

Wednesday, 27th February, 1935

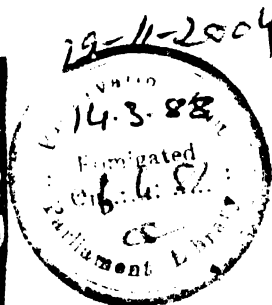
THE  
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

VOLUME I, 1935

*(11th February to 17th April, 1935)*

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NINTH SESSION  
OF THE  
THIRD COUNCIL OF STATE, 1935



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	Pages.
<b>Monday, 18th February 1935—<i>contd.</i></b>	
Indian Naturalization (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	221—23
Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	223—32
<b>Thursday, 21st February, 1935—</b>	
Questions and Answers . . . . .	233—35
Election of four non-official Members to the Standing Committee on Emi- gration . . . . .	235
Nominations for election to the Central Advisory Council for Railways .	235
General discussion of the Railway Budget for 1935-36 . . . . .	236—81
<b>Monday, 25th February, 1935—</b>	
Questions and Answers . . . . .	283—88
Resolution <i>re</i> reduction of British soldiers in India—Negatived . . . . .	288—311
Resolution <i>re</i> Government of India and State Railway Presses—With- drawn . . . . .	311—25
Resolution <i>re</i> advancement of loans on the security of postal insurance policies—Withdrawn . . . . .	325—28
Resolution <i>re</i> inquiry into conditions of horse-breeding colonists—With- drawn . . . . .	328—33
Resolution <i>re</i> import of foreign rice—Moved . . . . .	333
<b>Wednesday, 27th February, 1935—</b>	
Member Sworn . . . . .	335
Questions and Answers . . . . .	335—36
Short Notice Questions and Answers . . . . .	336—37
Statement laid on the table . . . . .	337—38
Election of six non-official Members to the Central Advisory Council for Railways . . . . .	338
Resolution <i>re</i> import of foreign rice—Adopted . . . . .	339—57
Resolution <i>re</i> education of the electorate and preparation of electoral rolls, etc.—Withdrawn . . . . .	357—67
Resolution <i>re</i> accommodation in the Western Court for Members of the Legislature—Withdrawn . . . . .	368—72
Resolution <i>re</i> legislation for the compulsory mixing of alcohol in motor spirit—Negatived . . . . .	372—80
Parsi Marriage and Divorce Bill—Motion for reference to Joint Select Committee, adopted . . . . .	381—82
<b>Thursday, 28th February, 1935—</b>	
Presentation of the General Budget for 1935-36 . . . . .	383—89
<b>Saturday, 2nd March, 1935—</b>	
Questions and Answers . . . . .	391—93
Short Notice Question and Answer . . . . .	393—94
General discussion of the General Budget for 1935-36 . . . . .	394—463
<b>Thursday, 7th March, 1935—</b>	
Questions and Answers . . . . .	465—68
Statement laid on the table . . . . .	468
Resolution <i>re</i> continued protection to wheat growers in India—Part (a) —Adopted; Part (b)—Negatived . . . . .	469—82
Resolution <i>re</i> building up of an Indian Mercantile Marine—Adopted .	482—501
Madras City Hindu Temples Bill—Motion to introduce, adopted . . . . .	501—02
Resolution <i>re</i> establishment of an Industrial Council—Negatived . . . . .	503—12
Statement of Business . . . . .	512

**Wednesday, 13th March, 1935—**

Member Sworn . . . . .	513
Questions and Answers . . . . .	513—18
Statement laid on the table . . . . .	518—21
Resolution re unemployment—Negatived . . . . .	521—41
Resolution re recruitment of all classes to the Indian Army—Negatived . . . . .	541—68
Resolution re establishment of a ministry of communications—Adopted . . . . .	568—71
Resolution re damage caused by the Salt Range and Khewra Salt Mines to culturable lands—Moved . . . . .	571—72

**Thursday, 14th March, 1935—**

Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment) Bill—Motion to introduce, adopted . . . . .	573
Resolution re enlistment of the Sayyid community in the Indian Army—Withdrawn . . . . .	574—85
Ballot for the election of three non-official Members to the Standing Committee for Roads . . . . .	585
Ballot for the election of two non-official Members to the Standing Advisory Committee for the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department . . . . .	585
Election of two non-official Members to the Standing Committee for the Department of Commerce . . . . .	586

**Monday, 18th March, 1935—**

Questions and Answers . . . . .	587—88
Result of election to the Standing Committee for Roads . . . . .	588
Result of election to the Standing Advisory Committee for the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department . . . . .	588
Resolution re damage caused by the Salt Range and Khewra Salt Mines to agricultural lands—Negatived . . . . .	589—600
Resolution re steps to check the increase in population—Negatived . . . . .	601—29
Resolution re recruitment of Indian Medical Service officers by open competitive examination in India—Negatived . . . . .	630—38
Indian Milch Cattle Protection Bill—Motion to introduce, adopted . . . . .	638—39
Resolution re financial condition of Assam—Withdrawn . . . . .	639—40
Madras City Hindu Temples Bill—Motion to circulate, adopted . . . . .	640—41

**Thursday, 21st March, 1935—**

Questions and Answers . . . . .	643—44
Short Notice Questions and Answers . . . . .	644—48
Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	649—50
Resolution re non-ratification of the Draft Convention for the regulation of hours of work in automatic sheet-glass works—Adopte . . . . .	650—54
Resolution re non-ratification of the Draft Convention ensuring benefit or allowances to the involuntarily unemployed, etc.—Adopted . . . . .	654—65
Statement of Business . . . . .	663

**Friday, 29th March, 1935—**

Member Sworn . . . . .	667
Questions and Answers . . . . .	667—79
Valedictory speeches in connection with the retirement of the Honourable Khan Bahadur Mian Sir Fasl-i-Husain . . . . .	679—88

**Monday, 8th April, 1935—**

Members Sworn . . . . .	689
Questions and Answers . . . . .	689—92
Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	692—98
Message from His Excellency the Governor General . . . . .	693
Indian Finance Bill laid on the table . . . . .	693
Message from the Legislative Assembly . . . . .	693
Motion <i>re</i> Nomination of Members to serve on the Joint Committee to consider and report on the Parai Marriage and Divorce Bill—Adopted . . . . .	694
Statement by the Honourable the President on the future course of business . . . . .	694—700

**Wednesday, 10th April, 1935—**

Questions and Answers . . . . .	701—0
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> refusal of the Government of India to hold a public enquiry into the Karachi disturbances—Leave to move, granted . . . . .	702—03
Statements laid on the table . . . . .	703—09
Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	710
Indian Tariff (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	710—38
Indian Tea Cess Amendment Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	738—43
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> refusal of the Government of India to hold a public enquiry into the Karachi disturbances—Terminated under time limit . . . . .	743—66

**Thursday, 11th April, 1935—**

Members Sworn . . . . .	767
Indian Finance Bill, 1935—Motion to consider, <i>not concluded</i> . . . . .	767—826

**Tuesday, 16th April, 1935—**

Questions and Answers . . . . .	827—32
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> inquiry by tribunals into the conduct of Government officials—Leave to move, disallowed . . . . .	832—34
Indian Finance Bill, 1935—Considered and passed . . . . .	835—90

**Wednesday, 17th April, 1935—**

Short Notice Questions and Answers . . . . .	891—97
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> communal riots during Mohurrum—Disallowed . . . . .	897—98
Salt Additional Import Duty (Extending) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	899—903
Indian Mines (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	903—06
Motion <i>re</i> expression of loyalty and devotion to His Majesty the King-Emperor on his Silver Jubilee—Adopted . . . . .	906—09

# COUNCIL OF STATE.

*Wednesday, 27th February, 1935.*

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

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## MEMBER SWORN:

The Honourable Mr. Shantidas Askuran (Bombay: Non-Muham-  
madan).

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT.

52. THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: Will Government kindly state whether, and if so, when they are going to establish a Ministry of Transport in the Governor General's Executive Council?

THE HONOURABLE MR. D. G. MITCHELL: Government have accepted the principle that there should be a portfolio of Communications in the Governor General's Executive Council, but the question when effect should be given to it is still under consideration.

### LITERATE RECRUITS IN THE MECHANICAL BRANCH OF STATE-MANAGED RAILWAYS.

53. THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: Will Government kindly lay on the table of this House a detailed statement of new literate recruits to the Mechanical Branch of the Indian State Railways on each State Railway (a) from qualified students from each of the Mechanical Engineering Colleges in India, (b) from other sources, during each of the last five years, to (i) superior service and (ii) subordinate service?

THE HONOURABLE SIR GUTHRIE RUSSELL: The available information was placed on the table of the House on the 27th August, 1934, in reply to the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam's question No. 139.

### INDO-BURMA TRADE RELATIONS.

54. THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: Will Government kindly state whether they will before concluding the Indo-Burma Agreement consult the Indian Legislature and representative commercial institutions in this matter? If not, why not?

THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART: I take it that the Honourable Member is referring to the discussions now proceeding between the Government of India and the representatives of the Government of Burma in regard to the nature of the regime which should govern the trade relations of India and Burma in the transitory period after separation. Government have

already consulted representatives of commercial interests in this connection. Should any Honourable Member be interested to initiate a discussion with a view to giving Honourable Members an opportunity of expressing their views, he is, of course, at liberty to do so, but, for obvious reasons, it will be impossible for Government to offer any expression of opinion.

#### CAPITATION CHARGES.

55. THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : (a) With reference to my question No. 26 of 11th February, 1935, will Government kindly give the following information : Did Government contest the liability for these payments ? If so, did they include the point in the case which they presented to the Capitation Tribunal ? If not, why not ? Had Government accepted the claims made by the War Office in 1908 ? For which of the items did the War Office claim, and what were the amounts ?

(b) Is it a fact that the Secretary of State for India and the War Office settled the Capitation Charges without consulting the Government of India ? Is it a fact that the Government of India protested against this action ?

(c) Has Government received the War Office calculations referred to in my question No. 219 of 5th September, 1934 ? If so, will Government lay them on the table ? Have they been examined by the Indian Actuary ?

HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF : (a) and (b). Both before the Romer Committee of 1907-08 and the Garran Tribunal of 1932-33 the Indian claim was that *all* the capitation charges should be remitted. Government did not contest certain liabilities and accept others. In 1908 the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for War arrived at a provisional compromise on the basis of certain decisions by the Romer Committee. It is a fact that the Government of India represented that they had not been consulted before this compromise was effected.

(c) Proof copies of the calculations have been received and are under examination. I am not therefore prepared to lay a copy on the table. I understand that the Government Actuary has not been consulted.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Has the Government Actuary been consulted ?

HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF : The Government Actuary has not so far been consulted and it seems doubtful whether examination by an actuary out here would in fact serve any useful purpose, but if the Honourable Member desires I will consider the matter.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Thank you, Sir.

#### SHORT NOTICE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

56. THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Will the Government kindly state if they are enquiring or propose to enquire into the working of the Indian Income Tax Act ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. C. TALLENTS : As stated in the Report of the Select Committee on the Indian Income Tax Amendment Bill introduced

into the Legislative Assembly by Sir Hari Singh Gour, the Government of India propose to secure the services of one or more income-tax experts from the British Inland Revenue Department in order to conduct an exhaustive examination of the Indian income-tax system, and are fully prepared to call the special attention of these experts to the opinions which have been expressed and the dissatisfaction which is felt at the absence of any outside appeal on questions of fact. It is hoped that these experts will visit India next cold weather.

57. THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Will the Government kindly state what action, if any, they are taking, or propose to take, about amending the Indian Life Assurance Act?

THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART: The desirability of amending the law relating to insurance in India is now under examination by an Officer on Special Duty. On receipt of the report of that officer, a decision will be taken as to the mode of further procedure.

STATEMENT LAID ON THE TABLE.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GUTHRIE RUSSELL (Chief Commissioner of Railways): Sir, I lay on the table the information promised in reply to questions Nos. 24 to 32 asked in the Council of State by the Honourable Mr Hossain Imam on the 8th August, 1934.

Question No. 24.—(i) Yes. Formerly a separate contractor was appointed for each station. Now, each contractor has been given all the stations in an area: the Dinapore division to which the question refers being divided into three areas for this purpose.

(ii) The Administration did not and do not recover any fee from the contractors. The present agreements are for one year subject to six months notice after the expiry of a year.

(iii) Two members made this suggestion at the meeting on the 18th November, 1933.

(iv) The matter is under consideration.

Question No. 25.—(i) The Agent, East Indian Railway, states that under the old arrangement it was found difficult to attain the required standard of catering and cleanliness.

(ii) No, but some of the former contractors who had proved efficient have been appointed contractors for some of the areas.

(iii) Yes, generally.

(iv) During the course of periodical inspections by officers and inspectors of the division.

Question No. 25.—(a) The amounts sanctioned for improving the stalls at the stations referred to were as follows:

	Rs.
Moghalaerai . . . . .	915
Gaya . . . . .	756
Kiul . . . . .	943
Sone East Bank . . . . .	1,108

(b) The building of a tea stall at Sone East Bank was postponed for paucity of funds. The vendor did not build a stall.

(c) The contract was terminated on the area system, referred to in my reply to part (i) of question No. 24, being introduced.

Question No. 27.—(a) The new contractors have local managerial staff in charge at stations and it is not necessary for them personally to attend at the stalls.

The old contractors were allowed to have servants to vend and were only punished if no one attended to carry out the contract for any particular time or train.

(b) The total number of hawkers under the present arrangement is practically the same as under the previous arrangement. All hawkers are medically examined prior to their appointment and periodically thereafter.

**Question No. 28.**—The reply to the first two parts of the question is in the affirmative. The Divisional Superintendent, Dinapore, is the competent authority to deal with such matters concerning his division. Complaints against vending arrangements have always received the serious attention of the railway authorities. Enquiries made by the Divisional Superintendent showed that most of the recent complaints were engineered by interested parties chiefly the old vendors and were unfounded.

**Question No. 29.**—No.

**Question No. 30.**—The Agent states that the rates are the same as those prevailing in the local markets. In the circumstances Government see no reason to call for copies of the tariffs of each station. But if the Honourable Member desires to have the tariff for any particular station, I will obtain a copy for him.

**Question No. 31.**—(a) Yes.

(b) No. The District Medical Officer reported that a man had died though, in his opinion, not of cholera. At a subsequent enquiry this opinion was confirmed.

(c) (i) Yes.

(c) (ii) The evidence of the witnesses examined, particularly of the two outside doctors, who attended the deceased vendor during his last illness proved that the man did not die of cholera but of gastro-enteritis as a result of heat exhaustion.

(c) (iii) (a) The foodstuff was not destroyed because, as already stated in reply to part (c) (ii) the man did not die of cholera.

(c) (iii) (b) The railway sanitary staff carried out the orders of disinfection of the place in which the case of gastro-enteritis occurred.

**Question No. 32.**—(a) The Agent, East Indian Railway, reports that Messrs. Balkar Dass and Iswar Dass held refreshment room contracts on the Howrah division and were given the contracts for the Moghaisera and Gaya areas on the Dinapore division. They were appointed by Mr. Marriott at Howrah and also in the Dinapore Division, because of their suitability and the satisfactory recommendations in regard to their work on the Howrah division.

Applications were called for.

(b) The question of offers made does not arise, in view of my reply to part (ii) of question No. 24.

## ELECTION OF SIX NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS TO THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RAILWAYS

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** With reference to the announcement that I made on the 21st February, regarding the election of non-official Members to the Central Advisory Council for Railways, I have to inform the House that the Honourable Mr. Mohammad Yamin Khan and the Honourable Sardar Shri Jagannath Maharaj Pandit have since withdrawn their candidature for election to this Council. There now remain the following six candidates for the six vacancies and I declare them to be duly elected.

The Honourable Diwan Bahadur G. Narayanaswami Chetty.

The Honourable Sir David Devadoss.

The Honourable Khan Bahadur Syed Abdul Hafeez.

The Honourable Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur.

The Honourable Sardar Buta Singh.

The Honourable Mr. S. D. Gladstone.



## RESOLUTION *RE* IMPORTS OF FOREIGN RICE.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** The Honourable Diwan Bahadur Narayanaswami Chetty will now resume the debate on his Resolution moved last Monday.

**THE HONOURABLE DIWAN BAHADUR G. NARAYANASWAMI CHETTY (Madras : Non-Muhammadan) :** Sir, the Resolution which I moved the other day runs as follows :

" This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to prevent the import of foreign rice into this country and to adopt other substantial measures to improve the present low price of rice, with a view to alleviate the lot of the agriculturists ".

I do not think many words of mine are necessary to commend this Resolution to the acceptance of this House. The Resolution is very simple. It requests the Government to take substantial measures which would raise the present low level prices obtaining in this country and thus to better the lot of the agriculturists.

I may at the outset state that a Resolution similar to mine has been already carried in the Lower House and so it is unnecessary on our part to discuss it thoroughly here.

The province which I have the honour to represent in this House, *viz.*, the Madras presidency, is purely an agricultural province and 90 per cent. of the population are engaged in cultivation and the staple food for our people is rice ; so that if there is any fluctuation in the price of rice it will correspondingly affect the purchasing power of the agriculturist. The price of paddy continued to increase until the year 1927-28 ; but after that year it has continued to decrease rather quickly, so that the present price of paddy is almost half if not one-third or what it was before. The reason for this fall in the price of rice may be partly due to the world wide depression, but I submit that the main reason is due to the heavy import of foreign rice, especially from Siam and Indo-China, into India. This will be apparent to every one here if I quote the total quantity of rice imported into India from the year 1932 to 1934. In 1932 the quantity of rice imported into India was 30,506 tons ; in 1933 it was 34,419 tons and in 1934 it went up to 285,415 tons, that is more than nine times the quantity of rice imported in 1932. This everyone must admit is an abnormal increase and unless this import is checked effectively it will continue to increase to the detriment of rice-growers in India.

It may be said that Siam and Indo-China export only broken rice and as such they do not compete with the better quality of rice grown in India. But actual facts show that foreign rice has really decreased the price of local rice. As foreign rice is sold at a very cheap price it has ousted the better quality of rice grown in Southern India and naturally the agriculturists who grow only superior rice are very hard hit. In this connection permit me to quote some of the remarks made in the *Trade Review* about Siamese imports:

" This position of increased imports into India concurrently with a record harvest in Burma appears at first sight unusual ; but to some extent it can be explained by the fact that the declining prices gave an inducement to foreign growers to get rid of their stock as quickly as possible ".

It will be seen from the above remarks that in order to get rid of their surplus stocks of rice, the Siamese import their rice into India at a price which is not only below cost price but also below the cost of production of rice in our country. Naturally the rice-growers in India are unable to compete with this almost annihilating competition and most of the rice grown in India remains unsold and uncared for.

[Diwan Bahadur Narayanaswami Chetty.]

Then, Sir, I wish to state that India is the only one unfortunate country into which foreign rice is being dumped. Japan and the Netherlands Indies have already, I think in 1933-34, restricted the import of Siamese rice into their lands and why should we alone sit quiet without doing something to help the poor agriculturists? In 1933 Japan and Formosa took 105,150 tons of rice from Siam, but after the restriction they have taken only 433 tons of rice; in the Netherlands Indies the import of Siamese rice has come down from 38,110 tons to 2,989 tons during the same period and again this is due to restriction; whereas in India owing to the indifference of the Government of India the import has increased from 9,973 tons to 335,000 tons. Does this not show that the Government of India have been behind other countries in helping our poor agriculturists?

I admit that the Government is not unaware of the sufferings of the cultivators. They have given remissions in land tax though not as much as the people of my province desired.

Sir, it is for the Government of India to find a way by which the foreign competition should effectively be removed. In this connection I might quote the words of the Revenue Member of the Government of Madras. Speaking in the Madras Legislative Council he said :

“ This Government had urged in season and out of season and they would urge still on the Government of India the necessity of stopping such an import. He hoped the Government of India would be strongly supported by the presidency's representatives both in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, and between them they might get some specific good results”.

Sir, recently, only last week—I think it was on Wednesday last—in the Madras Legislative Council, Mr. Rangaswamy Reddiar asked when the Madras Government had addressed the Government of India and how many times the latter had been reminded, about the import of rice into Madras. The Finance Member replied :

“ The Government of India were first addressed in the matter in July, 1933. They have since been reminded five times. No final orders have been received”.

We on our part have not been keeping quiet. I remember there was a discussion in the Legislative Assembly on this question and some Honourable Members urged the Government of India to take some action and the Member in charge of that subject in the lower House promised to enquire into this matter. But no concrete proposals have as yet come and foreign rice still continues to come into India in large quantities. Now may I ask why the Government should be so indifferent in the treatment of this rice question? When the question of levying an import duty on foreign wheat came before this House some time back the Government took prompt action: but when a similar question regarding rice has now come before us why should they be so disinclined to take quick action. Rice is the premier crop grown in India, and, from the point of view of consumption, it is more important to Indian agriculturists than wheat.

Let me assure the Government that by levying an import duty on foreign rice the consumers will not suffer. It is a well known fact that India grows more rice than is needed for her and with Burma to help her with her excess of rice, there is no fear of our running short of rice. The Government need not also fear about retaliatory measures from other countries. For Siam and Indochina import jute and opium and as we have a world monopoly of these two products they cannot hit us back.

While the Government have been taking effective steps to safeguard the interests of smaller industries such as textiles, etc., they have not yet taken any steps to promote the agricultural industry which is the mainstay of 90 per cent. of the entire population. The prosperity and contentment of the people for whom the administration is carried on should be the foremost concern of any Government and the success of a Government can only be measured by the relief which they afford to the teeming millions residing in villages.

I therefore plead most earnestly that the Government be pleased to stop the importation of rice. They should also adopt such other suitable measures which would ultimately improve the purchasing power of this commodity. Lastly, I would request Government to bear in mind the plight of the poor cultivators who are being driven to starvation by the abnormal fall in prices and do all they can to promote their well being. I can say that many petty landholders in my province are unable to pay their Government *kist*. It is only with great difficulty—by borrowing—that they can pay. Their position is most pathetic. I cannot describe in words the position of the landlords in Southern India. Sir, I move.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS (Nominated Indian Christians): Sir, the amendment which stands in my name runs thus :

“That for the original Resolution the following be substituted namely :

“This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to impose a reasonable duty on non-Empire rice and paddy imported into India with a view to raising the price level in this country.”

Sir, I have given notice of this amendment in order to make it quite clear that we do not want Burma to think that we are working against her. Burma rice is needed in India. We have no objection to that country exporting rice free. But what we want to guard against is non-Empire countries exporting cheap rice into India and thereby lowering the price and making it almost impossible for the agriculturist to meet the cost of raising paddy. Sir, in support of the main Resolution I wish to say a few words. So far back as 18th August, 1934, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Tuticorin, passed this Resolution :

“The continued imports of Siamese rice and paddy into various parts of this and other presidencies amounting roughly to 140,000 tons have resulted in the fall in prices of local paddy and rice and entails serious hardships on the agricultural population as they have not been able to recoup even the expense for raising the crops and pay *kist* to Government”

Quite recently, I believe on the 16th of this month, the Honourable the Leader of the House, in reply to a question from my Honourable friend Mr. Chetty, stated that the quantity of rice imported into India from Indo-China, Siam and other foreign countries during 1933 totalled 34,412 tons while that in 1934 totalled 395,474 tons, and that the representation of the Madras Government and the steps to be taken in this connection were under the consideration of the Government of India. That statement was made with regard to the quantity of rice imported into India in 1934, but almost every week, large quantities of rice are being imported into the Madras ports and only on the 20th February, the steamship “Woolgar” brought about 2,250 tons of Siamese rice into the Madras harbour. Sir, I take this statement from the *Hindu* of the 20th instant. Now, these quantities of foreign rice are sold very cheap. In August and September the information, which was given to me by a responsible person, was that for a rupee 12 measures of broken rice were sold in Madras, and that rice was said to be better than the Burma rice. The labouring classes and the poor people in the towns buy this cheap

[Sir David Devadoss.]

rice and the result is the price of paddy in the Presidency has fallen considerably. The time was, at least for 15 to 20 years, from 1895 to 1914, the price of paddy was in the neighbourhood of Rs. 10 for what we call a *kottai*, which means 112 Madras measures. Now recently, within the last two or three years, paddy has fallen to Rs. 5 a *kottai*. The cost of raising paddy is more than the cultivator gets by selling it. If the price of paddy were Rs. 9 or Rs. 10, it would just cover the cost of raising it and the payment of Government revenue leaving a small margin of profit. The fall in prices has affected the revenues considerably. With your permission I will quote a few sentences from the speech of the Revenue Member of Madras.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Order, order. It is not parliamentary practice to read from newspapers.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: Then I will only give the substance of it. The loss of revenue to Government during the four *fasals* 42, 43, 44, 45 was Rs. 2,05.20 lakhs. This was mainly due to the fall in prices of foodgrains, especially rice. Quite recently, during the session in January, a Resolution was carried in the Legislative Council in Madras that the land revenue should be reduced by 33½ per cent. Of course that was too much and the Government could not accept that. But all this shows that the price of paddy is such that people are not able to meet even the cost of raising it, and the result is a good deal of distress in rural areas. If you will pardon a personal allusion, I myself tried to raise paddy last year on my lands, just to see how it would work, and the price the crop fetched did not equal the cost of raising it, and only the other day I had a letter from my agent that the price obtained was not sufficient to meet the Government revenues. This is apart from the agent's and servants' salaries, which have in addition to be borne by the landlord.

Sir, Madras is almost a purely agricultural province. It raises a very large quantity of paddy, the largest of any province in India. Quite recently we have had the Mettur project, which is expected to irrigate thousands and thousands of acres. Some 30 years ago we had the Periyar project, which enabled the cultivation of some 150,000 acres. That being so it is very hard that the province should be made to suffer for no fault of its own. It might be said that the lowering of the price of paddy must benefit the agricultural and poorer classes. That is not so. When the agriculturist is not able to get a margin by raising paddy, he does not raise it, with the result that the agricultural labourer suffers. The time was when agricultural labourers were paid at the rate of four to five annas a day for a man and two to three annas for a woman. Now the cost is about ten to twelve annas for a man and five to six annas for a woman. That being so, it is impossible for any one to raise paddy and get a reasonable return for his outlay. And the land revenue assessment in Madras, Sir, is very heavy. It is well known that practically 90 per cent. of the Madras presidency is under the *ryotwari* system, and in places where the irrigation is with the help of water from channels and rivers, it is as much as Rs. 22 an acre, as in the Tinnevelly and adjacent districts and in the Northern Sircars also. If the situation is not improved, Madras will suffer very much indeed. The Government will lose a good deal of its revenue and the people will undergo much suffering. It might be said that the prices are looking up. No doubt owing to the failure of the south-west monsoon in the months of August and September prices rose to Rs. 8 and Rs. 9 a *kottai* in some districts. But that was only for a very, very short time. The Revenue Member stated in the local Legislative Council

only the other day that though they thought the prices were going to recover, prices did not in fact recover, it was only a temporary rise due to the failure of the monsoon, and prices have gone back almost to the previous level.

The broken rice is said to be, as I said, much better than Burma rice, and if unrestricted imports are allowed to go on I am sure Burma will lose its market, at least in Madras. These considerations must weigh with the Government. It is not necessary for me to labour the point. I would ask the Government to do as much as possible. Representations have been made more than once by the Madras Government to the Government of India to take steps in the matter. Well, it is a far cry no doubt from Madras to Delhi. People nearer to Delhi are able to get what they want, but Madras people are more law-abiding and quiet and do everything constitutionally, with the result that they are treated like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son: "You will get everything, but you must wait". That being so, I hope the Government will now see its way to help Madras by imposing such duty as they think proper to shut out the foreign rice coming from non-Empire countries, so that the price of rice which is the mainstay of the people of Madras may not be prejudicially affected.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa : Muhammadan) : Sir, I rise to move the amendment standing in my name, namely :

"That after the word 'country' the words 'by imposing prohibitive import duties' be inserted".

In the first place, Sir, I wish to thank the Honourable Diwan Bahadur Narayanaswami Chetty for coming forward to move this Resolution. It is a characteristic of the Honourable Member that he very seldom, if ever, sees any fault in the Government, so that when he sees a fault it must be high time for Government to bestir itself. I was surprised that the Honourable Member found some fault with the Government! But I find, Sir, that the enigma has been solved; it is the provincial Government of Madras which has been egging the Madras Members on.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : No, no.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : The Madras Government has taken up a very strong position in this matter and they have represented to the Government of India their troubles. From what I have been able to find, the Government of India is having recourse to the usual tactics of delaying matters till something turns up. The matter has become too bad for any delaying tactics, and I hope they are now alive to the situation, and realise that it is time that they did something.

Coming to the merits of the three propositions before the House, the Honourable the mover has given a very non-committal sort of Resolution, but I must admit that it is an advance on the amendment which Sir David Devadoss moved. The claim of the Honourable Mr. Chetty is to take immediate steps to prevent the import of foreign rice into this country. That is the first proposition which I wish to stress. It is a well known fact that rice is the mainstay of more of India's population than any other two items of production of India. The statistics of rice production show that during the last year for which I have figures, 1933-34, the area was 82 million acres and the next competitor which is wheat is less than half this acreage. That

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

shows the great extent to which India is dependent on rice production. We are told, Sir, that India proper is on balance an importer. That, Sir, is no reason why steps should not be taken to make it self-sufficient. We know that industries which are not even supplying a tenth part of India's requirements are being safeguarded; they are being given protection in the hope that at some future date they might be able to supply India's requirements. Is it not strange that the greatest industry of India, the production of rice, should be allowed to deteriorate and is left to take care of itself even though such a phenomenal fall in price has taken place? I would illustrate my point about the fall in prices by saying that the 1933 price of rice as compared to the price of rice in 1905 to 1914 is 54 per cent. of what it was in those years, whereas wheat price is 73 per cent. of the price it used to command at that time. If we take 1920 to 1929 for our criterion we find that the price of wheat is 50 per cent. of that figure in the year 1933 and in the year 1933 the price of rice was 39 per cent. of the price which it commanded in those years. At the present moment we are told that the price which rice commands is barely 47 per cent. of the price which it used to command in 1929-30. That goes to show that prices have fallen very steeply in rice, whereas the wheat price has been maintained. The question is how has wheat price been maintained? It has been maintained simply by the action of the Government which has imposed a customs duty on the import of wheat. The result is that there is no longer foreign cheap dumping of wheat in India. The Indian growers have been able to command and get their own price. That price is not in any way unfair to the consuming masses. It is apparent from the fact, which came before us during the discussion of the Ottawa Report, that during the second half of last year an export trade had started in Indian wheat. Therefore, Sir, the stabilisation of the prices at an economic level does not increase the cost too high for the other consumers. There is this factor that if we produce more than our requirements we have to find a market outside and the price which our commodities command in outside markets after a time comes to dictate the price inside the country too. Therefore, Sir, Government need not be afraid that by imposing a prohibitive import duty as I say on rice they will be making the position of India any worse. I do not know the system which prevails in other parts of the country, but in my province, Bihar, as is well known to my official colleagues who come from there, the system is that labourers on the land usually get payment in kind. Very few, if any, of the labourers in the villages are paid in money; they are paid in crops, the crops that they grow. The result is that the purchasing power of an enormous amount of people is reduced by reducing this price. May I, Sir, in this connection point out that as far as the area of cultivation of rice goes, we are only second to Bengal and Madras comes about fourth in the list of rice producers. It may be thought that the competition is now confined to Madras and therefore Bihar and Bengal have no need to bestir themselves. It is only because Madras happens to be within easy reach that the peaceful penetration of Siamese rice has begun there. If this thing goes on, and if Government do not take any steps, the day will not be very far off when Bengal and Bihar will be flooded by foreign imported rice.

Now, Sir, I should like to say why I have moved this amendment, in spite of the amendment of Sir David Devadoss. As long as Burma is a part of the Indian Empire we will not make any discrimination between Burma and India. But I am not prepared to say now that whatever happens, whether Burma is separated from us or not, we will always make India the exploiting place for

Burman rice and Burman oil. If Burma wants to separate from us, she should be prepared to consider the possibility of a tariff wall standing between her production and our country. I am not prepared to go as far as Sir David Devadoss has gone—being ready to give preference to the Empire product. By doing so we will be really playing into the hands of those who want to do us a bad turn. My Honourable friend proposes—this is what I understand and if I am wrong I hope he will correct me—he proposed that there should be no duty on Empire products. There are two countries which will probably come in. First and foremost is Burma and the second is perhaps Ceylon. We know that we have an adverse balance of trade with Ceylon. We import more from Ceylon than Ceylon imports from us and as far as Burma is concerned, the position is very heavily weighted against us. They import into India more than double of what we export to them. Is it wise, I say, that we should allow this state of things to remain? Is it wise that we should lose the trump card which we have for seeing that the Indians in Burma are treated fairly, and that full equality is ceded by Burma? By means of his amendment we will be placing ourselves and our people in Burma at the mercy of a Government about which we know nothing. Sir, the plea of the Government that they are inquiring into the matter is rather weak. It did not take them more than six months to decide on the question of the import duty on wheat. Why was that? Was it because Delhi is situated close to the Punjab and the other wheat-growing districts of the United Provinces? And is it because Madras, Burma, Bengal, Bihar, all happen to be far from the imperial cities of Delhi and Simla that no cry at Delhi is heard? What is the difficulty in imposing this import duty? If there was no difficulty in imposing an import duty on wheat, why all this delay about rice? We are told, Sir, that it would involve diplomatic representations and other things. Why, in heaven's name, delay this matter? The fall in rice is much greater than the fall in wheat was when this import duty was imposed. Did you grudge the wheat duty? We say, Sir, that it was a necessary thing to do and the Government was right in doing it. But if the Government did this without any qualms of conscience, why do they feel this difficulty in imposing this duty now? But, Sir, the real reason has come out in the shape of Sir David Devadoss's amendment. That is the real stumbling block. If they were to impose now an import duty on foreign imports of rice, when the Secretary of State separates Burma against the wishes of India and against the wishes of the Burmans, *then this duty will be the stumbling block*. Burma even now is not able to find a market for all her surplus rice. If this import duty is imposed, then Burma will think twice, thrice, a hundred times, before they accept this scheme of separation. That has been the real cause of keeping this thing in the background. *It is not the free will of the Government of India but dictation from Whitehall which is responsible for all this*. And in spite of what my Honourable friends may say to the contrary one thing is certain that, *whatever they say, they say under orders*. They are no more free agents than we are on this side of the House. We are here to voice the opinions of our constituents. They are here to voice the opinions of their masters.

Sir, with these few words, I commend my amendment to the acceptance of the House.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The discussion will now proceed on the original Resolution as well as the two amendments simultaneously.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. B. GLASS (Burma Chamber of Commerce): Sir, I rise to support the amendment of my Honourable friend Sir David

[Mr. J. B. Glass.]

Devadoss and I trust the mover of the Resolution, my Honourable friend Diwan Bahadur Narayanaswami Chetty, will also find it possible to accept his amendment.

The subject matter has been under investigation by Government for over a year now and as the replies to certain questions recently given by Government in another place may not yet be generally known in this House I will quote figures here. From them, it would appear clear, that action of the nature now demanded should have been taken early this year but it is not yet too late and I trust there will be no further delay.

The imports into India, from one foreign country alone, chiefly to the Madras presidency, have increased as follows over the last four years :

	Tons.
1930-31 . . . . .	101
1931-32 . . . . .	2,292
1932-33 . . . . .	14,679
1933-34 . . . . .	57,194

The quantities as shown are not large but increase is progressive and as this tendency applies also to non-Empire rice imported from elsewhere, the result has undoubtedly been to depress prices for Indian and Burma rice as the imports have been sold at low prices.

In more striking contrast are certain other figures given in reply to another question covering imports into the Madras presidency during the calendar years 1933 and 1934 which show more clearly the seriousness of the situation.

Imports of rice into the Madras presidency by sea :

	From abroad.		From other Indian ports.	
	In the husk.	Not in the husk.	In the husk.	Not in the husk.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
1933 . . . . .	2	34,200	78,900	529,400
1934 . . . . .	98,200	265,800	76,600	614,800

I understand that the imports of non-Empire rice consisted chiefly of brokens while in regard to imports of rice from other Indian ports chiefly Burma figures for the year 1934 were approximately :

	Tons.
Cleaned rice . . . . .	58,000
Broken rice . . . . .	32,000
Boiled rice . . . . .	480,000

I would emphasise the broken rice figures, Burma, 32,000 tons; from abroad in the neighbourhood of 265,000 tons.

Other comparative figures given in this House for imports into all-India were :

	1933.	1934.
	Tons.	Tons.
Siam . . . . .	21,625	280,856
Indo-China . . . . .	12,579	107,849
Other countries . . . . .	218	6,760
Total . . . . .	34,412	395,474



In considering these figures it has to be remembered that India proper is not self-supporting in regard to rice as she is in regard to wheat, indeed she is very far from being in that position as in the last calendar year 1934 she needed to import from Burma some 2½ million tons of rice.

India's population is increasing at the rate of 3½ millions per annum while large areas are being turned to more profitable crops than rice such as sugarcane and groundnuts.

Burma is able to produce rice and to put it on the market in India proper at a price within the reach of the poorer classes and thereby enables the Indian cultivator in Bengal and Madras to export some of his better grades at higher prices to the extent of about 200,000 tons per annum.

India is the natural economic market for Burma rice as Burma is for Indian manufactured goods and I trust therefore this House will accept and support the amendment of the Honourable Sir David Devadoss.

In regard to Mr. Hossain Imam's amendment to the Resolution I regret that I can only regard this as an impracticable proposition for what will seem, to my Madras friends in particular, obvious reasons, while so far as the Honourable mover is concerned I am left with a suspicion that he regards it as corollary from his earlier Resolution in regard to checking the increase in the population of India.

**THE HONOURABLE DIWAN BAHADUR SIR RAMUNNI MENON (Madras : Nominated Non-Official) :** Sir, I should like to say a few words in support of the position taken up by my esteemed colleagues from Madras and in doing so I should like to correct the impression that seems to exist in certain quarters that we are adopting this attitude because the Government of Madras have taken up the same attitude. That is not the case. We support the Government of Madras on this occasion because the case that the Government of Madras have taken up is a good case.

The broad considerations which should enable the Council to come to a proper decision on this important question can, I venture to say, be very clearly and succinctly stated. This question concerns Madras very particularly and it concerns it very seriously. As has been already pointed out, the price of rice has fallen very low in Madras and there is very grave and widespread discontent among the agricultural population. It will be idle to pretend that the fall in the price of rice has not been caused to a large extent by the same economic factors that have brought about the fall in the prices of other agricultural products. That position must be granted. But it must be remembered that the evil in regard to rice has been very considerably aggravated by an extraneous factor, and it is this factor which we want to control or eradicate. It is well known that India, including Burma is a very large rice exporting country. It produces not only sufficient rice for home consumption but a considerable surplus for export. Ordinarily, it would be as foolish to think of bringing rice to India as it would be to carry coal to Newcastle. As a matter of fact, till within a few years ago, the import of foreign rice into India was quite nominal. But within the last two years, as the figures quoted by Honourable Members who have spoken before me clearly indicate, there has been a phenomenal rise in the imports of foreign rice. I do not think it is necessary for me to repeat those figures, because the fact is admitted. It stands to commonsense that when we have such a large increase in the supply of a commodity, the market for that commodity must be seriously disturbed and the price of the commodity must fall. That is the main argument in this question.

[Sir Ramunni Menon.]

Now, I would like to approach the question from another point of view. In matters of this kind, the local Government must be presumed to watch the situation carefully and to study the problems that arise from time to time. As a matter of fact, the Madras Government have taken a very grave view of the situation and have made repeated representations to the Government of India. As far as we are aware, no action has been taken by the Government of India. When I say that no action has been taken, I mean that no action of a remedial kind has so far been taken. I would also like to mention another circumstance which should weigh with us. There was a Conference, known as the Crop Planning Conference which met at Simla in June last. That Conference included among its members a very large number of experts. That Conference went into the question of the production of and trade in rice in India and after full consideration it made a recommendation that the Government should levy an import duty on rice and paddy. I am not particularly concerned now with the amount of the duty that it recommended.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : What was the amount ?

THE HONOURABLE DIWAN BAHADUR SIR RAMUNNI MENON : I believe it was Rs. 1-4-0 per maund on rice and 15 annas on paddy. That is a minor question for the moment. These three considerations are, in my opinion, sufficient for Honourable Members of this Council to decide that some action is required and that it should be taken by the Government of India now.

With regard to the particular action that the Government should take, I am bound to say that a decision on such an important matter can only be arrived at after giving full consideration to questions of policy and a fuller consideration to the details of the particular problem in regard to rice than we as a Council shall find it convenient to give. Personally, I would leave that matter to be decided by the Government of India. There are various possibilities. There is, for example, the method of absolute prohibition of import of foreign rice. There is the method of import duty, or we can impose a quota system. As to which of these methods is the appropriate method in this case, I personally would leave the Government of India to decide. But I think we have made out a very clear case that some action is urgently called for, and I can only trust that the Government of India will not hesitate to take action and will not delay the matter any longer.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. C. D. CHARI (Burma : General) : Sir, it is well known that Burma, the province which I have the honour to represent, is producing double the quantity of rice which she needs for her own consumption, Burma produces from seven to eight million tons of rice and the exportable surplus in a year is something like three or four million tons. Burma being a province of India, she is most favourably placed when compared to other rival rice-producing countries, namely, Indo-China and Siam. Till very recently, on account of Burma's position as a province of India, there was no serious competition at all. In fact, we could hardly call it competition. Small quantities of rice were coming in from foreign countries. But, in recent years, especially during the last year, the import of Siamese rice into the Madras presidency has produced a very serious condition of affairs. Sir David Devadoss has graphically brought out the difficulties to which the Madras cultivator has been put by the import of Siamese rice. Last year the position was so serious that the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce and the other

merchants in Southern India petitioned the Government of India to take immediate steps. I tried in my own way to bring it to the notice of the Government of India to see that some effective steps were immediately taken. But unfortunately, the Madras Members and Members from other rice-producing areas were not fortunate enough to have the ear of the Government of India. They are not so fortunate as the wheat-producing provinces. In the case of wheat, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, immediate steps were taken to prevent the serious competition of foreign wheat. But in the case of rice, the position has been allowed to deteriorate in spite of the serious plight in which the rice cultivators in Madras and other places are placed. We have already heard the figures of imports of rice into the Madras presidency from foreign parts. It will be clear from the figures which my Honourable friend Mr. Glass has quoted that whereas we imported from abroad in 1933 only two tons, in 1934 we imported foreign rice in husks amounting to 98,200 tons, and rice not in the husk, 34,200 tons in 1933, whereas in 1934 it was 265,800 tons. This will show how serious became the competition of Siamese rice within the period of one year. The net result is that Burma is faced with very serious competition. I am told that broken rice which goes mainly to the Madras presidency is eaten not only by the poorer classes,

12 NOON.

whose staple food it is, but that it is also used largely by the middle and upper classes for making rice cakes and other delicacies. If this state of things is allowed to continue, Siamese rice, being superior and cheaper than Burma rice, will lose the Indian market which, as my Honourable friend Mr. Glass has put it, is her natural market. It may be said that in view of these things Burma might very well restrict her rice production. But the trouble is that it is not possible for Burma owing to climatic conditions to substitute any alternative crop in the rice-growing areas. The only alternative crop is sugarcane and it has been found impossible to extend the cultivation of sugarcane to more than 100,000 acres even under the most favourable conditions. So the rice-producing area must continue to produce rice, and unless this rice can be sold at an economic price Burma will be seriously handicapped. I am not going into the question of what is going to happen in the event of the separation of Burma. The main Resolution or any of the amendments will equally serve the purpose. What is necessary is that there should be a check on the unrestricted import of foreign rice into India, and whether you call it "foreign" or "non-Empire" rice, it comes to the same thing, because Burma is a part of India at present, whatever the position may be in the future. The main factor in the situation is that the other markets for Burma rice, namely, China, Ceylon and Malaya and the far eastern ports, which have hitherto taken a large quantity of Burma rice, are now producing rice themselves, and these markets have been contracting, so that the world position of rice has been steadily deteriorating from year to year. Unless therefore immediate steps are taken the plight of the agriculturist will grow worse and worse. Even now their plight is very miserable indeed. The Rice Planning Conference I find have gone very carefully into the matter and have suggested some remedies. Their main recommendation is for the better marketing of the produce in the inter-provincial markets especially. I believe the Agricultural Research Council is taking effective steps to give effect to this recommendation. Then another suggestion of the Crop Planning Conference was that the export duty on rice may be removed as soon as financial circumstances admit. I would urge upon the Government to do this as soon as circumstances permit. A third and very good recommendation which the Conference made was that the Government of India should take early steps to negotiate with Malaya and Ceylon to give preference to Indian rice, including rice from Burma. If that is done we would have a

[Mr. P. C. D. Chari.]

very good market in both Ceylon and Malaya. One other recommendation which the Crop Planning Conference made I would urge upon the Government to consider it seriously with a view to giving effect to it. They recommended a duty of Rs. 1-4-0 per maund on foreign rice and 15 annas per maund on foreign paddy. I am not particular as to the quantum of duty mentioned. I would only urge a reasonable measure of protection by the imposition of a reasonable rate of duty on foreign or non-Empire rice imported into India. That would greatly help this great agricultural industry of India.

Sir, I heartily support both the Resolution and the amendment.

THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR (Madras : Muhammadan) : From the facts recounted by the Honourable Member, Diwan Bahadur Narayanaswami Chetty, and the figures he quoted in support of his suggestion, it is perfectly obvious that the situation in Madras regarding the rice market is extremely serious and calls for urgent measures. It is clear also from his speech how this situation developed only recently about a year and a half ago and how so far the Government of India have failed to attempt to improve the conditions in Madras. It is true that long before these foreign imports had assumed alarming proportions, the agriculturists in Madras, as in other parts of India had been hard hit by the depression which had brought down considerably the prices of every primary commodity. But the situation was extremely intensified and aggravated by something which happened recently. The countries of Siam and Indo-China, which had been importing rice to India in small quantities for three or four years, all at once increased the volume of the imports, with the result that the market was glutted, particularly with a kind of rice which can compete very successfully with the better class of rice in Madras. The result was that the agriculturist, who had already been forced to part with his produce at most uneconomic prices, has now been obliged to keep back large stocks of his produce, not being in a position to find sale for a considerable portion of his crops. It would be true to say that this increase in foreign export has proved the proverbial last straw on the camel's back. Land which had already ceased to be a paying proposition has now become a source of endless misery and suffering to the landholder. It was in view of this fact that the Madras Government during the past three years granted remissions in the matter of land assessment, and this relief was very much needed in Madras inasmuch as the assessment of land in Madras is much heavier than in most other parts of India. This remission on the whole amounted to about Rs. 180 lakhs. Though it made a considerable inroad on the income of the Government from land tax, it was only a drop in the ocean considering the situation that had arisen among the rice cultivators in Madras. The plight of the landholder in Madras is so terrible that unless substantial relief is given to him at once, he is bound to be ruined altogether and there does not seem much prospect so far as the local Government is concerned inasmuch as they have recently announced their inability to put into effect the Resolution passed by the local Legislature requesting the Government to grant remission of land tax to the extent of 33½ per cent. It is therefore highly necessary to take necessary steps as recommended in the Resolution. In taking measures to afford this relief we have to see what precisely should be the direction in which the protection has got to be given, whether we should impose a duty on all foreign rice and all rice that comes from other countries, whether in this we should also include the rice that Burma exports into India. Sir, in deciding this question I am of opinion that we should not allow ourselves to be influenced by any extraneous consideration.

Whatever may be our views on the question of the separation of Burma, we ought not to allow ourselves to be in the least influenced in coming to a decision on a matter which is purely economic. Political issues like the advisability or otherwise of separation should be kept entirely apart. Sir, I would not for a moment hesitate to accept the duty upon Burma rice also if I had in the least been convinced that the imports that we get from Burma have anything to do with the situation that has now developed in Madras. We know that for more than 30 years Burma has been exporting rice to India. The kind of rice we get from Burma is such that it is a variety by itself, so that a section of the population at least in Madras have got accustomed to using that kind of rice. Since these imports have been coming into this country for more than 30 years, the prices of Burmese rice and of the indigenous rice have come to adjust themselves, so that any recent deterioration that we find in the rice market at least in my province is not due to rice we import from Burma. When such are the facts, I do not see any justification in trying to keep out the rice that we get from Burma, especially in view of the fact that Madras does not grow enough rice for her internal requirements. But, as my Honourable friend Mr. Hossain Imam has observed, the fact that Madras, for the matter of that India, is not self-sufficing in the matter of rice production should not go to deter the Government from taking prohibitive steps in regard to such imports as really go to bring down very much the price of the agricultural product in the country. The fact that the Government have not hesitated to grant this kind of protection even to industries which do not supply even a very small part of the requirements of the country makes it quite just that the Government should not hesitate to grant protection to an industry which is the main industry of the country. I am glad to find from the reply given on behalf of the Government in the Legislative Assembly the other day that it is clear that the Government have at long last come to realise that these foreign imports from Siam and Indo-China are not harmless. They have come to realise that at least in one particular direction they are disastrous to the interests of the agriculturist. May we hope, Sir, that having realised this and the direction in which it works mischief, the Government will proceed at once to check this mischief without any further delay, taking the necessary measures which are required for the purpose. As regards the competition of rice, I beg to submit that this competition which we have with the better class of Madras rice is not the only mischief that we see. Indeed it affects directly the better class of rice. But, Sir, it is obvious, that when one class of rice, especially the better class is brought down in value, the inferior class cannot maintain its level of price. It is bound to be affected also by the reaction of the lower prices prevailing in the market for the better class of rice. I would therefore request the Government to try and take steps immediately to prevent Siam and Indo-China sending such large amounts of rice into this country.

(The Honourable Mr. Y. Ranganayakalu Naidu rose in his place.)

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** The Madras view has been very strongly pressed before the House. Have you anything important to say?

**\*THE HONOURABLE MR. Y. RANGANAYAKALU NAIDU** (Madras: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I will only take two or three minutes. Today ryots are in a difficult position on account of the continued depression. At present ryots are unable to recover their cultivation expenses and Government *dist* besides their maintenance and discharge of debts. It is better to prevent

\*Speech not corrected by the Honourable Member.

[Mr. Y. Ranganayakalu Naidu.]

the import of paddy and rice from foreign countries or to impose a reasonable duty at the rate of Re. 1 per bag of two maunds and Rs. 1-8-0 per bag of rice which the Government of Ceylon imposes on rice and paddy exported from India. Sir, nowadays ryots are selling their cattle and other articles for their *kist*. I whole-heartedly support the Honourable Diwan Bahadur Narayanaswami Chetty's Resolution and the amendment of the Honourable Sir David Devadoss.

THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART (Commerce Secretary): Sir, the problem which has given rise to the Resolution of my Honourable friend, the Diwan Bahadur, is one that came into special prominence about a year ago. In general terms this problem consisted in a very remarkable fall in the price of rice at the same time as there was an exceptional increase in the imports of rice from foreign countries. A simple diagnosis of the problem would have been that the fall in the price of rice was due entirely to that increase in the imports of rice from abroad and that, I think, has been the diagnosis which has been made by some at least of the Honourable Members who have spoken today. I would ask this Honourable House to consider whether it is reasonable to conclude that imports amounting to some 30,000 tons of rice should have dragged down by as much as 40 to 50 per cent. the price of the 30 million tons of rice which is produced in India and Burma. I think, Sir, that that is an untenable proposition. The causes which have led to the fall in primary commodities in general since the autumn of 1929, must have contributed in by far the greatest measure towards the fall in the price of rice. If Honourable Members will bear with me I shall quote the percentage fall in the prices of various primary commodities between 1929 and 1934—rice 52, wheat 49, oilseeds 55, raw jute 53, raw cotton 51. Unless on the extraordinary theory that all of these commodities have been affected by these 30,000 tons of rice from Siam—

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. B. GLASS: 395,000 tons.

THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART: The figures I am quoting refer to March, 1934.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. B. GLASS: We prefer you to be up to date.

THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART: I am prepared for that also if necessary. As I was saying I think it is reasonable to assume that the major part of the fall in the price of rice has been due to general causes and not to particular ones. I might in corroboration of that theory point out that whereas rice prices in Madras—and it is in Madras that imports are coming in—that whereas rice prices in Madras have fallen by 40 per cent. since 1932, rice prices in Calcutta and in Rangoon have actually appreciated between December, 1932 and December, 1934. I do not mean to suggest for a moment that there is no problem. It is a problem however that is a Madras problem and it was in order to discover the precise nature of that problem that the Government of India and the Government of Madras independently placed officers on special duty to investigate the problem. Mr. Srinivasan, an officer of the Madras Government, was given somewhat wide terms of reference and he has investigated the Madras rice problem in all its aspects. We are blamed for having taken no action in spite of representations from the Government of Madras which were made so long ago as the middle of 1933. Well, Sir, I do

not know whether the Government of Madras were completely aware of the nature of their own problem. Presumably they were not if they appointed a special officer to investigate that problem. But in any case what I want to explain is that the report of that special officer was placed in our hands two months ago, in the month of December, so perhaps we are not guilty of so much delay as has been assumed. Our own officer, Mr. Vaidyanathan, the statistician of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, was sent to Madras to investigate particularly the reaction on prices in Madras of imports of rice from Siam and French Indo-China.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. C. D. CHARI :** At the beginning of the Simla session last year ?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART :** I think it was then or thereabouts. But in any case, the information which Mr. Vaidyanathan acquired in Madras was somewhat perplexing. For example, the arrival of a large shipload of rice in Madras was accompanied by a significant increase in the prices of local rice. There was, as a matter of fact, in July last a general rising tendency in Madras. There were also anticipations of food scarcity. This, to some extent I believe, has been realised, but in any case in July-August last it certainly did appear that the situation was adjusting itself and that in the circumstances that then prevailed it would have required the strongest justification to raise prices at a time when scarcity was anticipated. Since August the situation has continued to receive the most careful consideration. An attempt has been made to isolate the problem. It obviously was not so simple a problem as had been believed and as a result of the information we have received from Mr. Vaidyanathan and from Mr. Srinivasan's report and from fortnightly records of prices which have been kept, the problem now presents itself not as one of the competition of all imported rice with all indigenous rice. The problem in insolation appears to us to be this, that the imports of a very good, superior broken rice from Siam are in active competition with certain superior grades of rice produced in Madras. That, roughly speaking, is the problem as we see it. Now, emerging from the Resolution that has been moved today and the two amendments to that Resolution, there are four solutions suggested. Firstly, that a prohibitive duty should be imposed on all rice imported into India. Secondly, that a reasonable duty should be imposed on all non-Empire rice imported into India. Thirdly, in more general terms the Honourable Diwan Bahadur urges that steps be taken to prevent the import of foreign rice into India. And fourthly, the substantive Resolution asks that other measures be taken to increase rice prices.

The amendment of the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam is, I am afraid, one that I could not accept. It is based, I think, in the first place on a theory that this problem is an all-India one. I hope I have demonstrated that the problem is peculiarly one of Madras. But even if it were to be admitted that the imposition of a duty was the proper solution, I should still object to his amendment on the ground that he proposes a prohibitive duty.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** On a point of personal explanation, Sir. I am prepared to accept the limit as stated by Sir Ramunni Menon, that is, the duty recommended by the Agricultural Crop Planning Conference—

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Order, order. That is not the point before the Council now. Will you please resume your seat ?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART:** Prohibitive duties or prohibition constitute a double-edged weapon. I cannot minimize the dangers that India would be likely to experience should retaliation be indulged in by the other parties likely to be affected by prohibitive duties or prohibition. It may be that there is not very much to be anticipated from retaliation by Siam of itself or by French Indo-China by itself, though I do not think that we can afford to throw away the Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 lakhs of trade balance we have with these countries. But I would point out that prohibition against French Indo-China might well be accompanied by retaliation on the part of France who is as solicitous of the interests of her colonies as any other country. If Honourable Members will remember that our favourable balance of trade with France amounts to as much as Rs. 5 crores, if they will remember that she is the chief market for Madras groundnuts, I think that most Honourable Members who speak in the interests of Madras today will agree with me that we have a stake that it would be very foolish for us to endanger. For that reason, I cannot accept any suggestion that a prohibitive duty should be imposed. The Honourable Sir David Devadoss, as he has admitted, has the interests of Burma at heart. In order to secure the continuance of the favourable treatment of Burma rice—I do not think I misunderstand the Honourable Member—he has suggested that the duty should be applicable to non-Empire rice only. I do not wish now to enter into any discussion as to the merits or demerits of imperial preference as a fiscal policy. I would merely say that at the present moment imperial preference is not the fiscal policy of the Government of India. (Hear, hear.) It is perfectly true, Sir, that certain members of the Commonwealth enjoy preferences in India and we in return enjoy preferences elsewhere. These preferences have been negotiated on the basis of mutual concession. This proposition, however, is a somewhat wider one, and it is one which, without a very much fuller consideration, the Government of India could not at the present moment accept. May I give you one practical implication of the acceptance of the Resolution in its present form? Australia, Sir, imposes an import duty on Indian rice. Is this Honourable House prepared without seeking any *quid pro quo* to admit Australian rice into India?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** No.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. T. A. STEWART:** For that reason, Sir, I regret that I must oppose the Honourable Sir David Devadoss's amendment in the form in which it stands.

May I turn now to the fourth of the suggestions that have been made for the improvement of the condition of rice-growers in India, namely, that steps other than tariff action or prohibition should be taken? As I see it, there are two methods by which such improved conditions could be secured, *viz.*, by obtaining new markets or by improving existing markets for Indian rice. These markets may be external markets or internal markets. So far as external markets are concerned, we certainly have made a start to endeavour to secure better marketing conditions for our rice. Under the Ottawa Agreement, we secured a preference in the United Kingdom. We have under consideration the question of securing preference in Malaya and in Ceylon. The more important of those markets of course is Ceylon. Honourable Members are no doubt aware that if we are anxious to secure favourable conditions in Ceylon for our rice, Ceylon is just as anxious, if not more anxious, to secure favourable conditions in India for her cocoanuts and coconut products. Now,



that requires a very delicate balancing of interests, because there is one thing of which I am quite certain and that is, that any proposal to give preferential or more preferential treatment to Ceylon cocoanuts than they receive at present will be most strongly opposed by many of my Madras friends. (Hear, hear.) Another method by which we can do something for the rice-grower is by research to enable him to develop better strains that will receive more favourable acceptance in world markets. The Imperial Council of Agricultural Research has succeeded, in co-operation with growers in Burma, in producing a strain of paddy which commands a premium of 20 per cent. over the ordinary crop. Researches have not been confined to Burma. In Western Bengal there are two experimental stations which are seeking to develop the strain of Patna rice which also is a variety which is generally exported to European markets. In all, the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research is carrying out experiments in, I think, seven provinces and on rice alone is expending Rs. 9 lakhs a year. In order to facilitate the marketing of rice in India, the Government of India have adopted the recommendations of the Agricultural Commission and as Honourable Members are now aware, there is under development a scheme for internal marketing and grading of crops. Rice will share in that with others.

Now, Sir, as I have explained, the Government of India have been at some considerable pains to ascertain what is this problem of rice in Madras. They believe that they have isolated that problem, and that they are now aware of what it is. There are, as the Honourable Sir Ramunni Menon said, various ways of dealing with it. The Government of India have at this moment under their active and immediate consideration the steps which should be taken and in view of that assurance, I would ask the Honourable Member not to press his Resolution.

**THE HONOURABLE DIWAN BAHADUR G. NARAYANASWAMI CHETTY:** Sir, though I do not agree with many points raised by my friend the Honourable Mr. Stewart in regard to not taking up this matter earlier, I am glad to hear from him that the Government of India propose to take immediate steps in the matter. Sir, in view of the fact that the Madras Government since July, 1933 have been urging on the Government of India to take action, the inaction of the Government of India seems to me to be very disappointing. It was not just a Resolution of a local Council or of the Assembly, but the recommendation of a local Government who realise the difficulties of the people and say that unless some remedy is applied the condition of the agriculturists will become very bad. That the Government of India should delay in the face of that is a very grave disappointment. Anyhow, as the Honourable Mr. Stewart has said just now that the matter is receiving the immediate consideration of the Government of India, I shall not press the Motion.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Is it your pleasure that leave be given to the Honourable Member to withdraw his Resolution?

(Several Honourable Members expressed dissent.)

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Resolution moved:

“ That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to prevent the import of foreign rice into this country and to adopt other substantial measures to improve the present low prices of rice, with a view to alleviate the lot of the agriculturists ”,

[The President.]

to which an amendment has been moved :

“ That for the original Resolution the following be substituted :

‘ This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to impose a reasonable duty on non-Empire rice and paddy imported into India with a view to raising the price level in this country ’.”

The Question is :

“ That that amendment be made .”

The Motion was negatived.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Resolution moved:

“ That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to prevent the import of foreign rice into this country and to adopt other substantial measures to improve the present low prices of rice, with a view to alleviate the lot of the agriculturists ”,

to which an amendment has been moved :

“ That after the word ‘ country ’ the words ‘ by imposing prohibitive import duties ’ be inserted. ”

The Question is :

“ That that amendment be made .”

The Council divided :

AYES—11.

Buta Singh, The Honourable Sardar.  
Chari, The Honourable Mr. P. C. D.  
Ghosh Maulik, The Honourable Mr.  
Satyendra Chandra.  
Habibullah of Dacca, The Honourable  
Nawab Khwaja.  
Halim, The Honourable Khan Bahadur Hafiz  
Muhammad.

Hossain Inam, The Honourable Mr.  
Kalikar, The Honourable Mr. V. V.  
Mehrotra, The Honourable Rai Bahadur  
Lala Mathura Prasad.  
Muhammad Hussain, The Honourable Khan  
Bahadur Mian Ali Baksh.  
Sapru, The Honourable Mr. P. N.  
Suhrawardy, The Honourable Mr. Mahmood.

NOES—28.

Akbar Khan, the Honourable Lieutenant-  
Colonel Sir Mahomed.  
Charanjit Singh, The Honourable Raja.  
Chetty, The Honourable Diwan Bahadur  
G. Narayanaswami.  
Choksy, The Honourable Khan Bahadur  
Dr. Sir Nasarvanji.  
Commander-in-Chief, His Excellency the.  
Devadoss, The Honourable Sir David.  
Ghosal, The Honourable Mr. Jyotsnanath.  
Gladstone, The Honourable Mr. S. D.  
Glass, The Honourable Mr. J. B.  
Glancy, The Honourable Sir Bertrand.  
Hafeez, The Honourable Khan Bahadur  
Syed Abdul.  
Hallett, The Honourable Mr. M. G.  
Johnson, The Honourable Mr. J. N. G.  
Menon, The Honourable Diwan Bahadur  
Sir Ramunni.  
Miller, The Honourable Mr. E.

Mitchell, The Honourable Mr. D. G.  
Mitha, The Honourable Sir Suleman Cassim  
Haji.  
Noon, The Honourable Nawab Malik Sir  
Mohammad Hayat Khan.  
Padshah Sahib Bahadur, The Honourable  
Saiyed Mohamed.  
Pandit, The Honourable Sardar Shri  
Jagannath Maharaj.  
Philip, The Honourable Mr. C. L.  
Russell, The Honourable Sir Guthrie.  
Spence, The Honourable Mr. G. H.  
Stewart, The Honourable Mr. F. W.  
Stewart, The Honourable Mr. T. A.  
Tallents, The Honourable Mr. P. C.  
Ugra, The Honourable Rai Sahib Pandit  
Gokaran Nath.  
Yamin Khan, The Honourable Mr. Moham-  
mad.

The Motion was negatived.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Resolution moved :

“ That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps to prevent the import of foreign rice into this country and to adopt other substantial measures to improve the present low prices of rice, with a view to alleviate the lot of the agriculturists ”.

**The Question is :**

“ That this Resolution be adopted.”

**The Motion was adopted.**

### RESOLUTION *RE* EDUCATION OF THE ELECTORATE, AND PREPARATION OF ELECTORAL ROLLS, ETC.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN** (West Punjab : Muhammadan) : May I have your permission, Sir, to make a slight change in the Resolution which I now propose to move. The amended Resolution would read as follows :

“ This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a Committee to suggest what steps should be taken :

- (a) To educate the electorate.
- (b) To ensure that the electoral rolls are properly prepared.
- (c) To ensure that illiterate voters record their votes without the help of the polling Officer.
- (d) To minimise the chances of personation and corrupt practices in polling ”.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Yes.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** At the outset one fact must be made clear that any allusion to the probability of corruption at elections in this country or any references to the protection of the ignorant or inexperienced voter must not be regarded in the least degree as intended to cast a slur on Indian public morals as compared with those of other countries. It is because of the evils that formerly prevailed in the United Kingdom that stress is intended to be laid on the dangers of similar corruption in India.

Now, Sir, discussing the various details of the Resolution, about part (a) I would only submit that my object is that the Government of India should take steps to see that all the important books, such as the Government of India Act or other important literature concerning the public are translated in the various vernacular languages and copies are distributed on a very large scale free. As we all know, Sir, the number of the English-knowing public is very small and the number of those people who read papers regularly is also comparatively small. Therefore I consider that it is the duty of Government to see that all important books are translated and distributed free on a very large scale. I am sure that the Government will agree that the success of a democratic form of government entirely depends upon the interest which the electorate take in the important public affairs and it would not be possible for them to take a real interest in the affairs of the country unless they are educated in this direction. As a matter of fact, normally it should be the duty of political organisations to educate the voters in these matters, but considering the special circumstances prevailing in this country I personally suggest that the Government should undertake this task. They have got machinery in all the provinces as well as at the centre. There is a Director of Information Bureau at the centre and there are similar officers in the provinces. They have

[Raja Ghanzafar Ali Khan.]

got a large staff and I do not think it will require much additional expenditure if they are required to translate these documents and distribute them. Only a short time ago the Punjab Government translated certain extracts from the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report and distributed them free to the public, but I think this practice should be more regularly followed, and this is what I mean by educating the voters.

The second part concerns the preparation of electoral rolls. In England as far as I know electoral rolls are revised after every six months, while in India the electoral rolls remain in force for three years. The result is that the electoral rolls are not kept quite up to date. Secondly, the work of preparing the electoral rolls is entrusted either to low paid municipal clerks or to the subordinate staff in the Revenue Department, who get practically no remuneration for this most important work, with the result that the electoral rolls are very carelessly prepared. To illustrate my point, I read in the newspapers that His Excellency Lord Willingdon was anxious to record his vote, but when His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and other Members of the Viceroy's Council went to the polling station to record their votes, His Excellency discovered to his great disappointment that his name was not on the electoral roll. Considering the fact that the qualification of an elector is that he should have a property of Rs. 10,000 or his income should be more than Rs. 2,000 a year, it is a matter for surprise to find that those who were entrusted with the preparation of the electoral roll thought that His Excellency did not come under that definition. There are various other instances. For instance, everybody knows that the name of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was not to be found on the electoral roll of Benares; similarly Mr. Nariman's name was not on the electoral roll of the Bombay constituency. Such glaring defects have become conspicuous because the personalities are important, but I may assure you that the names of a very large number of people who are really entitled to vote do not appear on the electoral roll. As far as I understand in England and in other advanced countries this work is generally done by election agents of various candidates, but in India when the political parties have not developed to the same extent I think the Government should take particular care that the electoral rolls are properly prepared. There are different suggestions which can be made to achieve this object, but I have no intention of detaining the House by discussing those details. It is enough to place before the Council that the present machinery of preparing electoral rolls is highly defective.

Coming to the third part of my Resolution, Sir, which concerns the recording of votes by illiterate voters, I would submit that there are different systems adopted in different provinces. In the Punjab the illiterate voter takes his ballot paper to the polling officer who is sitting alone in a room and asks him to put a cross against the name of the candidate for whom he wants to vote. It is the polling officer who puts that cross against that name, folds the ballot paper and puts it in the box. Now, is there any guarantee that the polling officer will not put a cross, instead of putting it against the name of the candidate for whom the voter intends to vote, against the name of his opponent if the polling officer is interested in him ?

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** What is the alternative in the case of an illiterate man ?

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** There are different alternatives which are adopted by different provinces. For instance

in Bombay they have a different sign for different candidates, such as an elephant, a camel, a horse. An illiterate voter can vote for an elephant, although I think the bulk of the people, being very fond of racing, would prefer to put their cross against a horse than against an elephant. Then, Sir,

1 P.M.

there are other systems. For instance, in some provinces they have coloured boxes. There are different colours assigned to each candidate and the voter, even an illiterate voter can go and record his vote without the help of the polling officer. But of all these systems I think the system in the Punjab is the most defective one and is liable to be very much abused which, as I have already explained, is the marking of the ballot paper by the polling officer. That, I understand, is also the practice in Madras, Assam and the United Provinces. Therefore, Sir, the House will realise that this is a very arbitrary way of recording a vote which leaves the candidate entirely at the mercy of the polling officer. It seems most essential that the Government should devise some means of enabling the illiterate voter to record his vote without the help of anybody and without breaking the secrecy of the voting. I think, Sir, this trouble is bound to assume large proportions when the franchise is expanded as is proposed to be done under the new constitution. Therefore, it is high time that the Government with the help of non-official Members who have got first-hand experience of these elections tried to formulate some scheme to put an end to this.

Then, Sir, coming to the last part of my Resolution, which relates to cases of personation and corrupt practices, while I admit there are clear rules on the subject already, at the same time I feel that in spite of these rules there is a tendency to increased expenditure at the time of elections and also of personation on a very large scale. During the last municipal elections in Lahore it was published in all the papers (and, if I am not mistaken, the Punjab Government are holding an inquiry about it) that more than 50 per cent. of the votes tendered were cases of personation. This is an evil, Sir, which has got to be eradicated by this committee.

Then there are corrupt practices and I mainly refer to the feeding of the voters and the provision of conveyances. My experience is that some candidates spend thousands of rupees nearing a lakh on their election. Most of this money is spent on providing conveyances, motor cars, lorries, etc., for the voters and also providing food for them when they come to the polling stations. In some cases, particularly in rural constituencies, I think it is very difficult to avoid this because there is one polling station for about 20 villages and voters have to walk a distance of about ten miles to come and record their votes. After all, the voters are not so keen about recording their votes that they should walk ten miles and go and record their votes and go back to their own villages without having any food. Therefore, what happens in most cases, indeed in all cases that I have experience of in rural constituencies, is that the candidate provides food for thousands of his voters. Well, you can imagine, Sir, what heavy expenditure it involves, and naturally a man who can spend more money has a great advantage. Naturally, Sir, when the voters come to a polling station they will vote for the candidate who can give them *palau* and *kabab* in preference to the one who can only give them *dal* and rice. Of course, all these corrupt practices are strictly prohibited under the rules but still they are indulged in on a large scale. My friend says it is very difficult to stop them. There are many difficult things but that does not mean that we should become so helpless as to give up any idea of mending these things. I personally think some means can be devised by which a proper check can be kept on these corrupt practices, and I am sure

[Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan.]

Government will give sympathetic consideration to the proposals contained in this Resolution. I may just conclude my speech by telling them once again that if this new form of government, this democratic form of government which is foreign to this country, does not bring any good to the people, at least let it not be responsible for corrupting their morals. Therefore, Sir, I would appeal to Government to take special measures to develop a sense of responsibility in the voters as well as in the minds of the candidates. Of course, elections in this country are entirely a new device and therefore it is necessary that the rules with regard to corrupt practices and personations should be made very rigid and strict in the beginning. When the next stage comes, naturally these rules will have to be relaxed. But at the commencement and particularly with this great expansion of franchise, it would be very difficult to stop these corrupt practices unless special measures are taken.

I will now finish my speech, Sir, by just quoting a small passage from that great well-wisher of India, the late Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu, and I am sure the spirit in which he uttered these words will be the spirit in which the Government of India will treat this question. He said :

“ To obtain from this system of popular government the best that the West can give, to exclude any undesirable features that have attended its growth in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, and to retain for India all that is good in her own political heritage, that seems to me, is the task of those who wish to adapt any English system to Indian use ”.

Sir, I move my Motion.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU (United Provinces Southern : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, the Honourable Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan has moved a very difficult Resolution. So far as the question of the education of the electorate is concerned, it is a matter for political parties. The Executive in this country, Sir, is an irremovable one. It is an Executive responsible to the Parliament of another country. The Executive therefore here cannot go and educate the electorates. I think it is not fair to Government servants that you should ask them to take part in politics and that is what it will come to if you ask them to educate the electorates. So far as education of the electorate is concerned, that is a task to which Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan should address himself ; that is a task to which Sir Phiroze Sethna should address himself ; that is a task to which political parties in this country should address themselves. I think it is wrong for the Government of the day, for a Government constituted as the Government of India now is, to take part in what is called the education of the electorate. I have very strong views on this question. I think all this publicity business is so much money wasted. In many cases, I do not think anybody takes very seriously what emanates from the Publicity Department. You can never influence or educate public opinion by the methods which commend themselves to Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan. He says that the Government of India Bill should be distributed free. Those of us, who are interested in the Government of India Bill, have purchased copies and have read it from page to page, from cover to cover. I do not think that the average villager is likely to read the Government of India Bill or understand it. In any case, I do not think that the new Government of India Bill is worth distributing free. I would rather that this money was spent on more useful objects. We do not want our money to be squandered for these purposes.

So far as the second, third and fourth parts of the Resolution are concerned, I must confess that I have a certain amount of sympathy with these parts.

I think that the electoral rolls are not always properly prepared. They are not prepared by a very intelligent class of persons. But here again, I would say that you cannot fix the responsibility entirely upon the Government. It is the duty of political organisations also to help in the preparation of these electoral rolls. I think that political organisations in this respect are very defective. We have no proper party Secretariats which would see that these electoral rolls are prepared intelligently and properly. I found, Sir, to my horror my own name in the electoral roll spelt in a way in which I do not spell it, and it was difficult for me really to discover whether it was I or somebody else. But then, the parentage made it clear that it was myself and not somebody else whom the officer had in mind.

So far as the third part is concerned, namely, that the illiterate voters should record their votes without the help of the polling officer, that is a very difficult question. Various methods have been suggested. I believe the Lothian Committee has also made some valuable suggestions.

So far as the fourth part is concerned, namely, that effort should be made to minimise the chances of personation and corrupt practices in polling, I am not sure that the electoral law needs revision. My friend objects to the entertaining of voters and so on. My friend will remember the observations of the Simon Commission on this matter. If you have a too rigid law, then the temptation is to evade that law. I do not suggest for a moment that there should not be a very rigid electoral law. But if you make that law too rigid, and if there is no public opinion to see that that law is enforced, then you do not stop the evil, however much you may desire to stop it. What you want is not so much a change in the electoral law as a change in public opinion. I think some of the things which the electoral law recognises as corrupt, people do not recognise as corrupt. That is the real difficulty. That is why the electoral law cannot be enforced very strictly.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** For instance ?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU :** For instance, entertaining voters. I think personally it is very wrong to entertain voters. But if you talk to the average voter, you will find that he has got a very different outlook in this matter.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** Naturally.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU :** Therefore, before you can enforce your laws strictly, or before you can make your laws more rigid, in this respect—I think the laws are already sufficiently strict—you want a strong public opinion also, and you cannot have that strong public opinion until you take steps to educate that public opinion, and so far as the education of this public opinion is concerned, it is a task in which Government cannot be of very great help. It is a task which we must perform ourselves. Therefore, Sir, I find that I cannot give my support to the Resolution of Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan in the form in which it has been placed before the House.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR (Central Provinces : General) :** Sir, I have listened with great attention to the Honourable Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, but I am still in doubt whether I should support this Resolution. I know it has been brought forward with the best of motives, but, on further consideration, I think this Resolution is not needed at all. My grounds are these. I am fully in accord with the views of my Honourable friend

[Mr. V. V. Kalikar.]

Mr. Sapru so far as the education of the electorate is concerned, and I agree that no amount of public money should be wasted in distributing copies of the Government of India Bill or getting them translated into the vernacular and distributed to the large number of voters in India. I think that that money could be spent on more useful purposes. I do agree with Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan that the electorate should be educated. But I think it is the concern of the various political parties to educate the voters and I think it should not be left to Government to do it. As stated by the Honourable Mr. Sapru, we should certainly not ask Government to allow their officers to take part in politics and to educate the electorate.

With regard to ensuring that electoral rolls are properly prepared, I know that complaints do crop up because the electoral rolls are not properly prepared in various provinces. I know there are electoral rules—in my province there are—saying that if any elector's name is not in the roll, he has to apply to the District Judge and get his name enrolled. If he fails in that, the fault is not with the Government; the fault is with the political party. I know that the people who are entrusted with the task of preparing these electoral rolls are low paid municipal clerks and officers. But then, this is not the proper place to move a Resolution like this. If the electoral rolls of his province are not properly prepared I would suggest that he have this Resolution moved in the local Council and not in the Council of State.

Then I come to the part of his Resolution

“to ensure that illiterate voters record their votes without the help of the polling officer”.

I do not know the practice of other provinces, but in my province for election to the local Council we have coloured boxes for the different candidates and from my experience as a member of the local Council there has never been any difficulty. The voter has made up his mind beforehand for which candidate he will vote and he puts in his paper into the box of the candidate for whom he wants to vote. But if there have been difficulties in other provinces, then still I do not think this is the place where he should move his Resolution.

Then I come to the fourth part and here I would remind my Honourable friend of the Government of India Act of 1920, Act XXXIX of 1920. I have not heard the Government reply but I do not think they propose to repeal various Acts and especially this Act when the future constitution comes into force. And in this Act there is a provision dealing with false personation and corrupt practices. That Act is incorporated in the Indian Penal Code and sections 171D, 171E, 171F, and 171G clearly lay down the law in regard to corruption and false personation. So I do not think there is any need to appoint a committee and waste public money over this matter. Therefore, Sir, I do not see my way to supporting this Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE SIR PHIROZE SETHNA (Bombay: Non-Muhamadan): Sir, objection has been raised by my Honourable friends Mr. Kalikar and Mr. Sapru that this Resolution should not have been brought in this House. It will be for the Government Member to say whether he considers the evils referred to by the mover such that Government should take notice of them, and if he does so decide then the Government of India in their turn should ask the provincial Governments to remedy the state of affairs.

The Raja Sahib has divided his Resolution into four parts. I will deal with (b), (c) and (d) first and then refer to (a). As regards (b), that the electoral



rolls are not properly prepared, I would like to say that my experience does not extend to rural electorates. I only know the position in regard to elections in Bombay. As has been stated, municipal clerks are engaged for the purpose of preparing these rolls. What do they do? Suppose they go to a large block of buildings where there are many offices. All that they do is to take down the names of companies which they find on the signboards. That is all. But as has very well been pointed out by Mr. Kalikar, it is the duty of the elector himself to see that his name is included. In Bombay the practice prevails, and I suppose elsewhere also, that the preliminary electoral roll is published and intimation is given to the public by advertisement. It is for the public to find out whether their own names or the names of the companies or agencies they represent are duly entered or not. If they do not do so, they have no cause to complain when they find on the day of the election that their names are not entered in the municipal electoral roll.

As regards (c), to ensure that illiterate voters record their votes without the help of the polling officer, you, Sir, asked the mover as to what alternative he would suggest and he referred to the case of Bombay. It is true that in Bombay they do not use coloured boxes, but candidates are allowed to select signs or emblems. A man may choose an elephant, a book, a motor car or an aeroplane or any thing else he likes as his emblem. But even then the question arises, supposing a voter is entitled to give 12 votes in a particular ward, how has he to divide them if he is illiterate? In Bombay they give him a sheet, and supposing there are 12 votes then in that sheet there are 12 perforated slips. If he wants to divide his votes the illiterate voter can tear off as many slips as he likes for each candidate and throw them in the box or boxes of the candidates represented by their respective emblems. That is the way in which voting is done in Bombay.

As regards part (d), there has been any amount of personation in the Bombay municipal elections which took place only four or five weeks ago. I will give two or three instances which will interest Honourable Members of this House. One prominent candidate, a medical man by the name of Dr. Saher thought he might give his own votes in the afternoon, but when he went to the polling clerk he discovered that some one had personated him and signed his name on the voting paper. A second case was also that of another well known medical candidate Dr. Meshiri. He too waited till the afternoon to record his own vote, and he also found that he had been personated and by some one who could not read or write because he had put his thumb impression on the voting paper. Imagine a medical man, a member of the Corporation for many years past, recording his vote by a thumb impression! But there was yet another case which beats the first two I have mentioned. This was at the election of three years previous: a man came up to the polling clerk and gave his name—say that his name was A. B. The clerk turned up the list and found the name A. B., but he was well aware that A. B. was the name of his own father and who had died only ten days previous. The polling clerk said, "Are you A. B.?" and he said, "Yes, I am A. B." So he took the paper from the supposed voter after he signed it and then put him up before the officer in charge. It was proved that he had personated a man knowing that that man had died ten days previously but never dreaming that he would apply for the voting paper to a clerk who was a son of the deceased himself. That sort of thing does happen too frequently. The Bombay municipality will I hope appoint a committee to go into the matter and remedy the state of affairs. And if the Government of India are satisfied that the position is substantially as the mover has portrayed it, and I know these evils do exist,

[ Sir Phiroze Sethna. ]

then it would be well for the Government of India to draw the attention of provincial Governments to the state of affairs.

I now come to (a) in which it is said the electorate must be educated. That, Sir, is the root of the evil. I know my friend Mr. Sapru and others will disagree with me, but I think the biggest mistake has been to have so soon extended the franchise to the extent to which it has been extended at this stage. I know they would like to have adult franchise. If without adult franchise you have the evils of the kind referred to by Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, and which I endorse, how much more will be the evils when adult franchise is introduced ? Therefore we should have proceeded in a better manner, extending the franchise say by ten per cent. every five or ten years and during the interval strive to increase literacy in the country. Until there is a far larger percentage of literacy in India than at present we will have to put up with these evils.

THE HONOURABLE MR. M. G. HALLETT (Home Secretary) : I do not think it necessary to speak at any length on this Resolution. The arguments of the mover have been criticized and counter arguments have been put forward. The Resolution as it stands is I understand that the Governor General shall appoint a committee. On that point, Sir, as far as I followed the Honourable Member's speech, not a single word was said. He went on to deal with parts (a), (b), (c) and (d), but there was not an argument to suggest that a committee was the best remedy for these evils, if they really exist. If this Resolution had been that the Government of India should take steps, I would readily have accepted it. As it is, there is the suggestion that there should be a committee and I certainly am not prepared to accept it. A committee on these matters will in fact be entirely useless. Committees are, we know, very often appointed in order to shelve matters. These are urgent problems which have got to be dealt with quickly and, as I shall explain later, are being dealt with very satisfactorily by provincial Governments. The matter is really one of provincial concern, as has been urged by one of the speakers, and necessary action is being taken by the provinces. They are preparing for the first election under the new constitution. We do not know when the Bill will become law, but we know that in any case there will be plenty of work to be done in the short time between the Bill becoming law and the actual introduction of the constitution and we do not want to have that delayed by an entirely unnecessary committee at the centre. Those are my arguments against the committee.

As regards the other points, the four specific points which have been raised, we and local Governments are taking up and considering all the points which are referred to in the Resolution. On the question of educating the electorate, there appears to be some difference of opinion as to whether this should be done by the Government or by the political parties. As Sir Phiroze Sethna has pointed out, it is essential that the electorate should become educated, but the great difficulty I feel is that during the last ten years under the present constitution when the elective system has been in force on a fairly wide scale, parties and representatives of constituencies have done extremely little to educate the electorate during this period. They have visited their constituencies for a few days or for a few weeks just before the election. They do not keep in touch with the constituencies for the greater part of the time they are members of legislative bodies and practically have done nothing to educate them. That being so, it is essential that Government should do something in this matter, when you have got a new system coming into force, when you

want to make the new system a success, you must let people know exactly what that system is. I quite agree that to translate this Bill and distribute it broadcast would do no good at all; the villagers would not understand half of it; but what we have done—what I think is desirable—is that documents such as the Memorandum which was published at the time when the Bill was introduced in the House of Commons, should be distributed widely; that has I think already been done; if it has not been distributed, I will see that it is distributed, because that gives a very clear and intelligible account to the ordinary villager. Local Governments are doing a lot in this respect to explain the provisions of the whole constitution, and I have got numerous examples here of what has been done. I need not weary the House by repeating them. More no doubt will be done in the future, if the need arises when the Bill has finally been passed. But I agree with Mr. Sapru that we are treading on delicate ground because we are accused, if we go too far, of interfering in politics; but in spite of this I think it is our duty to see that the constitution is fully explained to the people who will have to work that constitution, and to the voters in the villages.

I pass on to the second point, the preparation of the electoral rolls. That is entirely a matter for the provinces. It is no doubt a difficult task. We have to employ low paid clerks or subordinate revenue authorities. We cannot employ higher paid staff, because the cost of the elections which is already very high would become very prohibitive. It is a problem which is being dealt with by Reforms Officers in the provinces and I may inform the House that in the course of the next few days the Reforms Commissioner, Sir James Dunnett, is having a meeting here of the Reforms Officers for the various provinces with a view to discuss all the practical difficulties that are likely to arise at the first elections. That I think meets the Honourable Member's point to a large extent. They are pooling their opinions and trying to find out what difficulties they anticipate and what solution they can find for the various problems.

As regards the third point, much has been said on that. The whole matter was thoroughly dealt with by the Lothian Committee when they were out here. I remember I was in charge of a district then and they came to my district and we held a sham election. We showed exactly how we ran the election. In Bihar we had adopted the system of coloured boxes, which is in force in the Central Provinces also, and the Lothian Committee in the Appendix to their report have advocated the system of coloured boxes or possibly coloured symbols in preference to the Punjab system of polling officers making a mark on the ballot paper. The whole matter has been fully dealt with by that Committee. They consulted public opinion; they saw what was actually done; they saw what the difficulties were and this was their considered recommendation. I have no doubt the Punjab Government have considered this and if they have not accepted it there must be some valid reason for their refusal to do so.

Finally, as regards personation and corrupt practices, that again is largely a matter for the people themselves, and for the candidates themselves, to see that they do not set a bad example in the matter. It is referred to by the Joint Select Committee in their Report; they fully recognised the dangers. This again is a matter in which, if anything can be done by Government, local Governments will no doubt take such action that they consider suitable. I have no doubt the question whether a limit should be put on election expenses has been considered. I do not know how that stands. That of course is an important question bearing on the question of corrupt practices.

[ Mr. M. G. Hallett. ]

I think, Sir, I have said enough to show that the Government are dealing with these questions as far as they arise and that there is no need for us to do any more, and in particular there is no need to appoint a committee. I trust, Sir, that in view of the explanation that I have given to the Honourable Raja Sahib and in view of a certain amount of opposition which he has provoked from other parts of the House, he will be content to withdraw his Resolution.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** Sir, I am really very glad that the Honourable Home Secretary has shown a more sympathetic attitude towards my Resolution than some of my friends of the Progressive Party. But before I tell you what I am going to do with regard to my Resolution, I would like to answer some of the criticisms made by my Honourable friend Mr. Sapru. I must admit that I was unable to follow the logic contained in Mr. Sapru's speech. He admitted one thing in one breath and contradicted it in another. He said that it should be the duty of the voters to go and see that their names are properly entered on the electoral roll when the roll is prepared and notice of one month is given to the public to correct it. On the other hand, he said his own name was entirely wrong. Sir, I am not prepared to believe that an average voter in India is more intelligent than Mr. Sapru and if my Honourable friend Mr. Sapru himself who was a candidate for the Council of State did not take the trouble of going and seeing that the electoral rolls are properly prepared, how does he expect an ordinary voter will do that? It is all very well to say that we can do everything ourselves, our political parties should do that, why should we ask Government to do it? But I ask him when he admits and says in his speech himself that there are no political secretariats, that parties are not well organised, that they have no system, no machinery, why should he hesitate in asking Government to use such legitimate methods which are essential to educate the electorate. I really do not understand the opposition coming from the members of the Progressive Party. It is no use indulging in these high slogans that it is the duty of the political parties and all that. There are backward communities, such as the Harijans. They are being allotted quite a large number of seats. May I ask my Honourable friends of the Progressive Party whether they are educated?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU :** We never made it a party question.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** When I say members of the Progressive Party, I do not mean the party. But I was surprised at the attitude shown by my Honourable friends on the right. When I look at their attitude I feel like pressing my Resolution to the vote. On the other hand when I see the attitude of the Government, I feel that it would be unreasonable on my part to press the Resolution any further.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Second thoughts are best!

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** Thank you very much. I would request the Government to accept the Resolution and I would just change it in accordance with the wishes of the Home Secretary.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Order, order. I cannot allow you to make any alteration in the Resolution at this stage.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** Well, Sir, as no alterations can be allowed at this stage, therefore I have no hesitation in asking the House to give me leave to withdraw the Resolution in the earnest hope that the Government will not attach very great importance to those irresponsible statements made by some Honourable Members who say that the Government should sit tight.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU :** I object to the word "irresponsible."

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** I think, Sir, it is perfectly legitimate and even when I say that an Honourable Member is making a statement which a responsible man would not do, I think I am perfectly within my rights, because this is my conviction that the statement made on this question was made in the most irresponsible way. As I have already explained, I feel it is the duty of the Government to take steps to see that the electorate are educated. By that I do not mean that they should be trained to vote for a particular candidate. What I said was that all important documents such as the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report, the Railway Statutory Commission's Report, and so forth, should be translated into various languages and distributed. Now, anybody who says that this is a duty which should not be done by the Government but should be left to the political parties, unorganised as they are, I have no hesitation in saying, he is talking irresponsibly. Therefore, Sir, I would request the Government to do their own duty of observing scrupulous non-interference at elections, but educating the voters and seeing that they do not depend entirely on these wonderful political parties to get the electoral rolls properly prepared. This will have to be done by the Government itself.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** On a point of order, Sir. We would like your ruling whether it is parliamentary for an Honourable Member to call other Honourable Members names. He may stigmatise a statement as irresponsible or anything he likes but to call a person irresponsible is, I think not parliamentary and I would ask you to request the Honourable Member to withdraw that.

**THE HONOURABLE RAJA GHAZANFAR ALI KHAN :** Sir, on a point of personal explanation. I never said "irresponsible person"; I said "irresponsible statement", and I would challenge my Honourable friend to say that this word is not perfectly parliamentary.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** As my ruling is sought on this question, I must point out that I do not see anything objectionable in the words "irresponsible statements". That expression has been used in the House of Commons by more eminent statesmen than this House possesses. But I must also correct and bring to the notice of the Honourable Mr. Sapru that the Honourable Member did not, so far as I heard him, speak of "irresponsible persons" but "irresponsible statements".

The Resolution\* was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

The Council then adjourned for Lunch till a Quarter to Three of the Clock.

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\*Vide page 357, ante.

The Council re-assembled after Lunch at a Quarter to Three of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

## RESOLUTION *RE* ACCOMMODATION IN THE WESTERN COURT FOR MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE.

THE HONOURABLE SIR PHIROZE SETHNA (Bombay : Non-Muhamadan) : Mr. President, I beg to move :

“ That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that accommodation in the Western Court, New Delhi, during the sittings of the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly be offered in the first instance to Members of the Legislature who live in European style ”.

Sir, my object in bringing forward this Resolution is to draw the pointed attention of Government to what some of us consider a legitimate grievance. When Government moved to New Delhi, it became necessary to construct buildings for their different requirements. One of such requirements was to provide accommodation for Members of the two Houses when they came here to attend a session of the Legislature. With this object in view, they erected two big blocks of buildings facing one another, called respectively the Western Hostel and the Eastern Hostel. The Eastern Hostel was meant for Members who live in the orthodox style and the Western for those who live in European style. After a time, those who live in the orthodox style did not care for the Eastern Hostel because it looked more like a hotel and they preferred to have separate cooking arrangements for each Member. When therefore more detached bungalows were available, they were given to orthodox Members and the Eastern Hostel was converted to another purpose, namely, to locate the Central Telegraph Office, and I believe the upper floors are reserved as residences for some of the officers of that department.

The Western Hostel continued to be used for Members of the Legislature who lived in European style. So far as I remember, it was originally restricted only to Members of the Legislature, but later on, some officials were also given accommodation in that building. I would like to mention what the accommodation is in the Western Hostel, which however is now known as the Western Court. There are 70 rooms in all, 58 single rooms and 12 double rooms, so that there would be 70 tenements altogether, if I might call them by that name. Some of these single rooms were later on converted into double room quarters ; that is to say, two single rooms were made into a double quarter, one room being given for a bed room and the other for a sitting room. Thus, the total number of 70 tenements was reduced to 58, namely, 23 double quarters and 35 single quarters. I will now inform the House how these 58 tenements are allocated. The Members of the Council of State are allocated only three, one double quarter and two single quarters. Members of the Assembly are allocated 31 quarters, 10 double and 21 single. That still leaves 12 double room and 12 single room quarters. These are all given to officials. Not only do they get these 24 quarters, but perhaps they have the pick of the rooms because they occupy quarters in the Western Court when they return from Simla and consequently long before Members of the Legislature arrive here. I have no objection to officials being given quarters in the Western Court provided that the demands made by Members of the Legislature themselves are first acceded to.

I will now take the case of Members of the Council of State. According to Circular No. 1 issued on the 8th January of this year, we were allotted eight

sets of quarters at Metcalfe House, Delhi, and two single and one double quarter in the Western Court, New Delhi, and these are meant for Members who live in European style. Now, Mr. President, the Honourable Members know that Metcalfe House is at a distance of nearly six miles or more from the sphere of our labours, namely, New Delhi and particularly the Council House. It means a drive of anything from 15 to 20 minutes each way, and one may have to go there twice, and sometimes three times a day. It certainly involves very considerable loss of time. What we, Members of the Council of State, would like is to be within proximity of our colleagues, both of this House and of the other, and to live in New Delhi so that we can meet the officials as often as possible, which is necessary, and also to go to the Library for reference and other purposes. Therefore, their asking us to stay at Metcalfe House is a serious inconvenience. But more than that, Mr. President, in the Circular No. 1 of 8th January, whilst offering us eight sets of quarters at Metcalfe House, paragraph 9 (b) says :

“ that no arrangements for catering at Metcalfe House have been made this year and Members desiring accommodation there will be under the necessity of making their own arrangements for messing, namely, by arranging to take their meals at Alipore House. Facilities for cooking have not been provided ”.

Fancy the idea of asking Members to live in Metcalfe House and trudge a distance of half a mile or more three times a day for their meals ! I wonder who was the official whose brilliant idea it was to offer us eight sets of quarters there and at the same time tell us that there are no catering arrangements. Surely if that was so, they could very easily have provided us with more accommodation in the Western Court. But it is no use crying over the past. My Resolution is in regard to the future. I certainly think that we are entitled to first preference, for as far as I know and remember, these blocks were meant exclusively for the Members of the central Legislature. There is no reason why we should be asked to go to Metcalfe House and these quarters be given to officials. Officials only require to come in the morning to their offices in New Delhi and go back in the evening. That is not the case with us and we should certainly be provided with accommodation here.

There is another complaint, to which however I do not attach much importance. I understand that whilst there are 70 servants' quarters only 30 or less are allotted to Members of the Legislature. Similarly, the better class garages also are not given to Members of the Legislature but reserved for officials. This is another grievance.

All therefore that I want the Government to do is to see that a mistake such as this, namely, of offering us quarters at Metcalfe House when there are no catering arrangements there is not repeated, and, more than that, to see that quarters in Metcalfe House are no longer offered to us but only quarters in the Western Court.

THE HONOURABLE DIWAN BAHADUR G. NARAYANASWAMI CHETTY (Madras : Non-Muhammadan) : While agreeing with my friend Sir Phiroze Sethna in all that he has said in commending his Resolution to the acceptance of the House, I would also like to draw attention to another grievance. Last month I had to attend a meeting of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research. I wrote to the Estate Department for my accommodation in New Delhi for two days, asking them to give me a room. I got a reply the day previous to starting on my journey stating that no accommodation was available for those two days. You will see from that, Sir, that we are unable to get accommodation in Delhi even when we come here on Government business to attend meetings summoned by a Government department. I say that

[Diwan Bahadur G. Narayanaswami Chetty.]

we should be given a place to stay in during our attendance at meetings here. In this case I got the intimation that no accommodation was available only the day before I had to leave, and I had to telegraph to a friend of mine to put me up. That is an inconvenience we feel. Surely Government could set apart some rooms for such contingencies but we are denied even that. Therefore I would also add to what my friend has said, that accommodation must be given to Members who come to Delhi on Government business.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS (Nominated Indian Christians): I have much pleasure in supporting this Resolution. I will only add that so far as the Council of State is concerned I believe we are worse off than the other House. There are only two of what are called single quarters and only one married quarter. Last year I tried to get married quarters and at the last moment, two or three weeks after they had got my letter, I got a telegram, "No. 1 Metcalfe House available. Will you take it?" I said, "Hobson's choice. Yes". Well, I had to be in Metcalfe House for three months with my wife and child, and you know, Sir, how far away it is. The result was that the two of us had to go back home about the beginning of May burning with fever. So I think that those who are prepared to live in English style and conform to the ways of the Western Court ought to be provided with sufficient accommodation there. I have much pleasure in supporting this Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE MR. D. G. MITCHELL (Industries and Labour Secretary): Sir, I must begin by expressing my great regret that the Honourable mover and other Honourable Members of this House have been incomed in this matter of accommodation in New Delhi. Having been myself a homeless official of the Government of India for several years, I am in a position fully to sympathise with the Honourable Member in not being able to find accommodation for a few days in the hostelry of his choice. He has made out that Government is rather stony-hearted. That is really not so, and in order to persuade the House that Government has been doing its best I would supplement the history given by the Honourable Sir Phiroze Sethna.

As he said, in 1920 the Western Hostel, as it was then called, was built for the accommodation of Members of the central Legislature. A few years later, in 1924, the lease of Curzon House lapsed and a large number of officials were rendered homeless. Government approached the Legislative Department, which at that time administered the Western Hostel, and asked if it was possible to arrange for the accommodation of some of these officials in the Western Hostel. A review was taken of the case and it was found that out of 70 quarters, in the year 1922, 21 were occupied by Members of the central Legislature; in 1923, 20 quarters were occupied; in 1924, 27 quarters were occupied. So Government decided that out of a total number of 70 quarters, 25 single quarters and 10 double quarters, that is, 35 quarters in all, should be reserved for Members of the Legislature, whose maximum demand up to that time had been 27. The rest of the accommodation was then made available for officials. In 1927, in connection with the proposal to sell the Western Hostel to a hotel company, the whole question of the accommodation in the Western Hostel was re-examined and the case was referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses. They reviewed the whole position and they confirmed the arrangements which were made in 1924. Since then there have been certain re-arrangements in the accommodation and particular quarters have been allotted to the Council of State and particular quarters to Members of the Legislative Assembly. At the present moment I understand the position



is not quite as stated by the Honourable Member. The present position is that there are now 24 single quarters available for Members of the Legislature and 11 double quarters, and 34 single and one double for officials of the Government of India. This accommodation is allotted according to a fixed plan. There is no question of an official coming up first and booking the best accommodation. Certain rooms are set aside for Members of the Legislature and certain rooms are set aside for officials, the one set is just as good as the other ; and the same remarks apply to the garages. The Honourable Member has perhaps obtained a garage which is not one of the best but it does not follow that the officials keep the best garages. I assure the Honourable Member that is not so.

In the present year there were 39 applications from Members of the Legislature for 35 quarters allotted to them, and there were 46 applications from officials for 35 quarters. I would draw the Honourable Member's attention to the fact that, though it is very regrettable that Members of the central Legislature should be inconvenienced, officials themselves are inconvenienced to a much greater extent. They are required to live in Delhi for six months, whereas the Members of the Legislature at the outside come up here for two months. The Honourable mover of the Resolution himself, for instance, in 1930 did not appear at all. In 1931 I gather he was in attendance for four days ; in 1932 for five days ; in 1933 for two days ; in 1934 for two days. I hope he will give us the honour of staying a little longer this session. As regards Metcalfe House, I fully admit the inconvenience caused to Honourable Members, but we did our best to get a caterer ; but the thing is in such a small scale that no caterer will take it up. We will do our best next year and try to have a caterer there to meet the convenience of Honourable Members.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR PHIROZE SETHNA :** We do not want to go to Metcalfe House. We prefer to be in the Western Court if Government can provide accommodation for us there.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. D. G. MITCHELL :** I shall come to that. But I would suggest to the Honourable Member that he should not press this too far. It is hardly a practical proposition to allot quarters to officials on the condition that they may be turned out for two days at a time or even five days at a time during their stay. The chances are that officials will not take them up as permanent residences, and in that case the caterer will not be able to provide conveniences for Members on the scale and for the reasonable figure at which he now does. To turn out officials entirely or to make them subject to eviction at any moment would certainly have the result of making these quarters more expensive for Members of the central Legislature. The Honourable Member must remember that officials stay there for six months, and the caterer makes a steady income out of them. I must also remind the Honourable Member, though it is an argument which I advance with diffidence, that the official pays rent to Government for six months and the legislator in some cases for a few days. However, I can hold out a ray of hope to the Honourable Member. As he knows, we are now carrying on with the capital project in New Delhi and are building bungalows. We intend during the ensuing six months to build another 21 officers' bungalows, which will be ready for occupation next cold weather. That, in all likelihood will have some effect on the demand by officials for quarters in the Western Court. If that is so, then Government will certainly reconsider the position and see if it is possible to allot more quarters for Members of the central Legislature ; and then I hope my Honourable friend will find a nice little suite ready waiting for him when he pays us the honour of one of his fleeting visits.

3-5 P. M.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR PHIROZE SETHNA:** I am obliged to the Honourable Mr. Mitchell for the reply he has given, but it is more or less a defence in regard to giving so many rooms to officials. My point is that even though officials stay for six months at a stretch and we are here only for a few days or weeks, surely our convenience has to be studied and the more so because this block was originally intended for Members living in European style. I learnt from him that a committee was appointed in 1924 and I think he said another in 1927 and that these committees allotted certain rooms to officials and the rest to the Members of the Legislature. But circumstances have now altered and Members prefer to stay in the Western Court for the reasons I have stated and do not want to go as far as Metcalfe House. Why then force them to go to Metcalfe House. You can very easily ask officials to go to Metcalfe House and that will not cause them the great inconvenience it causes to Members of the Legislature. I am assured that 21 more bungalows are going to be put up and they will be ready before the next cold weather. As the Honourable Mr. Mitchell has promised that Government will reconsider the matter and offer perhaps more accommodation to Members of the Legislature in the Western Court, I will not press my Resolution.

The Honourable Member referred to my presence in the House during the last few years and gave the number of days that I was here in each of those years. The Honourable Member surely knows that I cannot be at two places at the same time. My absence from India during most of the time that he referred to on the Round Table Conference or the Joint Select Committee work was perhaps responsible for my presence in the Council being for a limited number of days but I will readily admit that, because there is very little work to do in the Council of State, I cannot afford to stay here doing nothing and that is why I am not here at a stretch but run up whenever necessary. At the same time I would like to remind my Honourable friend that I would not refuse to pay the rent for the full season, whether I stay for two days or two weeks during the session. The Honourable Mr. Mitchell's argument therefore will not avail.

On the assurance which my Honourable friend has given that Government will reconsider the position when these 21 new bungalows are completed before the next cold weather, I do not press my Resolution.

The Resolution\* was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

## RESOLUTION RE LEGISLATION FOR THE COMPULSORY MIXING OF ALCOHOL IN MOTOR SPIRIT.

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA MATHURA PRASAD MEHROTRA** (United Provinces Central : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I beg to move :

" This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to introduce legislation to make it obligatory to mix a certain percentage of alcohol in motor spirits and to permit sugar factories, specially those working on co-operative lines, to manufacture alcohol out of molasses "

\* Vide page 368, ante.

Sir, as the Resolution stands, it has got several advantages and objects and I think it would be better if I described the objects underlying the Resolution at the very outset before I go into its details. Sir, the first object of the Resolution is to utilise the enormous production of molasses on account of the recent increase of sugar factories. Secondly, Sir, the object of the Resolution is to bring down the cost of the manufacture of sugar, so that it may be able to compete with foreign sugar. The third object of the Resolution is to lower the price of petrol which is enormously consumed in India and for which the provinces in the northern and central parts of India have to pay much more than the presidency provinces on account of the heavy railway freight. And lastly, Sir, if my Resolution is accepted, it will help to a certain extent, if not much, in solving the problem of unemployment because a large number of persons will be employed in the manufacture of alcohol out of molasses.

Sir, the question of molasses in India was very insignificant before 1930 when there were about 25 factories which were manufacturing white sugar and India on the other hand had to import enormous quantities of molasses from Java and other foreign countries. Since the development of the sugar industry and the opening of so many factories in India, their position has altogether changed. Now, Sir, I will just show what is the position at present so far as the production of molasses is concerned. Sir, the total production of molasses in 1929-30 was 248,292 tons. In 1930-31 it was 268,945 tons, in 1931-32 it was 341,350 tons, in 1932-33 it was expected to be 420,000 tons, and in 1933-34 about 500,000 tons. So, Sir, we find that the production of molasses is being increased year by year on account of these factories. What is the result? The result is, Sir, that the factories have to spend something out of their own pockets to throw away these molasses. There are many factories, I know, Sir, which do not find ways how to throw it away and they have to wait for the rainy season when these molasses may be washed away.

Sir, when the Tariff Board fixed a certain import duty and found out the fair selling price of sugar in India it considered that the price of molasses would be about Rs. 1-8-0 per maund. But what we do find is that at present the molasses fetch no price at all. With your permission, Sir, I will place certain facts about the price of molasses before the House. In 1931 the price was Rs. 1-8-0 per maund; in 1932 it came down to ten annas per maund; in 1933 it further went down to four annas a maund; and since 1934 it has practically fetched no price at all. So this national product of India is being wasted away at present. We all know, Sir, that in previous years India had to import molasses from Java in great quantities. In 1930-31 the molasses imported into India was to the value of Rs. 42,63,995, in 1931-32 it was Rs. 15,82,250, in 1932-33 it came down to Rs. 10,66,648, and after that India itself had an abundance of molasses and did not require to import any more.

Sir, molasses can be utilised in many ways. But we have to see what is the best and most profitable way in which it can be utilised. I know, Sir, that it can be utilised for manufacturing methylated spirits, for cattle food, for fertilising land, for road surfacing, for cheap confectionery, as alcohol to be mixed with petrol for motors. But all these things which I have described just now are not suited to India. It is not likely that for some years to come it can be utilised in the quantities in which it is being produced by these sugar factories in India nowadays. The best and most profitable solution at present is that alcohol should be manufactured out of the molasses and a certain

[Rai Bahadur Lala Mathura Prasad Mehrotra.]

percentage of it should be compulsorily mixed with petrol. Sir, this is not a new idea that I am placing before this House. In foreign countries they have made experiments and found its utility. The value of alcohol as fuel for internal combustion engines has been recognised in various countries, for example, France, Germany and America. Sir, I will just refer to the Report of the Imperial Sugarcane Research Conference, London, of 1931. In that Conference, what they said of molasses was that :

“ molasses is the cheapest raw material in common use for the production of alcohol for industrial purposes, the price being governed by the supply and demand ”.

That is the conclusion which this Research Conference in London arrived at in 1931. Sir, with your permission, I will place before the House a few of the advantages that would ensue if alcohol prepared out of molasses is mixed with petrol. These advantages are as follows : Alcohol does not produce violent explosions such as gasoline and other motor spirits produce. As a result the motor runs smoothly, thus reducing the amount of wear and tear. As alcohol generates less heat in the combustion process, it needs less water for cooling. Alcohol is less disagreeable to work with and the danger of poisoning due to an inadequate supply of air does not exist when alcohol is used in an engine in a closed place. If the manufacturers of alcohol can succeed in getting the Government of India to abolish the use of costly denaturants and substitute less costly ones for them such as petroleum and gasoline for motor alcohol and exempt alcohol from any excise duty as on petrol, the immediate success of the industry would be assured, and it can compete safely with the petroleum industry.

Sir, these are a few of the advantages that can be secured by the use of alcohol, and on account of this the question has been taken up, not by one but by a number of foreign countries, and what we find, Sir, is that in Australia a mixture of 17 per cent. alcohol and 83 per cent. petrol is used on a small scale and legislation is contemplated ; in Austria the law provides that mixing shall be compulsory if the (duty paid) price of petrol exceeds the price of alcohol ; in Brazil petrol companies are required by law to purchase power alcohol equivalent to five per cent. of their petrol imports, in Czechoslovakia the addition of 20—25 per cent. of alcohol to motor fuel is compulsory and 98½ per cent. of the petrol sold is this mixture ; in France importers of petrol are under a legal obligation to take from Government a quantity of alcohol equivalent to eight to ten per cent. of their petrol imports ; in Germany the oil importers and indigenous producers are required to purchase from the alcohol monopoly of power alcohol corresponding to 10 per cent. by weight of their imports of petrol ; in Greece it is proposed to standardise a mixture of 78 per cent. petrol with 22 per cent. alcohol but also to permit the use of unmixed petrol ; in Hungary petrol over 735 S. G. must be mixed with 20 per cent. alcohol ; in Italy a definite allocation of the total production of industrial alcohol is made to the motor industry—at present 2½ million gallons which is less than three per cent. of the total consumption of motor spirit, in Sweden there is no legal regulation but power alcohol is free of all duty, the mixture used being 25 : 75.

So, Sir, it is not one or two countries, but we find almost all European countries are using alcohol in mixing with petrol and I have therefore brought this Resolution forward to request the Government that they also may b.

pleased to make legislation by which, in whatever percentage their experiments direct, they may use alcohol in mixture with petrol. The consumption of petrol in this country is also growing year after year. It was as follows :

	Million gallons.
1926-27	36.3
1927-28	48.6
1928-29	61.2
1929-30	79.2
1930-31	79.4
1931-32	75.5

So much petrol is being used in this country. So far as the United Provinces, the Punjab and Bihar and Oriassa are concerned, they have to pay a higher price than the other provinces on account of the railway freight. The consumption of these three principal sugar-producing provinces is not less than 13 million gallons of petrol. If Government undertake such legislation and alcohol is mixed in these provinces, they will be saved the enormous railway freight which they now pay and the cost of petrol there will also be reduced. I am aware that in 1933 the Sugar Committee of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research set up a scheme under which two distilleries, one at Cawnpore and the other perhaps at Amritsar began to try experiments about the manufacture of alcohol out of molasses. More than a year has passed. I do not know to what conclusion they have come. I certainly want that the experiment should first be made and then Government may come to a final conclusion as to what percentage of alcohol would be suitable for mixing with petrol according to the conditions in this country. I therefore commend my Resolution to this House and the Government for the advantages that I have just described.

With these words, Sir, I move my Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. MILLER (Bombay Chamber of Commerce) :  
Sir, I have listened most carefully to the Honourable the mover of this Resolution but regret that he has failed to convince me that there is any reason why the Government of India should introduce legislation for the compulsory mixing of alcohol in motor spirit.

A very large proportion of motor spirit consumed in India is indigenous and equal in every respect to motor spirit produced in other parts of the world and it requires no improvement by the addition of alcohol, so why should this be made compulsory by legislation, particularly as there is some doubt as to whether the admixture would prove satisfactory during the monsoon months owing to the possibility of the alcohol attracting additional moisture. In places where extreme humidity prevails the tendency of the alcohol to absorb water would make such a mixture unsuitable for transport and storage in bulk, while handling in sealed packages to any extent would again add to the cost.

There are also other grave practical difficulties in the proposal which need very careful consideration before any legislation of the kind suggested should be supported. One is that the production of alcohol in India is concentrated in certain areas and the freight incurred on carriage to some of the mixing points would add considerably to the cost of the petrol when marketed.

[Mr. E. Miller.]

It has been suggested that legislation should require the mixture of alcohol with petrol in India because such legislation exists in other countries such as France but I would point out that there is no analogy between India and these other countries in this respect. The countries where the production of indigenous power alcohol is subsidised or encouraged by Government have no indigenous petroleum industry such as exists in India. Even in these countries it is not an economic proposition, but there may be reasons in these countries why it should be encouraged and subsidised.

Now there is the other side of this proposal to be considered in regard to the source from which this alcohol is to be obtained. I do not think there can be any insuperable difficulty in obtaining Government sanction to manufacture alcohol out of molasses beyond possibly obtaining a license from the provincial Government concerned and if sugar factories want to manufacture alcohol in this way there should be no serious obstacle in their way.

The real difficulty for the factories is how to dispose of their molasses, which owing to the rapid development of the sugar industry in various parts of India, now amount to a considerable figure, somewhere I think in the neighbourhood of 300,000 to 400,000 tons per annum.

In the days when the sugar industry was in its infancy, there were various industrial outlets which could deal with the residual molasses but now that sugar is being manufactured in such large quantities, not only is the disposal of this bye-product a problem, but it is only right that every avenue should be explored with a view to ascertaining the most useful manner in which this can be utilised. I think this has been discovered, due to the falling off of the production of sugar in Java, mainly owing to the development of the sugar industry in India. This has naturally led to a considerable contraction in the supply of molasses in Java and I think there is every reason to believe that in consequence a certain world-wide organisation which used to make large purchases of molasses in Java will turn to this country for some of their requirements. What therefore is Java's loss will prove to be India's gain if this opportunity is seized of meeting this demand promptly and I shall not be surprised to hear that it will arise at no very distant date. I understand that the quantity required will be certainly not less than 200,000 tons per annum and it is likely to be far in excess of this figure. If this transfer of demand materialises the sugar manufacturers will be relieved of all further trouble for there will be no need to continue investigating the possibilities of marketing alcohol obtained from this source. Even if production of alcohol from molasses proved to be a practicable commercial proposition, it would entail considerable capital expenditure and the scheme would take years to develop whereas the purchase of all surplus molasses by the organisation mentioned can be put into full working operation within a period of a few months at little or no expense to the sellers or to Government.

I think Honourable Members will appreciate from what I have said that the proposals contained in this Resolution require very careful consideration and there certainly seems no justification for Government to be asked to legislate at this stage. So long as a quick, easy and reasonably remunerative market can be found for the surplus molasses and so long as we have adequate supplies of indigenous petrol at hand, just so long is there no justification for launching out on a scheme which will probably require a subsidy from Government and the success of which is most uncertain.

Sir, I oppose the Resolution.

\*THE HONOURABLE SARDAR BUTA SINGH (Punjab : Sikh) : Sir, I have great pleasure in supporting the Resolution moved by the Honourable Rai Bahadur Lala Mathura Prasad Mehrotra. Molasses are now a waste product and in all countries the only way to turn it into a useful article is to make power alcohol out of it. The Sugar Committee appointed by the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research shows how this has been done in other parts of the world, and there is no reason why we should not manufacture power alcohol in India and follow the example of these advanced countries, in compelling the use of alcohol with petrol for all power purposes.

I therefore gladly support the Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE KHAN BAHADUR DR. SIR NASARVANJI CHOKSY (Bombay : Nominated Non-Official) : Sir, I believe that the number of sugar factories will increase to 175 in the course of the present year, and naturally the amount of molasses, as my Honourable friend has told us, is bound to increase. The various ways in which molasses can be utilised have been amply described by Mr. Gandhi, the Secretary of the All-India Sugar Manufacturers Association. He has shown us that there are other articles than alcohol which can be produced. One of the suggestions is to produce denatured alcohol, but nevertheless it is known that the material required for the purpose is expensive and the imported spirit would be cheaper. I believe that there is an organisation which has been started in Calcutta to undertake the export of molasses for the manufacture of manure, and railway companies have made special concessions, by building wagons for transport and making arrangements for its storage there. This is one of the ways in which molasses can be utilised.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. C. TALLENTS (Finance Secretary) : If the Honourable mover will allow me, I will deal first with the second part of this Resolution, which runs :

" That the Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that he should permit sugar factories, specially those working on co-operative lines, to manufacture alcohol (that is to say power alcohol), out of molasses ".

The Honourable Rai Bahadur is a great champion of the sugar factory run on co-operative lines. In the course of the debate which took place in this Chamber the other day it came to light that there are at present in India six factories which can be so described, of which only three, and those are rather small ones, are in working order. So far therefore as their number is concerned, we may say that the factories working on co-operative lines are negligible for present purposes : they do not affect the argument one way or the other. The general recommendation however is that the Governor General in Council should permit sugar factories to manufacture power alcohol out of molasses. The position at present is that it is already within the competence of the local Governments to permit the manufacture of alcohol should they so desire. Excise is a provincial subject under the Government of India Act and it would not be within the competence of the Governor General in Council to issue orders to this effect. The Local Governments can be approached and, provided that the local excise laws and statutory rules are complied with, there is nothing to prevent any sugar factory in India today from manufacturing this alcohol. In the course of the process of manufacture some kind of

\* Speech not corrected by the Honourable Member.

[Mr. P. C. Tallents.]

excisable, potable drink would be produced. Whether it would be very palatable to the public I do not know, but at least it would have the virtue of being very powerful and would need regulation.

Now, Sir, no one has so far raised the question whether this power alcohol which is to be manufactured at Indian sugar factories is to be liable to the excise duty on motor spirit if it is so used. I think I should take this opportunity of emphasising that there would be no justification at all for exempting this spirit from the normal excise duty of 10 annas a gallon. That duty at present brings in to the central Government a revenue somewhere in the neighbourhood of five crores of rupees a year, and there is no justification for making inroads on this source of revenue simply to encourage the manufacture of a bye-product in sugar factories.

Now, Sir, I turn to the first part of the Resolution and I am bound to say that there are grave difficulties lying in the way. The Honourable Mr. Miller has very clearly stated some of them already, and I hope that if in the course of my argument, I cover some of the ground which he has already covered, the House will excuse me. To begin with, there are many more people in India interested in motor transport than in the sugar industry. The Government of India and all Governments in India are very often accused of delay. Well, Sir, what would happen if the Government of India were tomorrow to enact legislation such as that suggested in this Resolution? India would be almost at a standstill. The power alcohol would not be available; motor cars would have to be shut up in their garages and tongas would again come into use. Only a few minutes ago we heard Sir Phiroze Sethna complaining of the difficulty and time taken in moving about in Delhi. If he were forced to move about in a tonga, it would take him three or four times as long. I am sure he would not appreciate that, nor would any other Honourable Member. And this inconvenience would not be confined to the owners of private motor cars. The humblest villager who rides in a motor bus would find the bus unable to run owing to the absence of any mixed motor spirit to put into the tank.

Another point is that, if this power alcohol was manufactured at sugar factories, these factories in most cases are not accessible to centres where the alcohol could be readily mixed with petrol. Ordinarily the place for making the mixture would be at a port. If this power alcohol had to be sent a long way down to a port to be mixed and then brought up-country again, the cost of motor spirit to the consumer would be very greatly increased. Again, an enormous organisation would be required to enforce any such legislation. Honourable Members as they motored along the roads of their native districts would be liable to be held up and tests would be taken of the petrol in their tanks. And, if it could be shown that the mixture was not in accordance with the law how could it then be proved that the owner or driver of the car was aware of the fact? How could it be proved where he had obtained this petrol? If such a law were enacted, the public would be subjected to endless petty harassments, which I am sure would be most keenly resented all over the country.

At the present time it has been reckoned that the cost price of petrol landed at a port in India is in the neighbourhood of four or five annas a gallon, whereas, even under the most favourable conditions, the cost of producing power alcohol at a distillery is certainly not less than twice that figure. The only deduction that one can draw from these figures is exactly



the opposite of the conclusion drawn by the Honourable mover of the Resolution. One of the justifications for moving this Resolution was that he was going to bring down the price of motor spirit to the consumer. As far as I can see, the very opposite would be the case. The actual production of the power alcohol would cost more than the landed cost of petrol at the ports, and the inevitable result would be an increase in cost to the public. This would be keenly resented throughout India.

The Honourable Member enumerated certain advantages in the use of alcohol over motor spirit. I think that the advantages he enumerated were those to be derived from using pure alcohol, and if pure alcohol was to be used that would mean an entire re-designing of the engines. However, as Mr. Miller pointed out, even in the case of mixtures it has not yet been proved that a mixture is suitable for motor transport in India, and it is possible that particularly in the monsoon it might prove less suitable than pure petrol.

Another reason which the Honourable Member adduced in favour of the Resolution was that this was going to help unemployment. Well, Sir, even if you increase the employment in the sugar factories, you are going to reduce the employment in the oilfields, where this petrol is at present produced. What you give with one hand, you take away with the other. I do not think it can be alleged, taken all round, that his proposal is going to increase the amount of employment in India.

I hope that I have said enough to show that for the Governor General to introduce legislation at once on the lines proposed by the Honourable Member is unthinkable; it could not be done. A complete deadlock would take place in India. The industry on behalf of which the Honourable Member was speaking has after all already been protected at a great cost to central revenues. If the implications of his Resolution are brought out, I feel confident that he will realise that such a scheme at present is quite impracticable. The Government of India have been considering for some time past this question of the disposal of molasses and they are still considering it. The views which I have expressed are not the final views of the Government of India, but I have thought it necessary to point out the very great difficulties in giving effect to any such scheme as that which is recommended by the mover of the Resolution. No steps in this direction could possibly be taken without very careful examination, as Mr. Miller suggested just now. I hope, Sir, that the Honourable Member will not therefore press this to a division.

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA MATHURA PRASAD MEHROTRA:** Sir, I regret that the Resolution has been opposed by the Government and by my friend Mr. Miller. So far as my friend Mr. Miller's position is concerned, I may be pardoned if I say that when he said that my speech has not convinced him it was but right, because his speech was prepared before my speech was delivered, and therefore there was no question of conviction after hearing the speech. It is a very straight way in which he has said that my speech has not convinced him, but I regret that it has not convinced the Government also. I think they both are thinking alike, as great men do think. Therefore Mr. Miller was right in saying that it has not convinced him.

Sir, the Honourable the Finance Secretary has made out one or two points which I must answer. He said that I am speaking on this Resolution for co-operative societies. I take credit and I am proud when he makes remarks like that. I am indeed a great champion of the co-operative movement,

[Rai Bahadur Lala Mathura Prasad Mehrotra.]

because I do believe that this is the one movement which can solve the problem of the masses in India. Sir, my Resolution is very general. It deals with all factories and I have simply said that these factories should especially be given permission to make alcohol. That is all. I did not say that no other factory but co-operative factories should be given this permission. My Honourable friend said that there are only six co-operative factories out of which three are working and asked how they will be able to meet the problem. The problem is faced by all factories and the permission if given should be given to them all. Then, Sir, my friend said that the local Government can give this permission. I admit that the local Government can give permission to manufacture alcohol out of molasses; but unless there is legislation, an all-India legislation, on the basis that I have suggested in my Resolution, what would be the use of alcohol manufactured by these factories? Unless the consumption is assured, it is no use manufacturing alcohol, and therefore, Sir, it is very necessary. When I moved this Resolution, my object was that if Government expressed its intention to legislate, the factories would naturally approach provincial Governments and ask for permission to manufacture alcohol out of molasses. Then my friend, the Finance Secretary, keeping his eye on the finances as he should do, asked what about the money he would lose on account of the duty on petrol? I quite admit that Government would lose a certain percentage of the duty they are getting on petrol. It all depends upon the experiment—what percentage would be suitable for India. When we know that, we can say how much Government will be losing in the duty. But, Sir, they have already levied a high excise duty on the factories, by which more than half their profits go into the coffers of the Government. If it is so and if they lose a little and encourage this industry in India I think they will be greatly helping the indigenous industry of the country. So, Sir, that is not a very important point. Then, Sir, he said that it would be very costly to remove this alcohol from these factories to the central places for mixture with petrol. Sir, we all know that there are so many distributing centres in each province and those centres are not very far off from these factories, therefore the cost will not be as much as that of petrol coming from presidency towns. We know, Sir, that petrol is being sold at Bombay and Calcutta at about 14 or 15 annas. (*Some Honourable Members*: "Rs. 1-4-0 or Rs. 1-5-0".) I find that the price is Rs. 1-5-0, but in my province it is sold at Rs. 1-10-6, and so if a certain percentage of alcohol is mixed in my province, the Punjab and Bihar and Orissa, they will be getting much cheaper petrol. For these reasons I find that my Resolution is very reasonable and I do not see my way to withdraw it.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Resolution moved:

"This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to introduce legislation to make it obligatory to mix a certain percentage of alcohol in motor spirits and to permit sugar factories, specially those working on co-operative lines, to manufacture alcohol out of molasses".

The Question is:

"That that Resolution be adopted."

The Motion was negatived.

## PARSI MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE BILL.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR PHIROZE SETHNA** (Bombay: Non-Muhamadan): Sir, I beg to move:

“That this Council do recommend to the Legislative Assembly that the Bill to amend the law relating to marriage and divorce among Parsis be referred to a Joint Committee of this Council and of the Legislative Assembly and that the Joint Committee do consist of 12 members”.

The House will remember that at the Simla session on the 15th August last I introduced a Bill further to amend the Marriage and Divorce Act No. XV of 1865. A week later I moved that the Bill be circulated for opinion. These opinions have now been received by Government and printed copies have been in the hands of Members for the last four or five days. The next step in the ordinary course of business would be for me to move that the Bill and the opinions received be referred to a Select Committee of this House. Instead of doing so, I have moved the Motion which I have just read out and I trust the Council will accept it. I have suggested reference to a Joint Committee of the two Houses for the reason that thereby there will be on the Joint Committee an adequate representation of the members of the small Parsi community, which community alone will be directly affected by this Bill, and secondly that, if it is so referred to a Joint Committee, then the Bill after it has passed this House will have its progress in the other House greatly facilitated. That, Sir, is my reason for proposing a Joint Committee. I will only observe just now that the Parsi community is small in numbers. I would like to give the House some figures. According to the 1931 census, the total population of the Parsi community throughout India was 111,853, which however shows an increase of 7·8 per cent. on the figures of the previous census of 1921. Of these 111,853, as many as 15,304 are in the Indian States and the remainder, 96,549, in British India. Out of this 96,549, as many as 89,544 are in the Bombay presidency, and 57,765 in the City of Bombay itself. This will show that Bombay is the stronghold of the community. The opinions received are many, but the majority are from the Bombay presidency, as is but natural because more than three-fourths of the Parsi population of India live in the Bombay presidency. Those Members who care to go through the opinions will find that they are almost all in favour of the Bill. All recognise the necessity of amending the existing Act, which is 70 years old. There are only two opinions against it.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** All these remarks you should reserve for the consideration stage. They are not pertinent at present.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR PHIROZE SETHNA:** I do mean to do that, Sir. I was just going to say that there are only two opinions against, and that the great majority are in favour of the Bill. However I shall deal with that later as I shall have an opportunity of discussing the merits of the Bill when the Joint Committee submits its report. I therefore trust that the Council will accept my recommendation to refer this Bill to a Joint Committee of the two Houses.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. M. G. HALLETT** (Home Secretary): Sir, I would just like to explain the attitude of Government towards the Motion which has just been made by the Honourable Sir Phiroze Sethna. I can assure him that we cordially support the Motion before the House that this matter

[Mr. M. G. Hallett.]

should be considered by a Joint Committee of the two Houses, and we also fully agree with the two reasons given by Sir Phiroze Sethna for that Motion, viz., that in the first place we should get a larger, more representative committee and should be able to get more representatives of the community affected, and secondly, that it will, we hope, expedite procedure in the final stages when the Bill comes up for consideration.

Government have seen the various opinions which have been obtained by means of circulation and there is no doubt that the Bill has been very thoroughly circulated indeed, and that all members of the community, of whatever position, of whatever class, have had an opportunity of expressing their opinion. There appears to be a strong majority in favour of the Bill but there is a minority who object to certain clauses and those clauses will, of course, have to be very carefully considered by the Select Committee and I have no doubt that we shall be able to reach an agreement in the Select Committee on the points which they have raised. Some of them object to the more drastic provisions of the Bill but as I have said the majority recognise fully that it is time that the Bill passed 60 or 70 years ago should now be amended. Government therefore fully support the Motion which has been made that the Bill be referred to a Committee of the two Houses.

The Motion was adopted.

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The Council then adjourned till Five of the Clock on Thursday, the 28th February, 1935.