

[Mr. Chairman]

some leaflets from there on the floor of the House at 12.02 hours today and whom the Watch and Ward Officer took into custody immediately have committed a grave offence and are guilty of the contempt of this House.

This House further resolves that they be sentenced to simple imprisonment till 6 P.M. on the 22nd December, 1973 and sent to Central Jail, Tihar, New Delhi".

The motion was adopted.

17.47 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE: NEED-BASED MINIMUM WAGES FOR WORKERS—Contd.

श्री वसंत साठे (अकोला) : सभापति महोदय, अभी जिस प्रस्ताव पर बहस हो रही थी, उसका आशय यह है कि हिन्दुस्तान के नव श्रमिकों को न्यूनतम वेतन मिलना चाहिए। मैं इस प्रस्ताव का स्वागत करता हूँ, क्योंकि इस के द्वारा हमें इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर चर्चा करने का मौका मिला है।

श्री जगन्नाथ राव जोशी (गाजापुर) : सभापति महोदय, मेरा ध्यात आफ आर्डर है। इस प्रस्ताव के लिए दो घंटे का समय रखा गया है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि इन पर बहस कब तक चलेगी।

श्री एस० एम० बनर्जी : सभापति महोदय हम लोगों को इन्टिमेशन मिला है कि श्री चन्द्रप्पन का प्लेन या ट्रेन लेट है और वह 7 बजे तक पहुंचेंगे। इस लिए उनका डिस्कशन कल के लिए रख दिया जाये।

सभापति महोदय : मैंने श्री साठे को बुलाया है। उनके बाद मिनिस्टर साहब बोलेंगे और फिर माननीय सदस्य जबाब देंगे। इसमें थोड़ा समय लग जायेगा। हाफ-एन-आवर डिस्कशन कल नहीं होगा।

श्री वसंत साठे : मैं इस विषय पर यह कहना चाहता था कि इस देश में इस बात पर विचार करने का आप ने मौका दिया ...

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी (ग्वालियर) : सदन की कार्यवाही कब तक आज चलेगी?

सभापति महोदय : साढ़े छः सात तक खत्म हो जायेगी।

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : यह कहाँ तक हुआ है कि साढ़े छः तक सदन चलेगा?

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will adjourn at 6.30.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour) : I seek a clarification. If the half-hour discussion is not raised by Shri Chandrapan who, I am told, is not present in Delhi — he cannot come — this resolution could continue till 6.30.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Then what will you do?

MR. CHAIRMAN : It was decided that we would take up the half-hour discussion at 6 p.m. You know it is not yet 6 p.m. So, I have called Mr. Sathe, and everybody is obstructing his speech.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : The Minister has to reply; the Mover will have to reply.

MR. CHAIRMAN : They will take only a little time. (Interruptions)

7 मिनट देर कर के यह कार्यवाही शुरू हुई थी और दस मिनट इसी में लग गए डिबीजन वगैरह में। तो 17 मिनट वह हुआ। इस तरह से 6—17 तक खत्म हो जाएगा या नहीं हुआ तो आगे चलेगा।

श्री वसंत साठे : मैं यह कह रहा था कि यह एक अच्छा मौका है इस बात पर विचार करने का। इस देश में सारो जो एक हमारी नीति है श्रम वेतन के बारे में उस पर हम सोचें। इस प्रस्ताव में यह कहा गया है कि हिन्दुस्तान के जितने श्रमिक हैं उनमें यह नहीं कहा है कि श्रमिक केवल उद्योगों में काम करने वाले हैं, जहाँ तक

मैंने देखा यह हिन्दुस्तान के तमाम श्रमिकों के लिए है और यह मानी हुई बात है कि हिन्दुस्तान में 80 प्रतिशत श्रमिक देहातों में किसान लोगों के हाथों के नीचे काम करने वाले खेतिहर मजदूर हैं। इसलिए जब हम श्रमिक की बात करते हैं तो देश के तमाम श्रमिकों की बात करने हैं और जब यह कहा जाता है.....(व्यवधान).... अमेंडमेंट की जरूरत नहीं है, वह प्रस्ताव में ही है। कोई जरूरत नहीं है अमेंडमेंट देने की। प्रस्ताव में यह कहा गया है कि जो असली वेतन है दिन ब दिन ग्राहकों की वजह से कम होता जा रहा है और दूसरे जो न्यूनतम वेतन के बारे में पन्द्रहवीं लेबर कान्फरेंस ने एक राय से प्रस्ताव किया था उसके मुताबिक न्यूनतम वेतन मिलना चाहिए। वह अभी तक नहीं दे पाये। पन्द्रहवीं कान्फरेंस ने क्या कहा था कि 2600 कैलरीज एक आदमी को मिले, 17 गज कपड़ा मिले। साल भर में एक व्यक्ति को केवल 17 गज कपड़ा और 2 हजार 6 सौ या 7 सौ कैलरीज जो 14 औंस भी प्रति दिन नहीं होता, यह देने की मिफरिश की है। अब मुझे बताइए इससे ज्यादा और कोई न्यूनतम बात हो सकती है ? हमें क्या एतराज है इस बात पर विचार करने में कि हम देश के सब श्रमिकों को, हर एक मेहनत करने वाले व्यक्ति को न्यूनतम जीवन की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने भर को वेतन दे सकें? उससे होगा क्या ? उससे होगा यह कि जब यह नीति हम अपनाएंगे तो स्वाभाविक तौर पर जो देश की आमदनी है, यदि चन्द मुट्ठी भर लोग वह चाहे शहरों में काला बाजार करने वाले हों, चाहे उद्योग चलाने वाले हों, चाहे व्यापार करने वाले हों, जो कोई भी हों, उनके हिस्से में यदि देश की आमदनी का नाजायज हिस्सा आता होगा तो उसमें कटौती करनी पड़ेगी यदि गरीबों को हमें न्याय देना है तो। इसलिए मैं यह मानता हूँ कि आप भले ही आज इस बात में समर्थ न हों कि हर एक मेहनतकश व्यक्ति को न्यूनतम वेतन दे ही सकें, लेकिन आप को कम से कम इस उद्देश्य को तो मानना चाहिए और यह प्रग करना चाहिए,

यह निर्धारण करना चाहिए कि हम तेजी से इस उद्देश्य की पूर्ति की ओर बढ़ेंगे और चन्द लोगों को इस देश की आमदनी का नाजायज और गलत लाभ उठाने नहीं देंगे।

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): Sir, Dr. Saradish Roy has moved a resolution regarding the falling real wages of the Indian workers consequent to the abnormal rise in prices of essential commodities and failure of Government to grant need-based minimum wages to the workers on the basis of norms laid down by the Fifteenth Indian Labour Conference. The hon. member has referred to the norms laid down by the Indian Labour Conference. I am sorry to note that he is quoting the resolution to the extent it favoured him and left out the portion which was going against him. The conference itself envisaged a situation in which it would be difficult to implement the formula. It, therefore, recommended that wherever the minimum wage fixed went below the recommendation, it would be incumbent on the authorities concerned to justify the circumstances which prevented them from adhering to the norms laid down. So, the hon. member has laid too much emphasis on that resolution.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Read it again. It says that whenever they cannot do it, they must justify it.

SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA: From 1957 to 1966, tripartite wage boards were set up to evolve the wage structure for several organised industries. All of them took into account the need-based formula. Their reports deal with this question, in some cases very elaborately. Generally-speaking, their conclusion was...

SHRI A. P. SHARMA (Buxar): Does he mean to say that the Government will not implement the need-based minimum wage?

SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA: The ideal which he has tried to put forward through his resolution is laudable. Government is not averse to that objective. With that end in view, we are proceeding forward. This resolution cannot be carried out unless the econo-

[Shri Balgovind Verma]
mic development of the country warrants it. That is why I am saying the resolution is premature.

I was saying that generally-speaking their conclusion was that there was a wide gap between the prevailing wage and the need-based wage. This could not be filled in a single jump, since the paying capacity of the industry, the need for maintaining the levels of employment, etc., had to be kept in mind.

The Second Pay Commission also discussed the question of need-based wage in its report, but expressed doubt about the feasibility of its introduction in Government services. It also found that the monetary value of such a minimum wage would be out of tune with the level of the *per capita* national income. The question of need-based wage was considered by the National Commission on Labour in 1969 in detail. The Commission made the following observation :

"The need-based minimum wage and the wages at the higher levels of fair wage may and can be introduced by convenient and just phasing, keeping in mind the extent of the capacity of the employer to pay the same. This has to be a pragmatic process which the wage fixing authorities will have to keep in mind. In fixing the need-based minimum, which is in the range of the lower level of fair wage, the capacity to pay will have to be taken into account. Every worker in organised industry has a claim to this minimum and onus of proving that the industry does not have the capacity to pay it should lie on the employer."

18.00 hrs.

I say that they deserve the minimum wage. We are in favour of that minimum wage. They should be given the minimum wage. But, let the time come for that... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD (Azadpur) : It is not about the minimum wage, but the need-based wage. The minimum wage under the Act of Parliament has already been granted. What we are talking about is the need-based wage.

SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA : I am taking of the need-based wage.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore) : Will he not agree that there is erosion of the real wages due to the rise in prices? Should the workers not be given the need-based minimum wages or not? These two points should be clarified.

SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA : There is erosion of the wages because the value of the money has come down. I do not challenge it. But, unless economic development of the highest order takes place, I do not think we can improve the requirements of the labour.

No new Wage Board was set up after the National Commission on Labour made its recommendations. A new trend in wage fixation appeared with successful bipartite negotiations in the steel industry in the year 1970. The workers have since been demanding establishment of similar machinery for other industries also. Accordingly, bipartite negotiations have taken place in many of the industries, such as cement, coal, BHEL etc. In some States bipartite settlements on industry-wise basis (e.g. jute and engineering in West Bengal) have been arrived at. In such negotiations, wages are fixed taking into account the demands of workers, which invariably are based on their estimates of need-based wage and sometimes even more than that, and the paying capacity of the employers. Ultimately, a practical balance is struck taking the two factors mentioned above into account. In such circumstances, there can be no question of failure on the Government's part to grant need-based minimum wage. The present wages in some of the major organised industries may fall short of the need-based formula, but cannot be considered low when viewed in the context of the country's economic conditions.

While considering the question of need based wage for Central Government employees, the Third Pay Commission observed, *inter alia*, as follows :

"The fixing of minimum wages should be in harmony with broad principles of policy relating to economic and social developments and particularly the achievements of rapid growth and equitable distribution of national income. Further, the minimum wage should be realistic, and it should be in con-

sonance with the conditions prevailing in the country. One has to avoid the danger of setting premature and unwise minimum standards which the country and the economy can ill-afford. Such standards may raise expectations all round, and since they would be incapable of fulfilment because monetary wages would soon be eroded by a rise in prices, frustration would deepen all the more. The additional expenditure involved in fixing the minimum remuneration on the basis recommended by the 15th Indian Labour Conference, and the inevitable repercussions, such a course would have on State Governments, local bodies, universities etc. would, in the aggregate, have a deleterious effect on the total budgetary resources. It would lead to drastic curtailment of developmental expenditure and a slowing down of projects which would further aggravate the present unemployment situation in the country, to the solution of which the Government attaches paramount importance. Having regard to the prevailing level of wages in the agricultural sector and the general minimum level in trade and industry, except in certain organised private and public sector undertakings, which should be considered more as an exception rather than the rule, we feel that the adoption of the minimum remuneration based on the 15th I.L.C. norms at this stage would be tantamount to a misdirection of resources. When about one-third of the rural and one-half of the urban population in our country live on diets inadequate even in respect of calories, not to speak of other essential nutrients, it would be inequitable for the Government to guarantee their lowest paid employees a wage according to the relatively liberal norms laid down by the 15th I.L.C. and Dr. Aykroyd's balanced diet (after adjustment). We have, therefore, not found it possible to recommend that under existing conditions the minimum remuneration of the Central Government employees should be fixed on the basis of norms recommended by the 15th I.L.C."

The Third Pay Commission came to the conclusion that if the norms laid down by the Indian Labour Conference

were adopted, the minimum need based wage would be Rs. 314 per month (at the Consumer Price Index level of 200). I think, some hon. Members suggested and he is right that in September, this year, the Consumer Price Index has gone upto 248 and actually the wage would come to near about Rs. 375 or something like that.

While realising the need for fulfilling the aspirations of the Government employees in this regard, they have not found the same feasible due to the following reasons :—

(1) The acceptance of the demand would entail an additional expenditure to the tune of Rs. 600 crores per annum in the Central Budget with all the resulting adverse effects on the economy.

(2) This is likely to lead to similar demands from other sections of workers in the country which, if accepted, will generate inflationary forces in the economy, thus again eroding the real earnings and causing greater frustration among workers.

(3) This huge non-Plan expenditure would necessarily result in diversion of resources from developmental activities to the non-productive activities, thus jeopardising both the development efforts and employment objectives in the country.

Keeping in view all these relevant factors, the Commission arrived at a figure of Rs. 185 per month as the minimum wage to be granted to Central Government employees. This figure takes into account the diet, clothing, housing and other minimum requirements of a Class IV employee and his family (comprising three adult consumption units). The Government has raised this figure to Rs. 196 per month and the new pay scales for Class II, III and IV employees will take effect from the earlier date of 1-1-1973 as against 1-3-1973 as recommended by the Commission.

Here, I would like to say something about the remarks made by my hon. friend, Shri S. M. Banerjee. He said that in some of the industries, the labour is getting more than the minimum prescribed by the Pay Commission or fixed by the Government. We are not averse to it. If the labour can come to some understanding with the management and can get more, we will be too happy about it.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: He said about the public sector undertakings. Why disparity?

SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA: May be public sector undertakings or private sector undertakings. If the industry is in a position to pay, they can pay more. I do not deny the fact that the rise in prices is hitting hard the salaried class or the persons of fixed income group and also the poor people. There is no denying that fact.

There has undoubtedly been considerable erosion in the purchasing power of the rupee during the last few years. Thus, the Consumer Price Index (100 in 1960) stands at 248 for September 1973, which means that there has been a decline of 60 per cent in 12-13 years. From 1963 onwards till 1967, the purchasing power of the rupee diminished quite rapidly. This period was marked by the effects of two severe droughts in 1965 and 1966 and two armed conflicts, with China and Pakistan, which were largely responsible for a sharp increase in prices and consequent fall in the purchasing power of the rupee. From 1968, however, the decline in the value of rupee was much less and, in 1971, the average purchasing power was 52.6 paise. But again the severe drought conditions in 1971-72 and 1972-73 affected the agricultural output and also created acute power shortage leading to a slow-down in the pace of industrial production, etc., combined with a sharp rise in aggregate demand. Then there was the Bangladesh crisis and expenditure on relief and the emergency agricultural production programme. All these raised prices abnormally from the second half of 1972 to 1973. The rise in the general consumer price index between July 1972 and September 1973 amounted to 21.0 per cent. Consequently, the value of the rupee during September, 1973 has fallen to 40.3 paise.

In order to check the price rise and the consequent decline in the purchasing power of the rupee, the Government has taken several steps on both the demand and the supply side. These measures are: (a) reduction in outlay of the Central Government by about Rs. 400 crores in order to reduce the extent of likely deficit financing; (b) economy in non-plan expenditure on contingencies, entertainment, travelling

allowances, etc.; (c) progressive reduction in subsidy on foodgrains; (d) revenue gained through the recent price hike on petroleum products will help reduce the level of deficit financing.

A series of steps have been taken by the Reserve Bank to control the expansion of bank credit. Apart from raising the Bank Rate from six to seven per cent and the minimum lending rate, the statutory reserve requirements have been increased from three to seven per cent and the net liquidity ratio from 37 to 40 per cent by September this year. Raising the reserve requirements of banks has had the effect of immobilising about Rs. 400 crores of bank funds. Upward revision of procurement prices of rice, wheat and coarse grains to provide incentives to farmers and increased production has already shown good results.

Variable dearness allowance schemes are being followed in almost all major industries and these provide for automatic adjustments of dearness allowance whenever the cost of living goes up.

As regards Central Government employees, the Third Pay Commission has provided 100 per cent neutralisation in the case of employees drawing pay upto Rs. 300 and 75 per cent for those drawing above Rs. 300 upto Rs. 900.

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, empowers the Central and State Governments to fix minimum wages in scheduled employment in their respective spheres. It is for the benefit of those workers who are not well organised as to enter into collective bargaining with the employers effectively. The Act provides for revision of wages at suitable intervals keeping in view the cost of living.

In view of the position explained by me, I would request the hon. Member to withdraw his Resolution. I can assure him that the Government is fully aware of the difficulties faced by the working class. But, as I have said, these are to be considered in the light of general economic conditions prevailing in the country.

SHRI A. P. SHARMA: Only one question, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, please. If I allow you, I will have to allow others also.

SHRI A. P. SHARMA : The National Labour Commission has recommended that this minimum need-based wage can be phased.

DR. SARADISH ROY (Bolgpur) : I am grateful to all those hon. Members who have taken part in this debate and especially, to those hon. Members from the Ruling Party who have also come forward in support of my resolution.

While supporting my resolution, the hon. Member, Shri Naik, quoted the constitutional provision for a living wage but put forth the fallacious argument that it is calculated on the basis of Rs. 314 per head for all the people, for all the population of India, that is, for all the 60 crores people and came to the conclusion that this amount will be just equal to the national wealth. So he discarded even the amended resolution of Shri S. M. Banerjee. It is a fallacious argument and if he has gone through the resolution of the 15th Labour Conference, he will see that it provides for a need-based minimum wage for an earner who has three dependents and that is how this figure of Rs. 314 is arrived at. But he has calculated at the rate of Rs. 314 for each and every person of India. That is the fallacy and on that score he has gone against the main resolution.

However, some hon. Members have shed crocodile tears for the agricultural labour in the village side. Who has prevented you—you have got the massive majority—to do something for the rural people? During the election you gave the slogan '*Garibi Hatao*' and socialism and other things and after the elections you talked of land reforms and distribution of surplus land to the landless, but you have done nothing. Rather you have done the reverse. Who is responsible? You are conducting the Central Government for the last 26 years and for the last three years you have a massive majority and with your majority you can amend the Constitution in any way you like. You made tall promises but did nothing. You have not distributed the surplus land nor you have taken the surplus land from the landlords. You have made certain loopholes in the Act so that they can retain their land and they are still retaining and within three years you have forgotten your resolve to distribute the surplus land to the landless. So, it is no use shedding crocodile tears...

SHRI B. V. NAIK : How do we know that your tears are real?

DR. SARADISH ROY : In a short time we did something on this point.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah) : We are not in the Government.

DR. SARADISH ROY : The agricultural labour and the people living in the villages are not getting rations at controlled rates. You are supplying rations at the controlled rates only to the metropolitan cities but not to the poor people living in the rural side. Who has prevented you from doing that? We have always been demanding that they should also be supplied rations at subsidised rates or at controlled prices. You have not done it.

Then you have fixed the minimum wage for the people but you have not implemented that for the poor agricultural labour who are not organised and because they are not organised you have not done anything for them.

The Minister has said that if you fix the wages on a higher level, then there will be much more increase in the prices. I want to quote one sentence from the *Economic Times* dated 23-6-73. In its editorial it writes :

"If the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank were in touch with the economy, they should have known the elementary fact that wages do not constitute the dominant element in the economy nor are they the main factor behind the inflation."

They have said that wages are the main factors behind the inflation. This is from the *Economic Times*, Editorial dated 23-6-1973. So, the argument of the Minister, that if there is an increase in wages, there would be inflation, is not valid.

Then, Sir, the Minister quoted from the Third Pay Commission's Report in which they have also calculated the minimum wage at Rs. 314 to be reasonable as per the Fifteenth Labour Conference. But Pay Commission have awarded Rs. 185 as minimum wage. I do not know for what reason you have to increase this to Rs. 196. Maybe, because the people of our country—I mean the Government employees—launched a movement. They were agitating and so, you were forced to increase their minimum wage from Rs. 185 to 196. I am sure that if you do not concede this minimum which you yourself have resolved about 17 years back as the need-based minimum wage, the people of our country in

[Dr. Saradish Roy]

government offices, factories etc. will struggle themselves to realise that demand.

In this connection I want to mention one thing that many hon. Members were confused about our obligations to the Constitution. Our Constitution provides for a living wage. And yet, we have not demanded a living wage but only the need-based minimum wage. This is the first stage towards a living wage. Even this minimum wage you have not conceded. There were so many wage committees who have awarded such and such a wage. They have not conceded this basis. Only on one or two occasions, the wage boards modified that basis taking into account the dietary charge for the vegetarian and non-vegetarian meal. You have not discarded the basic principle as such. The working-class people of our country both here and in factories elsewhere, the officers etc. will launch their movement in order to realise their demands. Whatever they have achieved now, it is not by the grace of the Government but by shedding their blood. And they have achieved this minimum wage by struggle. And by their own struggle, I am sure they will also realise their demand for the need-based minimum wage.

I hope that the House will support this Resolution.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you not withdrawing your Resolution?

DR. SARADISH ROY: I am not withdrawing my Resolution. You will kindly put it to the vote of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are some amendments to his Resolution. So, I am putting all the amendments to the vote of the House. I am putting the amendment of Shri Daga. He is not here.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: He is very much here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is present. Are you withdrawing your amendment?

SHRI M. C. DAGA: I am withdrawing my amendment. I seek the leave of the House to withdraw my amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. Member have the leave to withdraw his amendment?

Amendment No. 1 was, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now I come to Shri Banerjee's amendment. He is not here. Shri Banerjee is not here. So, I am putting his amendment to the vote of the House:

Amendment No. 2 was put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the question is:

"This House expresses its grave concern at the falling real wages of the Indian Workers consequent to the abnormal rise in prices of essential commodities and failure of the Government to grant need-based minimum wages to the workers on the basis of norms laid down by the Fifteenth Indian Labour Conference."

The motion was negatived.

18.25 hours

RESOLUTION RE: FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी (खालियर) : सभापति महोदय, मैं निम्नलिखित संकल्प पेश करता हूँ: "यह सभा चुनावों में घन शक्ति के बढ़ते हुए प्रस्ताव और शासकीय साधनों के दुरुपयोग पर चिन्ता व्यक्त करती है और स्वतंत्र तथा निष्पक्ष चुनाव सुनिश्चित करने हेतु सरकार को निर्देश देती है कि —

(1) मान्यता प्राप्त राजनीतिक दलों को चुनाव अनुदान दिए जाएँ जैसे कि वांचू समिति ने सिफारिश की है ;

(2) मान्यता प्राप्त राजनीतिक दलों के लिए समान रेडियो-समय देने, निर्वाचन आयोग को बहु-सदस्यीय निकाय बनाने मतदान आयु को कम करके 18 वर्ष करने, और सूची पद्धति को अपनाने की सम्भाव्यता पर उच्च शक्ति प्राप्त समिति द्वारा जांच कराए जाने के बारे में निर्वाचन विधि में संशोधन संबंधी संयुक्त समिति की सिफारिश क्रियान्वित की जाए ;

(3) मंत्रियों के लिए शासकीय सुविधाओं जैसे वायुयानों, हेलीकाप्टरों, वाहनों आदि का प्रयोग वर्जित कर दिया जाए जब तक कि अन्य मान्यता-प्राप्त राजनीतिक दलों को भी समता के आधार पर ये सुविधाएँ उपलब्ध न हों ; और