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*D.O.No.*  
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New Delhi, the 13<sup>th</sup> Jan., 1969.

Dear Dr. Swaminathan,

Please recall your address at the 56th session of the Indian Science Congress at Powai. In your address you have claimed ( I am quoting from "Financial Express" of Jan. 6th 1969 front page) that "the country has achieved self sufficiency in Food". This I feel is too optimistic a view. There are many, some very competent ones like Dr. Ashok Mitra, who feel otherwise. In this connection I would like you to recall a recent article by Dr. Mitra (Statesman Oct. 14th, 1968). Though some of the views expressed (and the techniques employed to arrive at some of the conclusions) were questioned (Minas and Srinivasan, Statesman Nov. 14th, 1968) there was no dispute on Mitra's broad theme that "we are not still out of difficulties". The rosy picture given by you is based on the view that our food needs are only 80 million tonnes. To quote the Financial Express, "The food production this year was said to be 96 million tonnes according to official statistics (Italies supplied) while optiman demand (Italies supplied) in the country would not exceed 80 million tonnes". I feel, your estimate of domestic demand is a gross underestimate. We have now fairly reliable estimates of aggregate demand for food-grains based on growth in income and population, nutritional standards, likely changes in the dietary habits and after making allowance for non-human consumption animal feed and seed and wastage. I give below some of the estimates for 1970-71:

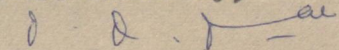
- |   |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
| 1) The working group set up by the Govt. to   | ) |                  |
| arrive at foodgrains target for fourth plan.) | ) | 122.8 M. tonnes. |
| 2) Planning Commission.                       | ) |                  |
| Perspective Planning Division.                | ) | 122. M. tonnes.  |
| 3) N. C. A. E. R.                             |   | 115 M. tonnes.   |
| 4) I. A. R. S.                                |   | 117 M. tonnes.   |

You have also expressed your opinion on buffer stock ("a buffer stock of 10 percent of the needs of the country would be more than adequate"). May I know the basis? As far as I know, the size of the buffer stock is determined by the objective function of the party in power implementing such a policy. We scientists/technicians can only "educate" the policy maker (i.e. the politician) on the criteria of size based on probability studies on subnormal, normal and abnormal years. The size of the buffer stock therefore depends on the degree of protection the policy maker wishes to give. After all buffer stock is a big capital commitment; we would need Rs.600 crores (at Rs.75 per quintal for purchase of 8 million tons (10% of 80 mt.) food-grains alone. This is a lot of capital which is totally unproductive.

I hope you will not misunderstand me for expressing my views.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
( P. R. Rao )

Dr. M.S. Swaminathan.  
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