

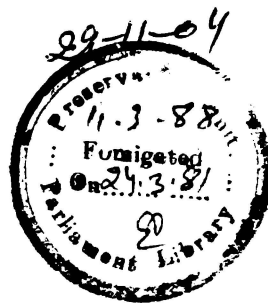
Thursday, 2nd April, 1930

THE
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

VOLUME I, 1931

(10th February to 2nd April, 1931)

FIRST SESSION
OF THE
THIRD COUNCIL OF STATE, 1931



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COUNCIL OF STATE.

Thursday, 2nd April, 1931.

The Council met in the Council Chamber of the Council House at Ten of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

SALT (ADDITIONAL IMPORT DUTY) BILL.

THE HONOURABLE SIR ARTHUR McWATTERS (Finance Secretary) : Sir, I beg to move that the Bill to impose a temporary additional duty of customs on foreign salt, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be taken into consideration.

Sir, in explaining the genesis of this Bill to the House it is necessary to go back two years to a motion which was moved by Mr. Kelkar in the Legislative Assembly in which he carried a cut of Rs. 100 under the head "Salt" in order to draw the attention of Government to the importance attached by the public to making India self-supporting in the matter of salt. The Government had prior to that date undertaken a departmental inquiry with negative results, but as a result of the motion carried in the Legislative Assembly they agreed to refer the matter to the Tariff Board, and that reference was made in July, 1929. Honourable Members are no doubt acquainted with the general results of the Report of the Tariff Board and I will refer very briefly only to their most important recommendations. Their conclusion was that in the national interest the Bengal market should be supplied as far as possible by rail-borne salt, but that, so far as this source of supply is insufficient, Indian sea-borne salt—and that for reasons which they gave included Aden salt—should be encouraged, provided that thereby no heavy burden is imposed on the country or the consumer. They went on to recommend that Government should undertake a thorough survey of the sources of supply with a view to their development, and they finally stated that no development of Indian sources of supply of salt is possible until the prices in the Calcutta market are stabilised. The actual scheme which they proposed was for a Marketing Board, but they realized that a scheme of that kind could not be introduced immediately and would require very careful consideration and examination, and therefore as a temporary measure they proposed that Government should immediately take control of the supply of imported salt. On receipt of that Report the Government of India circulated it and took the opinions of all Governments and bodies interested, and at the same time they undertook in connection with the Tariff Board's recommendation a special survey of the salt sources by a small Committee consisting of Sir Chunilal Mehta and an engineering salt expert, Mr. Pitt. That Committee sent in a long technical report, but the gist of it is that they came to the conclusion that India, and even continental India, taken by itself, can be made independent of foreign salt, but that foreign salt cannot be eliminated for three or four years or possibly even more. They also recommended that prices should be stabilised as the Tariff Board suggested, and for a period of at least 10 years. The next step taken was to form a special Committee of the Legislative Assembly to consider the Tariff Board's Report and the special report of the Salt Survey Committee. The special Committee of the Legislature examined the proposals which I had

[Sir Arthur McWatters.]

been made and came to the conclusion by a majority that, while they were in agreement with the policy proposed by the Tariff Board in the general interests of the country, they were of opinion that the interim measure proposed by the Tariff Board for Government control of salt could not be carried out without almost as much careful inquiry and organisation as their major proposal for a Marketing Board, and therefore they set themselves to devise some alternative scheme which would enable the general policy of the Tariff Board to be worked out in some simpler manner—some form of emergency action of a simpler form than the Tariff Board had suggested—and the recommendation they made was this. First, that an additional duty of 4 annas 6 pies per maund on all salt, Indian or foreign, imported by sea should be immediately imposed. Secondly, they suggested that the Executive should be empowered in certain circumstances to increase the amount of that duty. And thirdly, that a rebate equal to the additional duty should be granted on imported Indian salt (including Aden salt) on the producers undertaking to deliver a stipulated quantity of salt to Government at any time at the fair selling price fixed by the Tariff Board.

Those recommendations are included in the Bill which is now before the House. This Bill is intended to be a temporary measure. The House will observe that the new duty is to be imposed for one year only. Its object is to stabilise prices, wholesale prices, at a price which, taking a long view and based on the figures which the Tariff Board gave as the fair selling price, may be considered fair to the consumer. The object of taking this emergency step is to enable Government to take in hand at once the development of salt sources, particularly at Khewra, and also to endeavour to see what can be done to regulate retail prices of salt. It is recognised that until wholesale prices are stabilised any attempt to regulate retail prices is bound to be ineffective. I will only add, Sir, that the Committee of the Legislature recommended that there was a strong equitable case for the application of the proceeds—that is, after the necessary expenditure had been incurred for the development of salt sources—for the benefit of the consumers in the provinces concerned. The Government of India have definitely accepted in principle that they should make over to the provinces which consume imported salt the proceeds of this extra duty after deducting an amount, which they estimate at from 3 to 5 lakhs, that is not more than one-eighth of the total amount which the new duty is expected to bring next year, for the benefit of those provinces. The exact form of distribution is a matter which will require some further examination, but the general principle that that should be done has been accepted by Government.

That, Sir, is all I think it is necessary for me to say in regard to the principle of this Bill. The Bill is based on the belief that there is a majority at any rate of public opinion in favour of the policy of developing internal salt sources in India, and in the belief also that the only way to make a start in this matter is to proceed as we are doing in this Bill. We believe that the result, taking a long view, should not be harmful to the consumer, and in order to give such benefit as we can to the provinces which are contributing this sum we are proposing a distribution of the greater part of the proceeds. That, Sir, is all that is necessary to say on the principle of the Bill. It is possible, as elsewhere, that objections will be raised to this Bill perhaps on principle, perhaps on detail; and if so, it may be necessary for me to enter into the matter further. But for my present purpose what I have said is sufficient to explain why I am moving for the consideration of this Bill.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :

“That the Bill to impose a temporary additional duty of customs on foreign salt, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : Clauses 2 and 3. The question is that these clauses stand part of the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA (Assam : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, we have something to say on the principle of the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : I did not catch what the Honourable Member said.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA : We have something to say on the principle of the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : I gave the House ample opportunity to say what they had to say on the Bill. After putting the question I waited a long time before I took the vote. The Honourable Member, I am afraid, missed his opportunity.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA : You were on your feet, Sir, and it was not possible for us to get up.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The Honourable Member can speak on any clause on which he wishes to speak. I am putting the clauses one by one. If he wishes to speak on any clause and if he rises in his place, I shall certainly give him an opportunity.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :
“That clause 2 do stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :
“That clause 3 do stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 3 was added to the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :
“That clause 4 do stand part of the Bill.”

THE HONOURABLE MR. SATYENDRA CHANDRA GHOSH MAULIK (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I am afraid I cannot congratulate the Government upon this Bill. They have no doubt been actuated by a very laudable desire to encourage the salt industry in India. There is a good deal for them to atone for, in respect of their sins of omission and commission in this respect. The way in which the salt industry in Bengal, for instance, has

[Mr. Satyendra Chandra Ghosh Maulik.]

been throttled by them constitutes in fact a most melancholy chapter in the history of that province. It is something that under the pressure of public opinion they are beginning to wake up to a sense of their responsibilities. If, however, the present Bill is to be regarded as an earnest of the manner in which they wish to proceed, I am afraid the remedy may prove worse than the disease. The existence of an import duty on salt has, as Government must be aware, been a sore point with nationalist India and if there is one thing more than the other for which nationalist India has been crying itself hoarse, it is the total repeal of all imports in this prime necessity of life. It is a sad reflection therefore that far from working to that end, Government propose by this Bill to add still further to the existing burdens of the consumer of salt. It may be that the burden will fall not on the whole country, but mainly on the province of Bengal as well as Burma. But, Sir, I venture to think that in these days of nationalist outlook the grievance of Bengal or Burma must be the grievance of the whole of India. Bengal and Burma at present derive the whole of their salt from foreign sources. Why or how that is so, I will not go into that question, but the fact remains that things have been so contrived there in the past that these provinces have not found it possible to be independent of foreign salt. We may leave aside the case of Burma for the present, for admittedly this has neither been investigated by the Tariff Board nor by the Salt Survey Committee. The problem before us at this moment is practically that of Bengal alone, and that problem shortly stated is how to obtain for Bengal from Indian sources the quantity of 500,000 tons of fine white crusted salt which she at present consumes every year. Of this 500,000 tons, 180,000 tons come from Aden and if Aden is regarded as a part of India, for present purposes—a proposition to which in passing I may state I demur—the question reduces itself to one of finding 320,000 tons from India proper. There are, we know, several centres of production of salt, of solar as well as brine salt, in India, but their present output both as regards quality and quantity is wholly insufficient to supply the needs of Bengal. So far as the centres of production in Madras and Bombay are concerned, it seems to have been accepted on all hands that they must be left out of account altogether as possible sources of supply of the Bengal market by reason alike of the quality and quantity of the salt produced there as well as of the cost of production and transport. The Tariff Board in fact looked into the sources in Northern India and Central India or Rajputana as the most likely field for development and expansion in order to provide for the market in Bengal. The Tariff Board looked forward also to a substantial increase of production in Aden. As regards the existing sources in India proper, the Tariff Board pointed out that the normal method of transport on an economic basis from Karachi and Okha must continue to be by sea as it is at present, while the salt which is produced at Khewra and the Rajputana sources is and will be rail-borne. Now, Sir, so far as the sea-borne salt, that is to say, the salt from Karachi and Okha, is concerned; the present total output there is only 25,000 tons and the Tariff Board estimate, that with sufficient assistance this output in India proper might in the course of some years be increased to 147,000 tons. Even then it is clear that it will be wholly insufficient to supply the requirements of Bengal. Apart from that, on economic grounds the Tariff Board have come to the conclusion that it will not be in the national interest to afford any protection to these sources by means of an additional differential duty on foreign salt; and as far as Aden salt is concerned, they are also of opinion that it does not require protection. At the time the Tariff Board were writing this report, the foreign salt was selling at Rs. 53 per 100 maunds ex-ship, and basing their calculations on that

figure and of Rs. 66 which they calculated to be the fair selling price, the Tariff Board estimated that if a protective duty was to be put on, it would have to be between Rs. 1-4-0 and Rs. 1-6-0 per maund. This increase in the duty would represent an additional burden of nearly Rs. 20 lakhs on the Bengal consumers. The Tariff Board has no hesitation whatever in rejecting the proposal for inflicting such a burden on the Bengal consumer in the interests of Karachi and Okha. This is how they put their conclusion at page 59 :

“Considering the limited extent to which the national interest will be served by the establishment of the salt industry at Okha or Karachi, it would be entirely unreasonable to expect the consumer in Bengal to shoulder a burden of this magnitude.”

Taking into account the further fall in the prices of imported salt which has since taken place, the burden to-day on the Bengal consumer would be nearer 35 lakhs than 20. Well, Sir, I fail to understand why, in the face of this express declaration of opinion by the Tariff Board, Government should think of levying a protective duty on salt. It is true that the Tariff Board say that so far as the sources of rail-borne salt in India are concerned, it stands on a different footing from sea-borne salt and that a stronger case exists from the national point of view for the encouragement of the production of fine white crusted salt at Khewra and the Rajputana sources of supply. The Tariff Board were unable to make a survey themselves of the possibilities of these sources of supply; but pursuant to their recommendations Government have since caused the survey to be made by Sir Chunnilal Mehta's Committee, and for our present purposes we may assume that the manufacture of salt at these sources can be so developed that in course of time a considerable portion now imported into Calcutta by sea will be produced in India and supplied direct by rail to the consuming centres. But, Sir, in order to achieve such a result two things require to be kept in mind. One is that the stability of prices would have to be ensured if foreign competition was to be eliminated, and secondly—this is a very important fact which ought not to be overlooked—that whatever may be done, protective duty or no protective duty, it will be several years yet before these Indian sources can be developed to any appreciable extent so as to make it unnecessary or unlikely that any import of foreign salt by sea will continue. It is more than certain that for the next four years or so, at any rate, Bengal will in any case have to depend to a large extent on the importation of foreign salt to supply her ordinary needs. Sir, remembering these two facts, I confess I can see no justification whatsoever for the proposals embodied in the Bill. Foreign salt is now selling in Calcutta, let us say, at Rs. 30 per 100 maunds ex-ship. You are going to impose a duty of Rs. 0-4-6 per maund which will raise the price by Rs. 28-2-0 per 100 maunds. The price of foreign salt will then stand at Rs. 64-2-0 per 100 maunds ex-ship. This would no doubt help to raise the price of Indian salt to about the same level and thereby ensure a fair selling price for it. If, Sir, this meant that the consumer could depend upon obtaining salt in future at this price and nothing higher, I for one would not mind the temporary hardship which he would be put to by reason of the immediate increase in the price at which he is at present obtaining his salt. Sir, I am here to recognise that the advantage of the very low prices which the Bengal consumer is enjoying to-day is an artificial one due to the uneconomic prices which the foreign manufacturer is charging. The danger, however, I apprehend is that as a result of this duty the Bengal consumer will not only lose this temporary advantage but will be faced with the rise of an indeterminate increase. Sir, the power taken in clause 5 (5) of the Bill, I submit, is wholly inadequate to achieve the object it has in view, namely, that of protecting the consumer against the price of salt going up beyond the fair selling price fixed by the Tariff Board, namely, Rs. 63-11-0.

[Mr. Satyendra Chandra Ghosh Maulik.]

By that clause Government is taking power purely to regulate the price of India produced salt and keeping it at or below that level, but the foreign salt is left without any control, without any restrictions. The only limitation on the foreign product is the duty, but, Sir, all the same the consumer is left wholly at his mercy. Seeing that India proper will not be in a position for some years yet to produce all the salt which Bengal requires even including Aden, seeing that Bengal will yet have to depend for more than 3/5ths of her present needs on the Red Sea manufacturers, I should like to ask how it is possible to prevent the foreign manufacturers from putting up the prices as high as they like. I ask how by the mere imposition of this duty you can save the Bengal consumer from ruthless exploitation by the Red Sea traders if they should be bent on it. And, Sir, it is elementary that if out of 500,000 tons it is left open to the manufacturer to manipulate the price of 300,000 at any level which his caprice or rapacity may dictate to him it is idle to expect that the price of the remaining 200,000 tons to the consumer can be kept at a much lower level however much you might seek by means of your duty to maintain your control over it. The result will be that in the name of protection of the whole industry the Bengal consumer will find himself between the devil and the deep sea, or shall I say the Red Sea. That is the position, Sir. The benefit you are going to give the consumer—I mean the ultimate benefit, for admittedly immediate benefit there is none—is a snare and a delusion. Is that right, is that fair? Suppose, Sir, on the other hand, the price of foreign salt is lowered still further than it is to-day, in that case the duty becomes wholly ineffective. It will no doubt benefit the consumer for a time, but will hit even the Aden producers very hard, because the Red Sea salt will then be able to cut the throat of Aden quite as well as that of Khewra and Rajputana. Sir, I admit I am not looking very far ahead, but, Sir, the Bill is only a temporary measure and we are concerned more with the next year or two than with what may happen in the remote future. I submit, therefore, that it is a hasty and an ill-considered piece of legislation. It shuts one door only to have another open.

I beg therefore to oppose the Bill in the name of Bengal.

THE HONOURABLE SIR ARTHUR McWATTERS: Sir, the Honourable Member's speech has been made on one of the clauses, but in point of fact that being one of the substantial clauses of the Bill it is in effect an opposition to the Bill as a whole, and I think I am in order, Sir, in treating it as such. I quite agree that there is a good deal that can be said on both sides on this question. I admit that it is one of those cases where local interests may from certain points of view appear to conflict with interests of other parts of India or of India as a whole. I admit that we may be said to be taking some chances in this matter, that it is not certain that our policy will be successful, but I cannot agree with the Honourable Member that the action that is being taken is hasty or ill-considered. It is hasty only in the sense that any action of this kind which imposes additional tariff duties has necessarily to be taken quickly, and that accounts for our inability to consult again the authorities in the provinces which are mainly concerned. As a matter of fact, of course, on the Report of the Tariff Board we had the opinions in full of the provinces concerned and the various associations in those provinces, and we know quite well what their views would be on this particular Bill which raises the same issues as are raised in the Tariff Board's Report. But if action was to be taken at all, I think it is inevitable in the circumstances that action

had to be taken quickly. The real question is, is it worth pursuing the principle which we are aiming at—the principle which we have very strong reasons to believe has the support of a very considerable body of non-official opinion? That is the first point. The second point is, will our Bill really enable us to give effect to that policy. And here the Honourable Member made one or two comments—quite legitimate comments too—which I think require an answer. He made a point that we are not really controlling the price of imported foreign salt and therefore we shall not be able, in practice, to stabilise imported prices. Well, Sir, I think he has possibly under-estimated the effect of that provision in the Bill which enables us to obtain from imported Indian salt, including Aden salt, the amount of salt which we require at a fixed selling price. We have in our hands therefore not only the possibility of bringing down-country more salt from our own sources but of adding to that 200,000 tons of imported salt at a price which we shall fix. Therefore, I think, the remaining foreign importers will not be in the same strong position to operate by way of rings and otherwise to raise prices against us. That, at any rate, is what we hope, and we have some confidence that this policy will prevent the foreign importer from acting as has been done sometimes in the past. If the Honourable Member will read the relevant passages in the Tariff Board's Report, he will see that in the past prices of imported salt have on occasions risen to extreme heights owing to various arrangements between foreign importers and producers, and we hope that the policy which is being adopted in this Bill will enable us to counter any action of that kind. In the second place, the Honourable Member himself talked about the temporary advantage which the Bengal consumer was getting from the exceptionally low prices of imported salt which ruled before this Bill was introduced—something like Rs. 35 per hundred maunds. That price is, I have no doubt whatever, far below the actual fair selling price of salt having regard to cost of production and freights, and therefore it is not a price which could in any probability be maintained for any period of time worth having. Therefore, in the long run, the price of imported salt was bound to rise and the benefit which the consumer is getting in Bengal and the neighbouring provinces could only be a temporary benefit. Incidentally, as always happens with salt, the full benefit of heavy falls of this kind does not at once—indeed ever—reach the small consumer, because salt is for the most part sold in such small quantities that it is impossible for the small consumer really to get the full benefit of these sudden drops in the imported price. Therefore, although there is no doubt some force in the argument that the Bengal consumer will have to pay higher prices than he has been paying recently, I think that the arguments that are occasionally used on this subject are apt to be exaggerated. We hope, Sir, as I explained before, that our policy will not do any serious harm in the long run to the consumer. It is an experimental policy. It will remain in force for only one year and the great advantage of this method of procedure is that we can, if necessary, at the end of the year remove this duty without causing any particular upset. For, if we had followed the Tariff Board scheme of Government taking control of imported salt, it would be a very difficult matter indeed to recede from that position.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :

“ That clause 4 do stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 4 was added the Bill.

Clauses 5 and 6 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1 was added to the Bill.

The Title and Preamble were added to the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE SIR ARTHUR McWATTERS : Sir, I move that the Bill, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be passed.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA (Assam : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I oppose the passing of this Bill. I do so on various grounds. In the first place, Sir, I would ask the House to consider what our position really is. Three-fourths of the salt consumed in this country is produced locally and the remaining one-fourth is imported from foreign countries and the whole of this salt is practically absorbed by the Bengal market. This Bengal market serves besides the province of Bengal, Assam, from which I come, and the province of Bihar and Orissa. It is for these provinces to say whether they will go in for cheap foreign salt, or consume the salt produced in India and pay a higher price for it. They have made their wishes in the matter perfectly clear. The Bengal Council is against the import duty, the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce is against it, the Indian Association in Calcutta is against it, and the entire Bengal Press is against it. I ask my Honourable friends from other parts of India whether by virtue of their superior numbers they are justified in riding roughshod over the feelings of the Bengal people. The position of Assam and Bihar and Orissa is the same in this matter. If these provinces are forced to submit to a burden of that sort against their will, I for myself despair of the future of our inter-provincial relations. I am indulging in no hysterics. The fear is well-grounded and is freely and widely expressed. An import duty is good in certain circumstances, but where it involves the exploitation of your neighbour, it is better that you fight shy of it. If exploitation by a foreign power is bad, exploitation by one's own people is also an evil. Secondly, Sir, I appeal to the Government to say whether they are not treading on uncertain grounds. The Honourable the Finance Member, if he has been correctly reported, said in the other House that in imposing this duty he was treading on uncertain grounds. If that is so, is it fair, I ask in view of this uncertainty, to burden Bengal with a burden of this magnitude? Thirdly, Sir, as the Honourable the Finance Secretary has said, Local Governments have not been consulted on this Bill. This, I submit, ought to have been done. If this had been done, I think they would have found that there is strong opposition to the Bill which they are not in a position to face. It has been said that 7/8ths of the proceeds from this additional duty will be spent on the provinces concerned, namely, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Assam. Sir, these provinces have their own Legislative Councils and they know how to tax themselves for their own purposes. This act of the Government of India is an usurpation of the functions which belong to them. There are interests which for them are far more urgent than the charitable one of supporting Okha, a port in an Indian State, and Karachi. For all these reasons, I submit that this Bill ought not to be passed.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :

“That the Bill to impose a temporary additional duty of customs on foreign salt, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be passed.”

The motion was adopted.

WHEAT (IMPORT DUTY) BILL.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD (Commerce Secretary) : Sir, I move that the Bill to impose a temporary duty of customs on the importation of wheat, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be taken into consideration.

Sir, this also is a temporary measure, the main provision of the Bill being the imposition of a duty on imported wheat for a period of one year ending the 31st March, 1932. It will perhaps be convenient if I commence my remarks by a short review of the statistical position in regard to Indian wheat, as this will perhaps enable me to explain to Honourable Members the main facts which weighed with the Government in coming to the decision that action should be taken on the lines of this Bill. During the five years previous to 1928-29, the production of wheat in India was in excess of the internal demand and during these years India exported considerable quantities of wheat. The position was reversed in 1928-29 and 1929-30. The crops reaped in the years 1928 and 29 were below normal, the amount of wheat produced being below the amount necessary to meet the internal demand, and during the two years, 1928-29 and 1929-30, large quantities of foreign wheat were imported into India. In 1928-29 the imports reached the high figure of 550,000 tons, and in 1929-30, although they were rather less still the amount was as high as 350,000. These large imports were not unexpected, as naturally when the Indian production falls below the Indian demand the gap must be made up by the importation of foreign wheat. In 1930 the position again changed. Instead of a short crop the Indian crop that year was a bumper one, being one of the largest, if not the largest, on record. The estimated crop in that year was just under 10½ million tons. With such a large crop it would be natural to expect that imports in the year 1930-31 would fall to the normal figure, somewhere about 50,000 tons, and that exports would be on a considerable scale. During the first six months, that is up to October, 1930, the expected happened, although perhaps the exports were not on such a considerable scale as might have been expected in view of the size of the crop. Up to the end of October, 1930 exports amounted to about 190,000 tons. Imports were small. Practically no foreign wheat had come into Calcutta up to October, 1930 and the imports into Bombay were not large, being about 20,000 tons. During the year 1930 world wheat prices fell precipitately, and up to about the middle of December of the same year the price of Indian wheat fell with world prices. The price at Karachi about the middle of December 1930 was less than half what it was at the beginning of the year, that is in January, 1930. Up to October-November, Sir, the position then was that a considerable amount of wheat had been exported, imports were small and the prices of Indian wheat in the internal markets had fallen proportionately to the fall in world prices. The position changed however about the middle of December, 1930. The internal price of wheat in India rose substantially and lost its relation to world prices, in other words, Indian prices rose above world parity, exports ceased and imports increased very considerably. The increase in imports was very marked in the four weeks ending the 28th of February, for during that period over 50,000 tons of foreign wheat arrived at the ports of Calcutta and Bombay. The position at that time was therefore this ; Indian wheat prices, although they were at a very low level, at a level at which the return to the cultivators was very small, had ceased to have a definite relation to world prices ; exports had altogether ceased and foreign wheat was being imported in very considerable quantities. In addition, we had information that orders had been placed for a considerable amount of Australian wheat for delivery during March and succeeding months. It was these circumstances which raised the question

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whether it was not desirable to impose an import duty on wheat in order to assist the Indian producer by preserving for Indian wheat the home markets in India.

I should now like, Sir, to explain as shortly as I can what in the view of the Government of India an import duty can do in existing circumstances and what it cannot do. When an import duty is imposed one normally expects the price of both the imported and the indigenous article to rise, and not only to rise but to rise to the full extent of the duty imposed. That is what normally happens, because in those cases it is the cost of the imported article which regulates the price in India. If that condition is fulfilled, that is, the internal price is regulated by the cost of importation, then the imposition of an import duty increases the price of the indigenous article in India. But if that condition is not fulfilled, the imposition of an import duty cannot have the result of raising internal prices. That condition, Sir, is not satisfied to-day in India in the case of wheat, and that it is not satisfied is shown clearly by the fact that, although the heavy duty of Rs. 2 per cwt. imposed by the present Bill came into force from the date of the introduction of the Bill, that is the 20th of March, the price of wheat in the markets of Northern India to-day is not higher, if anything it is lower, than it was when the Bill was introduced. The reason why the price of wheat in India does not increase as a result of the increase in the rise of imported wheat consequent on the imposition of the import duty is the existence in India to-day of a large surplus stock of Indian wheat. It is difficult to say exactly what that surplus is, but I think there can be no doubt that the surplus is quite a large one. Now, Sir, so long as there is a large exportable surplus of wheat in the country the price of wheat in India cannot depend on the cost of importation and it is impossible therefore for an import duty to operate in what is considered the normal manner by raising the price of the indigenous article. So long as this large surplus exists the imposition of an import duty will have little effect, if any, on prices in India, and the main advantage which will accrue to the Indian producer at the present moment and under existing circumstances is that the duty will, by preserving to Indian wheat the market at the main ports and their immediate neighbourhood, enlarge considerably the markets in which the Indian producer can dispose of his crop.

Perhaps I might now give some indication to the House of the size of the market which if the Bill becomes law will be secured for the Indian producer. The consumption at the areas at and immediately round the principal ports is estimated at from 450,000 to 500,000 tons a year. Our information is that the total quantity of wheat for which orders have been placed before the 1st March for delivery after the 1st March is approximately 150,000 tons. If this figure of 150,000 tons is deducted from the figure of 450,000 tons the balance is 300,000 tons, and that is I think, Sir, a fair estimate of the market likely to be secured to the Indian cultivator. But there is something beyond that, and it is this. If the difference between Indian prices and world prices should move further apart, and I think, Sir, it would be a wise man who would prophesy that that is impossible, we might reach a point where foreign wheat could not only displace Indian wheat at the main ports and their immediate neighbourhood, but might travel upcountry and displace Indian wheat in the upcountry markets. If that should happen, the extent of the market lost to the Indian producer would be very much in excess of 300,000 tons. This possibility weighed considerably with Government in coming to their decision to introduce this Bill. The Bill, Sir, will therefore not only secure to the Indian produce

the markets at the principal ports but is a measure of protection or insurance against the upcountry markets being lost to the Indian cultivator, and in considering the benefit which the Bill will confer and which will accrue to the Indian producer, I would ask Honourable Members to bear that point particularly in mind.

As regards the amount of the duty, the view which Government took was this. In determining the duty, it was impossible to follow the usual method of comparing the fair-selling price of Indian wheat and the price of imported wheat. In the first place, it is extraordinarily difficult to determine the fair selling price of an agricultural product, and, secondly, as I have tried to explain, under present circumstances, there are no means available by which that fair selling price can be secured. In the second place, it is quite impossible to determine the future course of the price of foreign wheat. In these circumstances, Government came to the conclusion that it was impossible to fix the duty on what is considered the usual method that should be adopted, and they decided that the best way would be to fix the duty at such a rate as would be really effective for the purpose in view, namely, to secure the Indian market for Indian wheat and to impose the duty for one year only, because conditions in these abnormal times may change so rapidly that the position at the end of March, 1932 may be entirely different from what it is to-day. Again, Sir, there was the less objection to this course because, as I have explained, so long as there is a large exportable surplus in India, the price of Indian wheat will not be regulated by the cost of importation; in other words, the price in India will not rise by the amount of the duty.

The Bill, in addition to a duty on wheat, also seeks to impose a duty on wheat flour. That, Sir, is consequential. It is obvious, Sir, that if it were possible for foreign wheat flour to undersell wheat flour made from Indian wheat at the principal ports, the very object of the Bill would be endangered. Not only would the object of the Bill be defeated, but the millers at the principal ports would be compelled to close down as it would be impossible for them, deprived as they would be of cheap foreign wheat, to compete with foreign flour. There is at present an import duty of 20 per cent. *ad valorem* on wheat flour and at first Government tended to the opinion that in view of the probable level of wheat prices in India, it was unlikely that the danger of the import of foreign flour would materialise. On reconsideration, Sir, they finally came to the conclusion that it would be unwise to run this risk and the Bill now before this House provides for the same duty on wheat flour as on wheat. I might say, Sir, that the imports of wheat flour into India are practically negligible and therefore the imposition of this duty on wheat flour will not interfere with any established trade.

I now turn, Sir, to clause 3 of the Bill, which seeks to exempt from the import duty wheat ordered before a certain date. This clause has been included because of the position of the mills at the principal ports. As I have already tried to explain, ordinarily the price of an imported article on which a duty or an additional duty is imposed is raised by the full amount of the duty. When this is the case, the importer is in a position to recoup himself for the extra cost he has incurred on account of the duty; and this, Sir, explains why when a duty is imposed it ordinarily takes effect at once, and no concession is made to merchants and others who have already placed orders ahead. In those circumstances no concession is given or required, because the importer can, owing to the increase in price consequent on the duty, recoup himself for his increased expenditure. That is, however, not so in the present case. I have also tried to explain that so long as there is an exportable surplus of wheat

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in India, the imposition of the duty cannot be followed by corresponding increase in the price, and if no concession were made, the mills would be unable to recover the additional expenditure which they would have to incur in consequence of the duty from their customers. This would, Sir, be a most serious matter for the mills at the ports, because the burden would be a heavy one. The duty of Rs. 2 a cwt. is Rs. 40 a ton and the House will obtain some idea of the burden imposed if I remind them that on a single cargo of 5,000 tons the duty payable will be Rs. 2 lakhs. It is this abnormal position as regards the effect of an import duty on wheat which makes this unusual concession necessary. To refuse this concession would place the mills at the ports in a most difficult financial position and certainly might drive them to bankruptcy. Again, Sir, I should like to remind Honourable Members that India has a considerable export trade in wheat flour. The exports from Bombay to countries of the Near East and Africa average between 50,000 and 60,000 tons a year, and Calcutta also supplies 20,000 tons to Burma. The mills at Bombay can obviously only retain this export trade if they have the advantage of cheap foreign wheat. Deprive them of that advantage and they must inevitably lose for the time being that export trade, and I feel sure that Honourable Members will realise that if a trade is once lost it is extremely difficult to regain it. That, Sir, is another reason for the exemption contained in clause 3 of the Bill. As regards the actual effect of this exemption we have made every endeavour to obtain accurate information, and our information points to the conclusion that the total quantity of wheat which will be exempted under this clause is something less than 120,000 tons.

The only other clause to which I need draw attention is clause 5 which empowers the Governor General in Council, after such enquiry as he thinks necessary, to remit or reduce the duty imposed by the Bill on wheat and wheat flour. It is, I think, obvious that if the exportable surplus, to which I have referred, should be absorbed or otherwise removed and the duty should become fully effective in raising the price of wheat in India, then Government would have to consider, and consider very carefully, whether a duty as heavy as is proposed in the Bill would not place too severe a burden on the consumer. Whether it will be necessary to exercise this power or not it is impossible to say, simply because we cannot foretell the future prices of wheat; but if it did appear that the heavy duty was becoming a serious burden on the consumer it is, I think, right that the Governor General in Council should have power to relieve the consumer of that burden.

Sir, I move.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS (Punjab : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, the depression in the price of agricultural produce, especially of wheat and jute, this year has been quite unprecedented. I understand that such low prices have never before been experienced. In the Punjab, in certain areas, wheat has been sold at Rs. 1-4-0 a maund. Those who live on agriculture are in a very bad plight. The average rate which forms the basis of revenue assessments in the Punjab varies in different districts, but in no district has this average been taken below Rs. 2-2-0 a maund. I think, Sir, that in this fact the Honourable Mr. Emerson, who has done several settlements in the Punjab, will bear

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me out and, if I am wrong, correct me. The zamindars have to pay land revenue which has been fixed on this basis, and it is now a clear fact that a great number of zamindars have not been able to meet land revenue out of their agricultural produce and have paid the revenue from their savings. In the Punjab, Sir, this position has been very well explained by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab while speaking at the annual meeting of the Northern India Chamber of Commerce on Saturday last. I will only cite a few extracts from His Excellency's speech to prove the extent of distress that prevails in the Punjab :

"We had then a good wheat crop on the ground and some basis for hope that it represented money. Prices of other agricultural produce, as, for instance, *gur* and gram, were then satisfactory and firm. No one was prepared for the dramatic and general fall which was so soon to take place in the price of practically all agricultural produce—wheat, cotton, rice, *gur*, barley, maize, etc., all sharing in the collapse, or for the pitch, to which the decline would go. This disastrous and universal fall came upon us like a thunder-clap. It was upon this situation of widespread depression that the civil disobedience movement supervened with cumulative effect. I need not dilate on this or on the severe loss which firms and individuals have suffered with capital, either owned or borrowed, locked up in stocks, interest charges piling up and overhead and establishment expenditure outgoing with no incomings."

A reduction in the railway freight on wheat to Karachi and Howrah was the result of the recommendation of the Punjab Government. How far this reduction has helped the Punjab agriculturist it is so far difficult to say, because from the very day that the reduction in freight came into force there was comparatively an equal fall in the price of wheat at the ports. His Excellency further on observed :

"No one is more conscious than myself of the sensitiveness of the balance, in which our fortunes in the Punjab lie. A country of peasant proprietors and small holdings, we cannot afford to restrict agricultural production. Our agricultural population, if divorced from tillage, has no second string to its bow. It has no mills or mines, as in some other provinces, in which to seek paid employment when agricultural prospects frown on it. Its main wealth lies in the 34 crores of rupees which the Government has invested in irrigation, with a view to ensuring a permanent output of agricultural produce, and we must stand or fall on that, though I believe in the long run over a series of years, whatever the vagaries of prices, it is as firm a foundation for prosperity, if not firmer than many others."

I will now, Sir, give the reasons which are assigned to this unprecedented fall in prices. Some people hold that the demand for wheat has grown out of all proportion ; others say that more areas of land under wheat have come into cultivation. As far as these two statements are concerned, Sir, I am of opinion that both of them are wrong as they are not based on facts. From the statements* that I am presenting to this House it is proved, Sir, that the annual consumption of wheat in India has been in the vicinity of about 8½ million tons a year. In this statement it will be found that from the year 1910-11 to 1912-13 the average annual consumption was 85,39,918 tons ; from 1913-14 to 1917-18 it was 86,17,120 tons ; from 1918-19 to 1922-23 the consumption was 87,11,760 tons and from 1923-24 to 1928-29 it was 86,19,566 tons. So, Sir, there has been no appreciable increase in the annual consumption of wheat in India. So far as the area which has been under wheat is concerned, a perusal of this statement will also prove that the area under wheat has been in the vicinity of 3,10,00,000 acres. I will cite some figures to show how this area has differed from time to time. In the year 1923-24 the total area under wheat was 3,11,81,000 acres ; in 1924-25 it was 3,17,74,000 ; in 1925-26 it was 3,04,71,000 ; in 1926-27 it was 3,13,03,000 ; in 1927-28 it was 3,21,93,000 ; in 1928-29 it was 3,19,73,000, and in 1929-30 it

*Printed as an Appendix this number.

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was 3,13,47,000. The Honourable Mr. Woodhead while moving for consideration of the Bill has said that in the year 1929-30 the wheat crop was sub-normal. With due deference to him, Sir, I say that the Government Blue-Books do not tally with his statement. In that year the yield was 1,03,53,000 tons, which is above the normal consumption of wheat in India. How he says that in that year the crop was low cannot be understood.....

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD : What year ?

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : 1929-30.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD : No. I said, Sir, the crop reaped in 1929 was below normal.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : Sir, the figures for 1929 alone have not been published and so are not before me ; otherwise I would have dealt with those figures as well.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD : The crop reaped in 1929 is usually referred to as the crop of 1928-29.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : Then, Sir, I am right. The crop of 1928-29 was 85,91,000 tons. Even in that year we are practically near the average and therefore I must differ from my Honourable friend the Commerce Secretary.

Now, Sir, I will come to the question of the effect of the dumping and the effect of this Bill in stopping such dumping. I consider that this Bill is admittedly a temporary device, and, in my opinion, this matter is sufficiently important to require a permanent settlement of principle. The import movement into India is only to be justified in seasons of real scarcity, that is, when the price of wheat goes over Rs. 5 per maund and is above the import parity. If there were no import, surpluses in one Indian crop would go to fill up withdrawals on reserves in short seasons and there would be a natural balance in the country. But when one sees the shortage replaced by import and the subsequent surplus lying about saleable only at ridiculous rates, and even then forced down to still lower levels, it becomes a serious matter. In my opinion, the proper device is to permit import of wheat by licence, and licences need only be granted if there is an obvious need for relief of consumers owing to shortage in the country. Government cannot avoid their primary duty in this matter.

I may mention, Sir, that the essential difference between India and other parts of the world is that India has over 350 million customers within her own boundaries and that at best, in an article such as wheat, her exportable surplus in the most favourable years is relatively a small percentage of her production. Letting wheat into India at present is sheer dumping, and unfortunately, behind some of these transactions, is simply a regulation to suit the settlement of speculative transactions. This unprecedented fall in prices in agricultural produce was the subject of an adjournment motion carried in the Punjab Legislative Council in January last. Now, Sir, there are all sorts of rumours current that from Soviet Russia a very big cargo of wheat is likely to come soon into the Indian market. Some time back, Sir, I did put a question in this Honourable House inviting the attention of the Government to the book published by Messrs. Martin Lawrence, Limited, London, "The Five Year Plan of the Soviet Union". As regards this book, Sir, even eminent British journals have spoken in appreciative terms.

“ Russia,”
says the *Economist*,

“ is making an experiment which is of intense interest not only to herself but to the world at large. What is this experiment? It is called ‘the P’ateletkor’—the five-year plan of building up a new industry and a new agricultural system, a gigantic effort of a nation covering one-sixth of the world’s surface to push through an industrial technical revolution in five years under entirely new methods of State control.”

The *Week End Review* says :

“ It is impossible to give too much attention to the economic forces shaping in Europe’s eastern extremity, on the five-year plan. Everywhere there are questions about it. Every one must decide what attitude they will take up towards it. But the facts are first of all necessary. In this book, one of the leaders responsible for carrying out the plan writes in detail of its economic and political meaning and gives figures of the achievements up to the end of the second year.”

In this book, Sir, Mr. G. T. Grinko gives very useful information regarding the danger which is ahead of India. Soviet Russia will dump soon into India wheat, cotton and other agricultural produce to endanger its economic position. I do not want to be long on the subject. If allowed I shall read only small extracts from this book which concern wheat and the area of land under wheat cultivation. I should also like to say, Sir, that two years of this five-year plan have proved a success. So, the idea that this book was gossip does not now hold good. The *Morning Post* of 5th March, 1931, says :

“ A FIVE-YEAR PLAN.

It has always been counted wise to learn from the enemy. The Terrible Sect, which governs and owns Russia and the Russians are: certainly the enemies of what they nickname Capitalism, or what we prefer to call Western or Christian civilisation, and in particular of Great Britain and the British Empire. They have their plan—to create in five years such a surplus of all commodities as will swamp and destroy our industries and agriculture. They drive ahead with such cruelty and slavery as a cloud of witnesses report; but there is no sense in denying the formidable nature both of their design and their preparations. Have we any plan to oppose to them, or do we merely drift from one expedient to another, as before the attack of the Prussian in 1914? Now there are, as then there were, defeatists and temporisers, secret agents, allies and converts to the enemy.....”

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : Order, order. It has never been definitely ruled in this House that it is out of order for an Honourable Member to read long extracts from newspapers, but I would point out to him that it is a matter of some doubt and in any case it is a most unusual course to take.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : I have been citing these only to prove what the Soviet Republic anticipated to accomplish in five years and that in the first two years they have accomplished more than they anticipated. I simply gave those extracts from newspapers to prove that I was right in my statement and my submission was based on the authority of these British newspapers. However, Sir, I will not go further into the newspaper reports, and will confine myself to saying that there is a great danger ahead from the Soviet Republic, and I will simply now say how and in what rapidity they are bringing land under cultivation. This is relevant because this affects our future prospects of prices, and in case no safeguards are now adopted against this dumping into India, the Indian economic position two years hence will be very dangerous. It is with that view that I want to place this information before the Government so that they may be prepared for this dumping and to stop wheat imports entirely when the time comes.

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR BAHADUR SHIVDEV SINGH UBEROI (Punjab : Sikh) : This is the first step towards that end.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : Yes. In case you allow me, I will be very brief as regards this five-year plan, because I think it is my duty to place before the Council what that plan is. I will not go into detail and I will request Honourable Members to go through this book and the statements I present to this House. I will simply give a few prominent extracts.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : It would be better if the Honourable Member would give the facts instead of repeating over and over again that he is going to do so. For the last five minutes the Honourable Member has said hardly anything but that he will give the facts to the House. Will the Honourable Member give the facts, and I hope he will spare the House long strings of statistics.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : Very good, Sir.

Page 148 of the book :

“The five-year plan provides that the planted area in the socialized sector shall be increased by 1933 to 27 million hectares, as against the 2·3 million hectares in 1927-28. Of the total, 5 million hectares will be planted by state farms, and 22 million by collective farms.”

Then there is a note to that on page 149, which says :

“Since this was written the process of collectivization has been greatly accelerated. In 1928-29, the second year of this period, the accomplishment exceeded the original provisions of the plan for 1932-33. Of the total area of 90 million hectares sown in the spring of 1930 (as of June 25) the socialized sector comprised almost 36 million hectares, or 40 per cent., i.e., more than twice the proportion contemplated for the end of the period in the five-year plan. Of the 36 million hectares in the socialized sector 33·045 million are in collective farms and 2·034 million in state farms. Under the revised estimate, this last will increase to 7·6 million hectares in 1930-31.”

Again, Sir, on page 151 :

“Under the five-year plan it was proposed to increase the area under cultivation in state farms to 5 million hectares in 1929-30 with expectations of attaining 2·1 hectares in 1929-30 (*sic*). However, thanks to the success achieved in the first year of the period embraced by the plan, as well as to capital investments twice as large as originally provided, and to the tremendous interest taken in the development of state farms by all the economic regions and national republics in the Soviet Union, it has been possible to project a revised programme which though much increased, is still entirely feasible.”

Page 162 :

“15 million hectares of new lands, chiefly in the Steppe regions east of the Volga will be added to the productive area.”

From this it appears that in the near future Russian wheat will be heavily dumped into India. It is already being dumped into England at very cheap prices. So I hope that if the object which has made the Government of India bring this Bill is not achieved by the duty imposed, and which seems likely, the Government will come forward and totally stop the import of foreign wheat into India to prevent economic disaster.

THE HONOURABLE MR. BEJAY KUMAR BASU (Bengal : Nominated Non-Official) : Sir, my position as a Member of this House from Bengal makes it extremely difficult for me to steer clear of the Scylla of the Bengal consumer on the one hand and the Charybdis of the Punjab wheat growers on the other. I am most anxious to refrain from saying anything which will justify anybody in calling me parochial. I may therefore at once say that I intend to support this duty. But, Sir,—I am afraid there is a “but” however much I may wish to avoid that expression—but, Sir, the great solicitude and

concern which the Punjab wheat growers have been fortunate enough to enjoy at the hands of the Central Government, thanks I suppose to the existence of the Punjab influence in the Government, is a painful and humiliating reminder that the Bengal jute growers have not received any sympathy from that source, nor have they had the good fortune to secure a god-father in the Government, either Central or Provincial. The case of the Bengal jute growers, Sir, is, if I may say so, if anything more pitiful and more heartrending than that of the agricultural population of the Punjab, whose rural districts are comparatively in more affluent circumstances. It has been variously estimated that the loss this season in jute is somewhere near about 20 to 30 crores. As a matter of fact, Sir, while I can only say that the loss is colossal, I will not commit myself to any particular figure. I can say this as an indisputable fact, that the price at which jute has been selling is less than half the cost of production of that commodity. Sir, the jute growers therefore not only did not get anything for their pains, but they are seriously out of pocket, and it is well known that for a jute grower to be out of pocket means to be furthermore in the iron grip of the moneylender. No words of mine can convey adequately the universal and acute distress that has been prevailing in the jute districts of Bengal. Conferences were held; the Chambers of Commerce had discussions; the Provincial Government met representatives of the trade; the Governor was interviewed and waited upon in deputation; pamphlets were broadcasted; editorials were written in newspapers; schemes were made. But what has been the result of all this? The mountain in labour produced a mouse, and in this case the mouse was a short leaflet issued by the Government of Bengal urging a smaller crop for the next year. If I remember rightly, Sir, the Finance Member himself admitted that if the trade could put up a scheme something could be done in the case of a monopoly crop like jute. I find, Sir, that in the case of a commodity like wheat, which is only a 15 per cent. monopoly so far as India is concerned, the Government has been moved to action; but in the case of a cent. per cent. monopoly like jute they have thrown up their hands and said nothing could be done. While I congratulate the Punjab wheat growers on their good luck and on their having been fortunate enough to move the stony heart of Government into action, may I urge all my friends from the Punjab and other provinces to help us and enable us from Bengal to move that stony heart to do something at long last in the cause of the rural population of Bengal which is suffering the most acute distress at the present moment.

THE HONOURABLE KHAN BAHADUR CHAUDRI MUHAMMAD DIN (East Punjab : Muhammadan) : Sir, it is a source of great gratification that the Government of India has at last agreed as a temporary measure to an import duty on foreign wheat. The current price of wheat and other agricultural produce is much below the cost of production. In my own case this year, in some of my holdings the produce has been insufficient to pay even the land revenue and *abiana*, in spite of the fact that the Punjab Government had remitted a part of the land revenue and *abiana* on cotton and rice. Sir, the sad plight of small cultivators, who have no other sources of income, and who constitute the preponderating majority of the agricultural population, may well be imagined. An Honourable Member in the other House the day before yesterday told us that zamindars in some parts had to sell their daughters to find money to pay the land revenue. This being the case, Sir, I view with grave apprehension the insertion of clause 3 in the Bill which exempts from its operation foreign wheat already ordered. This clause will defeat the very aim and purpose of the Bill. We do not know the exact amount of wheat which has been already ordered. As the situation is very acute, I would very strongly urge that having regard to the greatest good of the greatest number,

[Khan Bahadur Chaudri Muhammad Din.]

the clause may be entirely deleted from the Bill. No such provision has been made in the case of the duty on kerosene oil and sugar, and there is no reason why exemption should be made in the case of wheat. If traders in wheat will suffer loss, then the traders in kerosene oil and sugar will also suffer loss. Sir, if there are any special reasons which require that wheat traders should be treated with consideration, then I submit that Government's duty to protect the peasant, the man behind the plough, is still more urgent. Government should not take away with one hand that which it has given with the other. I am not less anxious than anybody else to protect the legitimate interests of traders in wheat. All I want is that the interests of the peasantry should not suffer for the sake of big syndicates. "A bold peasantry, the pride of its country, when once destroyed, can never be replaced." If Government can meet the requirements of the cultivator by some other measures, such as temporary reduction of land revenue, reduction of railway freight to Calcutta, I shall have no hesitation in withdrawing my objection to the clause. The agricultural distress is an all-India problem and it is unreasonable to ask the Punjab Government to make good the loss to the railway, as I suppose, is being done. Sir, I ask the Government of India to look at the problem from the point of view of the agricultural position which will obtain a few months hence. By the time the next harvest comes, the borrowing capacity of the already heavily involved zamindar will be exhausted and in the majority of cases there will be nothing left to pay the Government revenues; and, Sir, there might be a movement for non-payment of land taxes, because of the sheer necessity of the case. I wish the Government of India to pay more serious attention to this matter than they have done so far. We should try to forestall the evil, and not to wait until it is upon us. Sir, over-production is said to be the main cause of the present agricultural distress. But I think that one reason is that Russia is selling, and intentionally selling, wheat at very cheap rates, as observed by my Honourable friend Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das. Because of the stipulations of the trade agreement with Great Britain and other countries they cannot embark on direct propaganda, but they can, and I think they are trying to, create widespread agrarian discontent by lowering the prices of agricultural commodities which they can produce in large quantities.

Sir, with these remarks I oppose clause 3 of the Wheat Bill.

THE HONOURABLE SAHDAR BAHADUR SHIVDEV SINGH UBEROI (Punjab : Sikh) : Sir, this is a measure about which there can be no two opinions from the Indian point of view. My Honourable friends from the Punjab, Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das and Khan Bahadur Chaudri Muhammad Din, have referred in harrowing terms to the sad plight of the producers of wheat in the Punjab. The very gentleman told me the day before yesterday that he is the owner of 20 rectangles of land which comes to 500 acres and he had to send Rs. 600 from here, possibly from his daily allowance, to meet the revenue demand of the Government. This shows that the gentleman, who is the owner of 500 acres in the Punjab, has not been able to get so much from the produce of land as to be able to pay the water tax and the land revenue; and this is all the more reason why we should congratulate the Government on bringing forward such a Bill. At present it is temporary for one year, and let us hope that circumstances will improve in the next year and there will be no necessity for the continuance of such a measure next year. Let us hope that conditions would differ, let us hope that the export of Indian wheat would take place and would fetch a suitable market for its produce and also get a

better return for all the labour involved in agriculture. (*The Honourable Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das* : "Question?") This is a point which I would also urge at this moment, that if the conditions do not improve and if the agricultural produce of India does not find its way beyond the shores, it would be a serious problem for the Government to consider the question of the land revenue and the water cess, because the settlement of rates was made in the Punjab at a time when the rates of wheat, etc., were much higher than what they are this year ; and it is a truism that at the present rates, no agriculturist, big or small, will be able to pay the high land revenue and the high water rates which are levied in the Colony districts.

Whilst congratulating the Member in charge of this Bill on behalf of Government, I have got my misgivings also about clause 3. Traders are generally very shrewd people and money is such a thing in the world which perhaps leads the human mind to many mischiefs and especially trade tricks. It is not likely that this clause may take away very much the good effects of this measure. Though the Bill was brought into the Legislative Assembly two days ago, and in this House to-day, people outside knew that such a measure was in contemplation and the shrewd traders may have got scent of it and may have entered into agreements which may not be all real, but only to make money out of this bargain. I suggest to the Honourable Member, whether something might not be done to revise this clause which I fear may take away with one hand that which is given with the other. Another clause which strikes me, Sir, is the provision in this clause 3 (1) :

" Provided that in all cases documents showing that the contract of sale has been made under these circumstances are deposited with the Customs Collector before the 1st day of May, 1931."

I would very much like that this period is reduced by 15 days and we have the 15th April instead of the 1st May, because one month is a long time in which the documents about consignments may be signed, received and got from the different countries which are importing wheat into India, and the good effects of all this legislative measure may all be taken away. I am sure this measure would help very greatly in bringing the produce of wheat-growing provinces to the port towns. Even a small reduction in the railway freight has brought that good effect. I was told by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab the other day, when I had the honour of interviewing him, that about 2,500 tons of wheat have, since the rates were reduced, gone from the Punjab to Calcutta and Karachi. I am sure that this Bill, if passed, would certainly help a great deal the wheat-growing province to send their produce to port towns, and this measure should be considered as a beneficial measure for the wheat growers and we must whole-heartedly support it.

My friend, the Honourable Mr. Basu, who is not in his seat, complained on the absence of such a Bill for the jute producers in Bengal. I am very glad and proud to hear that the Punjabees have influence with the Government of India, though the Punjab is waiting for its turn in the Executive Council, to bring this measure in support of the Punjab ; I wish such influence is brought to bear about the jute-growing province of Bengal. Every agriculturist, Bengalee, Punjabee or otherwise, should be able to make his earning and should be able to make both ends meet by one of the foremost industries in which he is engaged by having a good market for his produce.

With these remarks, Sir, I whole-heartedly support this measure.

THE HONOURABLE MAJOR NAWAB SIR MAHOMED AKBAR KHAN (North-West Frontier Province: Nominated Non-Official): Sir, it is no secret from anybody in and outside this Honourable House that the general depression in the prices of agricultural produce have greatly affected the agriculturists of this country. I myself belong to this class of people, and it is therefore that I am extremely sorry about the miserable condition of the peasantry of India to which they have been reduced on account of this general depression all over the country. It rather pains me to state that this class of people has been reduced to such a condition that it has been very difficult for them to meet the land revenue demand and *abiana* for the last harvest. In many cases they have been compelled to part with almost the whole of their produce of the year to pay their quota of land revenue and other taxes to the Government. Instances are not wanting in which they have been put to the necessity of selling their milking cows and ploughing bullocks in order to make good the deficiency in respect of this demand against them. On the Frontier the cultivators have mostly been compelled to agree to give up their entire produce to the Government, keeping nothing for the maintenance of their families. Indeed, it is a sorrowful spectacle for one to see that the agriculturist after their six months of hard labour, were put to the painful necessity of selling their cattle as well as their produce in order to pay their share of land revenue. The worst of the matter is that they have retained nothing for the upkeep of their families either in the shape of food-stuffs, or for purposes of obtaining other necessaries of life by selling a portion of their surplus store. I am afraid one or two more harvests like the last one will surely result in the entire destruction of the peasantry of India. On the strength of personal experience I can dare to say that no big landlord throughout the country has been in a position to pay his land revenue from the proceeds of his entire produce, but has had to part with a considerable amount of his deposits saved through his frugal habits. If this state of affairs continues for one or two harvests, I am afraid the agriculturists will have no alternative but to part with their lands in favour of the Government. It was on account of such a serious situation in the country that I pointed out the other day during the general discussion on the Budget for the next year that immediate measures might be devised to improve the condition of the agriculturists, as the wealth and prosperity of a country chiefly depends on the betterment and welfare of this class of people. Agriculturists have been described as the backbone of the society, or in other words the most important part of the human fabric in the same manner as the backbone stands to the body. Its strength is the strength of the body and its weakness is feared to result in the breakdown of the human structure. This is more true about India than the other countries of the world, for nearly 80 per cent. of the population of this sub-continent consists of this class of people. But unfortunately, in spite of their being in such an overwhelming majority in number, the economic condition of these people in India is evidently worse than the other classes inhabiting this country. The situation on the Frontier is even more serious; and how can it not be so when the price of wheat, which used to be sold between Rs. 5 or 6 per maund last year, has all of a sudden gone down to a rupee and a half and that of barley to annas twelve a maund? This decrease in price has so much affected the peasants that they are even contemplating to transfer their lands to the Government and to take to some other profession which might bring them the necessary livelihood for themselves as well as for those dependent on them.

Now, Sir, as a matter of fact, all this trouble and the miseries which have fallen to the lot of the agriculturists of India are due, firstly, to the sudden fall in prices and, secondly, to the realisation of land revenue at fixed rates.

It has been admitted by responsible persons like the Honourable the Finance Member in the other House that so much decrease in prices has not been experienced during the last 35 years. I might say that I myself during 40 years of my life have never experienced this depression. In spite of this admission, no step has so far been taken to alleviate the sufferings of the agriculturists either by a remission of the land revenue, or by devising a measure to effect a rise in the prevailing prices of agricultural produce. If the Government is not prepared to grant any remission in land revenue, it ought to devise some effective method to effect an increase in prices ; otherwise how can it be fair on the part of the Government to expect that the agriculturists will manage to meet their land revenue demand in the face of such a depression which amounts to nearly 70 per cent. as compared with the prices of the last year ?

India has keen competitors in Australia and Russia with regard to its wheat produce. The book from which my Honourable friend Lala Ram Saran Das was quoting, I had an opportunity of cursorily going through, and I also had a discussion with my friend on this matter. As far as my recollection goes, in Russia there is a scheme on foot to bring 30 million acres of land under cultivation within the space of five years instead of her capacity of two million acres of culturable land under the Czars. In case this scheme is executed up to the proposed extent there will be a large quantity of wheat pouring into the Indian markets and in case no adequate measures are adopted by the Government of India to restrict its import, I am afraid the Indian peasantry will have to face a still more serious decrease in prices. To avoid that situation it was therefore highly imperative that adequate measures should be adopted which might prove effective to improve the condition of the agriculturists within the country and also restrict the import of foreign wheat into this country in the near future. I think the present Bill will serve the desired purpose. It is intended to protect and improve the condition of the agriculturists of India. The proposed duty will restrict the import of wheat from foreign countries and at the same time there may be a possibility of an increase in prices within the country. In case it does not restrict the import as desired, it will surely contribute a good deal to improve the finances of the country and thus provide some relief to the general tax-payer.

We did not have much time to consider this Bill and therefore I could not work out in detail with reference to clause 3 of the Bill, to which most of my friends from the Punjab have been objecting, how many forward contracts for Australian wheat have already been made by the various people in India. But to the best of my recollection, I have been told by my Honourable friend Lala Ram Saran Das this morning—the responsibility for the statement will lie entirely on his shoulders—that there had been forward contracts for Australian wheat for 1,14,000 tons up to the 1st of March.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : For 1,50,000 tons.

THE HONOURABLE MAJOR NAWAB SIR MAHOMED AKBAR KHAN : All right ; let it be 1,50,000. Well, Sir, if contracts for this quantity of wheat have already been made, I think the producers from the North will lose a tremendous lot if no duty is imposed on this big quantity of wheat, because, Sir, most of the wheat grown in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province is transhipped and carried by the railway to Karachi and it finds a very good market in Calcutta. If the Calcutta people have already got such enormous quantities without the import duty, I think it will affect the rates of prices in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. Sir, I have not calculated it myself and therefore I could not definitely say what the effect will be, but if

[Major Nawab Sir Mahomed Akbar Khan.]

the duty is imposed with retrospective effect even on this amount, I think that will be beneficial to all the cultivators because it will help to keep up the price of wheat. We cannot pay the land revenue unless the price of wheat is over Rs. 3 a maund. If it goes anything under Rs. 3 a maund, it is impossible for the cultivator to pay Government land revenue and the present rate of *abiana*. As regards, Sir, my friend Mr. Basu saying that we have been very lucky in getting this favourable treatment.....

THE HONOURABLE MR. BEJAY KUMAR BASU: Aren't you ?

THE HONOURABLE MAJOR NAWAB SIR MAHOMED AKBAR KHAN: I will assure him that if he comes up with any resolution in favour of the jute cultivators, we, the Members from the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province, will with one accord support him, because we have the same tender feeling for the cultivators in Bengal as we have for the cultivators in our own province.

THE HONOURABLE MR. BEJAY KUMAR BASU: Thank you for the assurance.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA JAGDISH PRASAD (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I welcome the Bill as being eminently in the interests of the agricultural community and coming not a day too soon. It is an admitted fact that there has been a large surplus of wheat in India for some time side by side with such an enormous fall in the prices of agricultural commodities as has not been experienced within the last three decades or more, with the result that the wheat produced is unable to find a market either within or outside India. On the top of this came the import of foreign wheat into the country which is landed at the principal ports in India at such a low price that wheat produced in India is unable to compete with it at those ports and in the adjacent areas. The result of all this is that the cultivator is hard put to it by reason of his having to sell wheat at below the cost of production. How is he then to find the wherewithal to pay his rent to the landlord and canal dues to the Government and how is he to make the two ends meet? Consequently the zamindars are unable to pay their land revenue in full and properties of quite a number of big and respectable zamindars in the United Provinces, like the Raja of Kalakankar and others, have been attached for default in payment of land revenue. At a time of distress like the present one, it had long been expected that the Government of India would take some remedial measures to control the prices of agricultural commodities in the interests of agriculturists who form about 90 per cent. of India's population. But the Government have done little so far in the desired direction. It is now in the fitness of things that the Government of India realised their responsibility in the matter and came forward with this measure of protection. Sir, I for one thought that the interests of the Indian agriculturist demanded that the Government took steps not only to prohibit the import of all foreign wheat into India but also to facilitate the easy movement of Indian wheat from the main producing centres to important markets by reducing the railway freight on wheat. But the Government took the last mentioned measure only to a very limited extent and that too for a short period. By means of their communique, dated the 17th November, 1930,

they reduced the railway rates on wheat from the Punjab and the United Provinces to Karachi till the 28th February, 1931, and by means of their second communiqué, dated the 29th January, 1931, they granted for a period of two months, namely, February and March of the current year, a rebate of one-third of the freight on all consignments of wheat booked from the Punjab to Calcutta. Why the last mentioned concession should have been kept confined to the Punjab alone and not extended to the United Provinces and why these remedial measures should have been given such a short lease of life, when economic conditions have remained practically unchanged, passes one's comprehension. Even these temporary measures must have gone some way to ease the situation as it is nothing short of an anomaly that the sea freights for wheat from Australian ports to Bombay should be lower than the combined railway and sea freight from the Punjab to Bombay and that the sea freights for wheat from Australian ports to Calcutta should be lower than the railway freights from the Punjab to Calcutta.

Sir, the Bill, so far as it goes, does assist the Indian producer. Although clause 3 takes away much of the utility of the measure and there is a possibility of many a bogus contract being entered into if that clause existed in the Bill, yet the measure is sure to afford protection to the cultivator to some extent and thereby improve his miserable lot by making, designed as the Bill is, the importation of wheat from abroad unprofitable, and by enabling the stocks of surplus wheat held in Northern India to be absorbed in the market.

Sir, I support the Bill and hope that the House will extend its support to it.

THE HONOURABLE MR. MILES IRVING (Punjab : Nominated Official) :

Sir, I desire to correct some misapprehension which may have been caused by the remarks of the Honourable and gallant Member who spoke before the last speaker. It is not the case, Sir, that the Punjab Government has done nothing to alleviate the situation as regards the fall of prices as it affects the land revenue. That suggestion comes to me with particular poignancy because I have just been enabled to secure total remissions in one district, Gurgaon, of over three lakhs of land revenue and over three lakhs of *takavi*, but I would rather confine my remarks to the particular remissions especially given on account of the fall of prices. On account of the fall of prices, out of the revenue of the last *kharif* harvest the Punjab Government have decided to give a remission wherever the combined total of land revenue and *abiana* exceed Rs. 7 an acre. I cannot at this moment remember the actual total of that remission. I believe it is in the neighbourhood of 30 lakhs. As regards wheat, I am not in the least in a position to say what the Punjab Government will do in response to a Resolution laid in the Council on the subject. No doubt, much depends on the price of wheat at a future date, and also I may say on how far the cost of production will catch up the fall. I only wish to remove any misapprehension that the Punjab Government is in any way neglectful of this very important subject.

THE HONOURABLE MAJOR NAWAB SIR MAHOMED AKBAR KHAN :
But is this remission given permanently or is it going to be recovered when a prosperous year comes ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. MILES IRVING : It is a permanent remission.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD : Sir, I have very little to say as I gather from the speeches made that there is no opposition to my motion that the Bill be taken into consideration. The chief critic of the Bill has alleged that the Bill does not go far enough. Apparently what he desires is a permanent prohibition for all time combined with import under license. The Bill, Sir, is designed to meet extraordinary circumstances at a time when conditions are abnormal, and I think it would be unwise to go further than provide a measure which will meet these abnormal conditions. The Honourable Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das is worried about the danger that may arise to the Indian producer of wheat from large importations or dumping of Russian wheat. That danger has not materialised as yet and I think it would be wise to postpone any decision as regards what action should be taken if Russian wheat should in the future be imported in large quantities at a very low price into India until that event has actually taken place. The Honourable Mr. Basu dwelt at length upon the misery caused to the jute growers in Bengal by the low price of jute. Sir, I have the honour to come from Bengal. In fact, I think I may say I not only come from Bengal but I come from Eastern Bengal, which is the main jute producing area of Bengal, and I appreciate the loss which has occurred this year to the jute grower in Eastern and Western Bengal in consequence of the very low price which that commodity has realized in the market this year. But, Sir, I can assure the House that the Government of India has no special preference for the Punjab wheat grower and no special sympathy with the Punjab wheat grower. They realize that all agriculturists in India, whether they grow jute or cotton or wheat or groundnuts or other agricultural products, have suffered enormously through the extraordinary drop in commodity prices. It has been possible to take action as regards the Punjab, but unfortunately the Government of India have been unable to take any action as regards jute, cotton or other articles. And perhaps, if I might make a remark as regards Mr. Basu's speech, it is this. He has a grievance that action has not been taken to assist the jute grower, but he has not offered any constructive suggestion as regards what should or could have been done. Certain remarks have been made as regards clause 3 of the Bill, but, Sir, I do not propose at this stage to say anything as regards that clause. I will reserve my remarks until that clause is under consideration.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :

“ That the Bill to impose a temporary duty of customs on the importation of wheat as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :

“ That clause 3 do stand part of the Bill.”

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS : Sir, I oppose this clause and I wish that it should be deleted. My reasons for this are that from the figures we have before us there is no necessity at all for the import of wheat into India to augment a shortage of supply which some people anticipate. I will cite figures of the years in which the crop in India has exceeded 10 million tons. In 1910-11 the yield was 10,061,500 tons, while the imports were trifling. The exports in that year were 1,361,166 tons, and there remained in India 8,700,334 tons. Then in the year 1914-15 the yield was over 10 millions ; it was 10,087,000 tons. In that year the exports were 706,382 tons and there remained in India over 9 millions ; while the imports were only 1,451 tons. Then in 1916-17 the yield was 10,236,000 tons. The exports were 748,915, and the imports were only 7 tons.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I think the House would be glad if the Honourable Member could give his figures in round numbers.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: Then in 1919-20 the yield was also over 10 million tons; the exports were 237,000 tons and the imports were 148,000. In 1930-31, according to the figures given by the Honourable the Commerce Secretary, the yield up to the end of May and June has been over 10½ million tons and the exports have been about 1,19,000 tons. So, Sir, the surplus in India is about 9,931,000 tons; of that our consumption is only about 8½ million tons. We have got a bigger surplus and therefore there is no justification for any exemption to be made as is stipulated in this clause. If this clause is adopted, it will annul the object for which the Bill has been moved. There has been, Sir, a fall in the price of wheat, because it has been imported. There has been no fall in the price of gram, cotton seed or any other produce, which has not been imported; and, Sir, to avoid the disaster which is coming, I think it is wise that this clause should be deleted.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD: Sir, in my speech on the motion that the Bill be taken into consideration I dealt at some length with the reasons for which clause 3 found a place in the Bill, and I hope, Sir, that it will not be necessary for me to repeat those reasons at considerable length now. The Honourable Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das at the end of his speech said that if this exemption was granted it would annul the very object of the Bill and he apparently attributed the slight fall in price which has taken place since the introduction of the Bill to the presence of this exemption clause. As I explained, Sir, the effect of the exemption is to admit 120,000 tons or rather less than that figure of Australian wheat. The production in India in the year 1930 was 10½ million tons. This year it is estimated—this is the preliminary forecast—at nearly 9½ million tons, and the consumption, although I do not vouch for the accuracy of the figure, is somewhere in the region of 8½ million tons. I ask, Sir, does the House believe that the admission of 120,000 tons in a country which produced last year 10½ million tons, which is estimated to produce this year nearly 9½ million tons, that the admission of that small quantity is likely to have any effect whatsoever on prices? I maintain, Sir, that it cannot.

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR BAHADUR SHIVDEV SINGH UBEROI: May I know whether, when calculating the figure of consumption, the increase in the population of 3 crores of souls in India has been taken into account?

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD: No, Sir. I have not been able to take every factor into account. I admitted that I could not vouch for the absolute accuracy of that figure, but it is a figure which I trust is approximately accurate. If the Honourable Member suggests that there is not an exportable surplus in India, I would ask him if he can explain why if there is not an exportable surplus, prices in India are at their present low level: if there is not an exportable surplus, prices at the markets in Northern India must be on the import basis, and on that basis they would be higher than they have been during the year 1930 and higher than they are to-day. The very course of prices in India during the year 1930 points to the conclusion that there is a considerable exportable surplus.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: It is due to the speculation of the importers.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD: I do not follow that.

The two main reasons why this exemption has been granted are these. First of all, as I tried to explain before, the imposition of an import duty on wheat will not have the effect of increasing the price in India by the extent of the import duty, and therefore a miller who has entered into contracts for the purchase of foreign wheat will not be able to recoup himself for the additional expenditure involved in the payment of the duty. The loss to the miller would be heavy and I gave an instance of what that loss would be by explaining that the duty on a single cargo of 5,000 tons is Rs. 2 lakhs. The second point, Sir, is the export trade in wheat flour. We have a considerable export trade with the Near East, Arabia, countries round the Red Sea and East Africa. This export trade is in the region of 50,000 to 60,000 tons of wheat flour. That corresponds approximately to about 90,000 tons of wheat. In any case, Sir, in order to retain that export trade, it would be necessary to make some arrangements for the grant of a rebate on the amount of wheat required for that export trade, because, as I explained, if the millers in Bombay cannot get cheap foreign wheat they cannot retain their export trade. Therefore, under any circumstances, you would have to provide some machinery by which at least 90,000 tons of foreign wheat could enter the country free of duty and the Bill does very little more than that, because, as I have explained to Honourable Members, the amount which we calculate will be admitted free of duty is less than 120,000 tons.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: Are we to understand that remission will be based on the export of wheat flour by the said millers?

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD: No, Sir. I was trying to explain that under any hypothesis, it would be necessary in order to enable the export trade to be retained to admit free of duty foreign wheat to the extent of about 90,000 tons. The exports are, as I have said, in the region of 50,000 to 60,000 tons and that approximates to about 90,000 tons of wheat. So, under any hypothesis you would have to provide some means by which exporters of wheat flour in order to retain their export trade would be able to obtain this quantity of foreign wheat and the Bill does very little more than that, because, as I have already stated, the amount which is estimated will be admitted free of duty is somewhere in the region of 120,000 tons.

Sir, I think the reasons I have given fully justify the inclusion of clause 3.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The question is:

“That clause 3 do stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 3 was added to the Bill.

Clauses 4 and 5 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1 was added to the Bill.

The Title and Preamble were added to the Bill.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. A. WOODHEAD: Sir, I beg to move that the Bill to impose a temporary duty of customs on the importation of wheat, as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be passed.

THE HONOURABLE MR. M. D. DEVADOSS (Nominated Indian Christians) : Sir, I have no objection to the Bill being passed as it is, but I must enter my emphatic protest against the principle of the Bill, namely, taxing foodstuffs. Sir, as a free-fooder, I fear this principle, if once introduced, might go on increasing and other foodstuffs might be taxed. Government have no doubt undertaken to have this duty only for one year, but I fear that this duty or some other duty may be imposed on foodstuffs. It is all very well to speak of the zamindars whose sufferings have been ventilated in this House. What about the poor man, Sir, who has to depend for his food upon cheap commodities ? Nobody seems to have taken note of the fact that if he has cheap food he will have, to use a vulgar expression, his belly full . . .

THE HONOURABLE MAJOR NAWAB SIR MAHOMED AKBAR KHAN : May I ask what were the poor men doing when wheat was being sold at Rs. 9 a maund ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. M. D. DEVADOSS : That is easily answered. A good many people had only one meal or only half a meal. Now that they have got enough to eat we should not prevent them from eating. I only make this observation, Sir, so that Government and other Honourable Members who are interested in legislation of this kind may not bring forward such a Bill next year.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The question is :

“That the Bill to impose a temporary duty of customs on the importation of wheat as passed by the Legislative Assembly, be passed.”

The motion was adopted.

THE HONOURABLE SIR BROJENDRA MITTER (Leader of the House) : Sir, there is no further business before the House this Session.

The Council then adjourned *sine die*.

APPENDIX

Inland consumption of wheat in tons.

Year.	Area.	Yield.	Exports.	Remaining in India.	Imports.	Nett position.
1923-24 . .	31,181,000	9,060,000	1924-25 . 1,111,700	8,548,300	1924-25 . 4,000	8,552,300
1924-25 . .	31,774,000	8,666,000	1925-26 . 211,600	8,654,400	1925-26 . 35,000	8,689,400
1925-26 . .	30,471,000	8,686,000	1926-27 . 175,900	8,520,100	1926-27 . 40,000	8,560,100
1926-27 . .	31,303,000	8,973,000	1927-28 . 299,700	8,673,300	1927-28 . 69,000	8,742,300
1927-28 . .	32,193,000	7,791,000	1928-29 . 114,700	7,676,300	1928-29 . 562,000	8,238,300
1928-29 . .	31,973,000	8,591,000	1929-30 . 13,000	8,678,000	1929-30 . 357,000	8,935,000
1929-30 . .	31,347,000	10,353,000	1930-31 . 214,903*	...		
					Total .	51,717,400
					Average .	8,619,566

*Exports to end of June taken from Indian Trade Journal 46,900
Exports from Karachi during July to November taken from Karachi Chamber of
Commerce Publications 166,008
214,908

Inland consumption of wheat in tons.

Year.	Area.	Yield.	Exports.	Remaining in India.	Imports.	Nett position.
1918-19 . .	23,764,000	7,502,000	1918-20 . 8,600	7,493,400	1919-20 . 146,000	7,641,400
1919-20 . .	26,949,000	10,122,000	1920-21 . 237,600	9,884,400	1920-21 .	9,884,400
1920-21 . .	25,783,000	6,706,000	1921-22 . 81,000	6,625,000	1921-22 . 440,000	7,065,000
1921-22 . .	28,234,000	10,613,000	1922-23 . 220,000	9,593,000	1922-23 . 19,000	9,612,000
1922-23 . .	30,541,000	9,982,000	1923-24 . 638,000	9,344,000	1923-24 . 12,000	9,356,000
					Total .	43,556,500
					Average .	8,711,760

Inland consumption of wheat in tons.

Year.	Area.	Yield.	Exports.	Remaining in India.	Imports.	Nett position.
1913-14 . . .	28,475,000	8,358,000	1914-15 . 706,382	7,651,618	1914-15 . 1,461	7,653,079
1914-15 . . .	32,475,000	10,087,000	1915-16 . 652,678	9,434,322	1915-16 . 8	9,434,130
1915-16 . . .	30,143,000	8,518,000	1916-17 . 746,913	7,769,087	1916-17 . 7	7,769,094
1916-17 . . .	32,941,000	10,236,000	1917-18 . 1,454,374	8,781,626	1917-18 . 1,780	8,783,406
1917-18 . . .	35,487,000	9,922,000	1918-19 . 476,100	9,445,900	1918-19	9,445,900
					Total .	43,085,599
					Average .	8,617,120

Inland consumption of wheat in tons.

Year.	Area.	Yield.	Exports.	Remaining in India.	Imports.	Nett position.	
1910-11 . . .	30,565,000	10,061,500	1911-13 1,361,168	8,700,334	1911-12 1,768	8,703,108	
1911-12 . . .	31,141,000	9,924,500	1912-13 1,660,187	8,264,313	1912-13 2,538	8,266,851	
1912-13 . . .	30,043,000	9,863,000	1913-14 1,202,205	8,650,795	1913-14 7	8,650,802	
						Total	25,619,755
						Average	8,539,918

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