

Shri K. G. Deshmukh: May I know if there is a proposal to join the taluk headquarters to the Telephone Exchange?

Mr. Speaker: Is he referring to a particular taluk or to the whole province.

Shri K. G. Deshmukh: All taluk headquarters in Madhya Pradesh.

Shri Raj Bahadur: We have got first of all to join all district headquarters; then sub-divisional headquarters and then only taluk headquarters.

MEETINGS HELD BY COMMISSIONERS OF CALCUTTA PORT

*485. **Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state whether it is a fact that the press or the public have no access either to the annual budget figures or the agenda of meetings held by the Commissioners of the Port of Calcutta?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Shah Nawaz Khan): No. The budget figures are released to the press after the annual budget estimates have been sanctioned by the Commissioners in meeting. The agenda of the meetings is treated as confidential only until it has been discussed and approved by the Commissioners-in-meeting. The minutes of all meetings of the Commissioners which contain discussion of the agenda are open to inspection of the public in the office of the Commissioners during office hours on payment of a prescribed fee. Summaries of the minutes are also published in the local official Gazette.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: In view of the fact that the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta annually handle about Rs. 8 crores, is it in the contemplation of Government to allow the public greater facilities for finding out how the Commissioners actually operate?

Shri Shah Nawaz Khan: The public have ample opportunities even now.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Will the hon. Minister be pleased to tell us whether the Public Service Commission, for example, has no say in the matter of appointments which are made by the Commissioners in the Port of Calcutta, and will the hon. Minister also inform us.....

Mr. Speaker: I think he is going into the administration of the Port, which is a question entirely beyond the scope of the present one.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: But, Sir, it is only because of the lack of facilities as far as the public is concerned.

Mr. Speaker: I can well understand and appreciate the position, but then this question will not be admissible.

Shri K. P. Tripathi: Are Government considering a change in the constitution of this Port Trust?

Mr. Speaker: Obviously, it is not within the cognisance of the hon. Minister who is answering the question. Next question.

RAILWAY LINES

*486. **Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state whether Government propose to take over the Railway lines still remaining in private hands and if so, when?

The Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri L. B. Shastri): The Railway lines in private hands can be purchased by Government and in some cases by the District Boards concerned on different dates as laid down in their respective contracts. When the occasion arises, each case is considered by Government on its merits and the line is purchased if such a course is found justified in the public interest.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Do I take it that for the time being the Government has no idea to acquire all these railway lines in private hands?

Shri L. B. Shastri: Within the next few months we are going to acquire two lines.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: May I know how far the regrouping system is affected prejudicially or otherwise by the non-acquisition so far of these railways in private hands?

Shri L. B. Shastri: So far as I am aware, it has not affected the regrouping.

Shri K. K. Basu: May we know how many leases for running these were extended during the last five years?

Shri L. B. Shastri: I require notice.

Shri R. K. Chaudhuri: May I know whether the railway lines which have been taken over from private hands, e.g. the T. B. Railway in Assam, are following in the footsteps of their predecessors or has any improvement been effected?

Mr. Speaker: That is very much beyond the scope of the present question.

Shri R. K. Chaudhuri: No, Sir. Unless any progress has been shown, what is the use of Government taking them over? That is my point.

Shri L. B. Shastri: If we have not done it so far, we will do it now.

Shri A. K. Basu: May we know whether it is under the contemplation of Government to acquire the private suburban railways round about Calcutta?

Shri L. B. Shastri: There has been some consideration about the B.B. Light railway. There was a proposal to acquire that railway line. The Bengal State Government went into the matter and a high level committee under the Chief Minister of West Bengal was appointed. This committee's recommendation is that these lines should be replaced by suitable roads. So the question of acquiring that railway line does not arise.

Shri V. P. Nayar: What is the aggregate annual receipts from these railways and what is their gross profit?

Mr. Speaker: It is a question requiring notice.

Shri V. P. Nayar: Let him say that.

Mr. Speaker: I find hon. Members putting questions regarding details for which the hon. Minister cannot give any answer immediately. I am trying to place this point before Members, because they may not put unnecessary questions and take the time of the House. Thereby, they lose the opportunity of putting further questions.

Shri B. S. Murthy: How is the question of compensation decided in respect of these railways—on investment or yield?

Shri L. B. Shastri: On both.

Shri Kelappa: Is it not the policy of Government to acquire these utility services?

Shri L. B. Shastri: Yes, the policy of Government is to acquire these utility services and we are already doing it.

Shri S. V. Ramaswamy: What are the lines, what is the total mileage and what will be the probable cost of acquiring them?

Mr. Speaker: That also is very vague and general.

Ch. Ranbir Singh: May I know whether Government propose to ac-

quire the S.S. Light Railway in the near future?

Mr. Speaker: I think I had better go to the next question.

Shri A. K. Basu: May we know how many of these private concerns are subsidised by Government?

Shri L. B. Shastri: There are several, not actually subsidised, but we have to pay the difference between their earning and the 3-1/2 per cent. interest on capital guaranteed by the Government.

PRICES OF IMPORTED WHEAT

*487. **Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state the landed cost of Soviet wheat in 1951 as compared with United States wheat, computing identical heads of charges in the process of costing?

The Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): The agreement with USSR Government for supply of wheat is a barter agreement. The supplies of commodities on either side have not yet been completed and it is not, therefore, possible to work out the actual landed cost of the USSR wheat. It is also not considered desirable in the public interest to disclose the landed cost of the grains, contracts in respect of which are current; as the disclosure of price may prejudice negotiations for the purchase of similar kind of grain from other countries.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: May I know the reasons why the landed cost has not been calculated by the method of simple arithmetical calculation? The ruling export prices of what we send to the USSR on account of the barter agreement could be found out and the prices of imported commodities concerned in the barter transaction could also be worked out. May I know the reason, therefore, for the lack of this calculation mechanism as far as the Ministry is concerned?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: The contract has not yet been completed and we have not yet received the whole thing. Prices vary sometimes and even if we have calculated, we cannot give it in the public interest.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: I found in the Fortnightly Notes and News published by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce that the landed cost of 2 million tons of American wheat was Rs. 22/1/- per maund. Now, does Government