

RAJYA SABHA

Monday, 9th September 1957

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

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*519. [The questioner (Dr. Shrimati Seeta Parmanand) was absent. For answer, vide cols. 4029-4U30 infra].

IMPORT OF CEMENT

*520. SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of cement imported and distributed to various States in India in the year 1956-57; and

(b) the price that was paid for the imported cement to the exporting countries?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH): (a) 1,81,119 tons.

(b) Rs. 197-17 lakhs.

SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: May I know the price at which cement was imported into India and the quantity which was imported country-wise?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: The quantity imported from foreign countries cannot be given country-wise. The price varies from Rs. 130 to Rs. 150 per ton f.o.r. destination. f "

SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: On account of the equalisation of cement prices, may I know whether the Corporation will be getting any profits and, if so, how much?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: All trading is done with a view to seeing that it is done on commercial lines. We do not keep profit accounts for different commodities differently. The

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Annual Report of the State Trading Corporation will be submitted to the House, and the hon. Member will find from that the overall commercial trading profits of the Corporation.

SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: May I know whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the regular propaganda of the cement industry that the State Trading Corporation has earned or is likely to earn Rs. 4.5 crores in this deal, and, if so, what steps have been taken to meet it?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: So many types of rumours, articles and other newspaper items do appear. It is true that one such has been appearing from time to time, and we have been repeatedly contradicting it even on the floor of this House and elsewhere. It is true that the State Trading Corporation functions on a commercial basis and profit-making is not ruled out. As a matter of fact, the House, I am sure, insists that the trading activities of the Corporation should be of a profitable nature.

SHRI B. B. SHARMA: What is the extra amount that the consumers will have to pay?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: As the House is aware, the equalisation is between the imported material which is bought at a higher price and the production price in the country. To the extent that production goes up and import comes down, naturally the margin left to the Corporation will be higher. So far the imports have been so erratic that we have not yet been able to find out what will be the actual quantum of profit in that. In any case, the State Trading Corporation, like any other Corporation, does not keep item-wise accounts of profits.

SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: May I know through what agency this imported cement is distributed?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: Through the same normal agency as in the case of indigenous cement.

SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: May I know whether any representations have been sent to the Corporation and the Government of India to entrust this distribution of imported cement through co-operative societies?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: Generally the policy is that we do give encouragement to co-operatives, but this being a very large quantity, the co-operative societies cannot distribute or are not so widespread, so that the channels existing already and the co-operatives where they exist are utilised for this purpose. If the hon. Member desires any co-operative society to be considered, he may please let me know.

SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: May I know the difference in price between the imported and indigenous cement, and how much of the extra surplus is going to the equalisation fund?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: Sir, There is a misunderstanding. Firstly the difference in price is about 40 to 50 rupees per ton between indigenous cement and imported cement. As far as the equalisation fund is concerned, there is no separate fund as in the case of steel. This is purely one of trading account. Whatever quantity of imported material that comes and whatever is the indigenous production, all goes into the pool.

SHRI H. V. TRIPATHI: May I know why item-wise accounts cannot be kept in the matter of equalisation?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: There are hundreds of items with which the Corporation is dealing, and you cannot keep item-wise accounts, as the overheads are there, the interest charges are there, the working capital is there and anybody connected with business would agree that item-wise accounts are not feasible.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: Is it not a fact that the prices of cement have been steadily and continuously rising during the last two years?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: Sir, it is a matter of opinion. A certain amount of levy of excise duty

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA: It is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Have you finished?

SHRI MANUBHAI SHAH: Ne. Sir. I know that the hon. Member will be satisfied when he knows that our main aim is to see that indigenous production rises and also to see that the use of cement is conserved to the minimum necessary, and to that end, all these measures have actually helped.

POSTPONEMENT OF INSTALLATION OF PILOT TELEVISION PROJECT AT DELHI AND BOMBAY

*521. SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal to instal a Pilot Television Project at Delhi and Bombay has been dropped or postponed to the Third Five Year Plan; and

(b) if so, what would be the saving to the Central Exchequer as a result of the postponement of this scheme?

THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI G. RAJAGOPALAN): (a) and (b). The original proposal was to establish a Television Station at Bombay and a small experimental unit at Delhi for educational and cultural purposes. The proposal for Bombay has been postponed for some time. The experimental unit at Delhi is still under consideration. The Bombay project was estimated to cost about 40 lakhs of rupees.