

Shri D. C. Sharma: Ever since India attained freedom our Army has been working in a state of emergency.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member may continue tomorrow.

18.04 hrs.

*AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Shri Inder J. Malhotra (Jammu and Kashmir): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in reply to Starred Question No. 952 on the 17th March, 1961, it was stated, regarding the appointment of the Agricultural Commission, that the matter is still under consideration, in consultation with the State Governments whose views have been asked for.

In reply to another Unstarred Question, No. 1549 answered on the 16th December, 1959, regarding the recommendations made by the Agricultural Administration Committee which submitted its report in October, 1958, it was stated—I am quoting a portion of the reply—like this:

“Formation of a Committee for the Centre once in 5 years to examine programme and policies of Central Commodity Committees and other Central Institutions dealing with Agriculture.”

Now, it is stated that regarding this recommendation, Government has taken the following decision.

“A proposal to appoint a Commission on Agriculture instead of a Committee, to examine, among other things, policies of Central Commodity Committees and other Central Research Institutions dealing with agriculture in its broad sense, is under consideration.”

18.05 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

In reply to another question, Starred Question No. 415 answered on

26th February, 1960, it was stated by the hon. Deputy Minister that:

“As the House knows, there was a Commission as long ago as 1928, and after that, there had been no comprehensive investigation into the problems of agriculture. So, the proposal now is to have a Second Agricultural Commission and for that the terms of reference are being drafted.”

Up till now the Government has been coming forward with positive assurances to this House. The hon. Minister of Agriculture, while replying to a Resolution moved by me in March, 1960, regarding the appointment of a Committee for evaluation of the agricultural research programme in this country, stated:

“In fact the proposal before the Government was of a wider nature. When my hon. friend the Deputy Minister replied to a question the other day, he mentioned that the Government was thinking of a committee or commission which would have very broad terms of reference and would take up a much bigger task than the kind of committee which my hon. friend the Mover has suggested. We have not taken a final decision. That could be taken only when we ascertain and lay down what should be the terms of examination by this commission. Then we must circulate it to the State Governments to see if they have any suggestions to make. Then the various Ministries in the Government of India have to go through it and finally the Cabinet has to decide.”

Now when questions were asked in this House, the Government was coming forward with the reply that the matter was still under consideration in consultation with the State Governments. In the replies given to the previous questions and the references made by the Ministers in their replies,

there was a positive assurance that the Central Government had, in principle, agreed to the appointment of an agricultural commission and that when the matter was referred to the State Governments, it might be with regard to the terms of reference of the commission.

Now, Sir, I would like to invite the attention of the House to the recommendations made by the Agricultural Administration Committee which submitted its report in 1958. The Committee recommends:

"A similar Committee may be appointed at the Centre also, once in five years, to examine the programmes and policies of the Central Commodity Committees and other Central Institutions dealing with agriculture, with a view to promoting a balanced development of agricultural research, education and extension, and harmonizing the different and at times conflicting, policies which impinge on land use, agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry. Since the appointment of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India which submitted its report in 1928, there has been no comprehensive examination of the entire field of agriculture in its broad sense, though there have been a number of committees which have examined different facets of agriculture at various times."

A very important report was submitted in October 1958 and that was the second year of the Second Plan.

During the First and Second Plans, we have spent a considerable amount of money and implemented various agricultural schemes on various aspects of agricultural development but we have not, through any agency or any committee or commission, made any attempt to know our failures and achievements in the field of agriculture during the First and the Second Plans.

Now, after this report was submitted in the year 1958 and if the Government had taken steps early regard-

ing the appointment of this Commission, by this time I am sure the commission might have come out with its report and at the time when we are formulating our Third Plan, the report submitted by this Commission would have been of much use to us in formulating the various schemes and implementing all those schemes during the Third Plan period.

We have the present Food and Agriculture Minister with such dynamic personality and he is known to take quick decisions as far as important matters in the field of food and agriculture are concerned. I know recently that he has taken so many important decisions on some important things affecting the agricultural economy of this country. I just fail to understand how with his shrewdness he has overlooked this important question of taking the final decision regarding the appointment of an Agricultural Commission.

Now, from the replies we have noticed that the matter has been referred to the State Governments. I would like to know whether the State Governments have been asked for their views regarding the terms of reference, or whether they have been asked to say if they like to have such a Commission of this nature or not.

Then there is another situation that arises. Suppose some of the State Governments say that they do not want such a Commission to be appointed in this country, I would like to know from the Minister what the decision or attitude of the Central Government would be in the matter. So many times the Central Government had assured this House that they agree in principle to the appointment of such a Commission.

I would now invite the attention of the House to the Royal Commissions appointed at various times in Britain. The Royal Commission appointed in 1916 dealt mainly with the sugar policy in England. After that the Royal Commission was appointed only after three years, namely, in 1919. It reviewed the whole agricultural situation, the

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size of agriculture, the textent, etc. The terms of reference of that Commission run like this:

"To enquire into the economic prospects of the agricultural industry in Great Britain with special reference to the adjustment of a balance to the adjustment of a balance between the prices of agricultural commodities, the cost of production, the remuneration of labour and hours of employment."

Then, in 1921 another Agricultural Commission was appointed. In 1925, another Agricultural Commission was appointed and in 1936, yet another Royal Commission on Agriculture was appointed. I am confining this aspect only up to 1936 because I could get the information from the Parliament Library only up to that period.

In the end, I would urge upon the Government to appoint the Agricultural Commission as soon as possible because this being the first year of the Third Five Year Plan, in another year or so, we could get the recommendations and observations of this Commission, and I am sure that to some extent, those recommendations and observations would help us a lot in implementing our various policies during the Third Plan period.

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri S. K. Patil): Sir, I am very glad that my hon. friend Shri Inder J. Malhotra has raised this question of the Agricultural Commission. At the very outset, I can remove all his misunderstandings and assure him that in principle I entirely agree with the hon. Member. Nobody is against the appointment of an Agricultural Commission. But the question is, when it is to be appointed, how it is to be appointed, and what are the terms of reference that have got to be given to such a Commission. The hon. Member himself admits that this country has got varied interests; it is not like the United Kingdom where agriculture is very small and it would be a kind of little pocket, as compared to the agri-

culture of India. Therefore, viewed by the instances that I will narrate just now, I shall convince him that while agreeing in principle to the appointment of such a Commission, we have got to choose the appropriate opportunity and the circumstances under which such a Commission should be appointed.

It is true that in 1928 we had a Royal Commission on Agriculture under the Chairmanship of Lord Linthgow, and it was a very useful Commission. But that was the system of the United Kingdom under whom we were functioning. Occasionally they used to appoint such Royal Commissions. That Royal Commission did indeed some very important work. Before that, there was never such a Commission here and the whole field of agriculture was never gone into before them. Therefore, we are really grateful to that Commission. Their findings have really benefited this country greatly. But now, coming to the present position, ever since India became independent, and particularly ever since our Plans started, we are doing something which is scientific. It is not that there was some kind of uncharted thing on which the Commission was appointed in 1928. Now we have to take cognizance of the first, second and third Plans, and whatever we have done in the field of agriculture; that is also going to be the subject-matter of investigation by the commission that free India will be appointing in the near future.

In the first Plan, the major emphasis was on agriculture. In the second Plan also, though I do not agree that the major emphasis has been on agriculture, surely agriculture came in for considerable emphasis. In the third Plan, the major emphasis is on agriculture again. In the ten years we have passed through, we have taken several steps in regard to agriculture. Therefore, the appropriateness of time is important. After we have given some time so that some of the schemes

we have in progress have worked for some time and when the time comes for the revaluation or reassessment of what we have done, that is the precise time in my humble opinion for the appointment of an Agricultural Commission, because such commissions are not a daily occurrence.

The committee referred to by my hon. friend the Agriculture Administration Committee, otherwise known as the Nalagarh Committee—he is one of the very competent officers of the Ministry—suggested that a special committee should be appointed once in five years to examine the programme and policies of the Central Commodities Committee for coordination. They did not suggest an Agricultural Commission. They said that a committee should be appointed every five years to take stock of our commodity committees—there are quite a number of commodity committees—to investigate their work and suggest some methods of co-ordination. We are not of that view, because if we appoint such a committee every five years, the result will be that a certain element of uncertainty will be added to all these committees and their work will not be done properly. That is confined only to such committees. So far as the Agricultural Commission is concerned, this is of a higher import. It is not some co-ordination committee. It can be appointed, say, once in 25 years. There is no statutory period like other commissions—the Pay Commission, the Census Commission, etc.

Whenever our agriculture needs that a commission should be appointed to consider the matter and make a report surely such a commission could be appointed. In my view, if such a commission is appointed, it will take two to three years to go round the country and make a report. It is not like the U.K. where a commission can move about in 15 days or 1 month and make a report. In India, any such commission which we conceive of is going to be of the utmost value and would give benefits of a lasting character. Such a commission would

take two to three years to make a report; it is not a question of a day or two.

The hon. Member asked whether we referred this matter to the State Governments and if so, what their views are. We did refer this to the State Governments, because in principle we agree that such a commission should be appointed. I can also assure him that there is no opposition from anywhere, not even from the States. But unfortunately, because the subject is so very wide and the terms of reference are wider still, the States are taking their own time. There is a note handed over to me from which I find that as many as 9 States have not yet given their opinion as to what really should be done. Those that have given their opinion have said, it should be appointed. There is no dissentient voice.

Ch. Ranbir Singh (Rohtak): What are the names of the five States which have given their opinion?

Shri S. K. Patil: I shall give the names of the nine States which have not given their opinion. The remaining States have given their opinion. The States which have not given their opinion are Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, U.P., West Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir from where Shri Malhotra comes Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. I do not say that they would say that a commission should not be appointed, but so far they have not sent their opinion.

Replies are also awaited from the Indian Sugarcane Committee, and Indian Jute Committee under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Ministry of Community Development also comes in, because they are also concerned with this. In some of the replies we have received, certain States have mentioned as many as 24 subjects in the terms of reference. You can quite imagine; this is not a large number for an Agricultural Commission, because today agriculture

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is becoming more scientific and technical. More and more technical subjects are being added to it. Therefore it has become 24. Ultimately it may become 30 or 35. I do not know how many subjects will have to be referred to it. Therefore, you can see that there is no disinclination on the part of the Government to do so. But Government has to choose the proper time. When work is actually done it will take some years, probably the whole period of the Five Year Plan. There is no reference in the First or in the Second Plan. Plans are only instrumental. The Commission basically analyses agriculture, apart from the Plans, and just as the Royal Commission on Agriculture did in 1928 and make recommendations which are of a lasting character, which will last not for five years but for 25 or 30 years until another situation arises.

Now, we have seen that, apart from the changes that we have made in the Third Five Year Plan, we have made more changes. We have now taken to an intensive agriculture programme, otherwise known as "package programme". These are some of the things which are under way. We have not waited for the appointment of an Agricultural Commission which sits for three years and makes recommendations. Plans have already started. The Commission will have nothing to do with the Plans. Of course, they will give their opinion on the Plans—that is a different matter. But its functions are something, as I understand them, even more basic than what the Plans envisage.

Therefore, that is our policy. I remember that the Minister of Agriculture once gave that reply. The policy is one. That is the uniform policy that we are adopting. Whether the Deputy Minister mentions it, whether the Minister of Agriculture says it or whether I mention it, the policy is one. We understand the importance of the Agricultural Commission. We do not want to under-rate that importance of the Agricultural Commis-

sion. It must be a Commission which really studies all these problems, no matter what time it takes. If it takes three years it is worth-while taking three years. When we are having many of these schemes.

You find that sometimes difficulties arise. Till yesterday there were difficulties of scarcity. Today there are difficulties of surplus. I like to have difficulties of surplus because at least there is something with which we can trade. These difficulties arise because when you try to do something several other consequences flow from it. I wanted to give some incentive to our farmers. It is necessary that I should give them some incentive. The result was that instead of doing intensive agriculture and increasing the per acre yield—I am talking about sugarcane—as much as 4,00,000 new acreage came in because there was some kind of incentive to get more money. That is human nature. I am not finding fault with that. What I am saying is, to have any comprehensive policy of agriculture that embraces an acreage as big as 350 million acres of vast land in a country like India where the climatic conditions differ from place to place as between different countries to have anything uniform is a difficult thing. It takes a long time, perhaps years and years of discipline of the highest order, to determine ultimately as to how much area could be given to which particular crop, how crops per acre could be increased and so on. We cannot do it merely by the appointment of an Agricultural Commission. We can do it by the experiments we are undertaking, the national consciousness we are creating the country, the responsibility which we are giving over to the farmers etc. All these are factors which are very new in this country. We have been getting all co-operation in this respect. We can see what phenomenal change has come during the last 18 months. Providence has been with us the farmers co-operation has been with us. The far-

mers sometimes overdo things. I like them overdoing things rather than underdoing as they have been doing before.

Therefore, I would like to assure the hon. Member and the House that a time will come for it. When these opinions come from the States, we may fix the terms of reference and then select the proper personnel. It is not merely a question of appointing a committee. There is a plethora of committees and commissions in this country. Every second day we hear that some committee has been there. But an Agricultural Commission, whenever it is appointed, must consist of people who understand agriculture and who can bring that informed opinion to bear upon this subject which is expected of them. They must go through the problem thoroughly and ultimately make their recommendations which will be of a far-reaching character.

With these words, Sir, I would like to assure my hon. friend and the

House that the Government is basically committed to the appointment of such a commission in principle. We are only awaiting for the appropriateness of the time and also to receive the opinions that we have asked for from the States.

Shri Inder J. Malhotra: While replying the hon. Minister referred to the Third Plan. Does he think that the proposed commission would be appointed during the Third Plan itself or after the Third Plan?

Shri S. K. Patil: I would assure him that I am not talking of something which will come after five years. It may be that possibly their report will be received by the time the Plan is over, because they will take a long time. But I am not envisaging the setting up of the Commission only after five years.

18.26 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, April 12, 1961/Chaitra 22, 1883 (Saka).
