

PROF. N.G. RANGA (Guntur) : And credit also.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : The most important aspect to which Prof. Ranga referred is the credit that is needed by the peasant in order to make agriculture a success.

The problem of remunerative prices, therefore, in effect, is the problem of making the inputs required by the peasant cheaper and available in an easier way.

We have the Agricultural Prices Commission, Really speaking, the entire basis of the Agricultural Prices Commission ought to be really the Agricultural Cost Commission because the prices are basically related to the cost and, therefore, if we are able to tackle effectively the problem of cost of production for an agriculturist, we will be able to tackle very effectively the question of agricultural prices.

18.00 hrs

Unfortunately, when we look at the norms that are employed in determining the prices in respect of industrial goods and try to compare them with the norms that are generally used to determine the prices of agricultural commodities, we find that there is a sense of discrimination. There is a gap between them. For instance, when the prices of a commodity like cloth, an industrial good, is decided upon, almost all important aspects are taken note of. The expenditure on energy, fuel, transportation charges, the raw material that is used, whatever is to be spent on the labour that is employed to produce cloth, all these aspects, are taken note of. But as far as the determination of prices of agricultural commodities are concerned, it is not always—I will not say, never—that all these factors are taken note of. Every factor that enters into the process of production of an agricultural commodity must be attended to while determining the prices of agricultural commodities.

Who are the people at the helm of affairs in determining the prices in the Agricultural prices Commission ? I do not want to cast an aspersion on any experts or any members belonging to the Agricultural Prices Commission. But I will narrate an experience that has appeared in one of the financial journals. When one expert Prof. Ranga had come to Maharashtra, in Kolhapur he found a quantity of a good, a few kgs. of that, and he said, to produce such a quantity of a good, how big must be the tree. I do not know whether he said it with a sense of humour or he exercised his fundamental right of ignorance. I do not know that.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
SHRI BUTA SING : Janata Party man.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : He was not a Janata Party man. The Janata Party man espouses the cause of agriculturists.

I would now narrate my own experience. I asked one friend of mine in Delhi—he claims to be an agricultural economist, he seems to be an expert in determining various factors that contribute to the determination of prices of agricultural commodities—can you explain to me what is the difference between rabi and kharif ? You will be shocked and surprised to know that he was not able to tell me the difference between rabi and kharif. Then, I humorously asked him : Can you at least tell me, whether these are the names of women or these are the names of crops ? He started laughing and I laughed still loudly. This is not something which is imaginary. This has happened in my case. Leave aside the humorous aspect. But these are aspects that are to be taken note of.

All I want to drive at is this. We should have the Agricultural Prices

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Commission. I am not against the institution at all. In a country like ours which believes in Planning where the balance in various sectors is to be established, it is highly essential that instruments like the Planning Commission and the Agricultural Prices Commission are absolutely necessary.

But the question is what must be the structure and composition of the Agricultural Prices Commission.

The knowledge in the field of agriculture is not merely the bookish knowledge. There is something like an empirical knowledge in this country. I have come across quite a large number of agriculturists in this country who have not taken any Degree in Agriculture and in spite of that, they have practical knowledge about agriculture, the various factors that contribute to the production, the various factors that contribute to the cost of agriculture and the various factors that generally determine the prices of agricultural commodities and they are conversant with them. I would very much like that such representatives who are involved in the field of agriculture by dint of their experience and empirical knowledge and who have gained an expertise in the field of agriculture should also find some representation in Agricultural Prices Commission and if this is done, probably the agriculturist will be able to get better justice. I am not making a hypothetical proposition. When the interests of organised labour are involved, Various Committees are set up and the Central Trade Union Organisations are given representation on such Bodies concerning the interests of labour. If the Central Trade Union Organisations find a representation in Bodies which determine the fate of the working class in the country, I do not understand why proper representation should not be given to the representatives of farmer and kisans in this country so that better decisions can be taken on the basis of

empirical knowledge. That is the position.

There is one more significant observation made by Joshi Committee. The Committee has said :—

“It is a gross error to treat the imputed values of family labour rental for own land and interest on fixed capital as income.”

I just give an illustration. I think world of wisdom will share the experience. Such warnings and cautions are to be taken note of.

I will move to another important aspect as far as prices structure is concerned and that is the parity between the prices of agricultural and industrial goods. Having mentioned to you the various norms that are utilised in determining the prices of industrial goods, the next important aspect is to bring about some sort of a balance, of a parity, to be established between the agricultural prices and the prices of industrial goods.

PROF. N.G. RANGA : Professional salaries and allowances also.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Of course, that is a product of that. The prices of industrial goods are based on properly structured indices. There is a formula for the index to be prepared and when the working class finds that the index machinery is not proper, the machinery by which the index system has been built is not adequate, then Committees are appointed and the index systems are revised. Some changes are made but as far as agricultural commodities are concerned, there is no proper structure of index on the basis of which prices can be fixed and, therefore, we must have proper re-structuring of the index both for the industrial goods and also for the agricultural goods and once that exercise is gone into, it will be

possible for us to have a balance or a parity between the prices of industrial goods. Some basis must be taken for determining the agricultural prices and the parity between the agricultural and industrial prices will be able to give better results that will act as an incentive to the agriculturist and, in that case, the productivity will go up.

The next aspect which I would like to touch in a very cursory manner will be the question of fluctuations of prices. If there is one aspect of agricultural commodities prices that acts as a disincentive to the agriculturist, it is the usual and frequent fluctuation in the prices of agricultural commodity and, therefore, the agricultural commodity does not find itself quite safe and in equilibrium. They are constantly threatened by various extraneous factors, by fluctuations in the agricultural prices and, therefore, the agricultural prices fluctuations are a great disincentive even for agricultural production and, therefore, the best method and the accepted *modus operandi* would be that before the sowing season begins, agricultural prices should be announced. The agriculturist should not feel any fear about the fluctuations that are likely to take place once he enters into an experiment of agriculture before the sowing season. He must be assured that this is the fair price that is there to the agriculturist. That will act as a great incentive and once you give incentive to the agriculturist, he will be able to produce for the country much better than what he is able to do today. Therefore, I suggest announcement of prices, firm prices, of agricultural commodities long before the sowing season, so that that acts as an incentive. Then, building up adequate buffer stocks and a balanced import and export policy will also help and will also go a long way in avoiding constant and frequent fluctuations in prices. If buffer stocks can be built up in a very safe way, if substantial buffer stocks can be built up, in

that case the agriculturists will gain, the general community will gain, the consumers will also gain, the Government will also gain, the economy as a whole will gain. Therefore, this problem of fluctuation in prices must be tackled.

Then there is one positive suggestion that I would like to make, and I hope and trust that Government will respond to this positive suggestion. I would like to suggest that agriculture should be treated as an industry. If you treat agriculture as an industry, in that case a number of benefits that are made available to industry today for its development will become available to agriculture. We are in an age in which a lot of incentives are given to industry. The industrialists demanded that the present ceiling limit of Rs. 20 crores in the case of MRTPL be increased to Rs. 40 or Rs. 50 crores. Sometimes, when a blind man asks for one eye, God gives him two. The great monopolists asked for the present MRTPL limit to be increased from Rs. 20 crores to Rs. 50 crores. But the Government, being extremely satisfied, said, "Industrialists, you are asking for one eye; we are offering you two; the limit is raised to Rs. 100 crores". All right, if you have given that much concession and that much latitude to the monopolists in this country, let us try to give some advantage also to the kisans in this country. If the Government announces tomorrow that Government is going to treat agriculture as an industry and that all those concessions and facilities which are made available to industry, all the inputs that are made available at concessional rates, will be available to agriculturists taking agriculture as an industry, you will find that it will have an electrifying effect; the agriculturists will be able to give a better performance. Take, for instance, electricity. I know, Railways and industry are always given electricity and a concessional rate. We are told that industry is an infrastructure for the development of the country and Rail-

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ways are an infrastructure, transport infrastructure, for the development of industry and therefore, they are to be given concessional rates as far as electricity charges are concerned. I do not want to have any conflict with Railways and industry. I would not like anything to be done with retrospective effect, having functioned as Railway Minister. But at the same time I must say one thing. If Railways are an infrastructure for the development of industry and industry is an infrastructure for the development of the country, then the kisans who provide raw materials to industry, the kisans who provide raw materials to every sector of our economy, also constitute indirectly a great infrastructure for the development of the country and, therefore, they must be treated as an industry and given all facilities as far as electricity charges are concerned, for example. I think, in a State like Kerala they are prepared to offer electricity at a very low rate, and I am sure that all politicians, no matter to which Party they belong, fully realising that it is the peasantry which is the backbone of our economy, will be prepared to extend all facilities to kisans. Therefore, treat agriculture as an industry and give them all the inputs at concessional rates as they are made available to industry in the country. This is my concrete suggestion.

Then I would like the working of NAFED to be streamlined. In this House, in the last Lok Sabha and in the Fifth Lok Sabha particularly, we had a good deal of discussion on NAFED. I had initiated in this very House in the Fifth Lok Sabha and again in the Sixth Lok Sabha discussion on the working of NAFED. I remember, that was the time when the problem in respect of onions and potatoes had become extremely difficult. Onions and potatoes were being thrown away because there were no warehousing facilities where they could be accumulated. And NAFED was not prepared to purchase them when the kisans were in a difficult position. We

had a very good discussion on NAFED in this very House. I may remind you that irrespective of political differences, Members belonging to both sides of the House had insisted that the NAFED machinery must be streamlined and more funds should be made available to NAFED and they must be made to purchase potatoes and onions, they must be enabled to build up proper warehouses and refrigeration facilities and if they are able to do that, a number of difficulties which the people and the agriculturists face, to-day as result of inadequate functioning of the NAFED, I think, can also be removed. I must say that not only supply of adequate funds to NAFED must be made but it must also be freed the stranglehold of bureaucracy. In this country, it is a tragedy—I have nothing against bureaucrats; bureau bureaucracy and bureaucrats are different. Whichever be the system of government, whether it is a Congress Government or a Janata Government or whether it is a Capitalist government or a Communist government, we do need the bureaucracy and we need bureaucrats. But bureaucrats and bureaucracy is one thing and bureaucracy is a different thing. I want bureaucracy to disappear. I do not want bureaucrats to disappear because there will away be some officers and employees who have to manage. After all some human beings have to be employed and some expertise is still to be utilised. So I am not against bureaucrats but I am against bureaucracy. So also I am against red tape, but I am not against the Reds. I am against red-tapism. That is how I will describe that bureaucracy should be eliminated from the functioning of the NAFED and if it is done, it will prove to be one of the effective instruments to promote the interests of the peasants.

I would like to say a word about technology. It is an accepted fact that we rely solely on manual labour for our agriculture. So the productivity can not

improve beyond a particular stage. In every country where some degree of mechanisation had been utilised, we find that the per acre or per hectare yield of the agricultural land is definitely better. If we have better seeds, better fertilisers, better implements, better experimentation, better research, the same piece of land with better equipment and better fertilisers, better technology is able to give more yield. But, unfortunately, the land-man ratio in this country is such that we cannot afford to have a high degree of mechanisation through tractors. In this country where we have only small pieces of land, how will the tractor operate? For instance, I am told that the per capita availability of land for cultivation by the peasants in this country is only 1.5 acres. I am talking about the average, 1.5 acres. So in a country in which the per capita average is only 1.5 acres of land, we cannot think in terms of large tractors operating in large sectors of our country. But, at the same time, if we cannot afford tractors on small pieces of land I think we can try the Japanese experiment in which power-tillers have been utilised, and in our country in different parts peasants have started utilising small power-tillers. If power-tillers are used, they can have better productivity from the land and I am sure that equipment should be made available. But what is that difficulty? As far as the small and intermediate peasants are concerned, even they will not be able to purchase the power-tillers on their own. They will not be able to have a greater degree of fertilisers. They will not be able to have a sophisticated equipments for them. Individually they cannot afford it. I would, therefore, suggest that we should encourage a network of service co-operatives in the country so that the service co-operatives will be able to provide this equipment to the agriculturists. In that case, productivity will increase and the yield per acre increases and the nation's economy stands to gain and at the same time, in

terms of the price structure, the kisans will be able to benefit. This will lead ultimately to increased productivity.

A word about the zonal system. I am glad that when we ended the zonal system, that decision has not been reversed. My humble request to the present Government is that the ending of the zonal system in the country and treating the entire country for foodgrains movement as a single unit has served a great purpose of the kisans and peasants in the country.

By allowing free movement of foodgrains from one part of the country to another that has given great benefit to the kisans. Ending of the zonal system in foodgrains has given a definite advantage. I would urge upon the government that abolition of zonal system should be made a permanent feature so that it is not allowed to revive and, I think, the peasants will be extremely happy on this.

Now, I want to make a radical suggestions and I do not know how far government will be able to implement it. I would suggest that let there be dispersal and decentralisation of industries. At least wherever new industries are taking place and wherever finished products are manufactured these goods require certain raw materials. I would suggest to the government, try to set up industrial units in those particular areas in the vicinity of which we are able to get raw-material that is required for that particular industrial unit. Not only the transport problem will get eased but also at the same time there will be a co-relocation between the raw-material manufacturers and those who are actually manufacturing the industrial goods. In addition to that I would make a further suggestion and request the Minister to get it examined. I give an illustration. We have sugar cooperative factories. Very often the kisans residing in the vicinity of that particular factory—

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 within a few kilometer radius—grow sugarcane. They are part and parcel of the sugar cooperative factory. Here is our friend, Hrudh who has been a successful cooperator in our country and he will tell you that if in the vicinity of a sugar factory we have got a big field growing sugarcane there can be free movement of sugarcane to the factory and further if you want to give them in sense of sharing, then the sugarcane growers are made the shareholders of that particular cooperative factory. Not only that, in some of the sugar cooperatives even the industrial workers working in that factory are also made the share-holders and if that atmosphere of cooperation is built then the cooperatives will be genuine cooperatives and if such industrial units are built up in the vicinity of those areas where the raw—materials are grown, I tell you, the coordination between the industrial goods and the raw material will be better. The transport charges can be reduced and in deciding the price structure, I think, a great facility will be made available.

Now, Sir, a word about monopoly procurement of cotton. In Maharashtra we have made that experiment a success to some extent. No doubt, there may be difficulties but I would like to warn the House that monopoly procurement experiment of cotton cannot survive as an isolated island. If in a particular State monopoly procurement of cotton becomes a success and just across the border we have got a free market and there is no monopoly procurement then in that case there will be destructive competition and in that case the experiment will fail. So, I suggest, first adequate funds should be made available and in addition to that if a certain region is growing cotton to a greater extent, then let us try to encourage the new spinning mills in that very area where cotton is grown. If cotton is grown in regions and in the same regions we start spinning mills and there is decentralisation and dispersal of cotton mills,

in that case there will be better link between raw material and the finished goods and, I feel, transport charges also can be minimised to great extent.

Then there is one more aspect. Very often the so called radicals try to show that there is a contradiction between the interest of the peasants and the interest of the landless labour. I want this House to remove that impression from our minds that the interest of the kisans and the interest of the landless labour must always conflict. Sometimes they are likely to conflict. Of course, I am not talking about the old zamindars. But I am talking about an intermediate or small peasant. If you look at the peasants, the question is, shall the peasants in this country demand more and remunerative prices. Sir, when they carried on their agitation some pseudo-radicals said that the landless labour must not join peasants in this movement. On the contrary I was one among those who joined this movement, I joined the movement for remunerative prices for peasants in my State. I went to landless labour and agricultural labour. I went to their unions and to their platforms. I told them: You join the battles of the peasants for demanding better price and if they are able to get better price, if their income level goes up, if they are able to mop up better surplus, in that case it will be easier for people like us to demand better wages for the agricultural labour. We told them, once they get their remunerative price, we will also fight for the share of that price going to landless labour. We told them, rest assured, we will do that. And Sir, I am happy to tell you that in our State there was full cooperation between the agricultural labour and the peasants who were fighting for remunerative price. The agricultural labourer realised that if the peasant on whose land he works, does not get proper price for agricultural produce, how can he expect better wage. Therefore he joined the

peasants. The peasants also gave an assurance in advance that if they get a better price for their agricultural produce, be let assured that you will not be let down, you will get a better deal. That is how the interests of the two are to be reconciled. Let there be no class struggle between the peasant and the landless labour. Their interests can be reconciled for building up the economy of the country and also the mutual interests of agricultural labour as well as of the peasants.

Sir, while concluding, I would like to point out to you three things. As far as the economy of the country is concerned, as I have said, just as 'means of transport' provide the infrastructure for the development of the economy, let us take it for granted, that agriculture (and the raw material which they manufacture and grow) will also provide the infrastructure for development. One more thing. You may go through the speech of the Finance Minister when he pointed out certain things in this House last time in the 1983-84 Budget. That budget projected a deficit of the order Rs. 3900 crores, almost Rs. 4,000 crores. In this year's budget also the deficit financing projected is Rs. 3800 crores. What did the experts of the Government and the Finance Minister say? Sir, that is very relevant and that is very complimentary to the peasants. The Finance Minister said 'Though the deficit financing is of the order of Rs. 3800 crores, I have a confidence that if the kisans in this country give us a better crop, in that case, the economy will be able to absorb the shock of this deficit financing'. Sir, it is a great tribute which he has given to the peasantry of this country. Of course, I am not confident whether deficit financing will halt at Rs. crores at the bidding or direction of the Finance Minister. Probably it may go up still further. But he himself has admitted that only if we are able to absorb the shock of deficit financing, it will strengthen the base

of agriculture in this country. If we are able to build up better buffer stock and if agricultural crop is better in the coming year, that itself will be able to absorb the shock to the economy. That itself shows how the primacy of peasants is accepted by all concerned.

Sir, after a long time I have got this opportunity to raise this vital question of remunerative prices for agricultural produce. I thank the Speaker for that. He himself being a farmer, he realised the significance of this subject, Sir, while debating and discussing this problem, forgetting all our party affiliations and loyalties, let us all rise like one man in this House and see that remunerative price for agricultural produce is ensured, a new economy is built up and a new and prosperous India emerges. With these words I conclude. Thank you.

PROF. N. G. RANGA (Guntur): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate myself for having come back again to this House after the turmoil of the General Elections because I am able to hear the speech made by my Hon. friend Prof. Madu Dandavate. I feel as if I am thirty years younger while hearing almost every word of the speech that he has made. I am prepared to accept it as my own. I wish to thank Prof. Madhu Dandavate and I wish to congratulate the Opposition also for having come forward with this proposition. I am sure that the whole House would be unanimous in agreeing with him, in placing before us his impassioned plea for a fair deal for our agriculturists including the kisans as well as 'khet mazdoors'. I am very glad indeed that the opportunity has been given to our new Prime Minister to change the very title of the Agriculture Prices Commission, that is, from Agriculture Prices Commission to 'National Agriculture Costs and Prices Commission'. I speak subject to correction. In that he has already anticipated Prof. Dandavate's

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as well as our demand, the 'kisans' demand, for remunerative prices. Indeed, he has committed himself to this proposition that agriculturists should be paid remunerative prices. Now, how are these remunerative prices to be fixed? They should be based on agricultural costs. Prof. Dandavate already spelt out various items, the most important thing being, of course, credit and also the land cost. That also has got to be taken into consideration when all these various factors of production including the fertilisers and other inputs are taken into consideration including the whole family labour that has contributed to the production by the farmers themselves, their wives and children and everybody and these farmers can be assured of remunerative prices. We are all in favour of parity between agricultural and industrial labour. I have pleaded for it for the last several decades. I am also in favour and I am sure my party also would be in favour of paying as good wages to our agricultural labour as are being given to the industrial labour who are given a fair deal. Indeed, the International Labour office for a very long time continued to neglect the agricultural labour. It was on the pressure that was brought to bear upon it by myself, as well as the late lamented labour leaders in this country, like Mr. N.M. Joshi, that that International Labour Office began to pay some attention to agricultural labour. It was in 1923 that we initiated the 'Kisan Movement' in this country. The first thing we did was to organise agricultural labour conferences and the next conference was of the land-owning kisans because even at that time, we were convinced that agriculturists, the 'khet mazdoors' as well as land-owning kisans should work hand in hand cooperate with each other and work as two equal partners in carrying on this great profession, this activity, this industry of agriculture. Therefore, both of them should be treated as honourable partners and agricultural labour should be protected and paid properly. I have

been pleading with the Government in those years when I was in the opposition, as well as during the last fourteen years in which I have been cooperating with them again, pleading for adequate representation on this Commission for agricultural labour. My Hon. friend, the predecessor of our present Minister for Agriculture, was agreeable to it. He accepted it as a matter of principle. We are lucky to have had Rao Sahib as a kishan himself, a landowning kisan, and now his successor, Shri Buta Singh, as a leader, as a spokesman of the landless kisans. These two friends have come to us fortunately from the same State and they have been representing our kisans and the charge had been laid upon them to look after these people. I sincerely hope that very soon it would be possible for my Hon. friend to get the support of the Cabinet to change the constitution, or whatever it is, of this Commission so that it would be possible for him to have representatives of agricultural labour also on it.

I need not go into all other details mentioned by my Hon. friend, Shri Dandavate, because I have already prefaced my speech by saying that almost everything that he has said should be considered to be as if I have myself made that speech.

There should be parity between industry and agriculture, parity between not only the professional classes and agriculture. The most extraordinary thing is that professional classes have come to be the most favoured class here in our country. If there are any kind of vested interests at all, it is the professional classes. My friend was talking about the bureaucracy. The professional classes, official and non-official, the private enterprises and the public enterprises the whole lot of them have come to be the most powerful social element in our society. I want parity between these three elements, the industrial labour and industrialists, the professional classes as well as agriculturists.

And agriculturists should be treated at par with the others, whenever they make any kind of comparison and try to assess their respective needs and demands. Once that principle of parity comes to be accepted, there would be an answer to the query, the question that was put to me again and again both during the last election as well as after the election when I met my kisans again. All the kisans were asking me: 'Why is it that the price of cotton today is about the same, if not less than, what it was in 1975. When I fought for an increase of that price by demanding that the Cotton Corporation should come to the market. It was the same price, what is known as the basic price, the support price and the rest of it. While during the last eight years, all other prices have gone up, allowances have gone up, the agricultural price was still there the same. This is the real difficulty. This difficulty can be overcome if the whole House is to accept and the Government is to implement the new decision, or the new proposal, that agricultural costs should be given first consideration in trying to fix the support price. The support price as well as the remunerative price, both have got to be prescribed, and at the level of support price whenever the peasants are not able to find market or merchants or demand, Government must be prepared to come forward and purchase it, offer necessary price to the farmers, either in one instalment or in a number of instalments. All those details can be worked out, but that has got to be done. If we protect the farmers and agricultural workers, as my Hon. friend Shir Dandavate said, we can ensure the continued and continuous progress of our social economy as well as economy as such. If peasants are neglected, as have been neglected for a very long time, how can you expect the country to progress at all? This is one of the reasons why the progress in this country has been very slow. There has been some progress, —there is no doubt whatsoever—after we achieved freedom. But it is so tortuously slow. It could have been speeded up if only the peasants have been properly

looked after and if only the agricultural labour as well as self-employed labour is properly looked after.

The last thing that I would like to say is this. Sir, I am all in favour of this cooperative supply of not only inputs, but also all the services of the latest machinery, tractors as well as power tillers and various other smaller things, pump sets. Now in the management of these cooperatives also, we must see that there is no interference either from Government or from any political parties and they should be free from any kind of mischief, so far as politics is concerned. I want an independent authority like the Election Commission to ensure that there will be real democracy in the management of these cooperatives. Otherwise, the kisans would come to be exploited by the bosses of the cooperatives in the same way, even may be worse also than is the position today under the dispensation of merchants and all the rest of them. Once we have all this organisation, machinery and equipment for farmers as well as their workers, we have got to ensure, we have got to see to it that they are treated as self-employed people. They should be given the necessary privileges as well as opportunities to enjoy their economic freedom and social freedom. They should not come to be enslaved like some of those peasants in some of the socialist countries under the *Kolkhoz* and *Sovkhoz*. Peasant proprietorship must be the base; it must be the basic rock on which this peasant problem as well as the agricultural problem has got to be solved in our country.

Sir, with these words, I would like to associate myself with Prof. Dandavate and I would also like to express my gratitude to him, and I congratulate myself for this. If I were to consider myself as the third generation, Dandavate belongs to the second generation and it was my proud privilege to have had him as one of the listeners, as one of the comrades in one of the Citizenship Colleges that we have had in Bombay. And there

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 whenever I had any opportunity of talking about any social economy in our country at all, I would always be talking only about kisans and their need for parity economy. I have embodied all these thoughts in my book "Challenge of the Peasantry". He has presented our kisan's case just as well as I would love to. But then, as I am situated today, I may not be able to do it. I support him and I hope the House will support the plea that he has presented in such an effective, eloquent and dynamic manner.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : We have fixed two hours for this discussion and already 45 minutes are over. I request the Hon. members to restrict their time to five minutes. I expect your cooperation.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSHI (Howrah) : Since the time allowed is only four and a half or five minutes, it is as well if we lay our scripts on the table instead of giving a speech.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : You can do that.

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO (Vijayawada) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, first of all I would like to thank the Hon. Speaker for allowing a discussion regarding the necessity to fix remunerative prices for agricultural products. I would also like to express my gratitude for the analytical speeches of our Hon. friend Shri Madhu Dandavate and our political itahcuShri Ranga. Right from the student days, without seeing him, we used to adore Prof. N.G. Ranga as the kisan leader.

After his speech, certainly I am left with only a few points to make. First of all, I would like to express my concise and concerted opinion that merely changing the name of the Agricultural Prices Commission to Commission on Agricul-

tural Costs and Prices will not serve the purpose. I think the main, theme, the main objective should certainly change.

There is a Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices. It calculates the price of every industrial product and it makes its recommendations to the Government of India; and the Government of India will, with all generosity and liberal view, immediately allow the industrialists to increase the prices of their product from a small pin to the biggest machine or industrial goods. But, unfortunately, on platform, though they make election promises, on paper they will say, a kisan should get remunerative prices, I am sorry to state that the kisan is denied remunerative prices. It was mentioned just now by our two distinguished members regarding the support price and remunerative price. I submit the support price should be a remunerative price, because in the Indian economy where the average landholding is only 1.5 acres, it is the small farmer, it is the marginal farmer, who is compelled to sell his produce immediately after he gets his crop; whereas the middle farmer or a farmer with sound financial position, withholds his stock; he will sell his stock at a later date when he feels that the price he gets is a good one. So, there is every necessity to fix the remunerative price mainly to protect the interest of small and marginal farmers. Apart from that, actually, in the last two years, iron and steel prices were allowed to increase by 30 percent, cement by 25 percent, non-ferrous metals by 15 percent, aluminium by Rs. 3000 per ton and paper by Rs. 1000 per ton. Whereas the prices a farmer is getting are very low.

In regard to the composition of the Agricultural Prices Commission, hitherto two officials are there and one representative of the farmers is there. Unfortunately, the voice of the representative of the farmers was not given due consideration. For example, in 1983-84, two

official members thought that Rs. 132 should be fixed as the minimum procurement price for paddy, but the representative of the kisan recommended Rs. 152 per quintal on paddy.

In fact, he has rightly pointed out a genuine difficulty that is being experienced by the farmers of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal, where the farmer and the agricultural produce are subject to cyclone or disturbances of weather, due to which the farmers are losing very heavily and in the absence of crop insurance the loss is causing ruination to the farmer. So, he recommended Rs. 157 that is, Rs. 5 more keeping in view the peculiar circumstances of the Southern States, those adjoining the Bay of Bengal or the States where they are bound by the Arabian Sea and the North-Eastern States, but that recommendation was also vetoed. That was not accepted by the Commission.

Similarly, for coarse varieties like jawar, ragi, and maize the commission recommended Rs. 124 and the Member representing the *kisans* suggested Rs. 144. But that was also not taken into consideration.

I should like to bring to your kind notice that injustice done to the farmer is very very great, and it is because of this negligence, and the indifferent attitude towards the farmers that the farming community in the country is paying a very high price. Now they are importing Rs. 600 crores. worth of edible oils every year from other countries. I do not know whether this Government has any vested interest importing such huge quantity of edible oils from abroad. Some people are thinking that there is something behind the curtain and the ruling party is gaining something through those transactions. I would like, however, that such things should not take place.

Similarly, the price of sugarcane also is not remunerative. I will tell you. What is the logic in fixing Rs. 14 as the minimum price, statutory minimum price? It should be at least fifty rupees more. From the sugarcane bagasse comes, which is sold at a high price, and from it molasses come, out of which alcohol is prepared, and from it arrack is produced. From arrack hundreds of crores of income comes to the State Governments in the form of State excise. But the farmers is not getting the benefit. The contractors are becoming *karorpatis* the State governments are getting income, but the farmer is not benefited.

In my State, the state of affairs is really sad. I am very happy that in Maharashtra several co-operative sugar factories are running and the farmer is benefited. In our State, cooperative sugar factories are not functioning properly and the Government has to bear the losses to a great extent. Even the Government of India is also making available huge amounts by way of ways and means advances. Remunerative prices should be given to the sugarcane growers.

Some people say that the APC should keep the consumers' interests also in view, as if the people are living only due to those prices fixed by them or as if they live only on sugar. An increase of one rupee per kilogramme of sugar will not be much. After all, one has to pay for his clothing, for his daily needs, and on other items of consumption for his daily necessities, and they also are going on increasing. So, I request the Hon. Minister through you, to have a change in the basic attitude towards the farmers.

I would like to bring to your kind notice that the farmers are having apprehensions about the wrong policies of the Government. Dr. Patel, who was Governor of Reserve Bank of India, in his lecture in 1981-82 said :

"At the back of the minds of policy-

[Shri V. Sobhanadreesware]

makers was also the fear that higher prices readily conceded might what the appetite of the producers and something like a producers trade unionism might develop and cause distress to consumers, stake inflation and deny resources for development."

This is very unthinkable. While the Government has conceded several hundred crores of rupees worth of incentives and royalty to several tycoons in this country, it is really regrettable that the Government should think in this way in regard to several crores of kisans spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. In fact, as Prof. Ranga has stated, Andhra Pradesh farmers are suffering because they are not able to sell their paddy at the Government announced prices. The FCI is not purchasing their paddy. While FCI has purchased several lakh tonnes of paddy from Punjab, it has hardly purchased 70,000 tonnes of paddy from Andhra Pradesh. This is our bitter experience. This is not good. They apply one cut, two cuts, three cuts. Actually the farmers are selling their paddy at lower prices to the rice millers' because there is no other alternative. In fact, the people think that the representatives of the FCI are hand in glove with the rice millers. This causes lot of difficulties to the farmers. I request the Minister to kindly immediately check up with the FCI and see that they purchase paddy from the farmers.

There is a lot of gap between the price paid to the farmer and the price recovered from the consumer on any item. Unfortunately, middle-men are exploiting the situation. Near the city the farmer is selling vegetables at throw away prices whereas in the market the consumer gets it at a heavy price. I request the Government to at least form, on a trial basis, producer-consumers cooperative societies in cities and towns so that the farmer can get benefit

and the consumer can get things at a lesser price. We can start this experience with vegetables first. With the experience we get, the practice can be extended to other crops.

I also request the Minister to see that prices to be paid to the farmer in a particular seasons should always be announced in the beginning itself. I request the Minister to announce such a change immediately and implement it.

Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT (Dausa) : After listening to two learned Professors there is hardly anything left to talk. But there is a difference between yesterday's professors and today's students because of generation gap.

I think the Government that in this Budget they have taken very positive steps to help the farmers in the form of crop insurance and also in taking some more measures which will help the farmers. But as the Government is actionoriented, expectations are always from someone who really listens and acts.

80 percent of the population of this country lives in villages which mainly depend on agriculture. They are either farmers or farm labour to help the farmers. If we can help this category of people and this percentage of the citizens, the whole country will be helped. So, it is a national cause for which the House is sitting here to discuss this subject.

The late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri always said 'Jai Kisan'. Late Pandit Nehru also showed his feelings by declaring in his will that "After my death the ashes of my body should be spread over the lands of the farmers". with these sentiments, the whole House feels that the Government today has to take some actions which hitherto by some reasons have

not come to the notice of the Government.

19. 00 hrs.

I will quote a survey which was carried with 1970-71 as the base. The survey shows that in 1979-80, the increment in the agricultural input requirement was 116 percent whereas the increment in the agricultural production was 89 percent. With these figures in hand when we know that the increment in the input is more and the production is not going with that high increment, the Government certainly should take note of that. The operational cost which varied from 58.96 percent to 61.48 percent in 1971-72 to 1973-74 became 60.90 percent to 63.19 percent in early 80's. Similarly, the fertilizer cost became 22 percent, cost of human resources roughly 16 percent and the mechanical cost roughly 13 percent. Coming all these production cost which was Rs. 109 in 1977-78 taking Punjab as a sample because Punjab is one State which produces maximum wheat, it was Rs. 115 in 1980-81 and is estimated between Rs. 130 and Rs. 135 in 1983-84. When the support price was Rs. 151. When the total production cost is Rs. 130 to Rs. 135, giving a support price of Rs. 151, I think, is not a very reasonable cost for a farmer to survive and to continue helping the nation for the food cause. It is bad luck of the farmer that when the crop is good, the price goes down and if the crop is bad, the price goes up. It is the other way round. When you work hard and produce more foodgrains, you should be given more incentives and more price for the produce but it is the other way round in the case of a farmer when we say a support price.....(Interruptions).

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : If the candidate is good, the vote goes down.

SHRI RAFESH PILOT : I would not

be knowing that, Sir, because I have very little experience in that.

When the cost of wheat at fair price shops was declared Rs. 172 per quintal and for flour mills as Rs. 208, per quintal, the farmer was given only Rs. 151 per quintal whereas wheat from other countries was purchased at Rs. 203 per quintal. You cannot give that price to your own farmer who is producing more wheat for you. It certainly requires a thinking by the Government as to what is the reason behind this, why there is a restriction on increasing the price of foodgrains produced by our own farmers. You announce a support price today but the problem is that the farmer is for from the media. Our efforts have not been very hard to keep the farmer well informed. The farmer does not know what is in reserve for him from the Government agencies. Therefore, what happens is that the FCI gives a support price of Rs. 151 per quintal but the man who is at the counter of FCI, has got power with him to reduce the price to Rs. 146 or Rs. 147 if he finds that the quality of the wheat is not up to the mark. I must tell the Hon. Minister for his information that the marking done by the man at the counter is sometimes suspicious. A middleman comes in between and says, "This wheat is inferior and you cannot be given Rs. 151, you can be given only Rs. 146". Here the corruption breeds in. I would expect the man at the counter to tell the farmer "your wheat is not properly cleaned; so, you will get a little less; but if you clean it, you will get full price in future". After all, what is meant by the support price? It means that whatever the farmer produces and brings to the market, as long as it is fit for use, should be accepted at that price. First of all, why give the discretion of a margin to the person who sits at the counter? This is adversely affecting the farmers. The middle man goes to the village, ahead of the FCI representatives, tells the farmer "you give me one rupee per bag, I will see to it that your entire lot is taken without

[Shri Rajesh Pilot]

checking". The farmer jumps at this offer and he also commits some irregularities, because he is certain that he will get Rs. 150, instead of Rs. 151. So, this gives scope for corruption and the sufferer is the farmer.

Some measures like surprise check would also help. It should be carried out. Last time when I toured certain parts of western U.P. I came across this practice and reported it to the then Agriculture Minister. He did institute a few surprise checks, which produced some good results. The officials will be afraid of the surprise check and it will help the farmers.

Now fertilizer subsidy is given to the farmers. But they are not well informed as to what they are entitled to get. The subsidy is distributed by officials at the lower level or rank. That official tells the farmer that the subsidy on fertilizer is so much per bigha. He does not give the details and the poor farmer does not know what he is entitled to get. In some cases, it is not really given; it is given only on paper... (Interruptions) There are two types of subsidy. One is to issue fertilizer at a lower rate of interest. It is issued on paper it is in a particular name, it is deposited but really the man in between gets the money. These are the complaints which we have received in two or three States. That is why I have brought it to the notice of the Minister. It is right, should react on it. If it is wrong, it is our good luck that it is the wrong information. The farmer should know what is the fertilizer subsidy and how it is given to him.

Most of the farmers are not well educated. There are cases where fertilizer is supplied after its utility period is over. Even though the date of manufacture and period of expiry are stamped on the bags, the farmers are not educated enough to check that. So, Government should take measures to ensure that the farmers

to ensure that the farmers really get the benefit.

Under the Electricity Act, all the State Electricity Boards have to allot a fixed percentage of power to the rural areas. Unfortunately, no Electricity Board observes this condition. The result is that the farmers get the last priority in the matter of supply of electricity. Further, whether electricity is supplied to them for 10 days or 15 days, whatever may be the quantity he has actually utilized, he has to pay a flat rate. If you supply power to the farmer at the proper time and in the required quantity, it will help him to increase the production, which will ultimately help the country.

As Prof. Dandavate has stated, agriculture should be treated on par with industry. Unless that is done, the small and medium farmers cannot come up to the level of the big farmers and agriculture cannot develop in the way industry is developing.

My second suggestion is that the Government must monitor the system at district level and also have an information centre at the district level so that the monitoring and information is side by side. What the Government has given to the farmers, they should monitor to see whether it has reached the block level or the Panchayat level; and the information centre should be available there itself so that the farmer reaches the centre to know what is meant for him and what has reached for him. Therefore, only the district level monitoring can solve the problem. For the last five years we have been raising so many Call Attention Motions, so many 193 discussions have taken place, but we have not been able to achieve the results which we really thought of achieving.

Lastly, I hope with the Hon. Minister hearing very carefully to my suggestions, he will pay attention to my suggestions. As Prof. Dandavate has said that sometimes people who are not connected with farming, who do not know what

farming is, make the maximum use of this word. Even the politicians have exploited the farmers a great deal by using this word 'farming'. But it is being exploited further in cases like bank nominations. When you nominate a director from a farmer class, it is 'nominated' because the farmer sits in the panel and he heads as a representative of the farmers. But I am sorry to tell sometimes the farmer's nomination is given to somebody who does not even know what the spelling of farmer is. So, these measures should be taken into account sympathetically to help this neglected class. You have done a lot, but more is required.

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD (Hingoli) :
 I congratulate Prof. Madhu Dandavate for having brought this motion.

The agriculture prices for a long time have been agitation the minds of our farmers. Unfortunately, even the ruling Party also that merely after distributing lands to the tillers and giving some credit to the cooperative societies their work is finished. We have to realise that total economy of this country depends on agriculture which is served by nearly 70 percent of our people. But it is the great misfortune of our country that planning and administration have miserably failed to look into the agriculturists problems.

Prof. Dandavate has rightly pointed out that long ago agriculture should have taken up as an industry. It should have been treated as an industry. I remember long back in the early fifteen Mr. Tata has written an article, where he had suggested that if you want to improve agriculture in this country, you must treat it as an industry. At the same time I remember that there was a movement from the hotel owners demanding that hoteliering should be treated as an industry. We now find that hotels are being treated as industry, while the people who serve the whole of this

country are completely neglected.

I will now quote one or two examples to show how they are treated. When they are given credit, that is known as credit. But is it really credit? The agriculturist gets a loan. He has to pledge the whole plot of land for taking a loan to dig a well for his farm, while an industry is given credit, when it only pledges the plot and the machinery thereon which is likely to produce some material. Why is this discrimination, I ask? The first attachment is on the movable property of that poor chap and the second all his land which he has pledged with the Bank society or, say, with the Government, that is sold off. I do not know why this discrimination should be continued.

Prof. Ranga, Prof. Madhu Dandavate and later on Mr. Rao also have spoken about remunerative prices. I would like to add one more point. When you think of cost of production you have not only to think of the cost of the inputs, but of the land and the labour that the whole family puts into that plus also the risk factor. Hardly 20 to 25 per cent of our land is irrigated, through major, medium and minor tanks and also underground water. Most of the cultivators are dry cultivators who are completely neglected. When I saw the formation of the APC, I found it was not represented by even a single dry farmer. It was represented by the only one representative who comes from an area which has more irrigation in the whole country. I feel sorry for it. When we know the very fact that in this country the dry cultivators are more who always take the risk, they have to depend on the weather and rain and they have to face the vagaries of nature. Why don't we take their representatives on the APC? Prof. Dandavate pointed out very well the ignorance of these people. I remember that we had suggested that a qualified man, a Master's degree-holder in Agriculture,

[Shri Uttam Rathod]

who had experience of dry cultivation especially in the tribal areas should be appointed as a Member of APC, preferably from South. Earlier the APC comprised only Members from northern India. We fought for it and we saw that an agro-economist from South was taken on the APC. As the professor rightly said, an agriculturist only knows the difficulties of agriculturists better than an economist with a degree. So, I suggest that under these circumstances it will be better if the cultivators get the credit- I do not want 'loan' for them, the word 'loan' should be removed, it has to be 'credit'-- as it is given to the industrialists. How is it that agriculture is not treated as an industry? Is it not a fact that the whole economy will go to dogs if the rabi or kharif crop has failed? It must be a fact because it was on the strength of this that the Hon. Finance Minister could say that it would be possible for him to face inflation to the tune of Rs. 3000 crores and odd if the crop is better. Sir, if it is so, how much attention are we paying to it? Remunerative prices must contain the risk factor also. Secondly, credit should be provided to these people at a low rate of interest. Today credit is provided by the RBI to the apex banks and the apex banks pass it on to the district banks with their share of 2 per cent and the district banks give it to the cooperative societies who, in turn, give it to the cultivator adding 3 per cent more. I do not know why we should have such a hierarchy. We can remove one or two of it and reduce the rate of interest to the farmer. Recently the Maharashtra Government has decided to extend loan at the rate of 6 per cent to cultivator. (Interruptions) Sir, please allow me a little more time.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : There are many occasions when you can explain all these things.

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD : I will not repeat the points made by others.

SHRI RAM PYARE PANIKA (Robertsganj) : Sir, one hour more should be given. This is a very important topic.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Even if we extend it by one hour, it cannot be finished because there are many speakers. That is why I am asking. Let them be precise on what they want to express, because there are so many occasions we are going to have on this when we can give more thought to it.

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD : The Maharashtra Government wants to extend the loan to the cultivators at the rate of 6 per cent, and the RBI and the Government should try to help them.

Crop insurance about which the Finance Minister has recently said, does not include groundnut and cotton. Groundnut and cotton in this country are also grown by dry farmers. So, they should be covered by crop insurance.

Warehousing facilities should be provided in the rural areas for the benefit of producers. Again, when the question of export comes, what you will see is that CCI is allowed to export one lakh bales. One lakh bales are allowed to the Marketing Federation of Maharashtra and one lakh bales to Gujarat Cooperative Society. When the total purchase of Maharashtra State is to the tune of 18 lakh bales and the CCI is only 4 lakh bales, I do not know why this should be so. This ratio should change.

(Interruptions)

Sir, my last request to our Minister would be for the linking of raw produce with the finished produce. That must be the principle. In case of cotton, last time, the Ministry of Agriculture accepted it but the Ministry of Commerce did not accept it saying that it was a

complex problem and that it would not be possible for the Ministry to decide the price. When we can correct any irregularity in INSAT-IB from here, how is it that we cannot decide the price of cotton after linking the price of raw cotton and the price of finished goods ?

These are some of the things which I wanted to present before you. I hope, taking the consensus and taking the mood of the House into account, the Hon. Agriculture Minister will think on all these points and decide in favour of the farmers and cultivators.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I once again want to remind the Hon. Members that we are going to have an 8-hour discussion on the Demands for Grants for the Ministry of Agriculture. At that time, you can touch all the points which you like. Now, the only concern is about the price policy which you are interested to express. But now I am feeling that most of the Members are speaking as if the Demands for Grants for the Ministry of Agriculture are going on. So, I just want to restrict the discussion only to the price policy.

I am giving only three minutes to each Member.

[Translation]

***SHRI ZAINAL ABEDIN (Jargipur) :** Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the issue of remunerative prices for agricultural produce should be considered very seriously not only in the interest of the farmers but also in the context of the economy of the entire country. I will expect the Hon. Minister of Agriculture to ponder over this issue with due seriousness. In the words of the first Prime Minister of our country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "agriculture is the biggest private sector". In any industry or factory if the owner feels that his production is not proving profitable, he stops production and the factory is closed down.

I will congratulate our valiant farmers that even without getting a remunerative price for their produce, they have kept up their production in exchange for their blood and sweat.

Sir, I feel that the very policy and method which is followed in our country for fixing the price of agricultural produce, is very erroneous. This must be rectified. The cost of producing one quintal of any crop cannot be the same in all areas. It will differ from area to area. The cost of cultivating one acre or one hectare of land cannot be the same at all places, this also differs from place to place. Somewhere it is more and somewhere it is less. I will give an example in this respect.

In 1980-81 in Bihar, the cost of cultivating paddy on one hectare of land was Rs. 2089. But in the same year, the cost in Tamilnadu was Rs. 4727. In Andhra Pradesh, in 1981-82, the cost of cultivation of paddy on one hectare was Rs. 3845. In Orissa it was Rs. 2077 whereas in Madhya Pradesh it was Rs. 1800. So we see that somewhere the cost is Rs. 1800 and at somewhere else for the same thing the cost is over Rs. 4500. Therefore to fix the price of any agricultural product uniformly on an average basis, may be beneficial for some areas but non-profitable and very harmful for some other areas. Therefore at the time of fixing the price of any agricultural produce, it is necessary to keep this aspect also in view. And for that, I feel, that it is necessary to have representatives of various State Governments and of various 'Kisan Samajs' or farmers organisations in the Agricultural Prices Commission. They must also be associated in the process of fixing the prices of various agricultural commodities. I hope the Hon. Minister will duly consider this. Sir, the support price or the remunerative price that is announced by the Government from time to time is not even acceptable to the farmers in most

*The speech was originally delivered in Bengali.

[Shri Zaizal abedin]

cases, far from being remunerative or profitable. The price that is given to them as support price, fails to support them. Sir, if the price of agriculture produce does not increase in proportion to the rise in cost of the farmers inputs, then the farmers will lose their production capacity. I entirely agree with Shri Rajesh Pilot. Who said that in our country it is very unfortunate that the prices of agricultural commodities fall with a rise in production and the price rises when there is a shortfall in production.

In this House, we had demanded many times that the price of jute may be fixed at Rs. 300/- a quintal. But that demand was not conceded. Last year we saw that due to a poor jute crop and a huge shortfall in production, the price of jute went up to Rs. 900/- or even Rs. 1000/- a quintal. Sir, a few days back the issue of potato prices was raised in this House during Question hour. Government announced the price of potato at Rs. 50/-. Far from being remunerative, this cannot be even a support price. But it is a matter of regret that in some States the farmers are unable to get even that price for their potato crop. They are compelled to sell their crop at Rs. 30/- or 32/-. The Government should at least ensure that whatever support price or remunerative price is announced by them, may be actually available to the small farmers, the marginal farmers, the bargadars, sharecroppers etc. It is indeed a shame that even after 37 years of independence most of our poor farmers continue to be in the clutches and at the mercy of the speculators, the middlemen, and the traders and the industrialists. The farmers will not get a remunerative price for jute but he has to purchase jute goods at a high price. Farmers won't get remunerative price for their sugarcane but they will have to buy sugar at a high price. Farmers don't get the right price for cotton but he has to buy cloth at a high price. The industrialists are raising the prices of their pro-

ducts everyday but the farmers who supply the raw materials, do not get a remunerative price for their product. Therefore, just announcing a price is not enough, it must be ensured that the farmers actually get even that price. We have seen that when a support price is announced, the Government agencies who are supposed to buy the crop at that price from the farmers, just disappear from the market. As a result, the poor small and marginal farmers, the sharecroppers, the bargadars etc. are compelled to sell their produce to the middlemen, at a far lower price. Now these very farmers, when they go to buy finished goods as consumers they have to pay a very high price. If this situation does not change then how can the farmers continue with their process of production? This is the big Question today. Sir, unless the farmer gets a remunerative price, he will not be able to buy the industrial goods which he requires in his everyday life. In this situation there is a possibility of the entire economy of our country collapsing some day.

Sir, in the end I will again request the Hon. Minister to find out how the farmers can be given a profitable and remunerative price and not merely support price for the crops produced with their blood and sweat.

[English]

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I congratulate my Hon. friend, Prof. Madhu Dandavate, on raising such an important discussion in the House. I also convey my gratitude to the Hon. Speaker who has permitted the House to discuss this important issue.

With a continuous increase in population and improvement in the Purchasing power of the people, the demand for agricultural commodities is continuing to increase. The demand for foodgrains by the turn of the century would be 200

million tonnes as per the National Commission on Agriculture. Also, the Irrigation Commission has calculated that by 2000 AD the country will need 200 million tonnes of foodgrains.

The self-sufficiency of foodgrains which we claim is only short-lived. Drought and adverse weather conditions force us to go to the foreign market to import wheat.

In these circumstances, sufficient stress has to be laid on ensuring remunerative prices for agricultural commodities by which the farmers may be interested in producing more, foodgrains and agricultural products. But what we find is that the majority of our farmers are small and marginal farmers. 75% of our farmers own less than 2 hectares of land of their own which is another important factor why we should ensure remunerative prices for agricultural produce. It is the farmers alone who can help in increasing production. The basis of fixation of such prices is the Agricultural Prices Commission on which the Government fully depends. APC fixes the prices, as we are told, on the basis of the cost of agricultural operation and inputs etc. but it is unfortunate that the report of the Agricultural Prices Commission is not made public. We do not know on what basis the fixation of such prices is done by the Agricultural Prices Commission. I do not know whether the Agricultural Prices Commission takes the above factors into account while fixing the prices.

The services to be reformed by the farmer are like those to be performed by the manager of a firm. Just like the manager of a firm, the farmer has also to arrangement for the supply of all inputs, credit from banks and cooperative societies, meet the revenue officers for various purposes and perform such other essential services. Agricultural operations are subject to Adverse conditions like disease, epidemics etc. The cost of transport from the production

point to the market is also involved. I do not know whether these factors are taken into account by the Agricultural Prices Commission while fixing the prices. These factors should be taken into account by the APC.

While fixing the support or remunerative prices, the APC is not taking into account the dry land farming because we could not provide irrigation facilities to at least 50% of our agricultural and cultivable land in our country. Most of the farmers are producing their agricultural produces from dry land. It costs more than that of the irrigated land. There are many States in the North Eastern region and also in the Eastern region like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal also where irrigation facilities were not provided even to 25% of the cultivable land. So, we should give priority to provision of irrigation facilities to these States while considering about agricultural produce.

I would like to congratulate and express my gratitude to our departed and beloved leader Shrimati Indira Gandhi who in her new 20-Point Programme had stressed on the aspect of irrigation facilities which has been included as the first point. The Economic Advisory Committee has mentioned that the production of rice has stagnated in the Eastern and North Eastern States due to the poverty and lack of proper education of farmers.

The cultivators in those States cannot use modern technology and improved agricultural practices and, therefore, they cannot use the high-yielding varieties of seeds. This shows that in these States the farmers should be given support for producing more agricultural products.

As Prof. Dandavate has very correctly said, there should be parity in terms of trade between agricultural produce and manufactured products, in the absence of which agriculture in our country is

[Shri Chintamani Jana]

losing to the industry hundreds of crores of rupees every year.

From experience we have noticed that the support prices fixed are not acceptable to the farmers. For example, in the case of sugarcane last year, some States Governments had to come forward to give remunerative prices to farmers.

I should convey my gratitude to our beloved and dynamic leader Shri Rajiv Gandhi for fringing Crop Insurance Scheme in the Budget of 1985-86. As mentioned in our election manifesto, the Finance Minister has introduced crop insurance scheme. But unfortunately this will cover only wheat, paddy, oilseeds and pulses and will not cover other crops like betel leaves, groundnut, cotton, etc. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture may kindly consider extending the facility to the other crops as well.....

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please sit down. You can speak at the time of discussion on Agriculture Demands for Grants.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : I want to congratulate our Finance Minister for having given subsidy to farmers in the matter of purchase of fertilisers.....

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please sit down. You can write to the Agriculture Minister, and he will look into those things. I am calling the next speaker. Shri Selvendran.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : One point, Sir. We notice that the purchasing agencies are not coming forward to purchase the agricultural produce in time because of which farmers are compelled to have distress sale of their agricultural produce. The purchasing agencies should be asked to be in the market before harvesting starts.

[Translation]

*SHRI P. SELVENDRAN (Periakulam) : Hon. Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in order to focus the attention of the House that remunerative prices should be given to the agriculturists, my esteemed friend Prof. Madhu Dandavate has brought forward this Resolution and I am glad participate in this important debate and express my views. Shri Madhu Dandavate has given many worthwhile suggestions and I am sure that the Hon. Minister would examine them for effective implementation.

Sir, there can be two opinion on the floor of this House for ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers. Agriculture is not a profession, but livelihood for a majority of our country's population. If a business man incurs losses in his business, he closes the shop and takes to some other business. But an agriculturist sticks to agriculture inspite of losses due to drought, due to cyclone, due to floods or due to any other natural cause. That is because agriculture is a way of life for him. He does not mind having been born in debt, living in debt and dying in debt. He will not forsake agriculture. In this background, it becomes the bounden duty of the Government to ensure remunerative prices for agriculturists.

The Agricultural Prices Commission makes recommendations to the Government in this regard. Many times the recommendations are implemented in to by the Government. Some time slight modifications are made in the recommendations of APC.

I would only say that there cannot be one price for the produce of wet land and for the produce of dry land. The APC should consider this issue in depth and make recommendations suitably.

*The Speech was originally delivered in Tamil.

In 1984-85 the statutory minimum price for sugarcane was fixed at Rs. 14/- per quintal. This was based on 8.5% recovery. Sir, the recovery from sugarcane is dependent upon the fertility of the soil and upon the sugarcane. It is not depended upon the toil of the tiller. Hence it must be ensured that the remunerative price for sugarcane must be higher than what it is now. As pointed out by the Member from Telugu Desam Party, even bagasse gets better price than that of sugarcane.

Sir, the Food Corporation of India is doing signal service to the agriculturists in the country. The Corporation buys substantial quantities of foodgrains from the farmers and keeps them in stock. Unfortunately, the FCI is not buying directly from the farmers. The foodgrains are procured through middlemen. The middlemen do not hesitate to exploit their ignorance of the farmers. He gets lesser price even for good quality grains by giving an impression to the farmers that the foodgrains are of inferior quality. Even in weighing the farmers are cheated by these middlemen. It is really unfortunate that the agriculturists, who feed the nation, are treated shabbily by the officials of FCI, by the middlemen and traders and even by other sections of our society. The ignorance of farmers has become a handy tool for others to treat them with contempt. This is wrong. The farmers must be treated with dignity. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture should ensure that the FCI buys directly foodgrains from the farmers; the middlemen should be done away with. Then only the farmers can get remunerative prices.

My constituency Periakulam is known for the production of cardamom, which earns foreign exchange for the Government. In the whole world, only three countries including India produce cardamom. Since the Indian cardamom is of the highest quality, it has great market in middle-east countries. In spite of this the cardamom cultivators are not

getting remunerative prices. The Cardamom Board seems to be an exercise in futility, since it has not been able to get remunerative prices for cardamom cultivators. The Minister of Agriculture should look into this problem also and do the needful.

In my constituency Periakulam, Theni is the biggest marketing centre for cotton. M.C. 5 cotton and L.R.A. cotton are brought to the Theni market, which meets twice in a week—Thursday and Sunday. The cotton has to be sold when it is wet. To the two-day markets on Thursday and Sunday, some 40,000 quintals reach Theni. The officials of Cotton Corporation of India, who come to Theni on these days, buy only 3000 to 4000 quintals of cotton. The CCI does not buy cotton directly from the cultivators. The CCI officials buy cotton through middlemen and commission agents. The officials who come to these markets are ignorant about cotton and its quality. Naturally they depend upon middlemen and commission agents. These commission agents are a heartless lot and they cheat the cultivators of cotton in open day light. It must be ensured that cotton is purchased directly by the CCI from the cultivators. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture must exert his good offices in this also and ensure remunerative price for cotton growers.

With these words I conclude my speech.

[English]

SHRI D.B. PATIL (Kolaba) : I am very thankful to you for giving me time.

While discussing a vital issue in this august House and as time is very scarce... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : You want a reply from the Minister. do you not ? I want to give more time to the Minister.

SHRI D.B. PATIL : As the time is short, I have to skip many points, but I will deal with the important points. So far as the point of remunerative price is concerned, Prof. Dandavate has elaborated very ably. So I will not go into detail and repeat those points again. The first and most important point is: what will be the cost of production? Again here I would like to mention another point. While determining the remunerative price and that is the standard of living of the farmers and the agricultural labour, while fixing the remunerative price, are we going to take into consideration what standard of living we are giving to the agricultural labour as well as to the farmer—will it be the standard of living of a beggar in the street or of a class IV service or of a class III service?

The standard of living which we are going to give the agriculturists has to be taken into consideration while determining the remunerative prices. It is very necessary to give the proper price to the agriculturist. At present the poor farmers have to sell their produce under distress even when they know that if they wait for few days they will get better price for their produce. The rich farmers who have the holding capacity are able to get more prices. If monopoly purchases are made by the Government then this contradiction will not be there.

Some people argue that if farmers are given higher price then the consumers will have to pay more price. It is not correct. If the middleman is avoided then it can be guaranteed that the producers can get reasonable price and the consumers will also get the things at a lesser price. So Government should think of taking over of purchase of agricultural commodities.

I would like to draw the attention of the Hon. Minister to another important point. The National Commission on Agriculture in its final report in 1976 has recommended that the overall

relation between input and output within agriculture should be such as to stimulate growth in rural areas and further recommended that index number of parity between prices received and prices paid to the farmers both for domestic and for farm expenses should be constructed so that a watch can be kept on the behaviour of parity and corrective measures taken wherever parity gets unduly disturbed to the disadvantage of the farmer. The Commission has suggested that parity should be maintained and if it is not maintained then the agriculturist has to lose.

Today the Hon. Minister has declared the support price of wheat at Rs. 157 per quintal. In 1982 the Haryana government had requested the Central Government to fix the price on the basis of price index. According to the Haryana Government at that time in 1982 the cost of production per quintal of wheat was Rs. 186.30 and on that basis they asked for a price of Rs. 170 per quintal whereas it was fixed at Rs. 150. Now, taking all these factors into consideration the prices which have been declared today are much less and the principle of parity between the agricultural prices and what he has to pay for his maintenance is not there. So, the pertinent question. I want to ask the Hon. Minister is whether the government is prepared to accept agriculture as an industry. If the Government accepts agriculture as an industry then I think we will be going on the right path. I am sure the Hon. Minister will answer to this pertinent question.

[Translation]

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora) : I would like to submit that the Hon. Minister should keep the interests of the consumers also in view while replying.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS (Bhilwara) : I would like the Hon. Minister to clarify in his reply the

position of small farmers and marginal farmers while defining farmer.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI BUTA SINGH): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am indeed grateful to all the Hon. Members who have participated in the very important discussion this afternoon connected with the welfare of the farming community of our country.

Sir, as has been rightly pointed out by prof. Madhu Dandavate ji, the kisan are the backbone of our national economy. I would go a step further and say that they are the very life-line of our national economy. This was very appropriately put by the Hon. Finance Minister when he started his Budget speech. This House will kindly recall that the Finance Minister started his Budget speech by paying his tributes to the kisans and the farmers of our country by saying that Rural Development and Agriculture will continue to be at the centre of the scheme of things in planning by the Government of India. That shows how much importance the Government attaches to the welfare of the peasants and farmers in this country.

Sir, I will touch upon some of the suggestions made by Hon Members with regard to the pricing policy of agricultural produce in our country. Some of the Hon. Members have made some general observations. I will deal with them at the time of discussion of my Ministry's Demands.

As Hon. Members are well aware, the main objectives of the Government's price policy for agricultural produce are aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the growers for their produce with a view to encouraging them for higher investment and adoption of improved technology for raising

productivity of their resources, increasing production and at the same time safeguarding the interests of the consumers by making available supplies at reasonable prices. Towards this end, Government announces each season procurement and support prices for major agricultural commodities and organises purchase operations through public agencies such as Food Corporation of India, Jute Corporation of India, Cotton Corporation of India, National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation and Tobacco Board, besides other agencies designated by the State Governments.

Now, Sir, a pertinent question has been asked by almost all the Hon. Members who have participated in this Debate.

As we expected from Prof. Madhu Dandavate, he has given new dimensions to the debate today by highlighting some of the very, very important aspects which the Agricultural Prices Commission must take into consideration before deciding the support price for agricultural commodities. This was highlighted by Prof. Ranga ji, our veteran freedom fighter, who has championed the cause of the kisans all his life.

Sir, the Government decides on the support price for various agricultural commodities, taking into account the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices, the views of the State Governments and Central Ministries as well as such other relevant factors which, in the opinion of the Government, are important for fixation of support prices. All these are taken into account.

Some of the Hon. Members wanted to know as to that are the various elements that the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices should take into consideration while arriving at a

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reasonable price to be declared as a support price. For this purpose the Commission is supplied with estimates of cost of cultivation and production generated through the Comprehensive Scheme for studying the cost of cultivation being implemented by the Agricultural Universities and Research Institutes in various States. As of now, a total of 9,000 holdings are studied every year. Prof. Dandavate ji, these costs are not arrived at only while sitting in the Krishi Bhawan. We Make spot study and case study of each crop and not only in one State as suggested by some of the Hon. Members, but we take into account the variation in each State under different circumstances, under most favourable circumstances, under unfavourable circumstances, in rainfed areas, in dry lands, etc All these things are done every year. About 9,000 holdings are studied every year through the Universities. The universities are working in close cooperation with the Agricultural Departments in various States and the Extension Services are also available with them. The experts from the Commission go to the various areas to study per-acre/hectare input used.

Now, the Commission also takes into consideration the changes in the input costs since the completion of the study and provides for such changes before formulating its price recommendations. The Commission has developed the practice of consultations with the State Governments and various other public institutions and concerned interests including farmers, trade and industry before finalising its recommendations. At present the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommends to the Government support prices for 20 major agricultural commodities. The Commission however recommends about 12 major agricultural commodities for fixing the support prices. One Hon. Member has said that we are fixing support prices for only one or two commodities and most of the other commodities have been left out.

For the information of the Hon. Members, I may mention the 20 major agricultural commodities. They are : Paddy, wheat, jowar, bajra, maize, ragi, barley, gram, arhar, moong, urad, sugarcane, cotton, jute, tobacco, groundnut, sunflower, soyabean, rapeseed and mustard.

Now, what are the considerations that the commission takes into account before making the cost price as reasonable remunerative cost ? The Commission takes into account not only a comprehensive over-view of the entire structure of the economy of a particular commodity but also a number of important factors as indicated hereunder :

1. Cost of Production
2. Changes in input prices
3. Input/output price parity
4. Trends in market prices
5. Demand and supply
6. Inter-crop price parity
7. Effect on industrial cost structure
8. Effect on general price level
9. Effect on cost of living
10. International market price situation
11. Parity between prices paid and prices received.

These are the various factors taken into account. I am sure the Hon. Members, Prof. Madhu Dandavate and Prof. N. G. Ranga will agree with me that these are the various constituents which any reasonable body more so the Agriculture Prices Commission should take into consideration. These are the points which most of the Hon. Members highlighted in their speeches and I can assure the Hon. Members that the Government is very much alive to the various conditions under which our peasant and farmers are working.

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to Ensure Remunerative Prices For Agricultural Produce to Farmers

The cost of cultivation/production take into account includes all paid-out costs, such as those incurred on account of hired human labour, bullock labour/machine labour (both hired and owned) and rent paid for leased land besides cash and kind expenses on use of material inputs, as for example, seed fertilizers, manures, pesticides, and irrigation charges including cost of diesel/electricity for operation of pumpsets. Besides, cost of production includes imputed value of family labour. The cost also covers depreciation of farm machinery and buildings.

20.00 hrs.

Now, these are the very principles on which the Agriculture Prices Commission goes into the details and then arrives at a price which they think reasonable and remunerative for the farmers. Much has been said about the facilities being provided to the agriculturists and to the industrialists. As Prof. Dandavate said, on the point of credit facility, given to the farmers—if you look at the volume of credit that has flowed to this sector—between 1970-71 and 1983-84 it is like this. The co-operative credit disbursement in 1970-71 was of the order of Rs. 745 crores whereas in 1983-84, it touched the figure of Rs. 2900 crores. The rate of interest charged from the farmers is 10% to 11.5% which is quite concessional as compared to the industry from 12 to 17 percent. Similarly, the share of marginal and small farmers out of the figures that I have given is little over forty percent. Therefore, the thrust is on the weaker section of our peasants and farmers. The institutional credit provided by the national network of our banks as also the specialised bank NABARD through the cooperative system in our country is helping the farmer. I do not claim that this is ideal but to say that we have not been considering the plight of our farmers is also not correct. The Government, specially after the sixties, 1965-70, have

been paying special attention to the needs of the farmers. What is wrong with the present system of cultivation in our country is not facilities. Of course, yes, we must provide the facilities to the farmers, but it is the basic pattern of holding, as mentioned by the Hon. Member, Shri Dandavate. The revenue system varies from State to State. In one State, it is quite progressive, in the other State, it is not. The nature of landholdings in our country is varies from the very primitive to the latest, the most modern methods of landholding. In some of the States, especially those ruled by Jagirdars and Nawabas, the peasants and farmers were treated as slaves. They used to pick up the entire produce of the farmers leaving only a small portion with him, irrespective of the fact whether he can feed his family for the year or not. Therefore, the landholding itself is the biggest problem of our agricultural community. In that also, there is further fragmentation of holdings. If a farmer holds six acres of land in one village, it would not be at one place; one acre on one side, two acres on the other, and three acres still somewhere else. The fragmentation of small holdings makes it impossible for the cultivator to use any kind of modern technique. He cannot use his tractor, dig a tubewell, because he has to carry the water from one corner to the other and it will include so many fields in between and that gives rise to disputes and litigation. The secret of success of some of the States which have been quite often mentioned in this House, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Western U.P. etc...

PROF. MAHDU DANDAVATE : You mentioned the volume of credit that was given to the peasants. But there is one lacuna in that. If you find out the percentage of credit that was needed and actual credit that was given to the peasants, you will find that that will be a small amount.

SHRI BUTA SINGH : I qualified my

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statement by saying that this is not ideal. I would have welcomed that every farmer must get what he requires, but there is a big constrain on the resources. There are many agencies in some of the States, that I was going to mention, for example Punjab, Harayana etc. In addition to the short term cooperative credit, the nationalised banks, these States have evolved a very fine system of land mortgage banks. These banks themselves go to study the conditions of a farmer and they themselves come to the conclusion how much credit is needed by a farmer. We have to have that kind of infrastructure all over the country, so that the farmer can get what he requires to enable him to put with his best. We will continue to strive to see that these condition are made available to the farmers.

SARI SOMNATH RATH (Aska) : The land development banks charge penal interest from the farmers and that interest is more than what the money lenders charge and they do not come under the Money Lending Act. When they charge the penal interest, the cultivator is practically ruined. Will you kindly that this penal interest is not charged from the farmers, and the Money Lending Act is also made applicable to these bankers ?

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : I would like to bring one matter to the Hon. Minister's notice. I have raised this issue many a time in this House. The Punjab National Bank, recovers an amount of Rs. 1600 against the loan of Rs. 3000, given by it.

The Government should issue some directives against such recovery. There is a provision in the Civil Procedure Code that no one can recover more than double the amount of loan, but Punjab National Bank recovers five times the amount given as loan. It should be checked.

[English]

SHRI BUTA SINGH : Sir, I will definitely note down the suggestions by the Hon. Member. What I have been trying to bring before the notice of the august House is this. It is not that Government is not alive to the various problems that the Hon. Members have raised concerning the plight of our farmers. It was mentioned that the terms of trade, of industry and agriculture are at a great disparity. Obviously, you cannot compare one with the other, because there are so many factors. What constitutes the industry sector does not constitute the agriculture sector. There are in built disparities.

According to the data published in the *Economic Survey* which was presented before this House, the terms of trade, of industry and agriculture in the recent years have moved in favour of agriculture. The wholesale price index numbers of agriculture and manufactured products do not fully reflect the impact of subsidy on food, which is in the year 84-85, Rs. 850 crores. It appears to be a subsidy to the consumers but in effect it is the difference between the higher procurement prices paid to the farmers but not fully passed on to the consumers through higher issue prices.

Secondly, the subsidy in 1984-85 was Rs. 1080 crores. These are meant to keep the input costs of farmers low. You see that it is a big dose.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : All these benefits are availed only by the big land lords.

SHRI BUTA SINGH : Ultimately it increases the total foodgrain production in the country. That is the total impact of these subsidies.

Apart from the above, some of the other important inputs of farmers, such

as electricity for agriculture and water for irrigation are supplied to farmers at subsidized rates. As was mentioned by Shri Rajesh Pilot (I must say, I agree with him) all that is mentioned is not made available and all that is said in our policies is not made available to the farmers. We have to be very vigilant about it. We cannot leave it to the mercy of the middling agencies whether it is bureaucracy or private agencies or anybody. We have to monitor and our Prime Minister has already asked the Administrative Ministers to be very vigilant about the monitoring of the various schemes that we have formulated for the welfare of the poorer sections of the society.

Sir, in the sector of electricity, power is made available to the farmers comparatively at a lower rate. I agree that the misuse of flat rate which is charged from the farmers is reported from some of the States.

SHRI RAM PYARE PANIKA : In some States there is the system of minimum charge, which is sometimes more than what the farmers consume.

SHRI BUTA SINGH : Sir, because it is a flat rate, they have to pay, even if cuts are made on the electricity supply because of some erratic system in electricity transmission itself. But if you compare it with industry, then it definitely works in favour of the farmers. Especially, when it is the season when the crop is near about harvest, even at the cost of industry we supply electricity to the farmers. In this connection, this year the Hon. Minister of Energy and myself have been personally in touch with most of the Chief Ministers to see that the farmers are not starved for want of supply of power, because the crop was at a critical stage and they responded very well.

Sir, the index of prices of industrial products exaggerates the receipts by the industry inasmuch as a bulk of their prices includes various excise and other duties levied by both Central and State

Governments. Over time, the duties on most of these items have been increased whereas agricultural products are generally exempt from such taxes. Also, the incidence of such taxes on the important inputs of agriculture is negligible or relatively low. These are some of the comparisons which are working in favour of agriculture as compared to industry. If the Hon. Members mean that the attention which is being paid to industry, the same attention should be paid to the agriculture, I am one with them. We will do all that is possible within our means to see that the agriculture do not suffer for want of government's attention. You know, this is a task of national importance and the industries have been getting favourable terms in term of credit, in terms of power supply, in terms of permits. The agriculturists have not been getting that favour. But with the new thrust of our government, we will see we will make sure that so far neglected sector in our agriculture is taken care of especially the Hon. Member from Orissa mentioned that the north eastern region feels neglected, the problem in the north eastern region is not more than that of the cultivation itself; the problem of north eastern region is the management of water. There are certain areas in our country which are suffering from want of water; there are certain areas in our country which are suffering because water is more than the desired quantity. We are paying special attention to it. I have already directed our scientists in the ICAR to find out the variety of paddy and other crops which can stand well in the water available in the north eastern region; as the Hon. Prime Minister himself has taken up this matter a number of times, we will pay special attention to the north eastern region and also desert-prone areas. There is a definite scheme for improving the desert in the various parts of our country and we will be paying more attention to the dry farming rainfed area of the north eastern region with a view to increase the food-grains in our country. Having said all that, I must say that much is desired to

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be done in the field of agriculture. But I cannot agree with the Hon. members that the prices so far we have been paying to the agriculturists are working to the disadvantage of the farmers.

If I give you, in brief, the impact of the pricing policy of our government, you will realise how far it has gone to help the farmers in raising our annual foodgrains production. The support price by the government has a positive impact on the growth of agricultural sector. Rice production, which was caught in the trap of 52 to 54 million tonnes, achieved a new height of 59.8 million tonnes in 1983-84 and is expected to remain high during the current year. Wheat production has achieved a record level in each successive year during the last four years and is expected to achieve another record during the current year. Anticipated production will be much higher than in the last year. Similarly, we are surpassing 6th Plan target of 44 million tonnes by a handsome margin. Similarly, oilseeds production which was hovering around 100 lakh tonnes has scaled a new level of 120 lakh tonnes last year and is expected to do about 130 lakh tonnes this year. Pulses production has also been going up though it is still short of our requirement and we will pay special attention to the production of pulses especially in the dry farming area. *(Interruptions)* I understand what the Hon. Member has in mind. Whenever we take irrigation to the field, the pulses disappear because the farmers switch over to the better variety of crops. So we will make it possible by suitably evolving the seeds for high yielding variety of pulses to make it more attractive for the farmers so that the areas under pulses do not shrink. Sugarcane production reached a record level of 189.5 million tonnes in 1982-83, but weather factor was subsequently not conducive. However, in the case of fibre like jute and cotton, the unfavourable weather conditions have affected the realisation of our target level. In the case of potato and onion, a record level of production was achieved in 1983-84. During the

current year, the production of potato is expected to be still higher and this speaks amply that the pricing policy of the Government of India has not been working as a deterrent, rather it has been encouraging the farmers to grow more foodgrains, I am sorry. I have to reflect on one of the observations made by my friend, Shri S. P. Sadu.

I thought he would not have come to that level, but having said that, I must say that he was not fair when he said that the ruling party is mixed up with the import of edible oils. It is easy to say all these, but it is difficult to prove. But I have discovered one thing in Andhra Pradesh. That is, the programmes which were given under the 20-Point Programme have been mis-named. Programmes like the NREP, and the LRGEF have been called in Andhra Pradesh, 'Ramaravudi'. We should believe and we should try to live in honesty. If those programmes were given by the Government of India as national programme, their levels should not have been changed in Andhra Pradesh, just to win a few votes. That should not be the approach and that has never been our approach. I can assure the Hon. Members that there is no truth whatsoever in this and I repudiate the charge made by the Hon. Member against this Government.

With these words I again express my heartfelt thanks to the Hon. Members and especially to the Hon. Member who initiated the debate for having highlighted the problems of Indian farmers and I can assure him that the Government will spare no efforts to see that the farming community in our country is able to play its given role in nation building and increasing the food production of our country.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned till 11.00 A.M. tomorrow.
20.17 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, March 22, 1985/Chaltru 1,1907 (Saka).