

NOES

Alagesan, Shri O. V.  
 Alluri, Shri Subhash Chandra Bose  
 Banatwalla, Shri G. M.  
 Barua, Shri Bedabrata  
 Bhakta, Shri Manoranjan  
 Bonde, Shri Nanasahib  
 Chandrappan, Shri C. K.  
 Chavan, Shrimati P.  
 Chettri, Shri K. B.  
 Choudhury, Shrimati Rashida Haque  
 Damor, Shri Somjibhai  
 Deo, Shri V. Kishore Chandra S.  
 Faleiro, Shri Eduardo  
 Gomango, Shri Giridhar  
 Gopal, Shri K.  
 Gotkhinde, Shri Annasaheb  
 Jeyalakshmi, Shrimati V.  
 Kadam, Shri B. P.  
 Kadannappalli, Shri Ramachandran  
 Kalyanasundaram, Shri M.  
 Kodiyan, Shri P. K.  
 Kolur, Shri Rajshekhar  
 Kosalram, Shri K. T.  
 Krishnan, Shri G. Y.  
 Krishnan, Shrimati Parvathi  
 Laskar, Shri Nihar  
 Mallanna, Shri K.  
 Parvati Devi, Shrimati  
 Poojay, Shri Janardhana  
 Pullaiah, Shri Darur  
 Rajan, Shri K. A.  
 Ramalingam, Shri N. Kudanthai  
 Ramamurthy, Shri K.  
 Rao, Shri Jagannath  
 Rao, Shri M. S. Sanjeevi  
 Ravi, Shri Vayalar

Reddy, Shri G. Narsimha  
 Reddy, Shri M. Ram Gopal  
 Roy, Shri Saugata  
 \*Sai, Shri Larang  
 Sayeed, Shri P. M.  
 \*Varma, Shri Ravindra  
 Venkataraman, Shri R.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The result† of the division is: Ayes 92; Noes 43.

The motion was adopted.

16. 48 hrs.

PAYMENT OF BONUS (AMENDMENT) BILL\*

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMEN-  
 TARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR  
 (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA):  
 Madam, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the proceedings go on. Those who wish to leave, may do so quietly. Do not make so much noise please.

The Minister.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA:  
 Madam, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, be taken into consideration".

The Bill seeks to replace the Payment of Bonus Ordinance that was promulgated on the 3rd September, 1977. The Ordinance had a limited and urgent objective. Its objective was not to bring forward a comprehensive revision of the existing law on bonus, affecting the coverage of the

\*Wrongly Voted for Noes.

†The following Members also recorded their votes:

Ayes: Sarvshri Ram Kinkar, Narhari Prasad Sukhdeo Sai, Zulfikarullah. Km. Maniben Vallabhbhai Patel, Ram-nand Tiwary, Kailash Prakash, Surendra Bikram, Gauri Shankar Rai, Shrimati Rano M. Shaiza. Ravindra Varma and Larang Sai;

Noes: Dr. Henry Austin.

Act or dealing with all issues on which demands for revision had been made by the workers or employers. The limited, urgent and immediate objective of the Ordinance was to restore the position that existed before the compulsory minimum bonus was done away with during the emergency.

Madam, the payment of bonus in this country has a very long history. I do not propose to take the valuable time of this hon'ble House by referring to the distant past. I will make only a brief reference to the events from 1965 prior to which there was no legislation on the subject of bonus. The Government of India appointed a bonus Commission, and on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission that were accepted by Government, an Ordinance, called the Payment of Bonus Ordinance was promulgated in 1965. This was later replaced by an Act of Parliament in the same year. The Act provided for the payment of a minimum bonus of four per cent whether there were profits or not. It also fixed a limit of 20 per cent as maximum bonus. Section 34(3) of the Act enabled parties to enter into agreements for the payment of bonus under a formula different from that embodied in the Act.

Madam Chairman, in the light of demands for increase in the quantum of the minimum bonus, a Committee known as the Bonus Review Committee was set-up in April, 1972 to review the operation of the Act. The Committee submitted their interim findings on the question of minimum bonus on the 13th September, 1972 in two separate reports. After considering the two reports of the Committee, the then Government promulgated an Ordinance on the 23rd September, 1972, to provide for the payment of a minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent for the accounting year 1971-72. As I stated earlier, the rate of minimum bonus had been four per cent in the preceding years. The Act was amended again on two occasions to provide for the payment of a minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent for the accounting years

1972-73, and 1973-74. The final report of the Bonus Review Committee was submitted to Government on the 14th October, 1974. The recommendations were examined at different levels, and decisions were taken about the middle of September, 1975. By then, the night of the Emergency had settled over the land and along with other sections of the population workers too has lost their fundamental freedoms; Every one lived in fear, dreading that the Draconian MISA would be invoked against them. Normal Trade Union activities came to a stand-still and there was a moratorium on the right of workers to resort to industrial action to defend their rights and redress their grievances. In this atmosphere of fear and repression, an Ordinance called the Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Ordinance was promulgated on the 25th of September, 1975. The Ordinance was later replaced by an Act of Parliament. These amendments in the Act did away with the minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent. A minimum bonus of four per cent was made payable in respect of the accounting year commencing on any day in the year 1974, but was provided that in the subsequent accounting years no minimum bonus would be payable if there were no allocable surplus. Thus the concept of a compulsory minimum bonus, irrespective of profit and loss and productivity, was struck off from the Acts; and the workers lost not only the 8.33 per cent compulsory bonus that they enjoyed for three consecutive years before the Emergency, but even the statutory compulsory bonus of 4 per cent that they were enjoying from 1965. Another amendment related to the exclusion of the employees of banking companies and the Industrial Reconstruction Corporation of India from the purview of the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965. Section 34(3) of the Act, enabling the employers and employees to enter into agreements for payment of bonus under a formula different from that provided under the Act was also deleted. To say that these amendments affected the Workers

adversely will be a gross understatement. Many workers received only four per cent bonus in 1974-75 and were totally deprived of any bonus in 1975-76.

When this Government assumed office, it made a solemn declaration that it was pledged to carry out the mandate that it had received from the people, that in accordance with this mandate it would take steps to restore the freedoms of the people, to right the wrongs and injustices that were perpetrated during the Emergency, and endeavour to end poverty and destitution within ten years. It, therefore, took immediate steps to restore freedoms on all fronts.

Like other sections of the people, the working class too had suffered the rigours of the Emergency. Workers lost not only the fundamental freedoms of the citizen, but also the recognised rights that Trade Unions enjoyed in an enlightened democracy. The Government, therefore, took immediate steps to restore the rights of Trade Unions; to direct the reinstatement of all employees whose services had been terminated for political reasons; to undo all political victimizations by reviewing all cases where services had been terminated without the normal procedures that are followed to ensure natural justice. It decided to discontinue the impounding of additional D.A. under the Compulsory Deposit Scheme, and made cash payments to return the instalment that was falling due. The Government took this decision in spite of its apprehensions about the inflationary effect that a sizeable inflow of money (of the order of rupees 326 crores) was likely to have on the economy in general and prices, in particular, only because it was pledged to remove the hardships of the working class.

Demands for the restoration of the minimum bonus that the workers had enjoyed before the Emergency came up as a natural consequence of the manner in which the bonus was taken away during the Emergency. All Central Trade Union Organisations and all political parties made demands for the restoration of minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent. The continued denial of a bonus of 8.33 per cent was looked upon by them as a continuance of a wrong that was done during the Emergency. The Government, therefore, decided to restore the minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent for the accounting year 1976 subject to the existing provisions in the Bonus Act which empower Government to protect marginal and sick units.

This House is aware of Government's endeavour to formulate an integrated policy on wages, incomes and prices, to ensure growth as well as social justice, to reduce disparities of income and development, and to move towards an egalitarian order. All questions relating to the level of wages, disparities in the level of wages in different sectors, disparities in wages paid for the same kind of work, disparities in wages and incomes in and between the urban and rural sectors, minimum wages, fair wage, the rationale for a deferred wage and the concept of bonus unrelated to profits or productivity will, therefore, have to be viewed afresh and reviewed in the light of the integrated policy that is expected to be formulated. The formulation of such an integrated policy requires an in-depth study of various matters, and this needs time. We felt, however, that it would not be fair to the workers to postpone a decision on the question of bonus for the current year. Accordingly, the Government decided that—

- (a) The level of minimum bonus be fixed at 8.33 per cent of the annual wages, whether the establishment made a profit or not, during the accounting year;

(b) a provision be incorporated in the law by which employers and workers in an establishment or in a class of establishments can enter into an agreement for payment of bonus on a formula different from that of the Act; so, however, that the minimum and maximum limits of bonus are adhered to (this would however, be subject to certain safeguards);

(c) the maximum limit of bonus would be 20 per cent;

(d) increasing emphasis must be placed on promoting agreements for payment of bonus related to increase in production and productivity;

(e) investment allowance will be included as an element of prior charge in the determination of available surplus;

(f) employees of banking companies and Industrial Reconstruction Corporation of India would be brought again within the purview of the bonus law;

(g) to ensure that loss making units are not unduly burdened by the incidence of the minimum bonus, resulting in their becoming sick, provisions of section 36 of the Act for grant of exemption may have to be resorted to;

(h) employees of non-competitive public sector establishments will be paid an ex gratia amount on the same basis as in the Bonus Act.

It was also decided that these decisions would apply to the accounting year commencing on any day in the year 1976. An Ordinance was promulgated on the 3rd September, 1977 to amend the law to the extent necessary to give effect to these decisions. Copies of the Ordinance have already been placed on the Table of the House along with the usual statement explaining the circumstances in which the Ordinance had to be promulgated. The Bill which is now before the

House closely follows the provisions in the Ordinance, and seeks to replace the Ordinance. I commend the Bill for the consideration of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill further to amend the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, be taken into consideration."

\*SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY (Dharmapuri): Hon. Madam Chairman, while introducing the Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Bill, 1977, the hon. Minister of Labour narrated the circumstances in which urgent action had to be taken for issuing the Presidential Ordinance in this regard. He pointed out that the several representations from the workers about bonus induced the Government to take immediate action. Many hon. Members on all sides of this House know that, besides frequent reference on the floor of this House about the urgent need for taking a decision in the matter of bonus, the Governments in the State were urging that in view of the approaching Festival Season, like Dussehra, Diwali, Onam etc. the Government of India should restore the minimum bonus to the workers. In fact, the Ministries in the State of Kerala and in the State of West Bengal passed Resolutions to this effect and forwarded them to the Government of India.

Realising the gravity of the situation which might endanger industrial peace in the country if the minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent was not restored to the workers, the Government of India got the Presidential Ordinance issued before the beginning of the Festival Season. It is not as if the Janata Government *suo motu* acted in this matter. The Central Government wilted under the pressure from the workers and the State Governments and took immediate action. It is not a benign mercy of the benevolent Janata Government

\*The original speech was delivered in Tamil.

[Shri K. Ramamurthy]

shown towards the workers. This House must know this basic fact before the provisions of this Bill are discussed.

It was the Congress Government that declared 8.33 per cent bonus to the workers. Janata Government has merely restored this to the workers. This is not any new discovery of the Janata Government like the discovery of America by Columbus. I will not accept that this is a product of the political philosophy of the Janata Government at the Centre. It should be borne in mind that the Janata Government is not only resting on the oars of the Congress Government but also has wrested laurels.

The hon. Minister of Labour gave a background of the bonus issue. Before the 1965 Bonus Act, bonus was considered as customary bonus, later as a consequence of Court decisions, as Labour Appellate Tribunal formula etc. In 1965, it became an aspect of profit sharing. The Janata Party in its election manifesto accepted bonus as deferred wage and assured the workers of their rightful share. I am sorry that the hon. Minister of Labour has not clarified as to whether the Janata Government has accepted bonus as deferred wage. I need not go back to the days of 1965 when the minimum bonus was accepted and after that how very many organs of labour were waging a relentless struggle for getting bonus treated as deferred wage. Shri Madhu Dandavate, who spear-headed the movement for making bonus a deferred wage, was here till now and perhaps it was inconvenient for him to be present here at the time of discussion of this Bonus Bill. I would like to recall the days when on the floor of this House Shri Dandavate had pleaded passionately for treating bonus as deferred wage. The hon. Minister of Labour should have, in his introductory speech, referred to his Party's acceptance of Bonus as deferred wage

and how the Government propose to implement that assurance given to the people during the General Elections.

On the 29th of last month, about 60,000 railway workers staged a demonstration in Delhi demanding bonus. The workers in the Public Sector Industrial Units, the Post and Telegraph workers, the Government employees and workers in the unorganised sector whose number run into millions have been reminding the Janata Government of its solemn assurance of implementing Bonus as deferred wage. In today's Indian Express newspaper, owned by the Guru of Janata Party, Shri Goenka, you find an editorial entitled **TOWARDS CONFRONTATION**. I am sure that the hon. Minister will clarify this point at the time of his reply to the debate.

While we welcome the restoration of 8.33 per cent bonus to the workers, I would like to inform the House of the impact of certain provisions of this Bill. What we expected was in the light of what I have stated at the outset, that the provisions of this Bill would cover Railway workers, Bank employees, P. & T. employees, workers in the Public Sector Industrial Units and even Government employees. It is rank disappointment that they have not been made eligible through this Bill for 8.33 per cent bonus. The hon. Minister referred to the dread of the workers about the draconian MISA during Emergency and that was the reason why they did not even resent the denial of their right to get bonus and did not even demonstrate. He shared his sympathy for the workers with all of us here. While I welcome that, I would like to pin-point the gap between word and deed. If the Trade Unions could prove in the Court that the balance-sheet of the Company, for that matter even the audited balance sheet of the company, was not genuine, then they had the right to re-audit the balance-sheet. Even the Emergency Government did not deprive the workers of this right. It is unfortunate

gation and Waterways Department of the West Bengal Government had drawn up another project for the entire region excluding the comand area of delta project, Phase I, about which I have just now mentioned. That works out to Rs. 11,26,92,000. That would include sluices costing Rs. 162.52 lakhs, the remaining embankments Rs. 275.26 lakhs, revetment works at vulnerable zones Rs. 155.41 lakhs, retired and ring bunds Rs. 35.73 lakhs and overland crossbunds Rs. 498 lakhs.

We are very happy to see that the Central Government had come to rescue to a situation of this nature, under somewhat similar circumstances, in Kerala to save the people and land from the invasion of sea. In reply to a question of 20th March, 1973, which was replied to by the Minister for Irrigation and Power, it had been said:

"Taking into account the magnitude of the problem and the need for speedy implementation of anti-erosion measures in Kerala, the Government of India have agreed to provide special financial assistance during the last two years of the Fourth Plan to enable the State Government to implement a programme of Rs. 4 crores a year. This assistance should be released to meet the expenditure over and above the provisions made in the State Plan of Rs. 1.3 crores in 1972-73..." etc., etc.

Again on 17th March, 1975, in reply to Unstarred Question No. 367 it was stated:

"A length of about 113 kilometres have been protected upto the end of the Fourth Plan with an outlay of Rs. 17.50 crores of which the Centre has provided special loan assistance of Rs. 4.59 crores. These measures are being continued in the Fifth Plan also for which an outlay of Rs. 20 crores has been tentatively proposed."

Recently, a reply has been given to Unstarred Question No. 26 dated 14-11-1977. The Minister had visited the areas affected by sea erosion in Kerala. In that reply it has been stated:

"However, taking into account the need for speedy implementation of anti-sea erosion measures in the State, the Centre has provided special loan assistance to the State Government for accelerating the approved anti sea erosion schemes included in the State Plan. The amount made available during the first three years of the Fifth Plan has been Rs. 3.75 crores. During the current year, an amount of Rs. 1 crore has been released so far for this purpose."

Therefore, this is the position. Here is a case which could be used as a parallel instance. It is a case where the people are suffering because of invasion by saline water coming from sea, and it has to be treated as a national problem. We would earnestly make this request to the Central Government through you, Sir.—The hon. Prime Minister has taken the trouble of coming and listening to us—to be generous and save these 20 lakhs of people from perpetual misery, poverty and destruction. The State Government resources are very meagre; if it is left in their hands, I do not think, in our life time, people will have any relief. The poverty there is something unbelievable. Prof. Madhu Dandavate should go there; we expect that he will inaugurate the railway line after the final location survey is done. He is keeping mum. That is the trouble.

There should be a massive programme for multiple cropping and crop diversification. Production of commercial and cash crops is also necessary. It is predominantly an agrarian area with 88.53 per cent of people in agriculture.

There is a deep pauperisation and the percentage of owner-cultivation to the total agricultural worker is: in

▲ I am very glad to find that this has been done.

[Shri K. Ramamurthy]

hon. Members, either on this side of the House or on the other, who are interested in the welfare of our workers, will ponder over the issues I have raised and will insist on my amendments being accepted by the Government.

If the Government had to act urgently, it does not mean that they should bring forward a half-baked Bill before this House. Six months is a long period to formulate a comprehensive Bill. Yet the Government have failed the workers in the country. I request that the Government should bring forward a comprehensive Bill for Bonus at the earliest, accommodating the above amendments.

Before I conclude, I demand that 8.33 per cent bonus, which has been declared as deferred wage, must be given to all the workers in the country—railway workers, bank employees, workers in the public sector units, P. & T. employees and also the Government employees. The right of re-auditing the balance-sheet and other accounts by the Trade Unions must be restored to the workers. Similarly, the bilateral agreements entered into on the basis of production and productivity must be honoured by the management and there must be legal provision for this in the Bill. This minimum bonus must be a regular feature and should not be only for this year.

I am grateful to you for having given me an opportunity to participate in the debate.

**DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY** (Bombay North East): I would first like to congratulate the Minister and the Government for undoing one of the blackest acts of the Emergency—which act of the previous Government thoroughly exposed its intention vis-à-vis the workers of this country. It was a promise made during the Lok Sabha elections, viz. that once the Janata Party was voted to power, it

would undo this black Act of September, 1975 and restore the concept of a minimum of one month's income as bonus, or 8.33 per cent as the principle of bonus payments.

17.19 hrs.

[SHRI DHIRENDRANATH BASU in the Chair]

I would also like to use this opportunity to congratulate the Labour Minister who has functioned very well during the last 8 months; and had it not been for him, the labour situation would have been a lot worse than it is today. It is difficult for these trade unionists—and I, myself am president of many trade unions, especially of Insurance, Bank and Railway workers—to go into a negotiation with the Labour Minister Mr. Ravindra Varma and then come away with an idea of confronting the Government. So, I think, in the light of the fact that the labour situation was bottled up, as it were, by the previous dictatorial Congress Government, which was supported by the “so-called” supporters of labour, called the Communist Party of India, this Act, this step taken by the Labour Minister deserves the complete support of Parliament.

Sir, I would like to say that the question of payment of bonus is a matter of concern in the country for a long time. Strictly speaking, if we had a correct wage-income policy, there would have been no need to have a dispute on the question of bonus. But it is because we have not been able to pay minimum wages, which has been laid down by the National Labour Conference, and have not been able even to establish minimum norms for the payment of workers in industry that the question of bonus comes up periodically. I would say that if we are able to evolve, and we should be able to evolve very quickly a wage policy, in which the workers are given a fair share, then the question of bonus would not be of very material significance.

It is significant that in the last 15 years of progressive rule, supported by the progressives like the CPI, the share of labour has declined from 55 per cent to 40 per cent. There are only very few countries in the world where the share of labour in the national income has declined, but India is one of the few countries where the share of labour has declined. It is not that today the labour says "we want more share"; it is not that labour is asking for more share. But if labour is asking for constancy of shares in the national income, it is something which should receive national support.

Having said this, I would like to say that although this Bill is comprehensive enough to remove, rather to undo, what was done during the emergency, it does have some elements which require the consideration of Government, particularly section 34, which describes the maximum and minimum limits. Well, there is a clause there which says that if the management and labour enter into an agreement independently of the formula laid down in this Bill, it must have the prior approval of the Government. I would say that this condition need not be put in a democratic society. If labour and management on their own come to an agreement, in the absence of a national wage policy—and there is no national wage policy today—then they should be allowed to do so.

Secondly, there is the definition of "allocable surplus". That is all right for many industries which are regulated by the Companies Act. But, what about the banks, which have a right to maintain, what is called, "Secret reserves"? It is possible for any bank to manipulate the accounts in such a way that the allocable surplus becomes very small. And it is significant that this year, except for the Indian Overseas Bank, no other bank has paid more than 8.33 per cent. Therefore, I think that this section 34A really puts the employees of the banking industry at a very very great disadvantage. I would like the Minister to keep this in mind.

I would also say that some of the things which the previous Government have done, the Labour Minister cannot undo. But he is a very influential Minister, a very capable and persuasive Minister .... (*Interruptions*) All Members of Parliament belonging to the Janata Party are like that. He is also a very sweet-tongued Minister. I am sure he will be able to persuade the Cabinet and the Prime Minister.... (*Interruptions*) I am speaking on behalf of the workers, not on behalf of any foreign country. I would urge the Labour Minister to use his influence to see that the other black acts of the previous Government towards labour are also undone. For instance, LIC is not directly under him, but still the Cabinet has collective responsibility. There was an agreement with labour..

SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY: It is *sub judice*.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: I am telling you the factual part, I am only describing what happened, I am not commenting on the merits of the case.

On 24th January, 1974, the management and labour of LIC entered into an agreement. This agreement was unilaterally undone during the Emergency by an Act of Parliament in spite of the opposition of able Members like Mr. Mavalankar, among others. How can you win the confidence of labour if the management signs a contract, to which the Government agrees and which Parliament ratifies, and then you unilaterally get it undone? Labour has gone to court. I am very happy that the Finance Minister is here.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN (Coimbatore): He has already said no to them.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: He is a very open-minded person.

It is very essential that Government consider this as a gross act of



[Dr. Subramaniam Swamy]

betrayal of labour, whatever the legal merits or lack of it. That has to be decided by the courts, but the fact is that Parliament can take a view of the unilateral undoing of an agreement of this sort. Therefore, I would urge the Labour Minister and the Finance Minister that this black act of the previous Congress Government must also be undone and that labour in the LIC must be given what they were entitled to by collective bargaining.

I think it would be improper for me not to say something about bonus to railwaymen also. I realise the Government's difficulties in payment of bonus to railwaymen. Nevertheless, it is my duty as the Vice-President of the Bharatiya Rail Mazdoor Sangh to say that the railwaymen valiantly fought against the Congress Government and its black policies. Their demand for bonus is genuine in the absence of a national wage policy. I would disagree with the view that we should wait for a national wage policy before we think in terms of giving bonus. I would say that we should have *ad hoc* arrangements to pay bonus and once a national wage policy comes, we can think of readjusting the bonus. I do not think it is a question of lack of money. There are many ways in which Government can raise money without taxation. There are 20 million tonnes of foodgrains lying in stock. How much has been stolen or eaten away, I do not know.

SHRI SAUGATA ROY (Barrackpore): American aid will be there.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: With your co-operation, Russian aid may also be made available.

I certainly think that Government can sell 10 out of the 20 million tonnes of foodgrains. This will give cheap food to the people. They will not be able to sell it at Rs. 105 per quintal, the rate at which they bought through deficit financing. So, they may have

to make a loss if they sell it today, but enough money can be generated.

So, while these clowns of the Congress Party watch in despair, let us redeem our promises one by one. They have lost not only the Lok Sabha elections, but also the State Assembly elections, and they are about to lose more elections. So, let us fulfil our promises as early as possible.

17.30 hrs.

#### HALF AN HOUR DISCUSSION

##### VILLAGES COVERED BY NATIONALISED BANKS

SHRI P. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU (Chittoor): I had asked a question of the hon. Finance Minister to know how the various banks are working in the agriculture sector and how much credit they have given to the agricultural and other labour in the towns. The Finance Minister said that 4540 branches of 14 nationalised banks were functioning and that there were no statistics to show as to how much money was given to the agriculturists, how many villages were covered and how many agricultural workers were covered. I want to bring to the notice of the hon. Finance Minister about the actual working of the nationalised banks in rural areas so that he may improve upon it.

For Chittoor district, Indian Bank is the lead bank and other banks have started certain branches but these branches are only a few. The Minister has said that they are started in places where 10,000 people are there. It may be true but how many villages have they covered? For example, in Chittoor district, not even 100 central villages have been covered. There are certain restrictions on them. When agriculturists ask for money, they say that they cannot go beyond five or ten kilometres. They select one or two villages. In Pillaru they selected one village consisting of five or six families. In the nearby