

Edwina Mountbatten Fund

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*877. { Shri Arjun Singh
Bhadauria;
Shri S. A. Mehdi;
Shri P. G. Deb:

Will the **Prime Minister** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allowed State Governments to donate to the Edwina Mountbatten Fund;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether any State Government has given any donation to this Fund?

The Deputy Minister of External Affairs (Shrimati Lakshmi Menon):

(a) to (c). The Edwina Mountbatten Memorial Fund was started in India on October 1st, 1960. Before that, in August 1960, the authorities of the Edwina Mountbatten Trust in London wrote to the Chairman, St. John Ambulance Association of India, requesting her assistance in raising money from St. John Ambulance Units and elsewhere in India. The Chairman wrote to these Units in India and also to Health Ministers of State Governments in view of the late Countess Mountbatten's close association with the Nursing profession, Child Welfare and St. John Ambulance in India. It appears that in response to this request the Andhra Pradesh Government and the Rajasthan Government contributed Rs. 6,680 and Rs. 5,000 respectively to the St. John Ambulance Association of India. Later, when the Indian Fund was started, these contributions were transferred by the St. John Ambulance Association of India to this Indian Fund with a view to conserving foreign exchange.

It has been ascertained that very recently the St. John Ambulance Association of India has received Rs. 3,375 from the Kerala Government and Rs. 2,866 from the Gujarat Government in response to its Chairman's request of August 1960. The St. John Ambulance Association of India has also received formal intimations of

the decisions of the Mysore and Punjab Governments to donate Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 30,000 respectively in response to its Chairman's request of August 1960. Presumably these donations will be transferred to the Edwina Mountbatten Memorial Fund in India with a view to conserving foreign exchange.

No request has been made by the Government of India to the State Governments to give donations to the Edwina Mountbatten Memorial Fund. No reference has been made to the Union Government by the State Governments. It is open to State Governments to donate funds for charitable purposes, if they so choose.

The Edwina Mountbatten Memorial Fund itself has made no approach, formal or informal, to any Government for donations.

Shri V. P. Nayar: It is a long answer. How can we remember it from the beginning to the end?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister might have laid a statement on the Table of the House, if it were a long answer.

श्री अर्जुन सिंह भदौरिया : क्या यह सही है कि प्रधान मंत्री के भूतपूर्व सेक्रेटरी, मिस्टर मयाई, इस कोष के सेक्रेटरी हैं ?

प्रधान मंत्री तथा बड़ेसिक-कार्य मंत्री (श्री जवाहरलाल नेहरू) : जी हां ।

श्री अर्जुन सिंह भदौरिया : क्या यह भी सही है कि वह अब भी प्रधान मंत्री के सिफारिशी पत्र लेकर बड़े बड़े पूंजीपतियों के पास कोष में धन एकत्र करने के लिए जाते हैं ?

श्री जवाहरलाल नेहरू : जहां तक मुझे मालूम है यह सही नहीं है । यह तो बिल्कुल सही नहीं है कि वह मेरे पत्र लेकर जाते हैं क्योंकि मैंने किसी को इस बारे में कोई पत्र लिखा ही नहीं । लेकिन यह भी सही नहीं है कि वह इस तरह से गये ।

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether the money so far collected and donated by the States is entrusted to him or is with somebody else?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: The money is entrusted to a bank.

Shri Hem Barua: Who operates the accounts?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: The funds are in a bank, and are operated upon presumably by the Treasurer and sometimes by the Secretary. I do not quite know the details.

Shri Ram Krishan Gupta: May I know whether there is any control by Government over the functions of this Fund?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: Government have nothing to do with it.

श्री बजराम सिंह : प्रधान मंत्री के भूतपूर्व सचिव के अलावा क्या और कोई सरकारी अधिकारी या कोई मिनिस्टर भी इस फंड के संयोजक या प्रबन्धकर्ताओं में हैं ?

Mr. Speaker: Is there any Minister or any other person associated with it?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: I do not think so. I am not quite sure now of all the names, but so far as I know, there is none, no other Minister, certainly no other Minister.

Shri B. K. Galkwad: May I know the amount donated by the respective State Governments?

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: That has just been read out in the main answer to the question. I would repeat that before this Fund was started here, an appeal was sent presumably from England to the St. John's Ambulance Association here, of which Rajkumari Amrit Kaur is the chairman, that is, to her. She, on behalf of the St. John's Ambulance

Association, has asked the State Governments to subscribe and some of them subscribed,—and the figures were read out—in response to that appeal. The St. John's Ambulance Association passed on that money—fairly small sums they were—to this new committee that was formed later. This committee as such or the Government have nothing to do with asking the State Governments.

श्री म० ला० द्विवेदी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, क्या इस प्रकार के प्रश्न जिनका सम्बन्ध सरकार से नहीं है लोक सभा के लिए स्वीकृत किये जा सकते हैं ?

I want to know whether questions which do not concern Government can be asked in the Lok Sabha and can be admitted.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members give notices of questions, and the Speaker admits them. Until the answer is given, he does not know whether Government have any hand in it or not.

Shri M. L. Dwivedi: Is it not a fact that the questions are sent to the Ministries asking them to supply information?

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I have admitted the question so that a lot of misunderstanding that might otherwise go on whispering campaign etc. may be cleared on the floor of the House. It is now clear that the Government of India have nothing to do with it. It is only the responsibility of some other Government.

Shri M. L. Dwivedi: So far as I understand, questions are sent to the Ministries for eliciting information.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to say all that. It is my unique and peculiar privilege to take what steps I can to admit a question or not to admit a question.