

12.05 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCEINCREASE IN THE RATES OF POSTAL
SERVICES, TELEGRAMS AND TELEPHONES
ON THE EVE OF PARLIAMENT SESSION.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री (पटना) : अध्यक्ष जी, बोलने में पहले मैं एक निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ। इसके बारे में वक्तव्य की काफी हम लोगों के पाम नहीं भेजी गई है। लगता है कि कोई तर्द प्रथा चालु की गई है? इसके बारे में मुझे पता नहीं है। पहले बराबर वक्तव्य की कार्पा दी जाती थी लेकिन आज कोई कार्पा नहीं दी गई है। इसलिए वक्तव्य को मुन न ही हम कुछ बोल सकेंगे और मंत्री जी में कुछ पूछ सकेंगे।

श्री इन्द्रजीत गुप्त (अलीपुर) ऐसा नहीं हो सकता।

श्री मोहम्मद इम्सादिल (बैरकपुर) : एजेंडा पेपर में नहीं है।

MR. SPEAKER: The statement was kept in the Notice Office, as usual

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : पहले दी जाती थी।

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: The Members whose names are on the Call-attention notice are always provided with copies. Otherwise, how are they expected to ask questions? Perhaps, it has been given late by the Minister.

MR. SPEAKER: It was received at 10-25.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: There was plenty of time. It could have been given during Question Hour.

MR. SPEAKER: In future, it will be done.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : अध्यक्ष जी, मैं अविलम्बनीय लोक महत्व के निम्नलिखित विषय की ओर माननीय संचार मंत्री का ध्यान दिलाना चाहता हूँ और प्रार्थना करता हूँ कि वह इस बारे में एक वक्तव्य दें :—

“समद के मत्र के ठीक पहले डाक-गेवा, नार और टेनीफोन की दरों में वृद्धि।”

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA): A review of the Budgetary position of the P&T Department over the past few years shows that the overall surpluses of the Department have been coming down progressively. The profit of Rs. 37.14 crores during the year 1971-72 came down to a mere Rs. 2.33 crores during 1974-75. During the current year 1975-76, the Department is expected to run into an anticipated loss of over Rs. 20 crores.

Taking the financial picture of the Postal Services independently, it has been observed that the losses incurred by this Wing during the year 1970-71 amounted to a little less than Rs. 1 crore, but had been going up steadily, reaching the figure of about Rs. 66 crores estimated during 1975-76. The total loss on Postal Services since 1970-71 has accumulated to Rs. 138 crores. The calculated loss for next year would have been another Rs. 75 crores.

The Postal Branch is highly labour intensive and about 80 per cent of its cost is spent on staff expenditure. The revision of pay scales implemented on account of the Third Pay Commission's recommendations and some improvements in promotional avenues made as

a result of Agreement in the JCM Department Council in May, 1974 have steeply increased the salary Bill. Besides, sanction of 14 instalments of Dearness Allowance has led to a considerable increase in expenditure on allowance. The wage bill of the Department which stood at Rs. 203 crores in 1973-74 rose to Rs. 321 crores during 1975-76, an increase of nearly Rs. 120 crores during a period of two years.

The P&T Department has been taking various measures to contain the expenditure on staff costs. It is currently engaged in carrying out an exercise to modify and simplify the procedures so that the time of staff required for performing various operations pertaining to the work in Post Offices, RMS Offices and Telecommunication Offices may be reduced. The recent economy measures decided upon by the Government are being implemented scrupulously. Staff standards for sanction of man-power are being followed strictly. Expenditure on contingencies, over-time allowance, medical reimbursement etc. are being controlled and restricted to the minimum required for efficient functioning of the Department. These measures are expected to result in streamlining the working, increasing efficiency and also reducing expenditure. However, these measures cannot by themselves meet the anticipated deficit.

The costing of the individual postal services indicates that almost all the services are running at a loss, mostly due to the increased staff costs as mentioned earlier. The Telecommunication facilities in the country stand at a very low stage of development at present. We have 0.3 telephones per 100 of population as compared to 62.75 in the United States of America, 55.95 in Sweden, 35.9 in Japan and 35.39 in U.K. Telecommunications is an essential infrastructure for fast economic development of the country.

It also provides scope for earning substantial quantum of foreign exchange by export of telecommunication equipment manufactured in the country. The Department therefore, has to have an intensive plan to expand the Telecommunication Services in the remaining 3 years of the 5th Plan. In order to ensure that the existing subscribers get a better service, expansion as well as improvement of the system is absolutely necessary. This calls for heavy investment in more modern and sophisticated equipment. For this purpose, substantial support has to be provided to the P&T's Capital Budget from out of the P&T revenues.

The surpluses of the Telecom. Branch are being utilized to balance the overall Budget of the Department. Consequently, the internal resources that could be utilized for Telecom. development are decreasing fast. The Capital Reserve Fund built up so far will be completely wiped off by the end of 1975-76. As a matter of fact Rs 11 crores have to be borrowed this year from the General Revenues to meet the anticipated loss. Besides the increase in staff costs, prices of Telecom. equipment both imported and indigenously manufactured have been going up steadily. In these circumstances, the Government have found it necessary to revise the tariffs for certain of the Postal Services and Telecom. Services.

The revision of tariffs implemented with effect from 1st March, 1976 are the barest minimum required by the Department to meet its overall costs and earn a little surplus for Capital investment. In fact, the Government have refrained from raising substantially the charges for certain services which are used by the common man. For example, the money order service was incurring a loss of Rs. 11.5 crores per annum. The revision of money order commission will make up the loss only to the extent of Rs. 4.5 crores,

[Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma]

still leaving the service to run at a deficit of Rs 7 crores

I would like to submit that the revision of these rates are within the competence of Central Government under the provisions contained in Indian Post Office Act and Indian Telegraph Act. It is only in respect of certain Postal Services like Postcards, letter-cards, letters, book and sample packets, registered newspapers and parcels, that the revision of tariffs are subject to the approval of the Parliament. It may be observed that the tariffs for these services are not being revised.

The Government have been seriously considering the need for revision of tariffs for quite some time past in order to arrest the deteriorating financial position of the Department as early as possible. The Government would have liked to revise the rates much earlier but due to certain administrative reasons, this was practicable only from 1st March, 1976. Every day mattered and so the Government decided to revise the rates from 1st March and place the revision on the table of the House on re-assembly of the Parliament.

श्री रामाबतार शास्त्री अध्यक्ष जी वक्तव्य तो बहुत लम्बा है लेकिन निहायत ही समन्वित है और जनता पर चोट करने वाला है। आज 8 तारीख से सदन का मत प्रारम्भ हुआ और मंत्री महोदय ने इन चीजों की कीमत बढ़ाने या टैक्स बढ़ाने का ऐलान 25 फरवरी को किया। एक पखवाड़ा पहले सप्ताह के मत से इस बात की घोषणा की गई और मुझे दुःख होता है कि डा० शंकर कर्णालकरा जी जैसे मन मंत्री को शिखड़ी बना कर सरकार ने आम लोगों पर, करोड़ों लोगों पर, चोट करने की कोशिश की है।

क्या होता अगर हम 10-15 दिन रुक जाते, सप्ताह में उस पर विचार हो लेता? तरह तरह के मुद्दावा आ जाते, तब अगर सरकार बढ़ाना चाहती तो कुछ वह बढ़ा सकती थी। इसका क्या औचित्य है कि उसने मसदा में पहले इस तरह की घोषणा की? इससे तो यही पता चलता है कि सप्ताह का महत्व या इसकी मर्यादा का क्या सरकार को नहीं है।

अध्यक्ष जी, सरकार ने आम लोगों पर चोट की। मरीआड कनेडा गरीब लोग भेजत है कागजाने में काम करने वाले मजदूर भेजत है। उस तरीके में तार का रेट बढ़ा दिया। अब दो रुपये में कम में कोई तार नहीं होगा। उस लोग बारह आने में तार भेज सकें हैं एक रुपये में तार भेज चुके हैं अब तार दो रुपया में जायगा। उस तरह से रजिस्ट्रेशन फी का है। यह ठीक है कि बड़ी बड़ी कम्पनिया ज्यादा रजिस्ट्रेशन भेजती है। आप ठीक पर समय पर ज्यादा लगाना हम सब कर। लेकिन एक मामूली आदमी अगर मर उस रजिस्ट्री से पत्र भेजना चाहेगा तो उस ज्यादा दना पड़ेगा। दहान में किताब की दुकानें नहीं हैं। कोई भी ऐसा दहान नहीं होगा नहा पढ़न लिखन के लिए लोग बी०पी०पी० से पब्लिशर से पुस्तकें न मगवाने ह। अब उन पुस्तकों पर ज्यादा टैक्स देना पड़ेगा। फेडरेशन आफ इंडियन पब्लिशर्स के मनाबिक 6 रुपये की किताब के लिए 3 रुपए टैक्स देना होगा। यह कहा का न्याय है कि आप मामूली लोगों पर टैक्स लगा रहे हैं और बड़े लोगों कोरपोरेट सेक्टर बड़े बड़े इजारेदारों, एजीपनियों को आपने समय समय पर छुट दी है। न मालूम, आने वाले दिनों में, बजट के सिलसिले में आप क्या करने वाले हैं? एक तरफ कुछ खजाना सेठ लोग और दूसरी तरफ ऐसे मामूली लोगों पर चोट, यह कहा का जनतन्त्र है? क्या इसी तरीके से बीस सूत्री कार्यक्रम की

क्रियान्विति में आप गरीबों का सहयोग चाहते हैं, मजदूरों का सहयोग चाहते हैं, किसानों का सहयोग चाहते हैं, साधारण गरीब जनता का सहयोग चाहते हैं, मध्यम वर्ग का निम्न मध्यम वर्ग का सहयोग चाहते हैं ? मैं समझता हूँ कि यह आपने तय कर लिया है कि प्रतिगामी, फासिस्ट शक्तियाँ उनका इस्तेमाल करें। आप उनको भौका दे रहे हैं। रेमा करके आप गरीबों को, गरीबी मिटाने के नाम पर, शब्दों की गोदी में फेंक रहे हैं। उसमें आपकी नीति स्पष्ट मालूम पड़ती है।

अध्यक्ष जी, इस स्थिति में मैं दो-तीन बातें जानना चाहता हूँ। पहली बात तो यह बताइये कि सदन का मंत्र या मसद् का मंत्र प्रारम्भ होने में पहले आपको यह एलान करने की कौन सी आवश्यकता पड़ गई आप रुक क्यों नहीं सके ?

दूसरी बात, क्या इस तरह की नीति में आप आम जनता को भीम सूत्री कार्यक्रम के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर सकेंगे ?

तीसरी बात यह ठीक है कि आपको पैमें की जरूरत है सेवाएँ बढ़ रही हैं। डाक-नाग विभाग सेवा का विभाग है, यह मैं मानता हूँ। इसलिए आपको घाटा भी हो तो बर्दाश्त करना चाहिए। अगर आप धनी लोगों पर बढ़ाते तो कोई बात नहीं थी। लेकिन मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या आप पोस्ट कार्ड मनीआर्डर और लिफाफों पर एडवर्टाइजमेंट छाप करके आमदनी नहीं कर सकते थे ?

आखिरी बात, अध्यक्ष जी, टेलीफोन की है। टेलीफोन कौन लोग इस्तेमाल करते हैं ? क्या यह सब बड़े लोग ही इस्तेमाल करते हैं ? शहरों में बहुत बड़ी तादाद में मध्यम वर्ग के लोग, साधारण श्रेणी के लोग इस्तेमाल करते हैं, उस पर भी आपने बढ़ा दिया। इसका क्या औचित्य है ? टेलीफोन व्यवस्था आपकी कैसी है, यह बयान चाहिए।

बार बार हम लोग सदन में बहस करने हैं कि टेलीफोन डाक में नहीं चलने, आपके विभाग में करप्शन है। मैं पटना की बात जानता हूँ, वाड़ के नाम पर लाखों रुपये वृद्धि किये गये। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि आपने करप्शन को रोकने के लिए कौन से उपाय किये हैं ? फिजल-खर्ची रोकने की बात आपने कही है लेकिन करप्शन को हटाने के लिए आपने कौनसी योजना बनाई है ?

मैं यह चाहता हूँ कि इन तीन-चार बातों का आप स्पष्ट जवाब दीजिए ताकि जनता समझे कि आपको नीयत क्या है, आप सम्बन्ध में भीम सूत्री कार्यक्रम अमल में लाना चाहते हैं, या उसके नाम पर आप जनता पर हमला करना चाहते हैं ? स्पष्ट रूप से जनता यह जानना चाहती है।

डा० शंकर दयाल शर्मा : हमारा बराबर प्रयास यही है कि जो आम जनता है उस पर इसका प्रभाव न पड़े। माननीय शास्त्री जी अगर गहराई में देखेंगे तो पायेंगे कि जिन चीजों का सम्बन्ध आम लोगों से है और जिसमें पोस्ट कार्ड है, इनवीड कार्ड है, लिफाफे हैं उन पर हमने दर को नहीं बढ़ाया है। जहाँ तक एडवर्टाइजमेंट से आमदनी बढ़ाने का सवाल है वह कोशिश तो चल रही है लेकिन वह न काफी है और हम उसमें घाटा पूरा नहीं कर सकते हैं। पोस्टल माड्युल में हमारा घाटा मौजदा दरों से 75 करोड़ होने जा रहा है जिसमें से हमने जितना बढ़ाया है उससे कुल 19 करोड़ 70 लाख रुपया पूरा कर पाये हैं। जो पोस्टल है जिसका सम्बन्ध जन साधारण से है अब भी उसमें हम दूसरी आमदनी में से व्यय दे रहे हैं। मनी आर्डर की बात भी उन्होंने कही है। जैसे मैंने कहा है हमें 11.5 करोड़ के करीब घाटा था। अब भी हमारा घाटा 7 करोड़ के करीब रहता है। हमने सिर्फ उतना ही बढ़ाया है जिसके बिना

[डा० शंकर दयाल शर्मा]

हमारा काम नहीं चल सकता था। पूरे पोस्टल के रेटों के रिविजन से, डाक के रिविजन से कुल 19 करोड़ 70 लाख की आमदनी हमारी बढ़ती है बाकी हमने टेलीफोन से बढ़ाया है। खास तौर से मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि अगर हम न बढ़ाते तो गांवों में पोस्ट आफिस खोलने में गांवों में डाक पहुंचाने में जो कि बहुत आवश्यक निश्चित रूप से रुकावट आ जाती। मैंने बताया है कि इसमें बहुत ज्यादा लोग काम करते हैं। इस कारण से कुल दो बरस में हमारा वेज बिल जो हम उनको दे रहे हैं लगभग 120 करोड़ बढ़ गया है। उस में कमी करने की कोई गुंजाइश नहीं है। लोगों की छटनी करने, लोगों को हटाने की गुंजाइश नहीं है। हम इन ग्रोर ध्यान जरूर दे रहे हैं कि उसके बढ़ने पर रोक लग सके। इसके लिए हमने नियम बनाए हैं और उन पर पूरे अनुशासन के साथ पूरे ध्यान के साथ हम देख रहे हैं और उसका पालन कर रहे हैं। लेकिन इस समय कोई और दूसरा रास्ता नहीं था। अगर हमको टेलीफोन या नई टेलीफोन लाइनें देनी हैं तो उसके लिए हमको पैसे की जरूरत होगी। मैंने बताया है कि हमारे देश में सौ पर 3 यानी एक हजार लोगों पर तीन टेलीफोन हैं जबकि दूसरे देशों में 67-63 टेलीफोन हैं। इसलिए मैं यह कह रहा हूँ कि अगर हमको उसको बढ़ाया है तो हमको इन टेलीफोनज की संख्या बढ़ानी होगी। आप बार बार पी सी ओज की मांग करते हैं। मांग होती है कि गांवों में एक्सचेंज खोले जाएं। वहां हमें ऐसा करके नुकसान होता है। हमें तो बड़े एक्सचेंज ही फायदा करते हैं। अगर हमको देश को, पूरे को आगे बढ़ाना है तो जो पिछड़े हुए क्षेत्र हैं वहां इन तमाम चीजों को ले जाना पड़ेगा। उसके लिए पैसे की आवश्यकता होगी। हमने काफी सोच विचार के बाद इसका निर्णय किया है।

ऐसा कोई भी टैक्स लगे जिसका जन साधारण पर असर पड़े इसको हमने कमी भी पसन्द की नजर से नहीं देखा है। ऐसा तभी किया जाता है जब कोई चारा शेष नहीं रह जाता है। आई टी आई का हमको विस्तार करना है, उपकरणों को ज्यादा बढ़ाना है। जब तक इनको खपत नहीं होगी, कारखाने बड़े नहीं बिठा सकते हैं। खपत की जरूरत है। स्पष्ट है कि हम ज्यादा इंतजार नहीं कर सकते थे।

तार में हमने जो रेट बढ़ाया है इसके बाद भी तार व्यवस्था में हमें नुकसान रहता है। नए रेट के बाद भी जो तार है उसमें हमको 25 लाख रुपये का बाटा फिर भी रहता है। जहां तक टेलीफोन का ताल्लुक है उसको दर जो हमने बढ़ाया है वह भी थोड़ी बढ़ाया है क्योंकि उसको बहुत लोग इस्तेमाल करते हैं। बहुत ज्यादा उससे लाभ होता है। आप मानेंगे कि अंतोगत्वा इसका वजन जो बड़-बड़े कारखानेदार हैं, बड़े लोग हैं उन पर ही पड़ता है। आम आमदनी टेलीफोन करता ही कितने हैं? आम आमदनी जो बहुत टेलीफोन करता है वह भारत का आम आमदनी नहीं बन सकता है। हम चाहते हैं कि भारत का आम आमदनी भी बहुत से टेलीफोन करने लगे। हम उसका प्रयास कर रहे हैं।

एक आपत्ति आपने देर को की है और कहा है कि क्या हम प्रतीक्षा नहीं कर सकते थे। यह हर महीने दस करोड़ की आमदनी का सवाल था। दस करोड़ रुपये हमें मिलते हैं तो हम कुछ और टेलीफोन व्यवस्था बढ़ा सकते हैं, कुछ और पोस्ट आफिस खोल सकते हैं। आपने देखा होगा कि इस सब के बावजूद हम बराबर काम करते रहे हैं। इन चन्द महीनों में, करीब छः महीनों में 31 मार्च तक देश के सवा लाख या उससे भी कुछ ज्यादा गांवों में प्रति दिन डाक मिलने लगेगी। कल तक नहीं मिलती थी। दूर क्षेत्रों में जाते हैं हम तो खर्चा बढ़ता है।

खर्चा कम से कम बढ़ा कर हमने यह सब करने की कोशिश की है। आप अगर गहवाई से देखें तो आपको पता चलेगा कि हमारे सामने कोई चारा नहीं था। सिवाय रेट्स को बढ़ाने के। इसलिए हमने इनको बढ़ाया है।

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : आप क्या इंतजार नहीं कर सकते थे

डा० शंकर दयाल शर्मा : हर तीन दिन में एक करोड़ रुपये का फर्क पड़ता है।

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Jainagar): It is a very serious thing that a serious attempt is being made by the Government to erode the very powers of the Parliament and introduce a budget through the back-door just on the eve of the Budget Session. The statement takes shelter behind the fact that in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Post Office Act and the Indian Telegraph Act all these increases could be made without reference to the Parliament. The Minister had explained that he had shown mercy upon the people in that he had exempted items like the post-cards etc. which could not be done without the approval of Parliament. So, therefore, no question of mercy here. In the statement just now made, we have heard this. He said that substantial support has been provided to the P&T's Capital Budget from out of these P&T Revenues. What I want to say is this. This is the Budget for the coming year and this budget is being introduced in a manner which erodes the authority of the Parliament.

Sir, several blows on democracy are being made and on the authority of Parliament. These things have been happening during the last two years and there have been various forces at work. There have been one set of forces demanding the dissolution of State Assemblies and even the Lok

Sabha. And here is another blow which is coming, from the ruling party itself, from the Treasury Benches themselves. The two streams are meeting here only to give a blow to our system and thereby eroding the very authority of the sovereign Parliament.

No plea of public interest could be taken here. The Minister has explained in the statement that this ought to have been done earlier, but, because of some administrative reasons, this could not be done before March 1. So, because of this, namely; administrative difficulties; this could not be done earlier. But my question is this: Why cannot you wait for sometime more, especially when Parliament is going to meet soon? You have waited for so long. You have been losing several crores because of administrative difficulties. These administrative difficulties could not be overcome three months back or two months back or even one month back because it is a time-consuming, long-drawn out process and so this thing has come suddenly in this fashion. We know that during the last several years there have been cases of losses accruing to the Department. Even last year it could have been done, but it was not done. Here just now on the eve of this budget session it has been done. So, Sir, here; it is not merely a question of reply by the hon. Minister, but you, Sir; as the Speaker of the House; as the custodian of the authority of Parliament, have to give your ruling on this particular point. The arguments made so far by the hon. Minister are superficial and they are not convincing. He is giving a blow to the authority of Parliament, though unwillingly it may be. Although he may no have meant it, his is what it really means, and it serves that very purpose.

And, Sir, I think the Minister owes an apology to this House that in doing so he has committed a mistake and

[Shri Bhogendra Jha]

that ought to be rectified. The sooner it is done the better it will be for the country and all of us.

Now coming to the contents of the statement Sir, one argument that has been given in the statement is regarding some economy measures that have been taken. The economy measures have been enumerated in the statement but neither the statement nor the oral reply given by the Minister gives us any idea as to what amount is going to be saved through these economy measures and whether these have been calculated in putting this additional burden on the common man. In this context I would like to say that the different measures of economy that have been enumerated ought to make good the loss or part of the loss.

Another aspect that has been emphasised in the statement is:

"In order to ensure that the existing subscribers get a better service, expansion as well as improvement of the system is absolutely necessary. This calls for heavy investment in more modern and sophisticated equipment. For this purpose substantial support has to be provided to the P&T's capital budget out of the P&T revenues."

Sir, we know and I fully share the idea given by the Minister here that our production, particularly in telephone industry, has picked up very speedily during the last few years and we ought to be proud of it. I also feel that time has come when by exporting our equipment we can augment the resources of foreign exchange for our country and make this Department a very profitable one. But, Sir, for that investment is it necessary that the common man should be taxed? Is it not possible that the money could be had from banks and other sources because it

is an investment and not an expenditure. If an investment is required so that our telephone industry is capable of satisfying national needs and at the same time is in a position to meet the requirements of a score of other countries and thereby earn foreign exchange for that taxing the common man, I do not think, is justified.

Similarly the third point that has to be emphasised is that the increments in rates have violated the policies enunciated by the Government and the Prime Minister during the last few years. The policy here as declared several times is to try to help the common man, try to help the lowest rung of our population and then try to tax the upper rung. But here we have increased the money order and registration fee. Most of us are receiving registered letters. Could it be not possible to exempt the lower rung and impose heavy burden on the upper rung. I submit that taxing all classes together at the same rate is not very justified and that goes against the declared objectives of the Government. I think, in such a situation even now the lowest rung of people should be exempted and that burden, if it is unavoidable, can be shifted to the upper rung of people.

So I want to ask of the Minister whether it could not be done earlier. I also want to ask why it could not be delayed for at least one month...

Mr. Speaker: He has answered that.

Shri Bhogendra Jha: He has said in his statement that several crores have been lost already. He has also said in his statement that for administrative reasons, it could not be done before March 1. I am asking why it could not be done from January 1, why not from December? Why not from last year's budget itself so that Parliament could have had an opportunity to discuss it. He has said that for administrative reasons it could

not be done. So the administrative difficulty was taken note of. But what about the sovereignty of Parliament? What about a discussion with Members of Parliament and the Opposition and then evolving a more concrete, more satisfactory, policy? That has been avoided. There is no satisfactory explanation as to why this could not be done, why this could not be delayed for a while.

Then what is the net effect of the economy measures? Thirdly, what is the total expected-saving due to all these measures? Lastly, are they even now thinking of exempting the lowest rung from these taxation measures?

DR SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA: Mr. Speaker, so far as the question of not bringing these measures earlier is concerned, I should like to point out that last year we had a surplus of Rs. 2.33 crores. Naturally in a department so widespread as this, it takes time to get figures of income and losses. Again, I would like to remind Shri Jha—working in the labour field, he must be knowing it—that the new rates of DA were decided upon only late and after it was decided, its impact was studied. Then and only then could we decide about it.

So far as respect for Parliament is concerned I should like to submit that we have done this fully in accordance with the traditions and wishes of the House, because Parliament itself has conferred upon Government this power to change, meaning thereby—we have every reason to think that this is the only way of interpreting it—that Parliament in such a case has decided that this should be done by administrative action and we need not come before Parliament for these things.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, no.

DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA: So we have done it fully in accordance with the letter of the law and the intention as can be gathered from the letter of the law.

As for the question of its being done earlier, I have already explained that after that impact of the new instalments of DA was studied, we had to consider what further measures we should take in this matter. We could think of raising the rates of certain items with the consent of Parliament. We have tried to leave them.

So far as money orders are concerned, you have said that the richer people use bank cheques. We do not get money orders of the rich people. They just pay a rupee to the bank and they collect it from bank to bank.

As I said, there was a loss of Rs. 11.5 crores and we have only tried to make it up slightly.

So far as the question of what we are going to get by the various economy measures is concerned, the effect of these measures will be known later. We have reduced the forms, but we are not going to re-reduce the strength. There is no idea of retrenchment. As to what will be the effect of these measures, we will come to our conclusions later.

You may judge the extent of our work if you realise that we have got more than 6 lakh people working for us. We have to look to their interests. Then we have also to look to the interests of the extra-departmental employees. We have increased their emoluments also. As you yourself have said, ours being a welfare state, we have to see both sides. These 6 lakh people are not only employees, but they are also our people. We cannot retrench them; we cannot also stop what they should get merely because this thing has

[Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma]

gone up So in every measure taken, we have to see that the burden falls heavily only on those who can afford to bear it. We have tried to save the people who cannot pay, who are in difficulty. We have tried to tap the rich people.

Then I am not using the word 'tax'

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA The rich have been spared.

DR SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA This is technically a fee and not a tax.

As for delay, delay would have resulted in a loss of Rs 10 crores which would mean so much loss in other things. We want to utilise all this for improving the conditions. I want to make it clear that when we are talking of economy, we are not thinking of economy in terms of essentials for the worker. Even during this period while we were calculating we also decided about the quarters which had been stopped earlier types I and II. The ban on them had been removed and we are thinking of that. So this has to be balanced both ways in order that we may be able to meet the needs of the common man.

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA He has not answered the point whether it was not possible to invest in Telecom industry, not by taxing people but by taking money from financial institutions.

DR SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA As far as the Indian Telecom industry is concerned, the capital investment does not come to much. We have to pay for the equipment we use and this will mainly go for payment for the equipment that will be used.

12.41 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

(i) MINUTES

SHRI SEZHIYAN (Kumbakonam): I beg to lay on the Table minutes of the sittings of the Committee on Papers laid on the Table held on the 23rd June, 1975, 18th February and 1st March, 1976.

(ii) FIRST REPORT

SHRI SEZHIYAN Sir, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on papers laid on the Table.

12.42 hrs

STATEMENT RE DISCOVERY OF OIL BY ONGC IN BASSEIN STRUCTURE

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM (SHRI K D MALAVIYA) Mr Speaker Sir, it is with a sense of considerable gratification that I rise to make this statement today. The Hon'ble Members are aware of the efforts made by us in off-shore exploration in an area of about 100,000 sq km, spreading from the Saurashtra Coast to Konkan line. I have already stated about the special project known as the 'Deeper Continental Shelf Project' covering an area of about 20,000 sq km where seismic surveys have been completed in a record time of two months. The data obtained from the seismic survey of the deeper continental shelf project area are being processed and evaluated and the preliminary results are quite encouraging. In all probability, exploratory drilling in the deeper continental shelf area will also be taken up during this year.