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Masani welcomes PM's offer to lift controls

By A Staff Reporter

THE Prime Minister's offer to remove all controls if the business community sets its house in order was welcomed by Mr. M. R. Masani, Swatantra M.P., at a meeting of the Forum of Free Enterprise in Bombay on Wednesday.

Mr. Masani appealed to business men and industrialists to respond to this challenge. He congratulated the Prime Minister on her offer and said, "I am prepared to believe that she is sincere in what she says."

COLOSSAL WASTE

The Swatantra leader agreed that bank nationalisation and controls had been introduced partly because of the black sheep in the business community. Also, there were more black sheep than white sheep.

Mr. Masani was replying to a question after his talk on "public accountability."

In his talk, Mr. Masani referred to the colossal waste of public money. During his two years as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, from April, 1967, to April, 1969, Rs. 95 crores had been wasted. This, he said, was only the total of handful of reports examined by the committee.

The Railway Board's accounts for five years showed a wastage of Rs. 70 crores.

He said no effective measures could be taken because the time lag between the misuse of public funds and

exposure was two to three years. By this time the secretary to the Government department was almost invariably not the person who had committed the lapse. He had moved on to something higher.

Mr. Masani also referred to the inherent conflict in State enterprise, the one between political control and business efficiency. This was one of the reasons why public enterprises showed a loss.

He said the average rate of return on capital investment in 1965-66 was 0.8 per cent. Hindustan Steel by itself had by 1967 shown a cumulative loss of Rs. 82 crores.

Mr. V. K. Narasimhan, resident editor of "The Indian Express", presided.

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