

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION B/1262

B/1262 The Honourable Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix (**Mr Soodhun**)

To ask Dr the Honourable Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries:-

Whether, in regard to the refund to the workers of the sugar estates of the transport costs for their children before the introduction of the Free Transport Scheme (a) he will state if the owners of more than 100 arpents of land under cultivation were refunding same and (b) he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Authority, information as to if it has ensured that the amount that was being spent thereon is being used for the welfare of the workers or remitted to Government?

REPLY (on 04.12.07)

Mr Speaker, Sir,

The Remuneration Orders covering the agricultural and non-agricultural workers of the sugar industry provide that school transport be provided by the employer to children of workers. Such provisions are still valid.

The House will note that in my reply to PQ B/269, I had indicated that there are several modes of transport which the sugar estates put at the disposal of children of the employees of the Corporate Sector. With the provision of free transport by Government, it implies that most of the employees of the Corporate Sector are using public transport and hence the Corporate Sector is making a saving. My Ministry has impressed upon the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association (MSPA) that the saving made through the use of public transport be ploughed back to improve the welfare of children of the sugar industry workers.

In addition, Government has negotiated with all parties concerned comprising the Ministry of Education, the Mauritius Sugar Authority and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association and the latter has agreed to open up the field of study under the Blue Print and VRS in order to enable a larger number of beneficiaries to take full advantage of the scholarships being offered by the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association. The award of such scholarships takes on board all the priority fields of Government. Furthermore, in response to a request from my Ministry, the MSPA also agreed to request its members to make available, interest free loans to their employees for the payment of examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate.

The House will note that Government is currently negotiating an all inclusive deal with the MSPA and the issue of school transport will also be taken on board.