

Shri Priya Gupta: Sir, have you gone over to the next question?

Mr. Speaker: I have and the hon. Member has put it.

Price Line

*138. { Shri Mohsin:
Shri S. M. Banerjee:

Will the Minister of Planning be pleased to state:—

(a) the further steps that are being taken to hold the price line; and

(b) whether prices of essential commodities have gone up since January, 1962?

The Minister of Planning and Labour and Employment (Shri Nanda): (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b). The price situation over the last one year has been well under control. The general index of wholesale prices for March 1962 was 3.1 per cent lower than the March 1961 level. Between January 1962 and March 10, 1962, there was some increase in wholesale prices of certain essential commodities such as food articles and cotton textiles. But thereafter there has been a decline. The food articles index declined from 120.9 on March 10, 1962 to 118.4 by the end of March. The index for cotton textiles declined from 128.5 to 128.1 in the same period.

For augmenting domestic supplies of cotton, the Government has already taken steps to import larger quantities of the required variety. As regards cereals, adequate stock are held by Government so that releases can be increased if the situation warrants.

The measures and policies adopted for increasing production and holding the price line have proved generally adequate. The situation is being kept under constant review.

Shri Mohsin: Is it not a fact that under the present cost of living, the

present price line, it is difficult for an average wage-earner of India to have even on meal a day?

Shri Nanda: No, Sir.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: In the statement it is written: "Measures and policies adopted for increasing production and holding the price line have proved generally adequate. The situation is being kept under constant review". I want to know, since the prices have increased, have shown an upward trend from January to March, whether Government contemplate to have any definite price policy and appoint a Price Commission for it?

Shri Nanda: The price policy has been clearly laid down in the document relating to the Third Five Year Plan, and as has been indicated in the statement in the course of this year there has been a decline of 3.1 per cent in the wholesale prices. Therefore, that question does not arise.

Shri Ramanathan Chettiar: May I know whether there is a special cell in the Planning Commission in regard to price line to watch the price line position; if so, whether that cell is effective to control and watch the price situation?

Shri Nanda: There is a whole division which is called the Economic Division which concerns itself with price movements, and the Planning Commission as a whole has to consider all the aspects which have a bearing on the price level.

Shri Yallamanda Reddy: Are the Government aware of the fact that yesterday's taxation proposals will raise up the cost of living; if so, may I know what are the actions proposed to be taken by the Government?

Shri Nanda: I have not had enough time to calculate precisely whether it will be 0.1 per cent or something less than that. But it is going to be very insignificant as far as I can judge.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: In view of the fact that the prices of foodstuffs have shown a tendency of

rising—the wholesale prices have come down a little only—may I know what are the reasons which impelled the Government to direct the Reserve Bank to increase the margin of advances against foodstuffs which is against the policy that was laid down last year?

Shri Nanda: Yes, Sir. That policy was in operation for a considerable period and it has had good effect. Then it was considered that the general requirements of the market necessitated a certain relaxation. That is a policy which has been operated in an elastic and flexible manner.

Shri Hem Barua: In view of the fact that the statement shows that an increase in prices was registered during the initial months of this year 1962 in certain commodities like food articles and cotton textiles and as against that the hon. Finance Minister said in his speech on the interim budget that the price rise has been completely arrested, may I know how these two statements do agree and whether there is no liaison between the Planning Ministry and the Finance Ministry over this question?

Shri Nanda: It is a question of properly understanding what has been stated. I have given the figures, and they are well known. During this period, that is to say, since the start of the Third Plan, the wholesale prices have declined somewhat. It is also a fact that during the earlier part there was some rise which has now been offset by a decline. I do share the hon. Member's anxiety, and I think we cannot be complacent about these prices, particularly the retail prices, which go into the consumers' cost of living index. Though the cost of living index has stood steady since August and there have been no rises—of course, there was some rise earlier—I think we have to be very watchful and careful about the consumer prices.

Shri Harish Chandra Mathur: This question regarding the holding of the price line is not settled unless and until the Government tell us as to what

level they went to hold the price line. The prices are rising from month to month and year to year and all the time we are talking of holding the price line. Where do we want to hold the price line?

Shri Nanda: As to the level at which the prices have to be held, it has been laid down in the document relating to price policy. We do believe that even as it is the prices are high. So, we cannot tolerate any further rise in price, particularly in respect of essential commodities consumed by the masses. Therefore, any rise above that level is not proper.

Mr. Speaker: Next question.

Shri Tyagi: Since it is a very important question I request you to give a little more time for it.

Mr. Speaker: That is why I have spent about 7 minutes on this question. If hon. Members want the whole question hour to be spent on this question then, of course, it is different matter. Otherwise, how can I give time to other questions? Now, next question.

छंटनी किये गये अनुसूचित जाति के कर्मचारों

*१३६. श्री वास्मीकी : क्या निर्माण, आवास और संभरण मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) भूतपूर्व पुनर्वास मंत्रालय के कितने अनुसूचित जाति के कर्मचारियों (तृतीय तथा चतुर्थ श्रेणी) की मार्च, १९६२ तक छंटनी की गई; और

(ख) इनको अन्य विभागों में पुनः नियुक्त करने के लिये क्या कार्यवाही की गई?

निर्माण, आवास और संभरण मंत्री (श्री मेहर चन्द्र खन्ना) : (क) और (ख). जानकारी एकत्रित की जा रही है और उपलब्ध होने पर सभा की मेज पर रख दी जायेगी।

I shall also read the answer in English.