

12.03-3 hrs.

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS—*contd.*

MINISTRY OF IRRIGATION AND POWER—
contd.

Mr. Speaker: The House will not take up further discussion and voting on the Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Irrigation and Power. Out of six hours, one hour and 25 minutes have been exhausted. Four hours and 35 minutes remain. Shri Iqbal Singh.

Shri Iqbal Singh (Ferozpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I congratulate the hon. Minister for Irrigation and Power on the fine work he has been doing during the last few months and especially in the settlement of disputes—the inter-State disputes and other disputes—about the rivers as between State and State and as between one part of the area and another part of the area. It is a great work that he has done. He is a great technical man. I think that as far as the settling of disputes and as far as the progress of this Ministry are concerned, he has handled them in a quite remarkable way.

I shall first deal with the points which have been dealt with by my hon. friends, the previous speakers, and that is, minor irrigation. The work on minor irrigation is mostly done by the Agriculture Ministry which lacks the technical personnel. That is why there is so much of lag in the minor irrigation. It is better that such subjects as irrigation, minor and major, are under the umbrella of one and the same Ministry, so that there may not be any reshifting or redistribution of the same work. Where more technical personnel are required, those works may be given to the Ministry of Irrigation and Power, and subjects such as tubewells, tanks and wells, etc., may remain with the Agriculture Ministry, and the other things must remain with the Ministry of Irrigation and

Power and the work must be suitably divided as between the Ministry of Irrigation and Power and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

The Central Water and Power Commission is a highly technical body. It has done commendable work in the last 15 years, and as far as their work on the national level, is concerned it deserves credit from all sides of the House and from all sections in the country as a whole. But it must be strengthened. Especially, it must appoint some consultants for all the important projects so that the progress of these projects may remain constantly under review. We have appointed foreign consultants. There are a large number of people in this country itself. Even in the Central Water and Power Commission, they should have a separate wing of consultants so that all the work on different national projects dealt with by the Ministry of Irrigation and Power at the Centre or at the State level may always be under review and supervision. Moreover, as far as inspection and planning are concerned, they must be strengthened so that more work can be done especially in the fourth Five Year Plan for which we are ready with the plans. We should have all the project reports and the data and have them verified by the technical body and the work must be executed speedily.

The CWPC has taken up one project in the Punjab this year, namely, the Rajasthan canal feeder works. The schemes submitted by the Punjab Government, especially the Pong scheme and the Pong dam scheme and the others may be implemented and they may be examined soon so that the Punjab Government and the other Governments concerned may take up the matter in their hands quite early.

Secondly, I was one of the few voices in this House when the Indus Water Treaty was negotiated between India and Pakistan. I was one of the few persons who was even feeling at that time that this will have a reper-

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discussion on India. Now, more than three years have passed since the Indus Water Treaty has been negotiated and signed. The people are feeling the pinch of that treaty, especially the people in Punjab and Rajasthan area, the area of the Sirhind canal and the Gang canal. They are feeling it, because under that treaty, we have to release the water according to some schedule. Especially in the scarcity seasons and in the winter season, the water supply is quite small. About 66 per cent of the water is released for Pakistan, 21 per cent for Rajasthan and only 13 per cent for Punjab, and therefore, additional difficulties are being faced by the peasants of Punjab and Rajasthan. Anyway, the treaty has been concluded, and I have nothing to say about it. It is a national problem with an international treaty, and it is implemented on an international level. This country and this House which have been and which have sanctioned that treaty, owe something to that area, to those people, who are feeling the difficulties arising out of the treaty. The time will be over by the end of 1970 and we shall be no longer under an obligation to release any water to Pakistan. But even after three years, Pakistan can take water, that is, in 1973 also, and even then, the Ministry of Irrigation and Power may come and say, "Well, we hoped that everything would have been done but water will go to Pakistan because we have not completed our channels" and so on. Now, about four years are over and nine years hence, there will be no obligation on the part of this country to release any more water to Pakistan; or at the most, by 1973, there is no obligation. This country, and especially the people of that area can ask that in spite of all the difficulties for more than ten years, why this Government, especially the engineers of the Central Government who are mostly responsible for the implementation of that treaty, is not prepared to take away the whole water which was

due to India and again it is being released to Pakistan. It will be a great day, especially to the people of Rajasthan and Punjab, when these people can ask the Central Government to retain all our waters for our own purposes. Now, the foundation for the utilisation of that water must be laid. The capacity of Sirhind canal must be increased from 4,300 to 6,300 cft, and the capacity of the Gang canal may be increased from 2,800 cft. to 4,500 cft, so that the water, especially during the summer season, may be released to these areas and we can grow more cotton in this country. Especially the long staple cotton is in great demand, and it can be grown in that area and it will be in our national interest. It is in the country's interest. That is why I have to say humbly that this is something which India owes to that area. That area is suffering today. The people of this area can certainly ask whether everything will be done according to the treaty by 1970, after which we have no obligation to give any water to Pakistan. If water is going to be released to Pakistan even after that, it will be a national loss and it will certainly be a great loss to that area.

For that purpose, the Thein dam must be implemented. The Punjab Government has sent the technical report of the Thein dam to the Central Water and Power Commission, but nothing has been heard about it. It should be sanctioned at the earliest so that it may be completed by 1971 when Ravi waters will be released for India by Pakistan under the terms of the Indus Water Treaty. If it is going to be implemented in 1968, they will say it will require five or six years to complete it. So, this is the proper time to take up the Thein dam, so that we can take the water that is now released to Pakistan and at least in or by 1973 not a single drop of water, which is due to India according to the treaty, may go to Pakistan.

Regarding flood control, Punjab Government has taken the work of flood control on a war footing. They are quite serious. The total allotment for flood control and removal of water-logging from Punjab was Rs. 15 crores and they have utilised the whole amount. From their own resources, the Punjab Government are spending more than Rs. 20 crores. They have already spent Rs. 15 crores and they propose to spend during the third Plan more than Rs. 20 crores more. There are a few States who want to go ahead with great speed. But then the Central Government comes and says to them, "No; you do not go at that great speed". There are other States where no work is done. I have nothing to say against them; they certainly require help and the Central Government should give financial assistance to them. But certainly the Punjab Government can ask the Central Government whether they are going to give any share in the amount of Rs. 20 crores which the Punjab Government are spending from their own resources. The loss to Punjab due to water-logging and other things is a national loss. If somebody wants to do work, the Central Government should help, because Punjab is one of the granaries of India. Cotton and other crops are required by the country. The Punjab Government are trying to remove water-logging and floods by their own efforts. There is dispute between Punjab and Rajasthan regarding Ghaggar. There is dispute between Punjab and U.P. regarding diversion of water. There is dispute between Punjab and Delhi regarding Drain No. 8. The Central Government should intervene in these disputes in the national interest and not in the interest of Punjab alone. If something is being done by the Punjab Government, the Centre should certainly give financial assistance to Punjab because the Punjab Government is spending from its own resources. Punjab is not a rich State, but they are serious people. They have done this work in a serious way. If anybody in this country wants to see

work on a war footing, he should see the drainage and flood control work in Punjab, where things are being done in days, which nobody can imagine in other parts of the country.

Coming to the State Electricity Board and the implementation of the Electricity Act, I am one of those who think that now the time has come to examine the question of the Electricity Board and State electricity undertakings by some commission. I am one of those who think that we should do away with the Electricity Boards, because they are just contradictory phenomena. On the one side, you say that they should get profits and on the other side you say they should do development work which is unprofitable. These are two contradictory things. They cannot go together. Therefore, rural electrification is a subject which may be taken away from the State Electricity Board and the whole question may be thoroughly examined by a Commission at the national level. As far as electrification in rural India is concerned, the people can wait only till the end of the Fourth Plan or, at the most, till the end of the Fifth Plan. During the Third Plan we are expected to electrify 20,000 villages. Considering the speed at which we are proceeding, I think it will require more than hundred years to electrify all the villages. As far as the villages in India are concerned, in the matter of education, roads, rural electrification and irrigation by tube-wells or canals, they can only wait till the end of the Fifth Plan. If we go on telling them that poles are not available, certain other things are not available, something is not an economical or paying proposition and so on, then things are not going to be done in the way that we want. If we are really serious about it—of course, the hon. Minister is serious about it; there was a seminar about a month back and several people including some Members of Parliament who were invited gave their views on this subject—at least Rs. 500 crores should be provided for rural electrification

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in the Fourth Plan. Then 1,50,000 villages may be electrified during the Fourth Plan.

In this connection, I would like to point out one thing. Take the case of Uttar Pradesh. Out of 1,20,000 villages they have electrified only 4000 or 5000 villages which comes to only a very small percentage. How can the people wait for such a long time? They are not interested in knowing whether a particular scheme was not sanctioned by the Planning Commission or the State Electricity Board or even the Supervisor or the Electrical Engineer. They are interested only in one thing, and that is to get electricity for running their tube-wells, for agricultural purposes so that their agricultural production may go up and, as a result of that, their standard of living may go up. If that is done, they can also feel proud of the fact that the amenities due to them are being provided by the Government.

Then I come to the question of electricity charges. In this respect, Mr. Speaker, I have a special complaint against this Ministry and, through this Ministry, against the State Electricity Board. I have a statement here showing the State-wise average rates charged for supply of power for agricultural purposes. The people of North Bihar, practically the poorest part of our country, pay the highest rate. They pay at the rate of 23.44 naye paise per unit for agricultural purposes. The lowest in this statement comes Mysore—I think they are fortunate—and they pay only 4.93 naye paise per unit. The Central Government has taken a decision that the rate should be nine naye paise per unit. I do not subscribe to this view. Thereby you are doing an injustice to the poor agriculturists. When you are giving electricity to big businessmen and great industrial undertakings at the rate of 2 naye paise and 3 naye paise, even below the cost of production, for the agriculturists who are doing national work, who have no other facility for doing their work, you are providing electri-

city at the maximum rate. You are, consciously or unconsciously, compelling the agriculturists to sell their things at fixed prices. Either by law or by rules or otherwise you make them sell their wheat, their sugarcane at a fixed price, their cotton at a rate decided by the Government, and other commodities at fixed prices and so on. At the same time, Government is asking them to pay a price of 24 nP per unit. I am of the opinion that electricity should be supplied to the agriculturists at the same rate as is being charged from the big industrialists for factories. This Ministry should have some national policy regarding the price to be charged from the agriculturist for the use of electricity.

My constituency is the worst sufferer because of the Rajasthan Canal as thousands and thousands of acres have been acquired for digging the canal. We are proud of it and there was no agitation against the acquisition of land. At the time of acquisition, an assurance was given by the Minister that the settlement would be done in such a manner that there will be no complaints. Though five or six years have passed, nothing has been done. There are frequent meetings between the Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries and Chief Engineers of Punjab and Rajasthan but nothing has come out as yet. People have given their lands voluntarily without any agitation and without any murmur of complaint because it was for a national purpose. Now they are making a just demand that they should be allotted some other land in lieu of the land acquired from them. Though committees after committees are going into this question, nothing has been given to those people so far. As our Irrigation Minister is an energetic person, I hope he will persuade the State Government to expedite the settlement of this question.

Here I will refer to another point. When land was acquired for the Harika pond more than 15 years ago,

it was more for the benefit of Rajasthan than for the benefit of Punjab. Yet, for fifteen years not a single acre of land has been given to the Harika pond oustees. Nobody knows where the file is or what the present position is. If things are done in this manner and the grievances of the people, even when they are justified, are not looked into people will lose their confidence in the Government. If any land is taken away from the agriculturists for any public purpose like projects, they must be paid adequate compensation or allotted alternative lands. Our Prime Minister has given this assurance on more than one occasion. I hope this Ministry will implement that policy.

Punjab and Rajasthan are hard-hit this time because of poor crops as there was no water in the Gang canal and Sirhind canal. Here I want the Government of India to consider seriously a question of policy. Betterment levy is charged for lands near Bhakra from the poor peasants. Yet, the benefits of Bhakra go mainly to those who utilise electricity; because, they release water only according to the needs for generation of electricity. Even though there was a great demand for release of water from Bhakra to the Gang canal, Sirhind Canal and Sirhind Canal Feeder, they did not release more water on the ground that if the level of water goes down generation of electricity will go down. If the betterment levy is to be collected from the peasants, then water should be released according to their requirements and not according to the requirements for generation of electricity. If, on the other hand, a project is mainly meant for generation of electricity there should be no betterment levy from the peasants; because water is released only for generation of electricity and the water coming for irrigation is only a by-product. Betterment levy should be collected only if the project is meant exclusively for irrigation and there is no generation of electricity; not otherwise.

These are some of the points that I wanted to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister. I hope he will take note of them, especially rural electrification so that rural India may progress. With these words, I support the Demands for Grants relating to this Ministry.

12.25 hrs.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha): Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission and with the permission of the House, I would like to make a little adjustment in the order of discussion and voting of Demands for Grants relating to the remaining Ministries.

I propose that the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Health may be taken up after the voting on the Demands for Grants of the Department of Supply and Technical Development. This will enable the Minister of Health to be free by the evening of the 2nd of April for attending some very important business on the 3rd and 4th of April.

I also propose that the Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Home Affairs may be taken up after the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs. The shifting of dates of the Demands of the Ministry of Home Affairs would enable the Home Minister to have discussions with the Home Minister of Pakistan who is arriving here on the 7th April.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Barackpore): May we know the dates on which it will be there?

Mr. Speaker: Could he give the revised programme?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: We must know just now because our speakers have all gone. You cannot change like this.

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: Would you like me to give that to hon. Members or would you like me to announce in the House also the approximate dates which this adjustment will involve?