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(Official Report)

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THIRD SESSION

OF THE

COUNCIL OF STATE, 1923.



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COUNCIL OF STATE.

Tuesday, the 27th March, 1923.

The Council assembled at Metcalfe House at Half Past Twelve of the Clock. The Honourable the President was in the Chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

The SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL: Sir, a Message has been received.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Let it be read.

The SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL: " Sir, in accordance with Rule 36 (2) of the Indian Legislative Rules, I am directed to inform you that the amendments made by the Council of State in the Bill to fix the duty on salt manufactured in, or imported by land into, certain parts of British India, to vary the duty leviable on certain articles under the Indian Tariff Act, 1894, to fix maximum rates of postage under the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, to amend the Indian Paper Currency Act, 1923, and to fix rates of income-tax, were taken into consideration by the Legislative Assembly at their meeting of the 26th March, 1923, and that the Legislative Assembly have not agreed to the amendments."

THE INDIAN FINANCE BILL.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Has the Bill been brought into this House?

The HONOURABLE MR. E. M. COOK (Finance Secretary): No, Sir. The Bill is at present under the consideration of the Governor General and I am not in a position to say what further action, if any, Government propose to take in regard to the progress of the Bill. I very much regret this fact, Sir, but I shall be in a position to state by this afternoon to the Council what action, if any, Government are taking with regard to the Bill. I can only suggest that the present meeting be adjourned until this afternoon.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: As the Bill is not in the House it is obviously impossible for the House to take any action on it. Did I understand the Honourable Member to say that he will be in a position to make a statement this afternoon?

The HONOURABLE MR. E. M. COOK: Yes, Sir.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: By five o'clock?

The HONOURABLE MR. E. M. COOK: Yes, Sir.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I think, therefore, there is nothing for it but for the Council to adjourn till five o'clock.

The HONOURABLE MR. E. M. COOK: Sir, might I say that I very much regret the inconvenience that Honourable Members have been put to by being called here without any business, but I think perhaps the Council will realise that in a highly important matter of this sort it is desirable that the Governor General should have a little time for consideration. The occasion for such consideration only arose yesterday on the action of the Assembly, and even twenty-four hours have not yet elapsed.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I think the Honourable Member in charge of the Bill did right to bring to the notice of this House that the circumstances were unavoidable. Any suggestion—even the shadow of a suggestion—that this House was treated with any lack of consideration would be greatly resented by this House, and I think the Honourable Member was very wise therefore to make it clear that the meeting this morning is fruitless from circumstances which were not under control. It only remains therefore for me to adjourn the Council till 5 o'clock this afternoon.

The Council then adjourned till Five of the Clock.

The Council re-assembled at Five of the Clock. The Honourable the President was in the Chair.

The HONOURABLE MR. E. M. COOK: Government, Sir, have no further motion to make as regards the Finance Bill.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: This statement leaves me in some uncertainty and I must ask the Leader of the House to state whether I am in a position to adjourn the House or not.

The HONOURABLE DR. MIAN SIR MUHAMMAD SHAFI (Law Member): Sir, I think you are in a position to adjourn the Council.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: In those circumstances, I can only regret that it has been necessary for me to bring Members here this afternoon. I have pressed, and shall continue to press, on those who are responsible for the conduct of Government business in this House that in so far as it is compatible with the disposal of public business it is most desirable that Honourable Members should have as definite notice as possible of the termination of a session. India is not a small country. Honourable Members come from great distances; communications are infrequent and restricted; accommodation is difficult to secure, and it is really essential that as far as possible Members shall have timely notice so that they may make their arrangements accordingly. I recognise that in this session there have been special circumstances which possibly made it impossible to adhere to a date which we have generally been able to do in the past; but I do beg that these considerations may not be lost sight of in future.

The HONOURABLE DR. MIAN SIR MUHAMMAD SHAFI: Sir, I assure you and I assure the House, that the Government had and have that consideration always in mind, and I am sure you, Sir, as well as the House will recognise that the circumstances which have arisen in this particular case could not have been foreseen by Government. The circumstances being extraordinary, the Government was this morning unable to announce what the ultimate course of action in the afternoon would be. So far as the general principle which you, Sir, have enunciated is concerned, you may rest assured and the House may rest assured that the Government will always bear it in mind.

ADJOURNMENT OF COUNCIL OF STATE AND ATTENDANCE
AT MEETINGS.

The HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Nothing remains therefore but to adjourn the House. Before I do so, I should like to say that although the Council of State this year has probably not sat very long hours, it has met very frequently and it has made a great call on the time of the Members. I cannot say that the attendance has always been as good as it might have been. There is this, however,—great responsibilities are cast upon this House and it is desirable—I am sure the House will agree with me—that in discharging those responsibilities as many Members should be present as possible. I recognise there are many in this House who have charge of great estates, the conduct of great businesses and other affairs of their own; but may I put it to the House that a seat in this House involves responsibilities—responsibilities which if a Member takes upon himself he ought to discharge. I now declare the House stand adjourned till the 16th of July.

The Council then adjourned till the 16th of July, 1923.

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