

would like it to go into it and find out who are the persons responsible. Legal action can never bring out facts as a Committee of the House can. I would myself welcome it. But again, when I say this, I do not say it in a partisan manner. It is upto the leaders of the House and to you, Sir.

When I said that I had warned the State Government, there was a reason for me to do so. In the last 2 months before this incident took place, a peculiar kind of situation had developed in this area. I will not bring in the name of Naxalites. I know Naxalites are no longer operating in that area; but they did operate there. It is some degenerated form of a group whose slogans are taken up by criminals. Pipri is a famine-declared area for the last 6 or 7 months. There cannot be any question of a wage dispute there. There cannot be any question of labour dispute in a famine area—neither the agricultural labour is having to gain anything nor the farmer is having to gain anything. Every Member from Bihar knows; that it is a famine area. Nothing has grown over there. So, what was happening in the last two months is that a gang of 200 or 300 people move from village to village and demands—not asked for arms—from the farmers that they should be given a particular quantity of grains. They took 100 maunds of grains from one village and 25 maunds of grains from another village; and in a week they served actual notice to hundreds of people asking grains to be deposited with this gang. Who are these people? The State police

should have known, the Central Intelligence should have known. I think they knew it, but still no action was taken. My friend, Shri Buta Singh had referred to Gram Raksha Samiti. I can tell him that it is completely a non-political organisation. People who are involved in it are not interested in political parties, but they did create this organisation. And when the organisation was created, within two months, both the President and the Secretary were killed. Their threat was pressed in the usual extremist fashion. They are not Naxalites; they are some degenerated political criminals group. When I say this I have this unfortunate duty of giving all the hard facts of the hard background of the matter over which this incident took place. I am ashamed of what is happening and I would urge upon the Government even now to do its best to find out the culprit and give him exemplary punishment, but please also spare the innocents; do not harass the innocents, because then the tension will continue in the area. The need of the time is to end the tension and create peaceful conditions. Thank you.

**THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI-MATI INDIRA GANDHI):**

I share the feelings of anguish of all the hon. Members. We all realise that a debate is necessary for us to vent some of these feelings. But this does not necessarily lead to any solution. As soon as I heard of the tragedy in Pipra I asked the Home Minister to go and he was able to take certain initial steps which gave some reassurance to the people. How effective they have

[Shrimati Indira Gandhi]

been one can only tell in the long run? We are here as responsible Indian citizens who are proud of our country. Therefore it is all the more our responsibility to cleanse our society of those blots, shameful blots which can only, as hon. Members themselves said, cause shame to us and deprive us of our own self-respect.

I have decided to reactivate the National Integration Council. It is not a solution; it is merely a tool. It is the responsibility of the Government to assure our Harijans and tribal brothers and sisters of full protection. Also the guilty must and should be punished. This is not a new problem. As many have pointed out, it goes back to thousands of years; it is not easy to pull out those old roots. The causes are largely economic but into them are woven traditional social attitudes. Whereas it is government's responsibility to protect its citizens, it is the responsibility of all of us here, not only as Members of Parliament but as thinking, responsible Indian citizens to work towards the ending of casteism and communalism which are kinds of poisons which urge people to barbaric acts, lead them to forget that they are human beings and that others also are human like them, and have a right to live, to earn and to love and to work. This is something that cannot be removed merely by government decision or government action. It has to be a people's movement. Mahatma Gandhi tried to make it so. In our independence struggle,

we did not fight merely for political independence; we did this but part of the struggle was against economic injustice, against social humiliation of all Indians, especially of Harijans, Adivasis and the very weakest who had no voice, and who had no organisation. Today's situation is not the same, it has vastly changed; mainly it is this change which is part of the trouble, part of the cause of the trouble itself. As soon as they started reasserting their right; as soon as they wanted to stand straight with their heads up, a shower of atrocities and harassment descended on them. We are experiencing this also as a nation because this is the attitude of some of the developed nations towards us. They say how dare these poor people, who were cowed down, who listened to us, how dare they stand up and assert their rights? That is something that we have to deal with as a national problem. I know that. When politicians are talking, politics comes in, no matter how much one tries to avoid it. I certainly do not want to lay the blame on anybody. What is past is past. But we cannot remove the past; we have to be aware of the past. But now let us try to see how we can put our heads together and how we can create a right atmosphere. This is not something we can do just sitting here or sitting in the Integration Council. It has to be done at the local level. If a group of people have to be protected, basically it is the neighbours who are going to protect them. It should be our task as Members of Parliament from these areas, from every area because all of

us have Harijans and may be tribals in our constituencies, to see how to create that atmosphere, where people will not behave so barbarically, however much their feelings are aroused, even if they feel there is a cause for revenge. One wrong is committed, immediately the aggrieved feel that they must retaliate. The only solution is, apart from taking all possible administrative and other measures for protection as well as for punishment of the guilty, if we create an atmosphere that this is wrong, that it is not done in Indian society and will not be accepted by society. This is no short term solution. Much as I would like to say that I think such incidents are not going to happen again, I cannot honestly say that. We can only say that we shall try our very utmost, our very best to prevent such things from happening and I hope that in this effort we shall have the full co-operation of all sections of the people.

19.49 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: PRICE AND PROCUREMENT POLICY FOR WHEAT AND GRAM FOR 1980-81.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION (SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO):

Sir, I rise to make a statement on the price and procurement policy for wheat and gram for the 1980-81 marketing season.... (Interruptions).

.....I apologise for my inability to make this statement earlier at the fixed time.

The Government have had under consideration the recommendation of the Agricultural Prices Commission and have taken the following decisions in regard to the price and procurement policy for wheat and gram for the 1980-81 rabi marketing season:—

- (i) The support price of wheat will be Rs. 117 per quintal and that of gram Rs. 145 per quintal;
- (ii) The issue price of wheat from the Central pool will be maintained at the present level of Rs. 130 per quintal;
- (iii) Free movement of grains throughout the country will continue, the whole country continuing to be treated as a single zone for this purpose; and
- (iv) As procurement will be by way of affording price support, there will be no formal targets of quantities to be procured.

2. Government will ensure that price support operations are backed by adequate purchase arrangements in the field. However, this is a matter in which the primary responsibility rests on the State Governments. All efforts will be made to help the State Governments and the public agencies in removing any bottlenecks and in setting up an extensive network of purchase centres in areas where procurement takes place.

The Lak Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, March 14, 1980/Phalguna 24 1901 (Saka).