

NOTE

Award for the Babus?

Bharat Jhunjhunwala writes :

Government has accepted recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission with higher increases than suggested. Finance Minister P Chidambaram has claimed that this additional expenditure will not impact the finances of the Government adversely. A sense of doubt remains, however, because global rating agencies like Fitch and Standard and Poor have already downgraded India because of anticipated deterioration of the fiscal situation which is already in doldrums because of astronomical oil bill and farm loan waiver. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the finances of the Union Government are better today. A negative impact like that of the Fifth Pay Commission is not likely to take place. But can the increase in salaries of Government employees be justified on the grounds of sound fiscal situation?

What is the objective of the economy? For whom do the farmers and workers of this country toil-for earning more income for themselves or for making more money available to the Government employees? Salaries of Government employees are already huge. According to the Economic Survey published by the Ministry of Finance, the average emoluments of public sector employees was Rs 3,25,774 per annum in 2006-07. The income of the common man is much less in comparison. The daily wage of an unskilled worker was Rs 100 or less in that year. The annual income of common man would be about Rs 30,000 per year assuming he gets employment for 300 days. The salary of Government employees is about 10 times that of common man. This inequality, rather perversion in wage structure sharpens the contradiction between the privileged and the non-privileged employees further, making it difficult for unified labour-organizing.

The words of Chairman of the Sixth pay Commission Justice Sri Krishna throw light on the basic approach of the Government. In an interview given after the Government bettered his recommendations, he said, "We had worked on the numbers that the Minsitry of Finance had given us. My job was to give the award within those parameters and we did that. The Government has improved upon numbers and had they told us then only that they have more to give away; we would have given a better award. Now if they have chose to do more, who am I to question it? After all, I am retired and stand to gain too."

If the country is becoming prosperous and finances of the Government are in good position, then they should be wholly utilized to give salary increases to Government employees, not to the common man under Rojgar Guarantee Yojana! The sole objective of the economy is to provide maximum benefits to Government employees.

Member of Fifth Pay Commission, Professor Suresh Tendulkar had given a dissent note wherein he had admitted a conflict of interest. As member of the Pay Commission he was a beneficiary of the recommendations made by him. Justice Sri Krishna has no such difficulty. He is happy to award himself with a ten times the increase of salary if only the Government has the money! Truly, members of Pay Commission should not be appointed from among the Babus, judicial or

non-judicial. They should be appointed from independent persons who will not be benefited from the recommendations. But what else can ordinary Indians expect when the Prime Minister of the country is himself a Babu? □□□