

RAJYA SABHA

Friday, 13th September 1957

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

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION AND ANSWER

ECONOMY MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

14. SHRI M. VALIULLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the economy measures taken by Government to cut down expenditure in the various Ministries and Departments;

(b) the authority which is entrusted to supervise this work,

(c) the amount of success so far achieved in this regard; and

(d) the amount of money which would be saved as a result of these measures?

THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU): (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House. [For Part I of the Statement, see below. For Part II, see Appendix XVIII, Annexure No. 147.]

The Statement is relatively long one and perhaps it would be simpler if I laid the Statement on the Table of the House. If however you wish me to read out . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Part I of the Statement may be read out.

SHRI KISHEN CHAND: Yes, Sir. Otherwise how can we ask supplementary questions?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Part II of the Statement is a long list. Only Part I may be read out.

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: I cannot possibly read the statistical part of the Statement.

(The Prime Minister then read out Part I of the Statement which follows.)

STATEMENT I

With a view to ensure that the Government's financial and other resources are utilized to the best possible advantage, it was recently decided that each Minister and Secretary should give urgent and continuous attention to the maintenance of efficiency, integrity and economy in the administration. To this end, they have been called upon to review the nature, volume and quality of work at all levels and to take practical steps to remove deficiencies and to effect economies. In this task they are to be assisted by the Economy Unit of the Ministry of Finance and the O. & M. Division of the Cabinet Secretariat.

2. In pursuance of this decision, scrutiny of the present and projected activities to see whether some of them can be reduced, postponed or abandoned, has been undertaken in the different Ministries and Offices. The levels of expenditure on staff and contingencies are also being reviewed so as to adopt and enforce revised and more austere standards.

3. Orders have also been issued in all Ministries, directing that no new posts should be created and no existing vacancies filled without the personal approval of the Secretary, and calling upon all concerned to observe the utmost economy in the expenditure on travelling allowances and on item such as furniture, stationery, electricity, telegrams, telephones and the like. Many Ministries have also issued orders that expenditure exceeding specified limits shall not be incurred without the prior approval of the Secretary.

4. Internal Economy Committees have been set up in the different

Ministries to supervise the work. A Central Committee consisting of the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Home Secretary and Director, Organisation and Methods has also been set up for generally guiding the work of the Economy Unit and resolving outstanding issues. The O. & M. Division has been directed to obtain and submit monthly reports on the work done in this context by the Central Committee and by each Ministry and Department.

5. It is not possible, at this stage, to give a full estimate of the savings which may be effected as a result of these measures, which are still in progress. Part II of this statement, however, indicates the decisions which have so far been taken in the different Ministries and Departments, and the approximate savings expected.

(Part I of the Statement ends here.)

These sheets in Part II indicate the economy measures in regard to each Ministry. I might add, Sir, that the various savings shown in Part II total up to, for the current year, about Rs. 21 crores. Most of this is as a result of projects being postponed; some projects have been abandoned. So far as the general question of normal governmental expenditure going down is concerned, it is rather difficult to bring it down much because while we try to bring it down in some ways the very fact of a developing economy tends to send it up so that these two forces play against each other. What I think is likely to happen is, first of all, the actual saving effected and the constant effort not to allow expenditure to increase, as is constantly happening in new schemes and in a developing economy. That is all, Sir.

SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR BASU: Just one supplementary question that I would like to put. Will the Prime Minister be pleased to refer to the statement regarding the Defence Ministry and say whether I am correct

in my reading of that statement that the proposed economy measures will in no way affect the strength of the armed forces?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: Is the hon. Member referring to the statement regarding defence or is it a general question?

SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR BASU: I am referring to the statement regarding the Defence Ministry. What I want to know is whether I am correct in my reading of that statement that the proposed economy measures will in no way affect the strength of the armed forces.

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: Without any reference to any statement—I do not know which part he refers to, but I can broadly answer that, that we do not propose to take any step which will affect the efficiency and the strength of the armed forces

SHRI KISHEN CHAND: I understood from the Short Notice Question that it related to reduction in the expenditure on civil administration. The hon. the Prime Minister said that strict orders have been issued that no vacancies should be filled up. May I know, Sir, from the hon. the Prime Minister whether it is a fact that the number of high posts like Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Under Secretaries in the civil administration has gone up by at least 100 per cent during the last ten years?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: I should imagine that they have gone up much more than that, and, what is more, the need for even further growth is continually being pressed upon us because, in the nature of things, the kind of work that the administration has to do requires far more senior and experienced types of people. We can do away, without much difficulty, with 50 per cent of the junior staff, but almost every senior person is more or less ill

through overwork, working about 12 hours a day.

SHRI KISHEN CHAND: May I know, Sir, from the hon. the Prime Minister whether a comparison has been made with the civil officers of the high cadre in other countries and is not the number in our country excessive in proportion to the amount of work done?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: It is rather difficult to compare. One can compare the hours of work per day but unless somebody goes and sits down and finds out what is being done the comparison will not be complete. The hon. Member knows very well that the statement of hours of work is a very poor indication of the amount of work actually done. What happens? A man may do nothing in office; he may be smoking and having tea every hour and yet show that he has attended his office for all the time. On the other hand another person may be working frightfully hard. But I do believe—and I cannot speak for everybody naturally—that the senior staff in the Government of India have to work exceedingly hard.

SHRI RAGHAVENDRARAO: Will the Prime Minister circulate the Statement to the Members of Parliament?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: It is laid on the Table of the House.

DR. R. B. GOUR: However much this economy drive is very necessary and desirable will the Prime Minister tell us if steps are being taken to see that the workload will not undesirably increase on the staff and thus efficiency be hampered?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think the Statement is quite clear.

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: The present position is, as I just said, that we could easily do away with 30, 40, 50 per cent in the lower staff with greater efficiency for all concerned

and probably greater satisfaction for the persons who work too because they come in the way of each other. Now-a-days the methods of approaching this problem are much more intricate than merely, as they used to be, calculating how many receipts come in, how many papers go out—10,000 receipts a month or 15,000 despatches a month—and then calculating how many people have to deal with it. That is rather a primitive way of dealing with it. Now there is what is called 'work study', the manner of doing a work. A slight difference in the manner may make it more efficient and much more economical and less burdensome on the person concerned.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: The hon. Prime Minister has stated that reduction in expenditure has been effected to the tune of something like Rs. 21 crores. Most of this is due to suspension or curtailment of projects. I want to know, what actual economy has been effected. Out of this sum of Rs. 21 crores, what is the amount representing actual economy?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: That is all stated here in detail.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The list contains all the details; it runs into several pages.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Rs. 21 crores represents the total amount and it includes amounts due to suspension or curtailment of projects. Apart from that, what is the actual economy effected in the administration?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: All these details are given. Naturally the greater part of that Rs. 21 crores is due to projects given up or postponed. It would be the greater part. Another part is, where posts are lying vacant, we do not appoint anybody for the present. So it is mostly posts abolished or posts unfilled. I would submit that if the hon. Member is interested, he could look through the statement. Quite a good deal of detail is given there about this matter.

SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: May I know whether it would be possible for the hon. Prime Minister to lay a statement quarterly on the Table of the House showing the progress made in this matter?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is a suggestion for action.

DR. RAGHUBIR SINH: May I draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister to a very small economy that is reported to have been effected in the Ministry of Education under National Archives? There I find that the only economy effected is of two peons. Now, I personally feel that the abolition of those two posts of peons will only mean an economy of Rs. 1,000 or a little more but the loss that may be sustained because of that economy may be greater and may be incalculable and irreparable, for it is the . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You can only put a question; you cannot make a statement.

SHRI D. A. MIRZA: Is it not advisable, in view of the economy measures taken by the Government, to lipense with the staff cars that are maintained by different Ministries and effect a saving of about Rs. 15 lakhs?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, Order.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Has any actual retrenchment taken place? Posts may be vacant; they may not be filled up but it may be that from the lower posts people may be promoted. So in this reduction of expenditure, has any retrenchment taken place actually and if so what is the amount?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: As I have said, all the figures are here. I cannot immediately total up the different columns for the hon. Member. He may look into it; there are various columns, cross-wise, down,

left and right, and he can count them up. But what I would like to point out is that in a developing economy the continuous tendency is towards increase in staff. We are constantly pressed. Our work is roughly, I imagine, a hundred times more than in the pre-independence days—a hundred times more. I do not say that all the work is desirable; maybe, some work may be cut down; it is very likely, but the increase of work is something prodigious and naturally the normal course is to have more people added on to do that work. This particular check has a very wholesome effect in stopping those constant additions. Today that itself is something that helps further in reducing the numbers wherever possible.

SHRI SONUSING DHANSING PATIL: In view of the dearth of high-placed officers, does the Government consider the desirability of having or evolving some scheme of superannuation?

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: Government came to a decision some time back, in the case of scientific, technical and like work, normally to extend the period. It is really quite absurd to ask a competent scientist to retire when he is doing his best work. Scientists in Universities and in Government service even, run into the seventies and eighties in other countries; in fact, they work till they die. Nobody wants to lose an eminent scientist or an eminent technician or an eminent engineer. In their case age hardly comes in the picture. Age does come in the picture in the case of normal administrative work. There we consider whether normally we can increase the age of retirement but our present practice is to deal with special cases as individual cases and give them some extension whenever we think it is desirable in the interest of the State.