नहीं कर रहा हूँ, मैं तो उसकी प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी के बारे में कह रहा हूँ। अगर आपको "यू० पी०" शब्द से नाराजगी है तो मैं इसको छोड़ देता हूँ। मेरा यू० पी० के साथ पुराना सम्बन्ध है। तो मैं कह रहा था कि जब कोई किसान गांव से गाड़ी में गेहूँ बाजार लाता है तो उसमें से पचास टका फौरन व्यापारी सरकार के लिये खरीद लेता है और पचास टका वह अपने लिये खरीदता है। तीसरी बात यह देखने में आई कि आम तौर पर किसान खुद अपना

गल्ला बाजार में नहीं बेचता है। जब वह व्यापारी को बेचता है तो उसे पचास टका सरकार के लिये देना होता है। लेकिन जब वह स्वयं बेचता है तो उसे पचास टका सरकार को नहीं देना पड़ता है। मैं आपसे पूछता हूँ कि यह किस तरह की प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी है? आपके भाव तो कम हैं और बाजार में भाव ज्यादा है तो क्यों किसान कम दाम में अपना गल्ला सरकार को बेचे? दूसरी तरफ जब हम पंजाब की प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी देखते हैं तो वहाँ पर किसी तरह का प्राइस कंट्रोल हमें नहीं दिखाई देता और न किसी तरह की कम्पलसरी लैवी ही किसानों पर लगाई गई है। पंजाब में जितना गेहूँ किसान मंडी में लाता है उतना सरकार खुद खरीद लेती है और वह भी बाजार भाव पर। इस तरह से पंजाब में सबसे ज्यादा प्रोक्योरमेंट हुआ है।

श्री श्या० सु० तन्खा : पंजाब एक सरप्लस स्टेट है।

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : वहाँ पर गेहूँ ज्यादा पैदा होता है और सरकार की जो प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी है वह अच्छी है जिसकी वजह से वहाँ पर ज्यादा प्रोक्योरमेंट हो सका। आन्ध्र की सरकार ने मई के महीने तक अपनी प्रोक्योरमेंट पालिसी डिक्लेयर नहीं की थी परन्तु जब वहाँ पर प्रोक्योरमेंट हुआ तो उसमें किसी तरह का न प्राइस कंट्रोल ही था और न कम्पलशन ही था। इस साल आन्ध्र में चावल की पैदावार बहुत हुई परन्तु वहाँ पर चावल का भाव बहुत बढ़ा हुआ था। भाव किस लिये बढ़े, इसका कारण यह था कि जिस समय सरकार को प्रोक्योरमेंट करना चाहिये था उस समय उसने नहीं किया

"With the lifting of controls in Bengal arrivals improved."

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I will make it clear. The prices went up.

Then the Famine Resistance Committee came.

SHRI DEOKINANDAN NARAYAN: That is when the arrivals came. It says: "With the lifting of controls in Bengal, arrivals improved." तो मेरे

कहने का मतलब यह है कि इन तमाम बातों को देख कर यह नतीजा निकलता है कि जहाँ पर प्राइस कंट्रोल और कम्पलसरी लैवी लगाई जायेगी वहाँ पर प्रोक्योरमेंट अच्छी तरह से नहीं हो सकता है। मैं बड़े अदब से अर्ज करना चाहता हूँ कि हिन्दुस्तान के लाखों गांवों में गल्ला बिकता है लेकिन आप कम्पलशन करके उसे नहीं खरीद सकते हैं। अगर आप इस तरह की बात करते हैं तो वह बेमानी बात है। इसलिये अच्छा यह है कि देश में जितना गल्ला पैदा होता है वह सब का सब आप ले लें या फिर बाजार में जो भाव है उस भाव पर आप किसानों से गल्ला खरीदें। पंजाब के तजुबों से आपको मालूम हो जायेगा कि इस तरह की पालिसी अख्तियार करने से आपको कोई नुकसान नहीं होगा। अगर इस तरह की पालिसी से सरकार को थोड़ा बहुत नुकसान भी हुआ तो मैं कहूँगा कि जिस गेहूँ को व्यापारी खरीद कर प्राफिटिंग और स्पेकुलेशन करके आपको नुकसान पहुंचाता है अगर उस गेहूँ को आप कुछ ज्यादा दाम में यानी बाजार भाव में खरीद लें तो इससे देश में होडिंग और स्पेकुलेशन कम हो जायेगा। इसलिये मेरा सुझाव यह है कि

"Government should purchase in the open market and build up stocks."

मेरे भाई ने अभी यह कहा कि बम्बई में जितनी फूड कमेटीज कायम हुई हैं उसमें हर पार्टी के मेम्बर शामिल नहीं किये गये हैं। मैं बड़े अदब के साथ अर्ज करना चाहता हूँ और दावे के साथ कह सकता हूँ कि बम्बई में जिलों, तहसीलों और सब जगहों पर, जहाँ पर इस तरह की फूड कमेटीज बनाई गई हैं, उनमें सब पार्टी के लोगों को शामिल किया गया है। इन कमेटीज का एक

[श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण]

नियम यह है कि इनका हर एक एम० एल० एम० मेम्बर होता है। यह तो सब जानते हैं कि जहां तक महाराष्ट्र का सवाल है, महाराष्ट्र में कांग्रेस एम० एल० एम० बहुत कम हैं। लेकिन यह कहना कि वहां पर किसी और को इन कमेटीज में नहीं लिया जाता है एक गलत बात है, ऐसा मेरा अनुभव है।

बम्बई राज्य में अनाज बहुत महंगा हो रहा है। सिर्फ अनाज के महंगे होने से लोग इतने दुखी नहीं होते लेकिन इसके साथ साथ और सब चीजें भी महंगी होती जा रही हैं।

श्री श्या० सु० तन्खा : यह तो लाजिमी है।

श्री देवकीनन्दन नारायण : इकनॉमिक्स में यह लाजिमी होगा। लेकिन उस गरीब बेचारे की हालत क्या होगी जो इन चीजों के सहारे अपनी गुजर-बसर करता है? मैं जिस गांव से आता हूं वहां पर अक्सर लोग गेहूं और ज्वार की रोटी के ऊपर मिर्चा, नमक और तेल डाल कर खाते हैं और इस तरह से सैकड़ों लोग अपनी गुजर-बसर करते हैं। आजकल तेल ढाई और तीन रुपया सेर होगया है जब कि वह रुपये का डेढ़ सेर बिकता था। पहले मिर्चा आठ और दस आने सेर बिकती थी लेकिन आज ढाई और तीन रुपया सेर बिकती है। जिन चीजों के सहारे गरीब लोग अपना जीवन बसर करते हैं यानी जो रोजमर्रा के इस्तेमाल की चीजें हैं, उनके दाम दिन पर दिन बढ़ते ही चले जा रहे हैं। चीनी के भाव बढ़े तो गुड़ के भाव भी बढ़ गये जो कि गरीबों के खाने की चीज है। जब एक चीज महंगी होती है तो उसके साथ साथ दूसरी चीज भी महंगी होती चली जाती है और इस तरह से एक विशस सर्किल पैदा होता जा रहा है जिससे गरीबों को नुकसान पहुंचता है। अब पे कमीशन ने तनखा बढ़ाने की बात कही है जिससे सरकार के ऊपर १५ करोड़ रुपये का बोझ आने वाला है। इस १५ करोड़ रुपये के लिये फिर

टेक्सेज लगेंगे और इस तरह से महंगाई बढ़ेगी। तो तनखा बढ़ती है, वेजेज बढ़ते हैं, फिर महंगाई बढ़ती है, इस तरह से एक विशस सर्किल आपने इस मुल्क में पैदा कर दिया है।

इसलिये मंत्री महोदय से मैं यह कहूंगा कि आप इसको सोचें और आप इकाई प्रदेश को न बनावें बल्कि आप इकाई गांव को बनावें। आप ग्राम पंचायतों के ऊपर अपने गांव के संभालने का, खाने पीने का, बेकारी दूर करने का, और उद्योग का सारा भार डालिये। फिर जिले को लीजिये और इस तरह से नीचे से ऊपर जाइये। आज आप ऊपर से नीचे जाते हैं और कागज में दौड़ते हैं। “कागज में तो यों, कुनबा डूबा क्यों”, इस तरह से आज यह काम हो रहा है। इसलिये मेरा पहला सुझाव यह है कि आप इयूअरल गवर्नमेंट फौरन निकाल दें। जहां तक अनाज का सवाल है, या तो स्टेट गवर्नमेंट इसकी जिम्मेदार बने या सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट जिम्मेदार बने। प्रोक्योरमेंट के बारे में मैंने कह दिया कि फ्री मार्केट में आप प्रोक्योर करें। (Time bell rings)

दूसरी बात यह है कि जहां तक उत्पादन का सवाल है, सच्चाई से आगे बढ़ने का सवाल है, इस देश के अनाज के मसले को हल करने का सवाल है, आप इकाई गांवों की बनाइये, गांवों से शुरू कीजिये और इस तरह नीचे से ऊपर जाइये। ऊपर से नीचे जाने का उल्टा रास्ता है, सीधा रास्ता नहीं है। इतना कह कर मैं समाप्त करता हूं।

SHRI BABUBHAI CHINAI (Bombay): Mr. Vice-Chairman, for some time now, there has been a good lot of discussion about the food situation, both inside and outside Parliament. This is only as it should be, because, despite the efforts of the various committees, commissions and teams investigating the situation, the food problem continues to be as intractable as before. In fact, it appears as

if the situation would be aggravated further due to the rapid rate of growth of population which is estimated at nearly two per cent, per annum. There is no doubt that unless this problem is tackled immediately and satisfactorily, the future development of this country will be at stake.

It is difficult to mark out a single cause for this state of affairs. It is, no doubt, true that the food problem is, to a great extent, due to unavoidable factors, such as, unpredictable monsoons. But there have been a number of other causes also which could have been mitigated or avoided. Food statistics have been notoriously unreliable. Again, the policies and proposals of the Central and State Governments, regarding ceiling on land, food procurement and distribution, and co-operative cultivation have all contributed not a little to aggravate the situation by introducing factors of uncertainty and insecurity all round.

If we are to consider food statistics, it is true that foodgrains output in 1958-59 is estimated to be as high as 73 million tons. It is reasonable to assume that this increased output along with about 3 million tons of imported foodgrains, should have reversed to a considerable extent, the rising trend in food prices. But unfortunately, it has not been so. The reason is not difficult to seek for, although the 1958-59 harvest shows a sizable increase over the previous year, it is only 4·3 million tons higher, as compared with the harvest of 1956-57. The irony of the situation is that we do not have reliable statistics regarding all these trends. In fact, our agricultural statistics are mainly of a post facto nature and as such they do not give much guidance regarding the state of affairs to be. Unless, therefore, the collection and calculation of statistics are reorganised on a sounder basis, so that more anticipatory information is made available, it would be difficult, if not virtually impossible, to forecast possible developments and make timely adjustments. 48 R.S.D.—7.

Even assuming that the food statistics are reliable, the self-consumption of the small farmer is an incalculable factor. If the consumption of each peasant family is increased by even half a maund in any year, it will mean a short-fall of two million tons in marketable surplus. In our country, prices depend not so much on total supply but on marginal surpluses or deficits.

By no means the least intractable aspect of the problem of foodgrains is its orderly distribution. No doubt, zonal arrangements, credit control regulations, and curbs on use of cereals in short supply are the methods which have been tried. But these have ensured neither adequate and equitable supply nor reasonable prices. Nor has the Government's proposal to buy two million tons of rice for reserve stock purposes been of much use, though one would expect that the knowledge that the Government have reserve stock would induce traders to keep their prices down. If anything, Government purchases have only had the effect of fanning the price of foodgrains, as they have resulted in depletion of marketable surplus.

Now that the increased production has not resulted in any significant fall in prices, it is worth investigating whether farmers are withholding stocks in their possession. In such an event, I wonder whether any State trading scheme could function successfully. If the food situation were to deteriorate further—it is already bad in all conscience—either a completely free market or total procurement and rationing may be suggested, but both are desperate remedies. In the ultimate analysis, effective solution lies only in stepping up production.

Past experience is a grave warning against all attempts at direct State trading on a large scale at the wholesale or the retail stage. Grain which goes into godowns on Government account tends to remain there till it deteriorates and some unfortunate

[Shri Babubhai Chinai.] consumers are compelled to take them. I am not sure if an accurate and full estimate of the losses incurred by the Centre and the States, during the days of procurement and rationing, by deterioration and shortage has been made.

Another important feature which will have to be considered in this connection is that State trading in grains may reduce the capital and revenue available to Plan expenditure. The energies of the Centre and the States, more especially the latter, will have to be diverted from the primary task of increasing food production to the secondary and perhaps tempting preoccupation of manipulating distribution.

Broadly speaking, the future of the food supply position and the stability of food prices can be maintained only through the distinct rise in production. The Government must be prepared to look not only to the immediate present, but also to think in terms of the distant future. This is a problem which can be tackled effectively only if ideological considerations are not imported into it.

The long-term policy must be designed towards ensuring not only food to fill every mouth but also to see that foodgrains are sold at reasonable prices and that there is no racketeering in prices. I wonder whether the solutions suggested in this connection—ceiling on land holdings and cooperative farming—would not prove to be worse than the disease. Even ceiling at 20 to 30 acres will hardly release . . .

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA (Bihar): May I know from my hon. friend whether if we adopt the ideal of the Swatantra Party, we will be able to solve the situation?

SHRI BABUBHAI CHINAI: My hon. friend, Mr. Sinha, must know that I know nothing about the Swatantra Party. I do not belong to that party.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA: It seems that your brief has been prepared by the Swatantra Party.

SHRI BABUBHAI CHINAI: No, these are toy personal views. Even a ceiling at 20 to 30 acres will hardly release sufficient land to make uriaer-sized holdings economic in size. They will still be below the standard area leaving little room for scientidc farming. This is on the assumption that all the released land will be distributed to increase the area of under -jzed holdings and not for distribution among lanu'ess labourers. I wonder again, in view of the opposition to co-^peraiive farming and the traditional ^ve for ownership of land, whether there will be much success in this dvert'cn aho. The foot to be remembered is .hat the nee l i' the hour is to see that production "'ses and not create avoidable prob^l ems in the way.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I ask one question? The hon. Member 'aii that he is a Congressman and he participated in the Nagpur Session of the Coi.g-sss. Does he consider himself bound by the Nagpur Resolution?

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA: No.

SHRI BABUBHAI CHINAI: I am bouiu! by the discipline ϕf .o;v pirty. I ha.e no doubt about it but. at tht same time, that does not debar me, from expressing my persona: view* on p problem which is so hotly debated in this House.

SHRI N. C. SEKHAR (Kerala): It it o.a«-ide the party?

SHRI BABUBHAI CH'NAI: The short-term problems should be tackled side by side with the long-term ones.

Despite the recent shift towards short-term projects, the progress seems to be not much.. While on the one hand river valley projects are being built with large storage of water, on the other they have been to a great extent unutilised either for want of canals or waterlogging or some such other cause. While, again, new canals, wells, etc., are being built, there appears to be very little attention towards maintaining the old ones in good condition.

Irrigation and food are inseparable from each other. In this country, unless irrigation facilities are vastly extended and water made available to the farmers at reasonable rates, it will not be possible to increase food output either in the short run or in the immediate long run. I feel that there is a cogent case for amalgamating the Irrigation and Food Ministries so that the food problem can be tackled more effectively by one Ministry. The present position is that while the Centre initiates policy, the States are the implementing authorities! This has been one of the major handicaps for the development of agriculture on right lines. I am sure that unless machinery is evolved where the major share of implementation also rests with the Centre, it will be very difficult to visualise at bright future for India's agriculture. May I suggest in this connection that a National Food Board with the Food Minister as the

Chairman and composed of representatives of the States and of farmers and traders as members, be appointed to frame a nation-wide policy and implement it in an integrated manner? I also feel that in each State a State

Food Board on similar lines should be constituted. India's war against food has been the coldest of the cold wars ever fought. If the war is to be fought successfully, it requires all their ingenuity and the drive of the nation.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Fight under the Swatantra banner!

SHRI BABUBHAI CHINAI: That may be your opinion. That is not my opinion.

I am sure that the Food Minister is not incapable of this task, howsoever colossal it may be.

Thank you, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI DAHVABHAI V. PATEL) : The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. tomorrow, Friday, the 28th August.

The House then adjourned at forty-eight minutes past five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Friday, the 28th August 1959.