

RAJYA SABHA**Wednesday, 19th February 1958**

The House met eleven of the clock, MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.**OPPOSITION TO CREATION OF A SINGLE RICE ZONE FOR THE SOUTHERN STATES**

*99. SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Governments of Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore have expressed opinions to the Government of India against the creation of a single rice zone for the Southern States of Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Madras and Kerala.

(b) if so, what action Government have taken in the matter; and

(c) what are the suggestions made by the aforesaid Governments for creation of zones and distribution of rice from surplus States to deficit States within the zone?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI A. M. THOMAS): (a) to (c). The Southern Rice Zone was formed after due consultation with Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Madras and Kerala Governments and with their general agreement. Recently, Madras and Mysore Governments suggested the separate cordoning of those States in order to prevent the deficit State of Kerala from drawing supplies from them. The Government of Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, have not been happy at the prohibition of exports from that outside the Southern Zone where higher prices could be obtained for the exports. Considering all the aspects, the Central Government have decided to continue the Southern Rice Zone as it is and neither to impose cordons around Madras and Mysore nor to allow exports out of the Southern Zone from Andhra Pradesh.

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SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: May I know, Sir, whether the Minister for Agriculture in Andhra had said on more than one occasion that the creation of this zone is inequitable and disadvantageous to the agriculturists in the sense that the agriculturists are not able to get a fair price for the produce?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I have already conceded in the answer just now read to the honourable House that Andhra Pradesh has been opposing the formation of the Southern Rice Zone because the agriculturists are deprived of higher prices in Bombay and Calcutta. But the Government of India has to take the all-India picture and balance the factors, the factors, relating to the side of the agriculturist as well as that of the consumer, and take a reasonable view. Considering all aspects the Government of India has thought that the continuance of the Southern Rice Zone would be in the best interests of the country as a whole.

SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: May I know the difficulty of the Government of India to accede to the suggestion made by the Government of Madras to have this movement of rice at Government-to-Government level?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Now, the surplus of Andhra Pradesh, a substantial portion, is being procured by the Central Government, so that that quantity could move on Government-co-Government level. And it is not desirable to cut off trade on private account altogether, because, as the hon. House knows as far as Kerala is concerned, Tanjore is the traditional market. It may not be advisable to cut off those supplies. So long as we are not going to take up monopoly procurement and then rationing, it may not be advisable to cut off trade on private account.

SHRI K. MADHAVA MENON: Is the Government aware whether Madras, Mysore and Andhra Pradesh

suffer in any way by the creation of the Southem Rice Zone?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: has not suffered and the general impression now among the public is that it has been beneficial. . . . *j
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MR. CHAIRMAN: The general impression has been that it is beneficial that is what he said.

SHRI KISHEN CHAND: The hon. Minister says that after considering all facts the Government have come to the conclusion that the creation of the Southem Rice Zone* has been beneficial. "May I know from the hon. Minister whether, in view of the saving in transport and various other savings, the Government are thinking of acceding to the request of the Andhra Government to raise the minimum price of procurement of rice supplied to the other States" in the Southern Zone?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: It has been previously stated that the Government of India has no intention to revise the prices that have been fixed.

SHRI PERATH NARAYANAN NAIR: May I know, Sir, if the views of the Kerala Government have been ascertained in respect of the opinions expressed by the other State Governments in respect of the rice zone?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: It is well known that the Kerala Government is against the cordoning off of the Madras State or cordoning off of Kerala.

SHRIMATI T. NALLAMUTHU RAMAMURTI: The reply given by the hon. Minister is a bit contradictory in the sense that he himself admitted that the agriculturists suffer to a certain extent in Andhra Pradesh by not having sent their rice to Bombay and other external markets. I want clarification on that.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: We are very particular that the agriculturist should get a very reasonable price,

but that does not mean that the agriculturist should get a very high price prevailing in Bombay and Calcutta.

SHRI V. VENKATARAMANA: By reasonable price is it meant remunerative price or unremunerative price?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Remunerative price.

SHRI V. VENKATARAMANA: On what basis have you come to the conclusion that the prices now prevailing in Andhra are remunerative?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: It has been stated in this House, on so many other occasions that we have taken into consideration several factors—prices prevailing during procurement in Andhra in 1952-53 as well as in the previous two years and the House so well knows that the entire matter was gone into by the Asoka Mehta Committee and it has recommended a price ranging from Rs. 15 to Rs. 17.

SHRI V. VENKATARAMANA: On the recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee you have conveniently taken only this point. Do you mean to say that you have accepted all the recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No discussion. Please ask a question.

SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: The hon. Minister has stated that it is beneficial. I do not know whether he said beneficial to the consumer or to the producer. May I know, Sir, whether it is beneficial to the producer or to the consumer or it is a *via media*?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: It depends on the angle of vision that is adopted. Mr. Rajagopal Naidu is a champion of the producer, whereas we feel that while assuring a reasonable price to the producer at the same time the consumer also should not suffer.