

this Plan onwards, we will continue to increase the number of district correspondents. There has been some cooperation from the Publication Division and the National Book Trust and I am sure they will also have better linkage, understanding and planning of their year's schedule of books.

Regarding the Film Workers Bill, I hope that by the next session, we would come before this House with that Bill.

18.06 hrs.

STATEMENT RE PROCUREMENT AND PRICING POLICY OF WHEAT FOR 1974-75 SEASON

In Cuttack, I understand work on the studio—Mr. Surendra Mohanty referred to this—has now finally started. Stores have been collected; cement, steel etc. have been collected and work has started. As far as the transmitter is concerned, I understand, this would be commissioned soon enough. About the other things that he referred to, my colleague, Mr. Gujral, has already explained the position.

Shri Hiren Mukherjee referred to the take-over of Metro cinemas. The ministry agreed in principle to acquire the cinemas provided they became available on beneficial terms. In fact, the Government have even considered it necessary to set up a negotiating committee consisting of representatives of various departments concerned, with a view to negotiating with M/s. Transa S.A. of Switzerland the terms and conditions of the purchase of theatres by the Government.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA (Bhavnagar): On a point of order, Sir. He should be asked to continue tomorrow. The House has not extended the time of today's sitting.

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA: I am just concluding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is just finishing.

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA: The foreign firms have offered to contact the Government of India in case their negotiations with the Indian Company fail. The Reserve Bank have not, however, given permission for the purchase of the shares by the Indian Company.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI F. A. AHMED): Sir, in the context of the present food situation, the policy that should be adopted in regard to procurement and pricing of wheat has assumed considerable importance. Despite a good kharif crop, the psychology of shortage prevailing in the country has unfortunately encouraged hoarding at all levels. The policy for 1974 in all aspects was considered in the National Food Advisory Council, the Consultative Committee of Parliament and the Conference of Chief Ministers.

2. After careful consideration, it has been decided to continue the procurement of wheat by the public agencies in all the States and, in addition, to allow wholesalers, both private and cooperative societies, to operate under a system of licensing and control. The existing single State zones will be continued. There will be no restrictions on the movement of wheat within the States on trade account.

3. In the surplus States of Punjab, Haryana, U.P., Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, 50 per cent levy will be imposed on the foodgrain traders, including such cooperative societies on their daily purchases in the mandis/purchase centres, to be given to Government at a fixed price of Rs. 105/- per quintal. After the levy obligation has been discharged, the traders including such cooperative societies will be permitted to sell the levy-free wheat within the State or outside the State on the basis of a permit. In the other wheat producing States, the State Governments may undertake procurement by a graded levy on producers.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): On a point of order, Sir. It has come out in the press that the wholesalers are wanting Rs 150 a quintal for the wheat they will give. We want a clarification. Is it a mere trickery that they start with Rs. 105 and after sometime demand Rs 25 more and go on like that? We want a categorical assurance that the price will under no circumstances be increased beyond Rs. 105. This is a very serious matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order. The Minister may continue.

SHRI F. A. AHMED: In view of the need to improve market arrivals and maximise procurement of wheat and to encourage the growers to obtain a sufficiently remunerative price which will not only provide them with an incentive to expand production but also bring out stocks, it has been decided to fix the Government purchase price of wheat for the 1974-75 marketing season at Rs. 105/- per quintal for all varieties of wheat. Consequent upon the increase in the purchase price, the Central issue price of wheat will be revised to Rs 120/- per quintal for all varieties of wheat.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Sir, on a point of order. It is stated that the Central Government would purchase at a price of Rs. 105. But what would be the retail price at the ration shops?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister finish his statement.

SHRI F. A. AHMED: The policy aims at giving the growers a good market price, improving availability of wheat particularly in the deficit States at the same time discouraging hoarding at all levels and reducing wide variations in the prices of foodgrains in various parts of the country. It is also expected to create conditions favourable for equitable distribution of foodgrains produced in the country and to enable the public distribution system to meet reasonable requirements.

The trade will operate under strict control and regulations including a ceiling on prices and stringent measures against violations. For successful implementation of this policy, while opportunity has been provided to cooperative societies, non-official committees will also be set up at different levels.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Sir, I rise on a point of order. Firstly, the press has very clearly stated that the wholesalers want Rs. 150 per quintal of wheat. The Minister has stated that the price is Rs. 105 per quintal. So, he is making an untrue statement. Secondly, he says the issue price at the Central level would be Rs. 125. What would be the end price at the ration shops? Thirdly, we would like to have your consent for a full-fledged debate on this.

SHRI H N MUKHERJEE (Calcutta—North East): Sir, I wish to raise a matter of principle relative to this kind of *volte face* in so far as government policy is concerned. We are not a Parliament to be told, in the manner that the Minister has told us, that something has been decided and that we should swallow it. It is absolutely necessary, as early as possible, to have a discussion of this matter and have the decision approved by Parliament. Because, earlier, at one point of time, there was an effort to consult the representatives of political parties in this House. That process of consultation was given up. They have consulted, heaven knows which devil's interests which are involved, and they have brought about this change in policy in a manner which is dictatorial, which goes against the ways of parliamentary functioning. I demand, therefore, and I hope the representatives of opposition parties would agree, that this must be decided in Parliament, and then they can say that they have changed the government policy. Let the whole nation know what it is.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): My submission is that we are going to have a discussion on the Grants of the

Ministry of Agriculture, which would be coming up after about five or six days. It is surprising that when this morning this matter was raised by Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu and others, when the Deputy Speaker was in the Chair, the Minister was not here to give any answer. Now suddenly, at the far end of the day, when the House is depleted in strength and when there is not even the quorum, he is making this statement. So, my submission is that we should have a discussion and it should not be implemented, unless the House passes it or rejects it. After all, this House cannot be taken for granted. I cannot be a member of a post mortem House

श्री मधु लिमये (बाका) अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं दो बातें कहना चाहता हूँ। जहाँ तक इन की नयी नीति का मवाल है उस के बारे में प्रश्नबागों में एक क्षण से खबरें आ रही हैं और उस के ऊपर बाकायदा हम लोगों के द्वारा नोटिस दिए गए हैं। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि हम लोगों के द्वारा जो ध्यान आकर्षण के मुझाव दिए गए थे उन के जबाब में इन का बयान क्यों नहीं आया क्योंकि उस के जबाब में बयान आता तो हम लोगों को अपनी बात रखने का मौका मिलता। तो इस मदन में हम के ऊपर तत्काल बहस करने का मौका मिले और अभी मंत्री महोदय खुलामा करें कि इस वक्त हिन्दुस्तान के कई इलाकों में खाम कर के बिहार में घनाज का इनका घोर प्रभाव है कि राशन की दुकानों में बिल्कुल घनाज नहीं है, लोग भुखो मर रहे हैं, पश्चिमी बंगाल से भी खबरें आ रही हैं, कई सूबों में भुखमरी से लोग मर रहे हैं, तो मंत्री महोदय कम से कम यह इस वक्त बताने की कृपा करें कि बिहार आदि इलाकों में पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम के द्वारा घनाज का

वितरण करने के बारे में तत्काल कौन से कदम बह उठाने जा रहे हैं ?

SHRI DASARATHA DEB (Tripura East): In the very beginning, this Government has been saying that they were taking over the wholesale trade in foodgrains and they were allowing hoarders to hoard all the foodgrains. They have now stock-ed it. Now, this Government comes forward to make a statement, giving the right to these people to sell foodgrains at higher prices. This is a very serious matter. You should allow this matter to be discussed in this House tomorrow itself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, as you know, after the Minister makes a statement, under the Rules, there cannot be a discussion. As this was a matter which concerns the Members vitally, I permitted the Members to make some submissions.

As to whether there should be a discussion or not, I think, it will not be fair on my part to give a ruling. I will convey the feelings of the hon. Members to the Speaker. I know I am in the Chair and I exercise the powers of the Speaker. But as this matters relates to the business of the House, I feel, it will not be fair on my part to give a ruling. I will convey the feelings expressed by the hon. Members to the Speaker.

I adjourn the House to re-assemble tomorrow at 11 A.M.

18.18 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, March 29, 1974/Chaitra 8, 1896(Saka)