

19th March 1937

**THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES**

**(Official Report)**

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**Volume III, 1937**

*(15th March to 3rd April, 1937)*

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**FIFTH SESSION**

**OF THE**

**FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**1937**



**PUBLISHED BY THE MANAGER OF PUBLICATIONS, DELHI.**  
**PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS, SIMLA.**

1937

# Legislative Assembly.

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**MR. M. GHIASUDDIN, M.L.A.**

**MR. MATHURADAS VISSANJI, M.L.A.**

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 19th March, 1937.

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber of the Council House at Eleven of the Clock, Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) in the Chair.

## MEMBER SWORN.

Mr. Arthur Sheldon Hands, C.I.E., M.L.A. (Government of India: Nominated Official).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

### REJECTION OF NOMINATION PAPERS FILED BY TWO SIKH CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERSHIP TO THE DELHI MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE.

693. \*Sardar Sant Singh: (a) Has the attention of Government been drawn to the rejection of nomination papers filed by two Sikh candidates for membership of the Delhi Municipal Committee on the ground that the Sikhs cannot stand as candidates for the general constituency?

(b) If the reply to part (a) be in the affirmative, will Government explain the reasons which have prompted them to deprive the Sikh community as a whole from the civic rights in the Delhi Province?

Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai: (a) Yes.

(b) There has never been any intention on the part of Government to deprive the Sikhs of their civic rights in Delhi or elsewhere. Owing to a flaw in the Delhi Municipal Committee Electoral Rules, Sikhs have been held ineligible for election to the Delhi Municipal Committee. The question of amending these Rules to rectify the flaw is receiving the attention of local authorities.

Sardar Sant Singh: Is it a fact that according to the rules in force now in the Delhi Municipality, the Hindus can vote for Hindu candidates and the Muslims for Muslim candidates, but that the Sikhs have got the right to vote either for a Hindu candidate or for a Muslim candidate?

Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai: Yes, Sir, that is the position.

Sardar Sant Singh: What is the principle underlying this position?

Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai: I do not quite know what is the principle underlying that. But that is the position.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** Is it a fact that there are three electoral rolls published in the Delhi Municipality, the one dealing with the electorate for the Hindus, the other for the Muslims and a third under the head, "others" including Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and the Sikhs?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai:** It may be as my Honourable friend says, but I should like to know what inference does he propose to draw from it. I have already conceded the point that there is a flaw in the electoral rules. The rules have been so framed that people other than Hindus and Muslims can vote either for Hindus or Muslims and not for members of their own community.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** May I know the Honourable Member's position? The flaw being there, do Government contemplate doing anything for those who have been disqualified from standing as candidates for the municipal elections?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai:** I have already informed my Honourable friend that Government propose to rectify the flaw.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** What about those who have been disqualified in the recent elections?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai:** I doubt very much whether it will be possible to rectify the flaw in time for the elections which are already in progress. But my Honourable friend knows that there is the power to nominate, and I have no doubt that the question of nominating a Sikh in order to safeguard the position of that community will be sympathetically considered by the local administration.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** May I know if the candidature of those two Sikhs who have been disqualified for no fault of their own will be considered at the time when nominations are made in order to remove this sting? Will he please draw the attention of the Chief Commissioner to the fact that these persons should be nominated in preference to others?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai:** I will certainly convey my Honourable friend's suggestion to the Chief Commissioner, Delhi.

#### REBELLION IN BURMA AND NON-EMPLOYMENT OF INDIAN TROOPS IN BURMA.

694. \***Mr. Ganga Singh:** (a) Will Government be pleased to state in which year the last rebellion occurred in Burma?

(b) How long did this outbreak continue?

(c) How many units of the Indian Army, *i.e.*, British soldiers and Indian soldiers, were employed to quell the outbreak?

(d) Are Government prepared to avoid employing the Indian troops in future in Burma?

**The Honourable Sir Henry Orsk:** (a) and (b). The rebellion began in December, 1930, and continued up to March, 1932.

(c) I would refer the Honourable Member to the answer given to part (b) of Mr. Gaya Prasad Singh's question No. 16 in this House on the 7th September, 1931.

(d) It is really a matter for the decision of the future Government of Burma, but I may add for the information of the Honourable Member that on the separation of Burma from India, Indian troops will not normally be employed in Burma. One or two small units of the Army in India are to remain in Burma until the Burma Government can raise and train equivalent units of its own.

CONTINGENT OF THE UNIVERSITY TRAINING CORPS FOR THE ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY.

695. \*Mr. C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar: Will Government be pleased to state:

(a) if it is a fact that the Syndicate of the Annamalai University made an application to the Army Headquarters, as early as March, 1936, offering to furnish a contingent of the university training corps on the usual prescribed terms and requesting acceptance of the offer by the Government of India; and

(b) what steps, if any, were taken on the application, and what reply was sent to the University authorities?

Mr. G. R. F. Tottenham: (a) Yes.

(b) The application was returned to Headquarters, Southern Command, for re-submission later in accordance with the decision mentioned in my reply to Mr. Satyamurti's starred question No. 570 on the 9th instant.

REVISED POSTAL RATES BETWEEN INDIA AND BURMA.

696. \*Mr. C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar: (a) Will Government be pleased to state if it is a fact that the Burma Government has issued a communiqué announcing revised postal rates between India and Burma?

(b) Were the Government of India consulted in the matter?

(c) If the answer to part (b) be in the affirmative, what was the advice given by the Government of India?

(d) Are Government aware that the bulk of the correspondence between India and Burma is mainly between Indians living in this country and in Burma?

(e) Are Government aware that the increased rates will hit the large number of Indian labour in Burma?

The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce: (a) to (e). I would refer the Honourable Member to the reply given by me to the short notice question put by Mr. T. S. Avinashilingam Chettiar, on the 12th March, 1937, as also to the supplementary questions and replies.



**PRIVATE SECRETARIES ATTACHED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNOR  
GENERAL'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.**

697. \***Mr. C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar:** Will Government be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any Members of the Governor General's Executive Council have attached to them private secretaries, and if so, who they are;
- (b) whether it is a fact that the Honourable the Finance Member has a private secretary;
- (c) what the duties of that private secretary are;
- (d) whether other Members of Government do not have such private secretaries, and if so, why the Finance Member alone should have one;
- (e) whether it is a fact that his private secretary's duties now mainly are those of an ordinary Secretariat officer, and if so, the reason for not designating him as such an officer;
- (f) whether the present incumbent of that post has any previous experience of problems of finance or currency, and if not, the reason for appointing him;
- (g) whether the duties which he now performs as private secretary are not analogous to those which are usually expected of a private secretary to a Cabinet Minister in England; and
- (h) whether any previous Finance Members had private secretaries, and if not, the reason for the departure?

**The Honourable Sir Henry Craik:** (a) to (e). Members of Council are entitled, within the Rules of Business and subject to the necessary sanctions, to conduct their Departments in the manner they think most conducive to efficiency. This obviously covers the appointment of a Private Secretary if considered necessary.

(f) and (g). Yes.

(h) No.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE WHEELER COMMITTEE ABOUT THE INSTITUTION  
OF A SYSTEM OF PRIVATE SECRETARIES FOR MEMBERS OR MINISTERS  
OF THE FUTURE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.**

698. \***Mr. C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar:** Will Government be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Wheeler Committee has recommended the institution of the system of private secretaries for Members or Ministers of the future Federal Government;
- (b) if so, the source of their recruitment, the duties which it is proposed they should perform, and the emoluments which it is proposed to attach to these posts;
- (c) whether it is the intention to recruit for these posts men from the Indian Civil Service;

- (d) whether, in that case, they will be reserved posts within the meaning of rule 246 of the Government of India Act, 1935; and
- (e) whether in creating such posts it is intended to add to existing posts which will be outside the scope of the ministerial control?

**The Honourable Sir Henry Craik:** The report of the Wheeler Committee has not yet been made public, and until that is done, it is not possible to give information about any of its recommendations.

**USE OF THE TERM "M. L. A." BY MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES.**

699. **\*Mr. B. Das:** (a) Will Government be pleased to state if the newly elected members of Provincial Legislative Assemblies are using the abbreviation 'M.L.A.'?

(b) Will Government be pleased to state, in case members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies monopolise to themselves the expression 'M.L.A.', in what way (i) Members of the present Indian Legislative Assembly and (ii) Members of the Federal Legislative Assembly are to be distinguished from the provincial order?

(c) In what way do Government propose to maintain the distinctive features?

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** The question is at present under the consideration of Government. Their decision will be announced shortly.

**FILLING UP OF TEMPORARY VACANCIES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA OFFICES.**

700. **\*Mr. B. Das:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member please state whether it is a fact that the Home Department have issued instructions that temporary vacancies in the clerical establishment of more than three months' duration shall be filled by persons nominated by the Home Department from the Public Service Commission List?

(b) Is it a fact that these instructions are not complied with by the Intelligence Bureau and the Foreign and Political Department? If so, why?

(c) Is it a fact that in the Engineer-in-Chief's Branch, Army Headquarters, several new clerical posts have in the past year been sanctioned in connection with the reconstruction of Quetta?

(d) Were the Home Department asked to nominate persons for these posts and, if so, was the correct duration of the vacancies stated?

(e) Is it a fact that employment of extra staff for Quetta reconstruction is to be continued for some years?

(f) Is it a fact that Engineer-in-Chief's Branch have not recruited a single man from the Home Department list for the above vacancies and have appointed people from outside?

(g) How was the selection of men chosen for these posts made?

(h) Is it a fact that the posts were not advertised, nor was an examination held of the various candidates who submitted applications?

(i) Was a Selection Board constituted, or was the selection left to a single officer?

(j) Is it a fact that apart from Quetta reconstruction work, temporary posts in the regular cadre of the Engineer-in-Chief's Branch have been filled by persons who are not on the Home Department list?

(k) What is the number of temporary persons employed in the Quetta Section and Branch proper, separately?

(l) How many of them are graduates and how many, of them merely matriculates?

(m) Is it a fact that one of them is a non-matriculate?

(n) In the whole list of temporary men, how many are relatives of people serving in the Branch?

(o) Is it a fact that some of the temporary men had no previous office experience?

(p) Are Government prepared to replace these temporary recruits by men from the Home Department list, or by men selected through Public Service Commission?

**The Honourable Sir Henry Crick:** (a) Yes, but only in respect of vacancies which are not intended to be filled by promotion or inter-departmental transfer.

(b) The Intelligence Bureau is outside the scope of the rules for recruitment to the ministerial establishment of the Government of India Secretariat and its Attached Offices. As regards the Foreign and Political Department, the reply is in the negative.

(c) to (p). The necessary information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

#### **MARKETING OFFICERS UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ADVISER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.**

**701. \*Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang:** (a) Will Government be pleased to state the number of persons holding, respectively, the posts of Senior Marketing Officer, Marketing Officer and Assistant Marketing Officer, under the Agricultural Marketing Adviser to the Government of India?

(b) Will Government be pleased to state the number of Muslims holding the posts of Senior Marketing Officer, Marketing Officer and Assistant Marketing Officer, respectively?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai:** With your permission, Sir, I shall answer this and the next question together. There are three Senior Marketing Officers, three Marketing Officers and 12 Assistant Marketing Officers, of whom four Assistant Marketing Officers are Muslims. All these appointments were made through the Public Service Commission and it was decided not to apply the rule of communal proportions to the first two categories owing to the highly specialised character of their duties. Even so, only three out of five posts of Senior Marketing Officers and six out of seven posts of Marketing Officers could be filled. It will be observed that the number of Muslim Assistant Marketing Officers is more than the prescribed proportion. In future the rules regarding the representation of minority communities will apply to the two senior categories of posts also as it is hoped that with

the training received in the grade of Assistant Marketing Officers suitable candidates will be forthcoming for these posts.

**APPOINTMENT OF MUSLIMS UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ADVISER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.**

†702. \***Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang**: (a) Are Government aware that there is a feeling of dissatisfaction among Muslims owing to the claims of the Muslims to the higher appointments under the Agricultural Marketing Adviser not having been recognised?

(b) If the answer to part (a) be in the affirmative, what steps do Government propose to take to allay this feeling of dissatisfaction?

**APPOINTMENT OF A MUSLIM AS A SUPERVISING MARKETING OFFICER.**

703. \***Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang**: (a) Is it a fact that there is a proposal to appoint a Supervising Marketing Officer, which post has been advertised already, in addition to the Senior Marketing Officer, Marketing Officer and Assistant Marketing Officer?

(b) If the answer to part (a) be in the affirmative, are Government prepared to consider the advisability of appointing a Muslim to the said post?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai**: (a) and (b). The Honourable Member presumably refers to the post of a Supervisor of Experimental Grading and Marking Stations for Agricultural and Animal Husbandry produce, which has already been advertised. In selecting a candidate for the post, due consideration will be paid to the instructions issued by the Government of India for the representation of minority communities.

**OFFICERS SERVING UNDER MR. A. P. HUME, OFFICER ON SPECIAL DUTY IN CONNECTION WITH THE DELHI IMPROVEMENT TRUST.**

704. \***Mr. Muhammad Anwar-ul-Aziz**: Will Government please state the respective number of Hindu, Muslim and Christian gazetted officers serving under Mr. A. P. Hume, I.C.S., Officer on Special Duty, Delhi, in connection with the Delhi Improvement Trust, with their percentage of total in each case?

**Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai**: With your permission, Sir, I will answer questions Nos. 704, 705 and 706 together. Information has been called for and will be furnished to the House as soon as possible.

**OFFICERS SERVING UNDER MR. A. P. HUME, OFFICER ON SPECIAL DUTY IN CONNECTION WITH THE DELHI IMPROVEMENT TRUST.**

‡705. \***Mr. Muhammad Anwar-ul-Aziz**: Will Government please state the respective number of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian non-gazetted persons (Superior Service) serving under Mr. A. P. Hume, I.C.S., Officer on Special Duty, Delhi, in connection with the Delhi Improvement Trust, with their percentage of total in each case?

† For answer to this question, see answer to question No. 701.

‡ For answer to this question, see answer to question No. 704.

## POSTS SANCTIONED FOR THE DELHI IMPROVEMENT TRUST.

†706. \***Mr. Muhammad Anwar-ul-Azim:** Will Government please lay on the table a list of the posts sanctioned for the Delhi Improvement Trust stating against each post the name of the community upon which it was conferred?

## UNSTARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

## PASSPORTS TO MR. SISIR KUMAR MAZUMDAR AND MRS. FLORENCE MAZUMDAR OF NOWGONG, ASSAM.

96. **Mr. Kuladhar Chaliha:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any passport is proposed to be given to Mr. Sisir Kumar Mazumdar of Nowgong, Assam, to visit his home and go back to Japan; and
- (b) whether Government are prepared to allow his wife, Mrs. Florence Mazumdar, also a passport to visit her home along with her husband in Nowgong, Assam; if not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Henry Craik:** No application for a passport has so far been received from any of these persons. Government will consider their cases when applications are received.

## BAN ON MR. DHIREN SARKAR TO VISIT INDIA.

†97. **Mr. Kuladhar Chaliha:** Will the Honourable the Home Member please state whether any ban still exists against Mr. Dhiren Sarkar of Berlin to come to India, and whether Government propose to allow him to go back to Berlin again?

## LAVATORIES, FANS, ETC., PROVIDED IN INTERMEDIATE AND THIRD CLASS CARRIAGES ON THE ASSAM BENGAL RAILWAY.

98. **Mr. Kuladhar Chaliha:** Will the Honourable the Commerce Member please state:

- (a) whether the size of the lavatories of third class and intermediate class passenger carriages of the Assam Bengal Railway has been increased; if so, the number of carriages so improved; and
- (b) whether the intermediate class carriages of the Assam Bengal Railway have been provided with fans and switches for lights; if not, whether Government are prepared to direct the Railway authorities to do so at an early date?

**The Honourable Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan:** The information is being collected and will be placed on the table of the House in due course.

† For answer to this question, see answer to question No. 704.

‡ For answer to this question, see answer to question No. 96.

ABOLITION OF SECOND CLASS AND CREATION OF AN UPPER CLASS ON THE ASSAM BENGAL RAILWAY.

**99. Mr. Kuladhar Chelaha:** Will Government please state the reason for the abolition of second class and creating an upper class on the Assam Bengal Railway by enhancing the second class fare and reducing the first class passenger rates?

**The Honourable Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan:** First and second class carriages were frequently run empty or nearly empty, resulting in a great deal of unnecessary haulage of such stock on all trains. The Assam Bengal Railway Administration, therefore, decided to amalgamate the first and second classes into one, calling the latter "upper class", and thus to economise in operating expenditure.

The fare for the upper class was fixed at 18 pies per mile, as it was calculated that the loss on the first class tickets would be almost balanced by the gain on second class tickets.

THE INDIAN FINANCE BILL—*contd.*

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The House will now resume consideration of the following amendment moved by Mr. Shant Lal:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the entries under the head 'Postcards' the following be substituted:

'Single—Six pies,  
Reply—One anna'."

**Prof. N. G. Ranga** (Guntur *cum* Nellore: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I rise to support this amendment. We have been asking for a cheaper postcard for many years, but the Government of India have not yet been pleased to accede to our request. It is not a sentimental request at all. All over the country, in the country side, as well as in the urban areas, our people have been demanding a cheaper postcard. Apart from cheaper salt, this is the most popular demand in this country. We used to know in the good old romantic days of a quarter anna postcard and even today some of us often make the mistake of asking the post office to give us a quarter anna post card. Many people have not yet got themselves accustomed to this three pice postcard at all. I do not know why the price of a postcard has been raised by successive stages from quarter anna to half anna and from there to three-quarters of an anna. Of course, it is in keeping with the general policy of this Government of taxing the poor to a very much greater extent than the rich. It may be that we are in agreement with the doctrine promulgated the other day by my Honourable friend, Sir Muhammad Yakub, when he said that even the poor people should be taxed. The poor people are being enfranchised, and there is no reason why they should not be taxed. The postcard is really one of the items which really hit the poor man to a much greater extent than the rich person. The rich people can afford to write letters and send them in envelopes, but it is the poor people who have got to resort to postcards. Those who are eking out their livelihood on the Assam tea plantations and

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on the coffee plantations in the Nilgiris, and those who have migrated to other countries in order to find some employment and relieve themselves of the chronic unemployment that faces them here in this country are obliged to write only on postcards and they have been hit very badly. All those who have got to keep up their correspondence are very hard hit by the rise in the price of postcards.

Sir, we have been told that the Government have raised the price of postcards in order to get more income. But in answer to several questions, Government were unable to say whether really they were going to lose so much by a reduction in the price of postcard. In fact, by this rise in the price, the demand for postcards has gone down considerably and the anticipated additional income has not materialised all these years, and Government are cutting a sorry figure in regard to this. Year after year we have been asking for a cheaper postcard, and year after year, with a vengeance that befits this Government, the Government have refused to grant us a cheaper postcard. Why is it? Is it because of want of revenue? It cannot cost them very much money to give a cheaper postcard and thus please the masses and help them. They can certainly, if they want some more money, ask for a subvention from the general revenues as they ought to. But for their own convenience they have separated the revenues of the Posts and Telegraphs Department from the general revenues and have begun to say that the Posts and Telegraphs Department are paying their own way. How can they pay their own way? If they want these two activities of the Department to pay their own way, then, why not separate Posts from the Telegraphs and expect the Telegraphs to pay their own way and allow the Postal Department to look after itself? I am sure that if the finances of the Postal Department were alone to be taken into consideration, Government would find themselves with so much surplus as to be able to grant us a cheaper postcard. But they don't want to do that. They want to club it with the Telegraphs Department whereby they are faced either with a deficit which is not, after all, very considerable, or with a surplus which they can very well afford to utilise for granting us a cheaper postcard. We have asked for a subvention from general revenues for subsidising facilities for rural population. Government would not agree. We have asked for a subvention for giving us a cheaper postcard. Government would not agree. Why? Is it because the facilities that the masses expect to get from the Postal Department are not big enough or are not necessary? It cannot be. In fact, the civilisation of any particular country comes to be measured also by the degree to which the people can make use of the Posts and Telegraphs Department, and in this country it is not our people who have been lacking in their readiness to make use of this Department and the facilities that it affords, but it is the Government which has been niggardly in providing these facilities for the people. It would certainly be possible for the Government to raise more and more income for the Postal Department if only they cared to follow more commercial, more economical methods of organisation and administration and exploitation than they do at present.

As my Honourable friend, Mr. Joshi, has shown the other day, there are large parts of the country which are not provided with any postal facilities. We were told that every year additional post offices would be opened in about 200 villages, and in the last two years I dare say that these post offices have been opened in about 400 villages. What a poor

consolation to about seven lakhs odd villages in this country! It does not mean that when they open a post office in a new area, it is going to cost the Government a heavy sum, that it is going to land them in any further loss. For, if only they take a long view of things, it will be found even by this Government that this increase in the number of new post offices brings in its train additional income, income which makes it more and more profitable, which makes it possible for them even to subsidise the Telegraphs Department, and, even after that, find themselves with a handsome surplus. They do not want to do that. Why? Is it because they are vicious? I do not know. Is it because they are unbusinesslike? I am sure it is so. Is it because they are unenterprising? I am sure it is so. Yes, Sir, they are enterprising and they are businesslike in regard to trunk telephones, in regard to the Telegraph Department, in regard to their advertisement in the towns, but when it comes to doing any pioneering work in the villages and all over the countryside, they fight shy of it just as many of our politicians in the country fight shy of the countryside. Mere stud bulls are not going to provide postal facilities for the masses, and unless you provide more and more postal facilities for the masses in the country, it will not be possible for you to achieve a good enough surplus to enable you to provide various other facilities for the masses in this country. Postcard is the one item on which the Government can very well afford to be liberally minded. We have pressed again and again on the attention of the Finance Member and also on the Postal Department at the time of the Public Accounts Committee whether it would be impossible for them to grant us this half anna postcard. They were not able to give any straight answer. They would only say: "Oh, we shall see. Next year we shall see. And year after next we shall see". And they have always been seeing. Seeing only one thing—that this side of the House is determined in having a half anna postcard, and that side of the House is determined in frustrating this elementary demand of the masses. The postcard reaches more people than any other instrument of postal services, and all these people can be served by this half anna postcard; the incidence of it may not be large, but the advantage that can be derived from it will be appreciated by a large number of people, millions and millions of people, not only those who are using the postcard today, but many more millions will be tempted to use it, will be induced to use it if only the price is brought down. Is it not in the interests of even this bureaucratic Government to try to afford this much of pleasure to the masses in this country? They themselves claim to be the friend of the masses. They themselves claim to be doing more for the masses than anybody else in this country. They can at least make this gesture to the people, not to win the hearts of the masses,—that is impossible for them, they can never hope to do so,—but they can at least save their own face and justify their own professions towards the people. As long as the Government are here and as long as they are allowed to go on by our own people, they have got to try at least to discharge their elementary functions, and one of these elementary functions is to provide for our people cheaper postal facilities.

My Honourable friend, Mr. Bewoor, has been complimented again and again for the enterprise that he has shown in pushing further and further the advertisement section of the Postal Department. But why is it that he has so awfully failed in trying to win the affections of the great millions of the country towards his own Department by affording them cheaper facilities, more extensive facilities. It is all because, Mr. President, this Government really at heart do not care for any one in this country, even the



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poor man, not to speak of the rich man. Only yesterday this House has turned down a proposal of this Government to increase the sugar excise duty. I am afraid Government are going to get it certified and Government are anyhow going to collect the money from our cultivators. Contrary to what they have said, I still believe that it is the peasants who are going to pay it. They are going to get one crore and 15 lakhs. We want them to make a little sacrifice by giving a cheaper postcard. I ask them to make this return to the people of this country. It is not entirely the poorer classes that are going to be benefited. The richer classes and commercial classes are going to be benefited also to some extent. It may come to 40 lakhs. If they are not going to make this sacrifice, then they are going to be defeated. I sincerely hope that all the elected Members on this side of the House will support this motion and show to the Government that the country is unanimous in demanding a cheaper postcard. If only they will give us a cheaper postcard, I can give them an assurance that they need not be afraid of losing 50 lakhs. There is going to be such a great demand for more and more postcard and especially with the new King's effigy on it that Government may well make a profit, instead of a loss.

**Mr. G. Morgan** (Bengal: European): Will the Honourable Member make it a statutory obligation to write postcards?

**Prof. N. G. Ranga:** Let not the Honourable the Finance Member think that we are making a sort of irresponsible proposition. He is going to be faced with a surplus next year on this account alone. Let them take this risk now. They have always taken risks in raising the price of postal facilities, and hitherto their expectations have been falsified. They raised the price of the envelopes from one anna to one anna and a quarter and they expected a huge additional income. Their expectations were falsified. They expected a huge demand for envelopes. There also they were mistaken. Why do they not take at least this risk? I sincerely trust that the Honourable the Finance Member and the Honourable Member for the Posts and Telegraphs Department will accept this amendment and grant us the half anna postcard.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi** (Dacca *cum* Mymensingh: Muhammadan Rural): Before I proceed with what I have got to say on the motion, I should like to offer my quota of tribute to my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, for the admirable manner in which he has discharged his duties as the Member in charge of the two important Departments, Industries and Labour. I can assure him that he has the good wishes of not only his colleagues in this House, but also his numerous friends outside, and we wish him health, happiness, long life and well-earned rest after he leaves the shores of India. As he said yesterday, and we are sure of it, that wherever he might be, he would always have the interest of India at heart, the India which he has so well served.

After listening yesterday to the interesting and illuminating speech of my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, I thought that my friends opposite would change their mind and not press just now at any rate for the reduction in the price of the postcard. It is true that a three pice postcard is too expensive, but you will have to bear in mind that you cannot have it

both ways. You want an increase in the number of post offices and revert to the position as it was 15 years ago. That is quite natural. What is the use of the one pice postcard if the man has to walk for miles and miles to post it? It is no use to have the pice postcard without a post box near by to post it. So the extension of rural post offices is a necessary preliminary to cheaper postcards. One has to remember that this is a commercial department. It must be run on a commercial basis. For the last ten years it had been running at a loss. Great credit is due to Sir Frank Noyce and Mr. Bewoor who have done splendidly to bring about a welcome change. They have succeeded in converting a losing concern into a profitable venture. Under the circumstances, a reduction in the price of the postcard will not very much benefit the villagers; thereby you will benefit mainly the commercial people. (*Voices*: "Question, question."). If you take statistics . . . . .

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is again not addressing the Chair.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi**: I am very sorry. Sir, if statistics are taken, you will find that the commercial people use more postcards than the villagers. It is a cheap facility which the commercial community wants to secure for themselves. You do not very well get down to the villager without a post office, and, therefore, it is not a commercial proposition to ask them to reduce it from nine pies to six pies. Sir, we have a surplus budget this year (*An Honourable Member*: "Surplus?")—I mean a surplus budget for the Posts and Telegraphs for the year under discussion.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is again carrying on conversations.

**Sir Abdur Halim Ghuznavi**: Sir, the efficient way in which it is being administered now makes us hope that next year the successor to my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, will be able to find ways and means to reduce the price of the postcard as desired by all sections of the House. I do not think you will have to come before this Honourable House next year to urge this. I hope the Government will themselves provide for that, and there will be no reason for pressure. Let us just wait for one more year. Sir, the facilities that are being granted now were not being granted ten years ago.

Sir, one more factor has also to be considered. (*Interruptions*).

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member had better not be interrupted.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi**: The interruptions I do not mind, but they are made in such a low voice that I cannot follow them.

Sir, ten years ago, or a little less than that, owing to the pressure from this very Honourable House, the Member in charge of the Posts and Telegraphs Department had to increase considerably the wages of postal peons. In Bengal, Sir, it is very difficult for a graduate to get a job for Rs. 40, but a postman draws that sum of Rs. 40 a month in Calcutta. (*An Honourable Member*: "Very improper!") Very improper. But it was the

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result of pressure from this Honourable House. That also is to be taken into consideration as an impediment in the way of any reduction in the price of the postcard. Sir, everyone agrees that the Department is run very efficiently and very honestly, and no one can make any insinuation that the Postal Department is corrupt. In the case of everyone, from the postman right up to the top, honesty prevails, and great credit is due to that Department. (*An Honourable Member*: "Competition".) What do you mean by competition? There is no competition in the Post Office. Sir, the Postal Department in India can congratulate themselves on the manner in which they discharge their duties. (Hear, hear.) Sir, every year facilities are being added (*An Honourable Member*: "Or reduced?") See the facilities that they have added now. You can talk throughout India on the phone, which you could not do in 1922. You can now talk, not only throughout India, but abroad, and now also to Burma! And, therefore, I say, very great credit is due to them. They have reduced the postage from five pice to one anna, and it is hoped that next year the Member in charge will be able to find ways and means to reduce the price of postcards. Sir, I oppose this motion.

**Mr. Basanta Kumar Das** (Surma Valley *cum* Shillong: Non-Muhamadan): Sir, I rise to support the motion which has been moved by my Honourable friend, Mr. Sham Lal. He has delivered a speech which is quite appropriate to the cause which this amendment seeks to espouse. Sir, it is for the third time that we are moving this amendment for a reduction in the price of the postcard. We moved and carried this amendment in the year before last. There was another attempt in that direction last year also. This House fully knows how these two attempts have not been of any avail, the Government not having given effect to the vote of the House. Sir, we are here as the representatives of the people and as such it is certainly our duty to be persistent when we feel that the legitimate grievances of the people are not being removed. There are some Members in this House who twist us for this persistency by accusing us of indulging in hardy annuals; but, Sir, these hardy annuals have become necessary on account of the perpetual callousness that prevails in the Treasury Benches. (Hear, hear.) Sir, my Honourable friend, Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, has put forward a request to us not to press this motion this year; but I submit that we do not find any reason to accede to his request. He started by saying that it was necessary that there should be more post offices in the country and he said what was the use of reducing the price of the postcard if there be no more post offices? Exactly, Sir, on the ground that there should be more post offices to the rural areas, can we not also urge that the reduction in the price of the postcard should be effected? We say, Sir, what is the use of having more post offices if the rural people do not get the facilities for purchasing a cheap postcard? Sir, Honourable Members know that in the current year there has been an increase of about 390 post offices, and in the coming year they have budgeted for an expenditure of about five lakhs for increase of rural post offices. So I submit that, when there are going to be more post offices, it follows as a matter of course that further facilities should be given to the rural people by reducing the price of the postcard. Sir, it is an admitted principle of taxation that high postal rates are in the nature of a transit duty, and that the imposition of such high rates are both impolitic and uneconomic, because it tends to restrain communication and ruin business. Tested in

the right of this principle, all postal rates should be lowered. But, Sir, it is not so much for the enforcement of this principle of taxation that we ask for the reduction,—rather our case is that by urging this reduction we want to remove a long standing and genuine grievance of the people of this country. Sir, it is said that a reduction in the price of the postcard to the extent of a pice would not afford really a great relief to the people, because the burden of taxation that will be thus tightened would not be appreciable. But I submit that such a statement can be made only by those who have no idea of the poverty of the people of this country. In a country where even one meal a day is not available to the poor people, to whom "tightened belt" is the sole remedy for want of food, reduction of even one pice in the price of the postcard will mean a very great relief to them. The main argument on behalf of the Government is that such a reduction in the price of the postcard would involve the Department in a loss of about 50 lakhs of rupees, and it is said that since this Department is run as a commercial department, it is our duty to see that the Department pays its way. But, Sir, it should not be forgotten that this Department is also a public utility department, and in a country where the natural resources are still undeveloped, in a country where the poverty is proverbial the State should not make a fetish of commercial principles so far as the working of the Department of public utility is concerned. Therefore, I suggest, Sir, that a departure should be made from the principle that the Department should pay its way, in order to remove this grievance of the people of this country.

Then, Sir, it is also our case that, so far as this branch of the Postal Department is concerned, a subsidy from the other revenues of the Central Government should always be obtained for the purpose of effecting this reform, and this demand is being always pressed on the attention of the Government when this motion is brought forward before this House. So I submit that the argument of the Government that really there should not be any subsidy taken from the Central Government cannot stand for a moment. Because, Sir, we know that the Telegraphs Department is also being run at a loss of about 35 lakhs of rupees a year, and that generally we find that this loss is recouped from the revenues of the Postal Department. If that be so, then I do not see any reason why a subsidy should not be taken from the other revenues of the Central Government.

Then, Sir, we find that in the coming year an estimate of about 36 lakhs has been made over and above the Revised Estimate of the current year for some items of expenditure which include Empire Airways, and telephone lines, and for these two items alone 17 lakhs have been budgeted. I submit, Sir, that this increased estimate is certainly for the purpose of satisfying Imperial requirement, and it is no wonder that the poor man's postcard is not at all thought of. Sir, I feel that the poor man's interests are being sacrificed at the altar of the Imperial necessity (Hear, hear), and I submit that that is not the solitary instance. It has always been the rule with this Government to ignore the poor man's interests wherever and whenever they found it necessary to preserve and advance Imperial interests. But, in this matter of the postcard, precaution and advancement of Imperial interests should not stand in our way. So, viewed from any standpoint, I submit that the claim of this House for a reduction in the price of the postcard cannot at all be resisted. With these words, Sir, I support the amendment.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi** (Nominated Non-Official): Mr. President, I listened very carefully to the speech made by my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, last evening. I must say, Sir, that his speech has not convinced me that the Honourable Member is following a sound policy in the management of the Postal Department . . . .

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce** (Member for Industries and Labour): Have I ever convinced you in any respect?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** I am open to be convinced, but some people cannot convince me, it is not my fault.

I assure you, Sir, that for the sake of this discussion, I am prepared to agree that this Department should be run on commercial lines. I again assure you that so long as the largest part of the revenue of the Government of India is derived from indirect taxation, I would not like the Postal Department to be run at a loss; I would not like the general taxpayer to bear the burden of the losses made by the Postal Department. After having given you this assurance, I feel that the policy enunciated by the Honourable Member yesterday is not a sound policy. He says his Department is run on commercial lines. In my speech on the Finance Bill, I told him what a good industrialist does in a time of depression. If a good industrialist finds that his goods are not sold on account of depression, he does not raise the prices of his goods, people will call him a fool if he raises the price of his goods in a time of depression. What he, therefore, does in a time of depression is to reduce the prices of his goods . . . .

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** He advertises more.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** I will come to that later on. But what does the Postal Department do? As soon as depression sets in, they raise the price of their services. Is that a sound commercial policy? A sound industrialist in a time of depression will try to extend his market. Now, the post offices, instead of extending the market, reduce the scope of their market. I, therefore, told the Honourable Member that he should change his policy which was a wrong one. The Honourable Member's reply was that the Government of India are not the only Government that has followed this policy. Sir, I am prepared to admit that besides the Government of India, there are other Governments in the world that follow a wrong policy, but that does not prove that this policy is the right one. I would, therefore, like the Honourable Member to reconsider the policy which is being followed in the Postal Department. The Honourable Member tells us that if the Postal Department reduce the rates and extend the facilities, they will make losses. I will again remind him that if he is running his Department on commercial lines, he should follow what a good sound commercial man will do under these circumstances. Supposing by reducing the prices of your goods, or reducing the price of the postcard, you make losses, as a good commercial man you must be prepared to make some loss for a few years till you begin to sell larger quantities of your goods and make good the losses which you may have made by reducing the prices. But the only way of securing a sound position for an industry or a commercial concern or a Department of Government is to reduce the prices of the goods and extend the market. If, for a temporary period of time, you have to make losses, you must be prepared for them, and a good industrialist and commercial man are

prepared to make losses for some time. Let the losses be paid out of a loans fund if you like, because, if you extend your market and if you reduce your prices, one day there is a chance of your making good the loss, and a good commercial man does that. For some time he pays losses out of the loans, out of the capital fund if you like. If Government are running your Department on commercial lines, you should do that. That is the only way of doing it. But, Sir, in the case of the postcard that necessity of spending money out of your loans fund may not come.

It has been pointed out more than once that the Government of India make profit out of their Postal Department; they make losses on the Telegraph Department. If the Government of India are going to run their concern on commercial lines, as all of us would like them to do, why should they continue to make losses on the Telegraph Department and pay those losses out of the profits of the Postal Department? The postal service pays you; it is a profitable side of your business. Why should you penalise this side of your business and promote some other side of the business? If your Telegraph Department is making losses take some steps to see that those losses do not occur. Herein comes the difference between the Government of India and ourselves as regards policy. The Government of India's policy is to favour the more wealthy classes, take money from the ordinary classes of people and hand over that sum for the benefit of the more wealthy classes. Now, Sir, these telegrams are not generally sent by ordinary people; they are sent by well-educated people and people who have got money. Therefore, the Government of India are willing to make losses in the Telegraph Department. Year after year they continue to make losses. There the commercial spirit does not come, because it is a question of favouring the class which the Government of India want to favour. The European Group will howl if the Honourable Member will increase the rates for telegrams or even if he reduces the facilities with regard to the sending of telegrams. There are also other commercial classes. My Honourable friend, Sir Hormusji Mody, who is also another controlling element of the Government of India, will howl; and, therefore, the Telegraph Department must continue to run as usual. Not only that, but the telegraph rates were reduced. That, Sir, is a wrong policy. The Government of India should be a fair and just Government and an impartial Government instead of a Government that favours one class at the cost of another. If the Government of India want to run their Department on commercial lines, they should see that the Telegraph Department does not make losses. The Honourable Member said yesterday: "We consider our Department as one; the rich people and the poor people as one. If there are losses on account of the poor people, then the poor people must bear" . . .

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** Sir, I would ask my Honourable friend whether no poor people ever use the telegraph. We have all had experience, for instance, of telegrams to our servants, telling them to come at once to see some relative who is seriously ill, and so on.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Sir, I am quite prepared to leave this question in the hands of the House. If generally the Members feel that the Telegraph Department is more used by the poor people than the Postal Department, let them think so, but I do not. The Telegraph Department

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is more used by the wealthier classes than the Postal Department, and, therefore, the Government of India are willing to do it. I would, therefore, like the Government of India to give up this policy. Let them take steps to see that the Telegraph Department does not make losses. I would, therefore, like the Government of India not to treat for the sake of profit and loss all these Departments as one. Let the Postal Department make its losses or profits, let the Telegraph Department make its profits and losses; and if there be a loss on the Telegraph Department, let that be borne by the Telegraph Department. There is absolutely no argument in saying that these Departments are one, and, therefore, the Telegraph Department should continue to make losses and those losses should come out of the profits made by the Postal Department.

**An Honourable Member:** What is the total loss on the Telegraph Department?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** The total loss this year is 35 lakhs. I, therefore, suggest to the Honourable Member that this practice should be stopped, and, if it is stopped, there will be no real difficulty in the way of the Government of India to reduce the postal rates. The post office is making profits. If the profits of the Postal Department are credited separately, if not this year, in two years' time, the postal rates would be reduced. Let the profits of the Postal Department be credited to a sort of revenue reserve fund, and I have no doubt that in a year or two the rates will be reduced. I would, therefore, suggest to the Government of India that they should separate the profits made out of the Postal Department and credit them separately. If they find out what profits they have made during the last few years, I am quite sure, they will have sufficient money to reduce the postal rates.

Then, Sir, even with regard to the financial position of the Postal Department as a whole, you have to take account of this fact that the Government of India are at present paying interest on capital which is not all borrowed. A good part of the capital at charge of the Postal Department is really capital which has really come out of revenue and may have been provided out of the profits of the Postal Department previously. All the capital is not due to the loans fund. The Government of India try to commercialise the accounts, and in doing so, they said their assets amount to so much, and, therefore, on these assets so much interest must be paid. But they forget the fact that these assets were purchased, not out of loans, but a good part of them were purchased out of the revenue. It is, therefore, wrong for the Government of India to continue to pay interest on money which has been derived out of the postal revenues, and then say that the Postal Department is making losses. I, therefore, feel that the Government of India should revise their policy. The Honourable Member says that it is a commercial department. But if it is a commercial department, what about the complaints made by my friend, Sir Henry Gidney, and the suggestions made by him? No commercial department will promise that they will engage so many Anglo-Indians although they may have to pay more for them; and no commercial department will accept a statutory restriction that they will not only give them so many posts, but even so much remuneration statutorily guaranteed. I am not against what Sir Henry Gidney

demands. If he demands certain things for his community, let him do so. But I can tell the Government that no commercial department will agree to do that. You will get your employees from where you get the best employees, and you will not make any promises that a particular community will be given so many posts. Not only that, but you will not make a promise that you will pay a particular community the remuneration which is necessary according to their standard of living. I would, therefore, like the Government of India to revise their policy. . . .

**An Honourable Member:** In what way?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** In the first place, they should credit all the profits made on the postal side to the Postal Department. The losses made on the Telegraph Department should be debited to the Telegraph Department; and even if they do that much, I have no doubt that there will be no difficulty in the way of the Government of India in reducing the postal rates. As regards the extension of the market, the Government of India are not spending sufficient money. They are spending this year five lakhs. I hope the Government of India will spend more money. There is no doubt there will be losses for the first year or two. But, ultimately, that is the only way of making your concern solvent. I hope, therefore, that the House will accept the proposal that the postal rates should be reduced.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea** (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, it is claimed by the Government that the Posts and Telegraphs Department is a business concern. I agree with the Government in the view that this Department should be run as a commercial concern; but this policy should be extended further and the different branches of this Department should all be run as commercial concerns. If that is done, what will be the result? The result will be that in the Postal Department substantial profits will accrue, while there will be losses in the Telegraph Department. As a matter of fact, this has occurred year after year. For a number of years past, the Postal Department has made very large profits. This year, the profit amounts to over 26 lakhs, and, in the coming year's budget, the profit is estimated at 23 lakhs; whereas, we find that in the Telegraph Department there is a loss of 34 lakhs in the present year's budget and a loss of 36 lakhs is estimated in the ensuing year's budget. This is a very wrong policy. Surely it is impossible for Government to justify that policy. I was surprised to hear the Honourable Member for Industry defend this policy by saying that it is the poor who use the Telegraph Department. To what extent? . . . .

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** I am sorry to interrupt the Honourable Member, but it is an obvious fact that poor people do use the Telegraph Department.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea:** They do use it; but to what extent?

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is entitled to have his own opinion.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea:** It is a question of fact; it is not a question of opinion.



[Dr. P. N. Banerjea.]

If we take the two Departments, Posts and Telegraphs, is there any difficulty in finding out which of the two Departments the poor man most uses, and which of the two Departments the rich man and the comparatively well-to-do man use? It is really taxing the poor for the benefit of the rich. Although the Postal Department was making a profit, you raised the price of the postcard 15 years ago by 100 per cent; and, again, when the Postal Department was making a profit, you raised the price of the postcard by another 100 per cent. seven years ago. Now, you come forward and say that the poorer people use the Telegraph Department to some extent. A servant of the Honourable Sir Frank Noyce sends a telegram once a year or once in three years, that is the sort of use that the poor people make of the Telegraph Department. How many cultivators in the country have any use for this Department? On the other hand, the postcards are an absolute necessity for them,—they are essential for them for carrying on correspondence with their relatives. This policy will not do. If the whole Department is to be run on commercial lines, the different branches of the Department will also have to be run on commercial lines.

What is the solicitude of Government for the poor people? It is to tax the poor in order that the rich may be benefited. This surely is a wrong policy and this policy must be ended soon. In my opinion, no imposition of the Government has created so much discontent as the raising of the price of the postcard. I will relate to this House an incident which occurred some years ago. The late Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea sought re-election in December, 1923; and it was urged by his opponents as an argument against him that he was associated with a Government which had raised the price of the postcard from one to two pice. And, what was the result? The result was that this veteran politician, this great man,—once the idol of the people, who had rendered devoted service to the country for nearly half a century, who had done his best to rouse the political consciousness of the people of India,—was defeated at the polls; and he did not long survive his defeat. This is a tragic result of the raising of the postcard rate from one pice to two pice. A few years later, the Government of India, not only did not reverse their policy but went further in their wrong policy and raised the price of the postcard again, so that today the price of the postcard is 200 per cent. more than it was before the War or during the War. Is this policy defensible at all? No one with any common sense should come forward to defend such a policy. I hope and trust that the Government will see their way to reverse their policy and go back immediately to the two pice postcard and later to the one pice postcard at as early a date as possible.

**Mr. M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar** (Madras ceded Districts and Chittoor: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I expected that the Honourable Member in charge of the Post Office might have got out of the guiding influence of the Honourable the Finance Member at least this year, and that we might now go back to the country and say that the last gift of the Honourable Sir Frank Noyce to the poor people of India was that he reduced the postcard from three pice to two pice. The Honourable Member has tried to justify it, but unfortunately he has failed in that attempt. I shall come to that later. It is not in a mendicant spirit that I stand

approaching this question today. Of course, we have been approaching it in that spirit from time to time. But let us view it from the other aspect, and see on financial grounds alone whether the principles on which this Department is being run today justify the monopoly which has been created for it.

Sir, Honourable Members will be aware that a monopoly will be created for various purposes by the Government with respect to certain departments mainly for the purposes of revenue. I can understand that. In various countries, tobacco is a monopoly, here in India salt is a monopoly, opium is a monopoly. A monopoly is created if it adds considerably to the coffers of the general exchequer. This is what is happening in England today. For a long time the post office has been justifying its existence as an appendage to Government, and it has also been justifying the care and attention which has been bestowed on the post office in England. Year in and year out, it is a source of supply of income to the general exchequer. I will only ask the Honourable Member in charge of this Department and also his Commander-in-Chief or the next in command of the Department, to turn to page 85 of the book entitled "The Post Offices in England":

"Considering the industrial depression of the last few years, the growth of post office business has been encouraging. In 1925-26, on the basis of the Commercial Accounts the gross income of the Department amounted in round figures to £61,900,000 and the expenditure to £55,200,000, leaving a surplus for the exchequer of £6,700,000. With the exception of one of the war years when conditions were abnormal, this is the largest post office surplus ever realised. Each year shows a steady rise in the volume of correspondence passing through the post, which now amounts to over 6,000 million packets per annum. While the telegraph traffic is slowly dwindling under the influence of telephone competition the telephones are thriving with an annual increase of about ten per cent."

In the *Statesman's Year Book* for 1936, we find that under the head "Net Receipts from Posts and Telegraphs and Telephone Services of Great Britain", the exchequer has gained to the extent of eleven million pounds. I would ask Honourable Members to note if this Department deserves the patronage of monopoly. I was amused to find that some prosecutions were launched last year and a reference was made to that in the annual report of the Posts and Telegraphs for 1935-86. No doubt, on a strict enforcement of the rule of law, such a prosecution would lie. But I would ask the Honourable Member in charge to note it as a significant feature that if competition was there, he would certainly run his department much better and much more on a commercial basis. It is not by stifling competition that he could impose any amount of tax burden without ultimately enlarging or increasing the sources of revenue to the general exchequer. On the one side, not a single pie is added to the general exchequer, and, on the other, the poor consumer for whom so much of concern is exhibited day in and day out is not benefited, and that concern for him is not translated into action. On the other hand, the poor consumer is burdened to the hilt so much so that he may not be able to lift his head. These are the two ways in which the so-called commercial department, on which any amount of encomium is showered in this House, has been working all these years. I have absolutely nothing to say against the able and the energetic manner in which the Honourable Member in charge who is now about to retire has been devoting his attention, but unfortunately he has been clogged to the machinery from which there is absolutely no escape. Left to himself, possibly, as I understand he is a nice and good man having a large concern for the interests of this country and for the poor man of this

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country, he would have done something good for this country, but he is not allowed to have his own way. That is exactly how I understand the situation. But so far as we are concerned, be he good, or be he bad, the result is the same. That is what I find. I was referring just now to the report of a prosecution of one lady who was carrying *tapals* or mails from one place to another on a charge of one pice per postcard, instead of the usual Government rate of three pice. That poor lady was prosecuted. No doubt, strictly speaking, according to the law, she was rightly prosecuted. I would only applaud the energy and the vigilance with which the Post Master General or the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs has caught hold of this poor lady and launched a prosecution against her. I have absolutely nothing but praise for the vigilance with which this prosecution was launched. If really the Honourable Member in charge and others in his Department have eyes to see, they cannot stifle this competition for all time. Why should they have a monopoly of running this Department? It is on account of lack of competition in this field of carrying mails that the Government pay such big salaries to officers in charge of this Department. I have heard my Honourable friend saying again and again that there is absolutely no corruption in this Department. I say, it is for want of opportunities that there is no corruption in this Department. Could the postman steal postcards and try to see what is written in the postcards? What is it that can be done? Of course in dealing with money orders which are extra-postal affairs, and in dealing with savings bank which is also not a legitimate duty of the post office, in all such extra departmental matters, perhaps if a man has an itching palm, there is occasion for him to take away the money order, or, in the case of value payable parcel, the parcel clerk can temporarily misappropriate the value paid in cash for the parcel and bring it into account on the tenth day according to rules. In that manner, possibly there is occasion for corruption. In other words, ordinarily there is little or no occasion for corruption in this Department. I would, therefore, say that nobody need congratulate himself on the careful manner in which corruption has been prevented in this Department. We are not satisfied with the absence of corruption in this Department. What we want to know is whether the Government have taken any steps whereby the general exchequer will get an increased volume of inflow and would thereby get increased income while at the same time giving proper facilities for the poor. I have heard the Honourable Member in charge of this Department say that, during the past five years, he has tried to make it a self-sufficient department and that he has made this Department balance its budget. But I would say that, on the other hand, in the Memorandum which the Finance Secretary has submitted to us along with the budget, I find that even to this day there is a deficit of one crore 63 lakhs against this Department. On page 6 of this memorandum, under the head "Posts and Telegraphs", the annual profit and loss account in the working of this Department, since it was commercialised in 1925-26, is given as one crore 37 lakhs. I say that it is not by increasing the price of the postcard—or rather I would call it a duty on the postcard—that you can balance your budget. There are other means. So far as the post office is concerned, I would say—remove the monopoly and ask the telephone and the telegraph and the radio departments to reserve the monopoly system only so far as they are concerned. If you remove the monopolistic manner in which the post office is run to this day, if you will allow

free competition, I am sure, the heads of departments would not draw the fat salaries they are drawing now to this day. In various ways retrenchment could be effected, offices could be combined, the personnel could be decreased, the salaries could also be diminished. Last year, we find an abnormal increase in the staff or the establishment, and this year also they have continued in existence. I referred in my speech of last year the various ways in which additions have been made to this Department in the matter of personnel of the heads of Departments. When one Engineer could be in charge of both the telegraph and also the radio, I find more than two sets of engineers with a number of hierarchy of officials up and down to the lowest grade. Sir, in this year's report also it does not show that any retrenchment is sought to be effected in this manner.

Sir, I shall try to be brief. I would say, as regards the loss, if there is any, it can be remedied in this way. For one or two years, remove the monopolistic feature with respect to this Department. Then the persons in charge would readjust themselves and try to effect retrenchment, as no amount of preaching year in and year out from outside has done anything in this direction. It is only by removing the monopoly that you can bring home to the staff that they should make up the loss. So far as the loss is concerned, I have grave doubts if the figures that have been given by the Honourable Member in charge are correct. The Honourable Member in charge said that if the price of the postcard was reduced from three pice to two pice there would be a loss of nearly 66 lakhs, and even if a margin of ten per cent. should be allowed for increased volume of purchase of the postcards, there will still be a deficit of 50 lakhs. I have got certain figures here, and I do not know, subject to correction, if my Honourable friends are correct. In the year 1928-29, there were 590 millions of postcards purchased when the price was two pice. In 1935-36, 415 millions of postcards were purchased. Now, 415 millions and odd is roughly 416 millions and 550 millions and odd is roughly 591 millions. At the rate of three pies reduction, the deficit is 11 lakhs. If we reduce the price of the postcard to two pice we will certainly go back to the 591 million postcards that were purchased in the year 1928-29. The Honourable Member is absolutely modest in his estimate with respect to the increase and gets unnecessarily frightened regarding the volume if the reduction is made. There is absolutely no need to get into a flutter. If the rate is reduced, I am confident that you will go back to the figures of 1928-29 when nearly 600 million postcards were sold. During all these years education has increased. Whatever may be the unemployment, the people have got into a mentality in which we constantly expect a letter by the mail, and, if by any chance there is delay, we go to the Director General requesting him to ask the mail van to wait for the Grand Trunk Express. Every student who gets into a University or college expects a letter from his wife or his children. (Laughter.) Education has spread so much,—whatever the unemployment. I suggest that this should be taken into account. The money that is spent on the picture postcard is wasted. Even in the villages they have been accustomed to the cinema and are not allured by these picture postcards. So let no money be wasted on picture postcards. If you reduce the rate of the postcard there is absolutely no fear. Regarding the Telegraph Department it is quite useless to attempt to make that department self-supporting, and for this reason. The telegraph has got out of date. The telephone service has caught the imagination of the

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people, and further the radio also is having its full share of competition with the Telegraph Department. There were representations from various persons in the ceded districts of the Madras Presidency that the cotton prices should be broadcasted by the morning radio, but the Honourable Member has been consistently refusing to do so for fear that the telegraph income might go down. Therefore, it is useless to prop up this falling source of income. You must adjust the expenditure to the income and make the Telegraph Department as far as possible self-sufficient. If it is adjusted, I am sure the monopoly will continue for some time. As regards the cultural value of the postcard, enough has been said, and I do not want to waste the time of the House any more. But I say that if the Honourable Member in charge of the Department really wants to go back to his country with a feather in his cap,—before he sails for England, let him reduce the rate for the postcard, and he will go with the good wishes of millions of persons in this country who use the postcard. (Cheers.)

**Mr. G. V. Bawoor** (Director General of Posts and Telegraphs): Looking over the old debates, I happened to see a speech which was made by the late Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra in connection with proposals for amendment of the postcard rate in those days from half an anna to a quarter anna. Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra complained that Honourable Members failed to read the recorded debates on the subject. I am afraid I have to make the same complaint today. I have listened most carefully to the various arguments put forward today by the different speakers, I have been noting every one of those, but referring to the debate of last year and of the year before, I find that the same points were raised, and they were all replied to.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti** (Madras City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): But we hope one day to see a change.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi**: There is then no need of speech.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor**: We took the special trouble of printing the principal speeches of the Honourable Member and of my own and supplying a special copy to each of the Members hoping that they would read what was stated last year and produce arguments against the reply given by me last year. I regret to note that I have not yet seen any reply to the arguments that were put forward last year. I quite see that Mr. Joshi is not prepared to be convinced, but I propose, all the same, to refer briefly to some of these points instead of dealing with them in detail. In doing so, I may have to repeat myself—I apologise to the House—because the speakers, on the other side, have repeated last year's arguments. But before dealing with this question, I think it is necessary to remove a misapprehension regarding the policy of the Department.

The term "commercial" has been used in a somewhat loose sense. Government have stated that the Post and Telegraphs Department is a public utility service. It is not a commercial department, but its accounts are maintained on a commercial basis in order that we may know what is the real cost of the service and then be able to judge whether the rates charged are such as to meet the cost. The basic idea of the post, telegraph and telephone rates is that the charges recovered from the public should.

on the whole, be such as to meet the cost of the service, and that the department should not be a burden on the general tax-payer. I see that my Honourable friend, Mr. Joshi, admits this principle.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** The department is thus a public utility service and is not a commercial service. If it had been a commercial service and if the head of such a commercial service had been given that freedom which the managing director of any concern would have in private business, it would have been quite possible to show not merely a profit but an enormous profit. I would like Honourable Members of this House to remember that we are not running the department as a purely commercial department, that is to say, for the earning of dividends on the capital invested therein. We give post offices in areas in which not only they give no profit, but they do not even meet their cost and we continue them for years and years. We have definitely accepted a loss up to a maximum of Rs. 240 per annum. We give services in villages by means of village postmen who take in a day one letter or two to a village. A commercial concern would have closed all these losing branches, would have kept a few branches in the important cities connected by cheap means of communication and would easily have shown large profits.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** They would not have got a monopoly.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Let not the Honourable Member be interrupted.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I am merely stating for the present that the department is not being run as a commercial department. I want Honourable Members, therefore, not to understand the term "commercial" in the loose sense in which it is frequently employed. We look upon the post, the telegraph and the telephone not only as a public utility service but as an essential service for the safety and good government of the country. No Government of a country can carry on without a well established system of communications, by post, telegraph and telephone. Even if the public did not utilise the post and telegraph department, it would still be necessary for any well constituted and organised Government to have a post and telegraph service. I now come to the question of monopoly. Government have taken the monopoly for the service of post and telegraph, and, but for this monopoly, it would have been impossible to quote low rates which are uniform for all distances within the country, whether connected by fast or slow means of communication, whether by cheap means of communication or expensive ones going across deserts or jungles. Therefore, Sir, I say, this monopoly having been granted, it is the duty of the department to run its business in such a manner that the monopoly is utilised to the best advantage of the public and of the country. The rates which we adopt are partly historical and partly governed by considerations of cost. Already we have concessional rates. The unit rate, the principal rate, is the letter rate, namely, one anna for one tola but the postcard rate is lower, the book packet rate is lower and the newspaper rate is still lower. These are definite concessions which are given for political, social and industrial reasons and for the benefit of the public as a whole. These concessions would not have been possible but for the

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existence of the monopoly. It does not cost any more to the department to carry and distribute a letter than to carry and distribute a postcard. I am merely explaining the position in order to remove the misapprehension regarding what is known as the commercial working of the department.

I now come to the question of the Posts and Telegraphs, the Telephone and the Radio which all constitute one department. Honourable Members have stated that the post office is making a profit, therefore, the postal rates can be reduced. The Telephone Branch is making a profit. Therefore, the Telephone rates should be reduced. The Telegraph Branch is making a loss. Therefore, the telegraph rates should be increased. Apparently the idea is that the Postal Branch should make no profit, and if the Telegraph makes a loss, the general tax-payer should meet the cost.

**An Honourable Member:** You should effect economy. (Interruptions.)

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Honourable Members have made their own speeches. They ought to hear the other side.

**Mr. M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar:** He is misrepresenting us.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Then the Honourable Member can get up and make a personal explanation.

**Mr. M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar:** You are wrong when you say that we wanted the general tax-payer to bear the brunt of the deficit in the Telegraph Department. We want you to effect economy here and now.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Thank you. If there is a loss, somebody has got to bear that loss.

**Mr. M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar:** And that is you.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** If I am to bear the loss, the Honourable Member should leave me to manage it as I think it ought to be managed. If not, he must bear the loss himself. This question of treating the different branches of the department, as independent units, was raised last year. I would like to read what I said last year, because I really cannot add anything to it.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** You never grow!

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** The Honourable Member is unable to learn.

*"Vitaruti guruḥ pradye vidyam yathaiva tatha jadaih".*

The question was dealt with by the Postal Retrenchment Committee (of which Sir Cowasji Jehangir was the President). They stated:

"We would also like to express at this stage our view on the point that has been made on several occasions from various quarters that one branch of the department is working at a loss, while another is working at a profit. Such opinions overlook the implications of the declaration of the policy of Government which was accepted by the representatives of the people constituting the Legislative Assembly. As we read the declaration, Government expect the department as a whole to be self-supporting, irrespective of the results of working of individual branches. This implication, moreover, derives support from common experience. The results of the working of a

large utility department like the Posts and Telegraphs which provides facilities of communication of a most varied nature must depend on a variety of factors some of which are almost beyond control. It is not unreasonable to expect that in such circumstances sometimes it will be one branch and sometimes another which will show a profit while other branches are showing a loss."

**Mr. M. S. Aney** (Berar Representative): The Honourable Member can take it from me that the passage which he has read is known to every one of us. He need not repeat it over again.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** It is necessary for me to refer to it again, because the arguments advanced last year have been repeated again this year. It is quite a different matter if the Honourable Members say, "We don't accept your policy". If that is the position, then there is an end of the argument. I must proceed upon the accepted policy for the working of the department.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Accepted by whom?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Accepted by the representatives of the people in the Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** No.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If any Honourable Member wishes to put a question, he must rise in his seat.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** In that case, I would put a question. Has the Telegraph Department been ever run at a profit?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** May I ask when this policy was accepted by the House?

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Chair cannot allow these interruptions. If any point requires elucidation, and if the Honourable Member gives way, then questions can be put.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I will now turn to the question of the profit on the Post Office and the loss on the Telegraph Side. I have here the figures for the profit or loss on the post office for the last six years. In 1931-32, the post office worked at a loss of 51 lakhs, in 1932-33, there was a loss of six lakhs, in 1933-34, there was a loss of 11 lakhs. In 1934-35, that loss was converted into a profit of 24 lakhs. In 1935-36 it was 22 lakhs. In the revised estimate, we expect a profit of 26 lakhs. Now, the Telegraph side on the other hand has been working at a continued loss which has varied between 30 to 40 lakhs. It must however be remembered that the Telegraph Branch is an essential branch for providing quick means of communication necessary for the Government and the public, poor as well as rich. The main cost in telegraph is that of interest on capital investment and on depreciation. In the case of the post office, the material assets which require interest and depreciation are very much lower. Further, the telegraph service is not such an essential service as the post office, and consequently an increase in telegraph rates is likely to be followed by a very much larger fall, followed, therefore, by a great drop in the net revenues earned. There must be a point beyond which you cannot go in the case of the telegraph rates. If you raise your rates, your net revenue goes down and you are still left with a very large capital on which you have got to pay interest and on which you have to allow for depreciation.



**An Honourable Member:** Don't pay high salaries.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I am sorry, Honourable Members are extremely slippery. As soon as I deal with one argument, they ask something else. Another great item in the telegraph branch is the loss on press telegrams. We give to the Press an extremely cheap rate. Whereas the charge for an ordinary telegram is nine annas for eight words, for a press telegram we charge eight annas for 40 words. The loss on the press telegrams is calculated at something between 12 and 13 lakhs in 1936-37. This is a special concession given to the press in the interests of the country. It is considered necessary to do so. It is the giving of this large concession which makes the loss on the Telegraph side much heavier than it ought really to be. If you deduct that, and if you take the profits which the Telephone Branch makes, you will find that the two branches together are pretty near balancing each other. I will next come to the question of the Post Office profits. Here again you will find that the Post Office has worked at a loss for some years, and as regards the profits, those are insufficient today, as they stand, to meet the loss involved in the reduction of the postcard. Sir, questions have been raised about economy, about retrenchment, about cutting down salaries, about cutting down what is called a top-heavy administration. These points I dealt with in detail last year, and I wish now to assure the House that we do not consider that there is a top-heavy administration, or that the total salaries expended on what is called the highly-paid people are disproportionately large. I will give to the House figures for the total pay bill of the Department. Sir, the total pay bill for the Department is Rs. 774 lakhs. Out of this amount, if you take the salary paid to all people drawing more than Rs. 350 per mensem—I have been unable to obtain figures on the basis of salaries of people drawing more than Rs. 500 per mensem which is the maximum salary fixed by certain Members opposite for all officers—taking everybody drawing Rs. 350 and upwards, the total pay bill is Rs. 45 lakhs; that is to say, they constitute six per cent. of the total pay bill of the Department. Well, even if you abolish the whole of the staff drawing Rs. 350 or more, you will not be able to get enough to pay for the loss on the Post Office.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): It being Friday today, the House has got to rise at a quarter to one. The Honourable Member can continue his speech after lunch.

The Assembly then adjourned for Lunch till a Quarter Past Two of the Clock.

The Assembly re-assembled after Lunch at a Quarter Past Two of the Clock, Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta) in the Chair.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Sir, in my speech before the recess, I dealt with the correct interpretation of the term "commercial", as applied to this Department, and dealt with the argument advanced that each branch of the Department should be treated as a single unit instead of the Department being treated as a whole. I also gave certain figures to indicate that the Department was not top-heavy and that the salaries paid to what are

known as the supervising officers did not constitute any large burden on the revenues of the Department. I would now like, Sir, to deal very briefly with the remaining arguments advanced by various Members opposite. I do not propose to take very long over it. I do not want Members to be under any misapprehension as to the attitude of Government in this matter. The question of rates is one that receives the very careful consideration of the Government with regard to posts and telegraphs. We are fully aware that the rates which were raised in recent years require to be brought down, but financial considerations must be of primary importance. It is not possible to reduce the rates to be charged below the cost of service. My friend, Mr. Joshi, is undoubtedly a very able labour leader, but I very much doubt whether the advice which he gave to commercial concerns would be accepted by any industrialist.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** It may be right to sell goods cheap in a period of depression, but you cannot sell your goods below cost price. If the price is below cost price the more you sell the greater your loss. There is a limit beyond which you really cannot go. If it is done sometimes, it is done because the person later on raises the price to make up for what he has lost. We fully recognise that so far as the postcards are concerned, when finances permit, the rates should be brought down. We have given an earnest of our good faith in regard to rates, because as soon as the finances improved, we brought the letter rate down and put it on a logical basis. We have proposed this year a change in the book packet rate. We have introduced new services and we have brought down the rates for telegrams and telephones. It is not our intention to go on earning and pocketing large sums of money. There is no question here of Imperial interests as against Indian interests. There is here no question of any Machiavellian policy. Our budget is open to all of you, and we are prepared to explain every item of it. I am sure you will all admit that we have carried out retrenchment and economy to a limit which has received the severe criticism of certain Members in this House. We have pulled the Department out of a morass, from a period of recurring deficits and of huge accumulated losses, to a balanced position. We hope in the near future to be in a position to build up a revenue reserve. We have not neglected the question of expansion of postal facilities in rural areas. My friend, Prof. Ranga, who is very greatly interested in this matter, said that he was not satisfied with only 200 post offices in rural areas. He will be interested to know that as a result of the policy of expansion undertaken since the beginning of the current financial year, in the first nine months we have opened and made permanent 527 new post offices. We have in addition opened 420 experimental post offices and we have given 669 postmen and village postmen. Surely a total increase of nearly a thousand post offices and over 600 postmen in a period of nine months is proof positive of the good intentions of the Department in looking after the rural population of India. I would deprecate making rash experiments of the kind proposed by Honourable Members opposite who say that if we reduce the postcard rate, we will get more money and have no loss. Last year I took great trouble in tracing the history of the rise and fall of the postcard traffic, and I indicated that to expect anything more than a ten per cent. increase, that is to say, about 40 million postcards in a year, would be going from the realms of estimating to the realms of

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imagination. If we now embark upon an experiment, it will convert our small profit of four lakhs into a loss of nearly half a crore. We shall be floundering in this morass of debt for a long period to come, and it will be followed by a restriction of expansion of postal facilities which, I am sure, Honourable Members opposite would not like. Mr. Sham Lal, in moving the amendment, practically said: "We know that your budget is there; we know your figures are there, and that you cannot afford it; but all the same I should still like the half anna postcard. Do it somehow or other." That reminded me, Sir, of a little story which I told to an Honourable Member of this House. A wife wanted an expensive *Sari*; the husband said: "Well, I am very sorry I have not got the money. You see, we have got such and such expenses and I have got only so much income. I will put by Rs. 5 this month and I will put by another Rs. 5 next month and at the end of six months, I shall be able to buy a *Sari* for you." The wife said: "Yes, it is perfectly true your income is not very great and our expenditure is large." But after listening to the arguments of the husband and saying "yes" every time, she ultimately said: "But I would like my *Sari* all the same just now."

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** Every husband yields; why don't you yield also?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I did not know that my friend, Mr. Satyamurti, was such a soft husband, and if a husband does yield, he either gets into debt and ultimately goes into bankruptcy or remains under a load of debt for the rest of his life. A wise husband will tell his wife—"You must learn to wait, it is no use mortgaging our future. We must earn our money before we spend it." I wish to appeal to the House . . . . .

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Follow that principle in Air Mail.

**Pandit Nilakantha Das** (Orissa Division: Non-Muhammadan): If a divorce ensues in the meantime?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I wish to appeal to Honourable Members opposite—they may be sitting in the near future on this side of the House, and I may be sitting outside in the lobby giving them facts and figures with which to defend their policy,—I wish to appeal to my Honourable friends opposite and tell them that we fully recognise that for this country, though the three pice postcard is not expensive compared to the cost involved in handling it, it may be expensive considering the paying capacity of the poor man, but having admitted that, I say that today we are not in a position financially to give that concession. Sir, it is my hope, it is my aim to so work the department as to accumulate sufficient reserves before embarking upon an experiment of this large character. I would, therefore, appeal to Honourable Members opposite to put aside sentiment for the time being and to look upon the question from a purely business, or shall I say statesmanlike point of view. I know there is a strong desire in the country that there should be a reduction in the price of the postcard, and Honourable Members opposite would like to record their votes to indicate that they consider this change desirable. They have already done so by their speeches and by their votes in the last two years. This time, Sir, I appeal to them to show the same moral courage,—I know they have

on more important occasions shown their moral courage right up to the extent of accepting the greatest penalties imposed on them,—I now appeal to them to show the courage of their conviction by accepting the figures of the Department and, in the light of the explanation given in support of those figures, to record their votes against this amendment.

**Mr. Sri Prakasa** (Allahabad and Jhansi Divisions: Non-Muhammadian Rural): Sir, I am . . . . .

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce**: Sir, I rise to a point of order. There was a definite understanding before the luncheon hour that the debate should be brought to a close after the Government spokesman had spoken. It was on that understanding that the Honourable the President called on my Honourable friend behind me to wind it up.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): What was the arrangement?

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali** (Delhi: General): The arrangement was if we could divide the House before lunch, we would put up no speaker, but the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs could not finish before lunch, and he went beyond the luncheon hour, and so I say we must have another speaker.

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce**: With regard to that, I may point out that the fault is not ours. When my Honourable friend suggested to me that we should, if possible, divide before lunch, Mr. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar was on his feet. He took another ten minutes or so to finish, and, therefore, the time allowed to my Honourable friend, Mr. Bewoor, was entirely inadequate . . . . .

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): There seems to be some controversy over the matter. The Chair would rather take the line of least resistance and have one more speaker, and only one.

**Sir Muhammad Yakub** (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions: Muhammadian Rural): If the arrangement is disturbed, there is no reason . . . . .

**Mr. S. Satyamurti**: On a point of order, Sir. You have given a ruling, and my friend ought to accept it.

**Sir Muhammad Yakub**: I am speaking on the point of order. I do not question the ruling at all. My point is, if that arrangement is disturbed, there is no reason why Members of other Parties, who wish to speak, should not be allowed to speak.

**Mr. D. K. Lahiri Chaudhury** (Bengal: Landholders): Sir, it has been pointed out . . . . .

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Order, order. The question will arise when any other Honourable Member belonging to any other Party gets up to speak.

**Mr. Sri Prakasa:** Sir, I am sorry to say that this is the very first occasion when my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, has not been nice, but I have every desire to be nice to him. It is a curious thing that the amendment on the postcard always brings forward a supplementary budget speech from the Honourable Sir Frank Noyce reviewing the whole of the working of the Postal Department; and when he has been given so much latitude to discuss the various aspects of the Department on this particular amendment, I hope, Sir, you will permit me a certain amount of latitude as well. It is always an ungracious task to have to criticise my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, because he is always frank and always nice; and I must express my personal regret, Sir, that yesterday's speech of his was going to be his last in this House on that particular subject;

Now, before I proceed further, I shall also indulge in my annual habit of paying a tribute to the Postal Department; and I do not think I can do better than quote some of the sentences that I had occasion to utter at a Postal Conference when by an oversight they made me their President. I am repeating these words, specially to assure the House that I was not singing to the gallery; and singing to the gallery, as my Honourable and worthy opponent, the Finance Member, knows, is not in my line. I then said, and I repeat it now:

"I should like to pay my tribute of sincere admiration and affectionate respect to all those who work in this department, and help friends and relatives in distant places to keep in constant touch, one with the other; and also assist in forging loving bonds between individuals who would perhaps never have known each other otherwise. I should also like to pay my respectful tribute to the honesty, integrity and industry of the men who work in your department. It is a sad fact that dishonesty and corruption are rampant in most departments of our life, and there are incessant complaints of oppression as well against persons in authority generally and particularly the lower officials in most of the departments of Government. In the midst of this atmosphere, it is a remarkable fact that there are practically no complaints against your department on this score. In India I fear the presence of an official is always unwelcome; and in most cases the arrival of one in the neighbourhood causes alarm and not unoften brings trouble. But you are not only always welcome; you are even eagerly looked for. Will you not take it as the proudest expression of our gratitude and affection for you?"

As regards the industry of the members of your department and the risks to life and limb that they undergo, I fear, even a professional poet and panegyrist at a mediaeval Indian court could not do the subject full justice. When one sees telegraph wires across steep valleys, one wonders how human feet could have trod these inaccessible places, and human hands put the poles and pulled the wires; when one finds letter boxes hanging in the hearts of jungles, or hears the runner running with the post on his back and bells ringing from the top of a bamboo stick which he carries in his hand, on dark mountain slopes at midnight, then alone can we laymen understand the work of our brothers and admire their silent courage and devotion to public duty. Their tremendous industry and efficiency can also be seen if one happens to be in a post office at sorting time and sees the work of your men in running trains. My heart's sincere praise and sympathy always goes out to the post master of the small sub-office who single handed has to attend to a bewildering variety of work: despatching letters; receiving money orders; selling postal orders; attending to letters and packets meant for registration or insurance or both; weighing letters for anxious individuals; giving forms and information of all sorts; sending telegrams; receiving and giving money on savings bank accounts; and over and above all, attending to the importunate demands of the miserable censor eager to examine the letters of politicians in disfavour with the Government, just as the mail bag is about to be sealed for the train! I wonder why he does not lose his patience more often than he does."

Sir, having said that, I should like to say—speaking of the postcard—that it is essential that the postal rate on it should be reduced to two pice if the Postal Department is really anxious to help the poor people of this country. The plea is always put up that they have no money. I think, Sir, one item on which money can be saved is buildings. Last year, I complained of expensive postal buildings. In England, post offices are housed in grocers' shops or chemists' shops; but in India, in keeping with the traditions of imperialism, all public offices have to be in large houses. One of the Governors of the United Provinces, Sir Harcourt Butler, who was a descendant of Wajid Ali Shah in more ways than one, used to say that "a public authority meanly housed is meanly esteemed"; and the result is that in Lucknow we have a tremendous post office.

Sir, I will tell you a story of how sometimes useless buildings are got up. There is a post office attached to my little Hindi daily newspaper the *Aj* in Benares. The post office was there for 15 years; and there was no complaint of lack of accommodation. But one fine morning the manager suddenly receives a letter from the Post Master General saying that our post office would have to be abolished, because there was not sufficient accommodation and sufficient amenities for those members of his Department who worked there. My manager was naturally very much confused; and he saw the Inspector. The Inspector told him: "Well, if you trouble me, I am going to trouble you". "What is the matter?" my manager naturally enquired. "Well, these fellows who are in charge of the *Aj* newspaper are also in charge of the educational institution, the *Vidyapith*. I am building a house in that neighbourhood. My windows overlook your land and the *Vidyapith* are not allowing me to open windows. If they do not allow me to open windows, I am not going to allow you a post office". The result was that the man got his windows and we retained the post office. I hope the Director General will make sure that when some one asks for a building, there is not some such game in the air, and I hope some day there will not be the demand for a regular Taj Mahal for the little post office attached to my paper.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Sir, may I ask why the Honourable Member did not report it as soon as the Inspector held out the threat to him?

**Mr. Sri Prakasa:** This was many years ago, and I was a wiser man then than I am now (Laughter); and I am sure that if I had informed him, he would also have found that the post office room at the place was really very inadequate and very insufficient, even though it was as good as the editor's. But, Sir, I do not want the Honourable Member to pursue the matter any further, because I want to keep my post office. (Laughter.)

Well, Sir, it does seem rather unfortunate,—and I will close with that,—it is rather unfortunate that you should charge only one pice extra on an envelope that contains a whole tola of letter, while you charge as much as three pice for a small postcard on which only a few lines can be written. I shall have occasion, when I move my other amendments, to speak on the various aspects of this question as well as those of others; and for the present I will close with the hope that the House will carry this amendment.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Sir, I move that the question be now put.

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** The question is that the question be now put.

The motion was adopted.

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** The question is:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the entries under the head 'Postcards' the following be substituted :

'Single—Six pies.

Reply—One anna'."

The Assembly divided:

AYES—67.

Ahsan, Maulvi Muhammad.  
 Aney, Mr. M. S.  
 Asaf Ali, Mr. M.  
 Ayyangar, Mr. M. Ananthasayanam.  
 Azhar Ali, Mr. Muhammad.  
 Badrul Hasan, Maulvi.  
 Bajoria, Babu Baijnath.  
 Banerjee, Dr. P. N.  
 Bhagavan Das, Dr.  
 Bhagchand Soni, Rai Bahadur Seth.  
 Chaliha, Mr. Kuladhar.  
 Chattopadhyaya, Mr. Amarendra Nath.  
 Chettiar, Mr. T. S. Avinashilingam.  
 Chetty, Mr. Sami Vencatachelam.  
 Das, Mr. B.  
 Das, Mr. Basanta Kumar.  
 Das, Pandit Nilakantha.  
 Desai, Mr. Bhulabhai J.  
 DeSouza, Dr. F. X.  
 Essak Sait, Mr. H. A. Sathar H.  
 Fazl-i-Haq Piracha, Khan Bahadur Shaikh.  
 Gadgil, Mr. N. V.  
 Ganga Singh, Mr.  
 Ghiasuddin, Mr. M.  
 Ghulam Bhik Nairang, Syed.  
 Giri, Mr. V. V.  
 Govind Das, Seth.  
 Gupta, Mr. Ghanshiam Singh.  
 Hans Raj, Raizada.  
 Hosmani, Mr. S. K.  
 Ismail Khan, Haji Chaudhury Muhammad.  
 Jedhe, Ma. K. M.  
 Jehangir, Sir Cowasji.

Jinnah, Mr. M. A.  
 Jogendra Singh, Sirdar.  
 Joshi, Mr. N. M.  
 Kailash Behari Lal, Babu.  
 Khare, Dr. N. B.  
 Lahiri Chaudhury, Mr. D. K.  
 Maitra, Pandit Lakshmi Kanta.  
 Malaviya, Pandit Krishna Kant.  
 Mehr Shah, Nawab Sahibzada Sir Sayad Muhammad.  
 Mudaliar, Mr. C. N. Muthuranga.  
 Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi Qazi.  
 Murtuza Sahib Bahadur, Maulvi Syed.  
 Nageswara Rao, Mr. K.  
 Pant, Pandit Govind Ballabh.  
 Parma Nand, Bhai.  
 Raghurib Narayan Singh, Choudhri.  
 Raju, Mr. P. S. Kumaraswami.  
 Ranga, Prof. N. G.  
 Saksena, Mr. Mohan Lal.  
 Sant Singh, Sardar.  
 Santhanam, Mr. K.  
 Satyamurti, Mr. S.  
 Sham Lal, Mr.  
 Sheodass Daga, Seth.  
 Singh, Mr. Ram Narayan.  
 Sinha, Mr. Anugrah Narayan.  
 Sinha, Mr. Satya Narayan.  
 Sinha, Mr. Shri Krishna.  
 Som, Mr. Suryya Kumar.  
 Sri Prakasa, Mr.  
 Umar Aly Shah, Mr.  
 Varma, Mr. B. B.  
 Vissanji, Mr. Mathuradas.  
 Ziauddin Ahmad, Dr.

## NOES—43.

Abdul Hamid, Khan Bahadur Sir.  
 Ahmad Nawaz Khan, Major Nawab Sir.  
 Aikman, Mr. A.  
 Bajpai, Sir Girja Shankar.  
 Bansidhar, Rai Sahib.  
 Bewoor, Mr. G. V.  
 Bhide, Mr. V. S.  
 Buss, Mr. L. C.  
 Chanda, Mr. A. K.  
 Chapman-Mortimer, Mr. T.  
 Craik, The Honourable Sir Henry.  
 Dalal, Dr. R. D.  
 Ghuznavi, Sir Abdul Halim.  
 Griffiths, Mr. P. J.  
 Grigg, The Honourable Sir James.  
 Hands, Mr. A. S.  
 Hudson, Sir Leslie.  
 Jawahar Singh, Sardar Bahadur Sardar Sir.  
 Lal Chand, Captain Rao Bahadur Chaudhri.  
 Lalit Chand, Thakur.  
 Lloyd, Mr. A. H.  
 Mackeown, Mr. J. A.

Mehta, Mr. S. L.  
 Menon, Mr. K. R.  
 Metcalfe, Sir Aubrey.  
 Morgan, Mr. G.  
 Mukherjee, Rai Bahadur Sir Satys Charan.  
 Nagarkar, Mr. C. B.  
 Naydu, Diwan Bahadur B. V. Sri Hari Rao.  
 Noyce, The Honourable Sir Frank.  
 Rau, Sir Raghavendra.  
 Roughton, Mr. N. J.  
 Row, Mr. K. Sanjiva.  
 Sale, Mr. J. F.  
 Sarma, Sir Srinivass.  
 Scott, Mr. J. Ramsay.  
 Sher Muhammad Khan, Captain Sardar Sir.  
 Spence, Mr. G. H.  
 Tottenham, Mr. G. R. F.  
 Witherington, Mr. C. H.  
 Yakub, Sir Muhammad.  
 Yamin Khan, Sir Muhammad.  
 Zafrullah Khan, The Honourable Sir Muhammad.

The motion was adopted.

**Mr. Sri Prakasa:** Sir, I move:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the entries under the head '*Book, Pattern and Sample Packets*' the following be substituted:

'For the first five tolas or fraction thereof—Six pice.

For every additional five tolas or fraction thereof in excess of five tolas—Six pice.'

In moving this amendment, I shall take up the tale that was disturbed by the exigencies of voting. But I may, for the information of the Honourable the Industries Member, tell him that his chaprassis are really as fond of the half anna postcard as we ourselves on this side of the House are. As we were filing into the lobbies, the chaprassis anxiously enquired of us whether it was going to be a two pice postcard or continue to be a three pice one. I told them with regret that though we were trying to give them a two pice postcard, the Government would see to it that the rate remains at three pice. They were distressed; and so I informed them that according to their boss they are in the habit of receiving telegrams every day, and, therefore, they should have no complaint against a three pice postcard!

Now, so far as book pattern and sample packets are concerned, if I am not mistaken, there is a story attached to this. When the postcard rate was raised to three pice, the book pattern and sample packets rate remained at two pice. Later on, it was said in this House, if I am not mistaken, by Sir Harry Haig, that this was leading to a certain amount of fraud: and that it was necessary to raise the pattern rate to three pice as well. According to him, what was happening was that receipts, notices, circulars, etc., in the form of postcards required three pice, while the same put in an envelope required only two pice. Therefore, the rate for



[Mr. Sri Prakasa.]

this also went up. I fear the same arguments can hold good when the rate is being reduced to two pice. The only cure is to reduce the postcard as well. Government themselves are proposing that for the first unit of 2½ tolas the rate on packets should be six pies. I am proposing that the old rate of the five tola unit should be reinstated; and that five tolas of sample packets should be carried for six pies, and for every additional five tolas or fraction thereof, there should be levied an additional six pies.

I hope the Government will see the reasonableness of my request. According to the Government proposal, for the first 2½ tolas it is six pies, and for every additional 2½ tolas they propose only three pies. I say, I am prepared to give them two pice instead of one for every additional five tolas or fraction thereof, if they will give us the first unit of five tolas instead of 2½ tolas. I am sure that this argument will appeal to my Honourable friends opposite and that they will accept my amendment. Sir, it is a pity that, according to law, we cannot have private post offices at all. The Government have a monopoly of the post office, and they claim exclusive rights to carry letters. I have very often wondered whether the day will not come when the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs will jump up from his seat and insist on our putting on stamps on every little slip that we send to our friends sitting on other benches in this House itself. When they have a monopoly of carrying postal articles, they ought to be reasonable. They say that this is a commercial department of Government. First of all, a commercial department cannot be a monopolist department. In commerce, there is a certain amount of freedom of competition; but here, in the Postal Department, there is no free competition; and as my Honourable friend, Mr. Ananthasayanam, informed us, an old woman, who offered to carry letters for less than the postal rates, was prosecuted and roughly handled. Moreover, this Department is also a political department, because, if they work as a common carrier as they ought to do, they would not censor or open our letters in the manner they do at present. I do not think that a person who offers to carry my articles for a consideration can allow them to be examined by a third party. The post office in India does that, and, therefore, it cannot claim to be a commercial department; and it cannot come to us and ask us to make it self-supporting. If they took away this political side of the Department then we would have more sympathy with them than I fear we can have at the present moment. Any way, the proposal that I have made is an eminently reasonable one, namely, that instead of having two pice for the first 2½ tolas, we should have six pies for the first five tolas, and, instead of having three pies for every additional 2½ tolas, we can have six pies for every additional five tolas or fraction thereof. I think, according to my proposals, the loss on the first will be balanced by the gain on the other; and the Honourable Member should have no difficulty in accepting them.

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** Amendment moved:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the entries under the head '*Book, Pattern and Sample Packets*' the following be substituted:

'For the first five tolas or fraction thereof—Six pies.

For every additional five tolas or fraction thereof in excess of five tolas—Six pies'."

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria** (Marwari Association: Indian Commerce): Sir, I rise to support this amendment. This is a very modest amendment, and what my Honourable friend, Mr. Sri Prakasa, wants is that instead of 2½ tolas being the unit for six pies which has been proposed in the Finance Bill, there should be a unit of five tolas for six pies. As regards additional five tolas or fraction thereof, he wants that it should remain at six pies as it is at present, though in the Finance Bill it is proposed that for additional 2½ tolas it should be three pies. I would personally prefer that the additional weight in excess of five tolas should be in units of 2½ tolas as proposed in the Finance Bill, but if the Government should accept our proposal and give us a unit of five tolas for six pies initially, I think we will be satisfied, because after all it is only the first unit that counts most. It is for this reason that I support this amendment. Sir, I take this opportunity of speaking a few words on the general postal matters.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): You cannot speak on general postal matters.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria**: I am referring to postal rates. The Mover of the amendment also referred to it, and this is the only opportunity for me to speak on that point.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): But the Honourable Member must make it relevant to the amendment now under discussion.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria**: Sir, the post office is the only department which is in a solvent condition, and it has not suffered on account of the separation of Burma. On the other hand, my Honourable friend, Mr. Bewoor, is in the happy position of gaining 13 lakhs by this separation. Sir, the post office as it is at the present moment is running at a profit. The only branch of this department which is running at a loss is the telegraph department, which is a millstone round the neck of the postal department. It is losing. There is a loss of 35 lakhs on telegrams alone. In my opinion, this loss in telegrams is due to a certain extent to the great use which is now being made of telephones. Say for small distances, people are now in the habit of using telephones instead of telegrams. Say from Meerut or Hapur to Delhi, they will use telephones instead of telegrams, because the telephones are much cheaper than telegrams. So in my opinion, the rates for telegrams should be reduced considerably. If it is not reduced considerably then there is no hope of regaining traffic which is being lost.

**Mr. B. Das** (Orissa Division: Non-Muhammadan): Then, increase the rate of telephone.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria**: Certainly not. As regards telephones, I accuse my Honourable friend, Mr. Bewoor, of profiteering. He is making 50 per cent. profit. The working expense is only 55 lakhs 82 thousand and his net receipts has been 84 lakhs 33 thousand. He is thus making just 50 per cent. profit. Even if we take the interest on capital outlay . . .

**Sir Leslie Hudson** (Bombay: European): What has this got to do with the amendment before the House: that amendment relates to book packets. Telephones and telegrams have nothing to do with that amendment.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Honourable Member may refer to them as the Honourable Member for Industries and Labour has discussed them as co-related with one another.

**Mr. M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar:** The Honourable Member for Industries and Labour touched on all points yesterday, and, in fact, he made a budget speech. So my Honourable friend, Babu Baijnath Bajoria, is entitled to make a general reply with respect to all matters.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): I have already given my ruling.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria:** Thank you, Sir. Telephones are really a great boon to all communities in India, both to the people and to the Government, and the only complaint about the telephone, at the present moment, is that we cannot get connection as speedily as we should like. Furthermore, the charges are too high especially for long distances, and if the charges are reduced, especially those charges which are made during the day time, I think there will be further development in telephones. Telegrams cost more to the Government in working, they have to lay out more capital outlay, but in telephones the Government have got very little to do. The operator has only to connect the telephones and the people talk themselves.

**Sir Cowasji Jehangir** (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, I rise to a point of order. The amendment that we are discussing just now is No. 39 on the agenda which relates to one specific subject. The Honourable Member is now making a speech on the Finance Bill as a whole. He will have the right of making such a speech only at the third reading. If every Member discusses the whole subject of posts and telegraphs on every amendment, it is in my humble opinion completely out of order. I would ask you, Sir, to rule this speech out of order, and you will please ask him to confine himself to the amendment like other Honourable Members.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Honourable Member is certainly in order in referring incidentally, though only incidentally . . . . .

**Sir Cowasji Jehangir:** It is not incidentally.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Order, order. But he should not make it the main theme of his speech.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria:** What I am suggesting is that the loss incurred in accepting this amendment could be made good. That is the point I am making. My suggestion is that if they reduce the loss on telegrams, there will be no difficulty in accepting this amendment. The traffic has considerably gone down. There should be a retrenchment of the staff, there should also be a retrenchment of the pay, and there should be a reduction in the rates for telegrams, before the telegraph department can pay itself. Another department on which the Government is losing is radio. It is a luxury department.

**Sir Leslie Hudson:** That is also incidental.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria:** These are four departments, post office, telegraph, telephone and radio. Government are losing on telegraphs and radios, that is why the post office users and the telephone users suffer.

**Sir Leslie Hudson:** Incidentally, of course!

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria:** As regards radio, it is a luxury, and Government should see that no loss is incurred on that portion of the department. The effect of this amendment will be barely a few lakhs which my Honourable friend, Mr. Bewoor, can well afford to forego in the present position of the department. I support this amendment.

**Pandit Nilakantha Das:** May I know from the Honourable Member what will be the loss if this amendment is carried or accepted?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** The packet rate which has been put in the Bill deliberately fixes a lower unit of weight, and it is intended to allow the smaller weighing articles such as advertisements and catalogues of the small trader to go at a charge less than the present one. The subsequent stages have been fixed at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tolas with a charge of quarter of an anna with the same object. At present the rate jumps up in half an anna stages, and we want to give benefit to people, who have not got heavy packages, to pay a little less charge. As has been already stated in the budget speech of the Honourable the Finance Member, the concession that we propose in the Bill is expected to cost Rs. 8 lakhs a year. If the present amendment is accepted, it would mean a further additional loss of revenue to the tune of Rs.  $5\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs. That means that the budget which has been framed with a small surplus of Rs. 4 lakhs will become a deficit of Rs.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs. We have been working, as I have already stated, with an attempt to balance our budget and to remain on the right side rather than on the wrong side. The argument which was put forward by Mr. Bajoria shows the risk of accepting the proposal which was made some time ago that each branch should be treated as a unit by itself. Mr. Bajoria now wants me to reduce the rates on telephones so that the loss on the telegraphs may continue. I would just make one observation in this connection. There is a great deal of misapprehension on the subject of the competition between telegrams and telephones. We made certain investigations and placed them before the Standing Finance Committee. My Honourable friend, Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad, asked us for definite figures and we put them before him. We showed that the establishment of telephone connection between two places is not necessarily followed by an equivalent fall in the telegraph traffic. On the contrary, frequently the establishment of telephone connection brings in new traffic to the telegraph and the best indication of that is in the fact that, while the telephone revenue has been going up, there has been no corresponding fall on the telegraph side. Our telegraph revenue has remained more or less steady during the last 4 or 5 years; it has varied between Rs. 266 lakhs and Rs. 267 lakhs. The subject is not quite relevant to the amendment but as you, Sir, admitted it, I just wish to reply to my Honourable friend, Mr. Bajoria, and say that I think the safest policy is to take the department as a whole. As regards the amendment, I must oppose it as it is going to convert a small surplus

[Mr. G. V. Bewoor.]

into a small loss, and it is our intention to work the Department so as to have a surplus, and, as I said, to build up a revenue reserve for any further changes in the rates. Sir, I oppose.

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** The question is:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the entries under the head '*Book, Pattern and Sample Packets*' the following be substituted:

'For the first five tolas or fraction thereof—Six pies.

For every additional five tolas or fraction thereof in excess of five tolas—Six pies.'

The motion was negatived.

**Pandit Nilakantha Das:** Sir, I move:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, in the first and second entries under the head '*Registered Newspapers*' for the word 'eight' the word 'ten' be substituted."

I understand that my Honourable friend in charge of the Department has given notice of a similar amendment. This is the *status quo* and this was a mistake in print. I understand that it is his intention to accept this amendment. I move it.

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** Amendment moved:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, in the first and second entries under the head '*Registered Newspapers*' for the word 'eight' the word 'ten' be substituted."

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** As this amendment also stands in my own name. I need hardly say I accept it. I can only apologise to the House for any perturbation which had been caused by the appearance of the word "eight" instead of the word "ten", due to a misprint in the Bill.

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** The question is:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, in the first and second entries under the head '*Registered Newspapers*' for the word 'eight' the word 'ten' be substituted."

The motion was adopted.

**Pandit Nilakantha Das:** Sir, I move:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, after the entries under the head '*Registered Newspapers*' the following proviso be added:

'Provided that more than one copy of a Registered Newspaper of the same date shall be allowed to be sent at the above rates if the total weight is not more than given above.'

The amendment speaks for itself, and I move it. It is only a little extension of the cultural amenity for which the amendment which was just accepted was moved last year and accepted by Government. I hope

there will be no difficulty in giving this little benefit of educational culture to the poor man in the villages. I commend the amendment to the acceptance of the House.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Amendment moved:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, after the entries under the head '*Registered Newspapers*' the following proviso be added:

'Provided that more than one copy of a Registered Newspaper of the same date shall be allowed to be sent at the above rates if the total weight is not more than given above.'

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Sir, this question was raised some time ago by my friend, Mr. Sri Prakasa, who is extremely careful about the interpretation of the rules. The present concession which is given to newspapers is a concession for each copy of the newspaper. The proprietor or manager or publisher of a registered newspaper has the option under the rules to pay the postage on a packet containing two or more copies of the same registered newspaper either at the special rate for registered newspapers calculated on each copy according to the rate of that copy or at the rate applicable to book packets provided the conditions relating to the same are not infringed. The rate of postage for registered newspapers is already extremely low. It is in fact the lowest in the world, I think, so far as the rates I have been able to collect go. The further concession which is now asked would mean that in the case of newspaper weighing two tolas, ten copies of that can travel . . . (*An Honourable Member*: "Five copies.") Yes, five copies for one pice. Only a short time ago, the low rates given for press telegrams were criticised as an unnecessary concession. This is a further concession to the press. Newspapers get their news through press telegrams which are sent at a cheap rate. To accept this amendment would ruin the whole principle of the concession. As you will notice in the Bill, the rate is per copy of the registered newspaper. In Belgium, the rate is per copy, in Great Britain, the rate is one penny for every copy of the newspaper. In South Africa, it is the same—one penny per copy. In Australia, it is 1½d. per copy. What Honourable Members opposite are asking me to do is to permit a parcel of newspapers to go to a distributing agent at the registered newspaper rate. Our registered newspaper rate is a rate per copy sent to the subscriber. That should be the correct concession. I must oppose this as this will lead to a great number of newspapers going at an absurdly cheap rate. We are already losing on the newspaper traffic, because it is being carried at a concession rate.

**Pandit Nilakantha Das:** What will be the estimated loss if this amendment is accepted?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** It is impossible to calculate the loss.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** Why not make an experiment?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Mr. Satyamurti is asking me to jump in the dark. The loss may be very large.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** How do you know?

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra** (Presidency Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): You are making so many experiments. Why not make another?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** Please allow me to proceed without interruptions. Otherwise, we can as well have a discussion in the lobby. It is impossible for me to say how many copies will in future be sent in packets to local agents when the rate is changed. My point simply is this—the rate is a rate per copy. It is a rate per copy in all other countries. To make it a rate per bundle of newspapers would be wrong. It would go against the very principle. Similarly, a packet of postcards or letters might be sent and distributed at the other end. Considering the point that newspapers are already having a very big concession and knowing that the rate should and must be rate per copy, as in all other countries, I suggest that this amendment be not accepted. I oppose it.

**Mr. M. S. Aney:** May I ask the Honourable Member, with your permission, whether this reduction will not help the larger circulation of the newspapers.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I have no reason to believe that it will.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** I am surprised at the pertinacity of my friend in opposing all amendments. My friend talked of the principle. What is the principle?

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I have already explained it. If the Honourable Member cannot understand it, I cannot make him understand.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** This is a very old joke, and a very cheap one at that. We claim to understand these things much better than those Indians sitting on the other side who are slaves of the bureaucracy. We believe newspapers ought to go about freely and that people must be educated. I do suggest that the Honourable the Finance Member must teach these Departments sometimes, I do suggest that it is unseemly that the Government should think that they can oppose *all* amendments to the Finance Bill; I do appeal to the Finance Member to put some sense into those Departments occasionally. He cannot become merely the coffin-bearer of all his colleagues with His Excellency the Viceroy at his back! All our amendments have been passed by this House by tremendous majorities, but the Finance Member will bring his new Finance Bill all right. Sir, out of respect for the fact that our amendments have all been carried by tremendous majorities, I do suggest that he will pay heed to them. But nothing happens! I do suggest that this amendment is a very reasonable one, a very modest one; it simply asks that, without any loss of revenue, you should prescribe a maximum weight for a particular value of postage, and up to that weight, allow any number of newspapers, and no more. Sir, let us save the cheaper newspapers which all of us want. I appeal to friends who believe in democracy, who believe in educating our masters the electorates, who believe in cheap newspapers, who believe in the spread of knowledge, to support this motion. Sir, as far as I can judge, the Government will lose no money, but the cheaper newspapers in Indian languages will then be enabled to be sent to one man with two or three copies and they will

spread knowledge. Sir, let the common folk read them, let them learn, let them become educated. Sir, we are constantly told that in this country what we want is a more educated electorate. Why then don't you give us an opportunity in this simple matter? Sir, I suggest that this House ought to pass this amendment and we expect of the Honourable the Finance Member not to "certify"—I am sorry to use that word—every word of his original Bill and bring it back. I do suggest, Mr. Deputy President, that the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs, Mr. Bewoor, has made no case against the amendment except trotting out the word "principle": and I suggest that the principle is that we must help the proprietors of newspapers to spread knowledge widely and throughout the country, I, therefore, support the amendment and would ask the House respectfully to vote for it. (Cheers.)

**Sir Cowasji Jehangir:** Mr. Deputy President, I am afraid I am not quite convinced as to how this amendment is going to help the villager or the agriculturist. It first provides that more than one copy of a newspaper may be sent to a man if the combined weight of all such newspapers is equal to what is supposed to be the weight of an ordinary newspaper. Well, Sir, in the first place, "one man does not want two or three copies" of a newspaper of the same date. Therefore, it surely means, as Mr. Satyamurti explained, that it is for more than one person. So, in principle, what this amendment requires is that we should allow for packets of newspapers printed on very flimsy paper being sent to one person in the village, who thus in effect becomes a post office for this purpose, and who would have to take two or three papers, go round and then distribute them. Well, that is certainly against the principle of a monopoly, if you look at it impartially. You might as well say that you should allow half a dozen letters to be put into one envelope addressed to one man, who then distributes those letters to several of his friends who are living in the area. Then, Sir, it says, "of the same date". Now, that imposes upon the authorities the obligation of finding out what the dates of the newspapers in a packet are. If they are of different dates, then it is illegal. If they are of the same date, it is legal. I do not see how that is practical nor can I see the reasonableness of allowing—I will repeat—two or three newspapers of the same date to be sent to one single person for the same charge as one newspaper, so that that man may be able to distribute them to his friends, it may be in a town, it may be in a village. I think the principle is wrong; besides which, may I draw the attention of my Honourable friend, Mr. Satyamurti, to the fact that he is encouraging the printing of newspapers on paper which we will not be able to handle,—newspapers printed on the thinnest and flimsiest sort of paper—and that very often, most probably, the poor villager will not even be able to read it, due to the quality of the paper on which the newspaper is likely to be printed. I would suggest, Mr. Deputy President, that this is an amendment which should not be supported, because I do not see how it will be of great advantage, nor do I see how the villager or the poor man is going to gain any advantage from it, and I see great difficulties in putting it into practice.

**Mr. Mohan Lal Saksena** (Lucknow Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I want to add a few words in support of this motion. Just now, Mr. Bewoor was pleased to tell us of the rates in various countries.



[Mr. Mohan Lal Saksena.]

May I inquire if the Director General will be pleased to give us the number of papers that are being published in those countries? Sir, in Japan and in fact, in every country he has mentioned, every district has got its own paper and that paper is being circulated not in thousands but in hundreds of thousands and millions. Well, it is very easy, when it suits their purpose, to compare figures and statistics with other countries. When it does not suit their purpose, they say—"the conditions in India are different". Sir, my friend, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, has pointed out that it would be very difficult for the postal authorities to find out whether the issues of the paper are of the same date or different dates. Am I to understand that he is then prepared to support the amendment which stands in my name and which says that even issues of different dates of the same newspaper might be sent in one packet? Sir, it is not a concession to the newspaper man, it is a concession to the villagers. We know that there are a number of papers, in fact most papers in Indian vernaculars cost only two pice and even one pice, and it is really a great hardship to expect these villagers to pay one pice extra in order to read this two pice papers! It is for the convenience of these villages that we have moved this amendment. We want that these papers should go to the villages in as large numbers as possible. Sir, the other day, we were told that this large expenditure is being incurred in the interest of the provincial autonomy that is coming, that it is in our own interest that it is being done, but may I know, is it not in the interest of the villagers that they should know what these Provincial Legislatures are doing, and is it not necessary that there should be as many papers reporting the proceedings of these Councils and the activities of the Government as possible? Sir, we want that villagers should take as much interest as possible in public affairs, and the only way that we can make them do that is by giving all possible facilities for the circulation of these Indian-owned papers amongst them. Then there is another thing. To my mind, this concession is a concession to vested interests. We know that the *Statesman*, which is supposed to have a circulation of hundreds of thousands, and which weighs I think more than four times that of a similar issue of an Indian paper, is being sent at the rate of one pice. Sir, the Government, therefore, do not want other papers to come into existence; they want only to help those that have already established themselves and do not want to help the new papers. Sir, if the Honourable the Member for Industries and Labour accepts this amendment, he may be able to attract a large amount of traffic to post office that is going to the railway at present; we know that if this concession is given, most of the papers will be sent by post. Sir, the Director General was pleased to give us statistics from other countries, and he said that he did not know how much loss he would suffer if he were to accept this proposed concession. Sir, it would really have been much better if he had spent one or two hours in finding out what would be the loss of the Government by accepting this proposed concession. We also know that at the expense of the tax-payer, facilities are being given so far as post by air is concerned. We know that broadcasting is being popularised at the cost of the tax-payer. But when we come to the villagers, the argument is always trotted out that the finances will suffer and the Department cannot bear the loss. With these words, I support the amendment.

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** Sir, my Honourable friend Mr. Satyamurti, worked himself up, if I may say so, into a state of indignation because Government were not prepared to accept this amendment.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** Or any amendment.

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** As far as I could gather, his only argument in favour of this one was that it was an amendment moved by the Opposition, that we on this side have not accepted any of their amendments yet, which is not quite accurate, because I accepted one just now, and that, therefore, we might as well begin doing so. I submit to the House and I submit especially to Mr. Satyamurti that that is not a very good reason for accepting this amendment. I could wish that some of the Honourable Members who have been arguing at great length in the course of the debate that the different branches of the Posts and Telegraph Department should be separated and should be treated accordingly would carry that principle a little further. I am afraid we could not give them very much help as the figures would be difficult to collect, but I could wish that they would carry the principle to this extent as to think a little of the relative cost of carrying the different categories which are carried by post—letters, postcards and newspapers. There is not the slightest doubt that, if they did that, they would find that we are incurring a heavy burden from newspaper traffic. I think it is perfectly obvious that that must be so. The postcard weighs, I think, about quarter of a tola, and we carry it for nine pies, whereas we are carrying ten tolas of newspaper for three pies. The House can work out that sum in arithmetic. As Mr. Bewoor said, our newspaper rate is the cheapest in the world, and yet Honourable Members are continually asking us that further concessions should be given to the Press. They secured one such concession last year when we accepted the amendment raising the first unit of weight from eight tolas to ten tolas. Not content with that, they now ask for this further concession. I can only surmise that Honourable Members opposite, like the Honourable Members on this side of the House, have a wholesome respect for the Press. In the course of this debate, the finger of scorn has been pointed at the telegraph branch of the Department. It has been urged on several occasions, notably by Mr. Joshi, that we ought to cut down the activities of that Department. But no Member of the House has recognised the fact that to a very large extent the loss on the working of that Department is due to the help we give to the Press. The state of the finances of that Department would be very different were it not for the press rates. The loss on those is estimated at Rs. 12½ lakhs. So, we are already giving the Press a subsidy of Rs. 12½ lakhs from the Department, and yet we are continually asked to do more. We have been requested by Honourable Members opposite to tell them what the loss would be if we accepted this proviso. I submit to the House that it is obvious that we can do nothing of the kind. How are we to estimate the loss? It is obvious that if one newspaper is carried for three pies, and if three newspapers were carried for the same amount, there must be a loss of six pies—the difference between three pies and nine pies. But we could only estimate the total loss to the Department by the grant of the concession if we weighed every newspaper in the country and discovered how much it costs to send it by post. Even that would not be

[Sir Frank Noyce.]

very helpful since as those Honourable Members opposite, who are interested in the despatch of newspapers, know, the weight of a newspaper varies from day to day. Finally, I would submit that it is impossible to refute Sir Cowasji Jehangir's argument that if you grant this concession to newspapers, there is no reason whatever why you should not grant it to letters also. If you allow a bundle of newspapers to be sent in one packet to be distributed at the other end why should you not allow a bundle of letters to be treated in the same manner? That, Sir, is the main answer to the arguments of my Honourable friends opposite. The further answer which I have endeavoured to emphasise is that, in the present financial condition of the Department, we are doing as much for newspapers as can be justified. Sir, I must oppose the amendment.

**Mr. M. S. Aney:** Sir, it was for the unexpected speech of my Honourable friend, the Deputy Leader of the Independent Party, on my right that I am prompted to rise and intervene in this debate. Besides, a few observations that have been made by the Honourable Member in charge of Industries and Labour Department have also given me further cause to make a few observations in reply. The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce has told us that the Honourable Members who have taken part in the debate on the postal question have very often insisted that each Department should be self-sufficient, and the Department that is running at a loss ought not to be allowed to continue its work at a loss, and so on. Then, he based his argument on the point that whatever help they have been giving to the newspapers is already causing them considerable loss, and, therefore, any further reduction in this direction is unjustifiable. Now, I want to assure my Honourable friend that Government have to run departments for various purposes. There are certain departments which are kept up in the interests of the public although they cause expenditure only, and not bring in any return at all. The particular purpose for which this amendment is moved relates only to newspapers, and that purpose is to help the circulation of newspapers in the villages. It is a work in the direction of educating the village public, and, so far as the educational activities of the Government are concerned, it would be wrong for Government to expect any return from such educational activities; they must be prepared to incur that expenditure as much as they can, and therefore the argument urged by my friends opposite, that because there is already some loss incurred on account of the concessions granted to newspapers, no further concessions can be granted, cannot hold water for a moment. The question is whether the loss now incurred is of such a nature that the Government under its present condition cannot bear it at all. That is the real point, and my friend, Mr. Satyamurti, put a very pertinent question to the Director General as to what is the exact loss that he expected and the reply was, he could not say, but I am sure even if the Director General makes a calculation, he will see that it will not be very much, at least it will not be such that the Government cannot bear it under present conditions. •

Then, the second thing is the point which my friend, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, made, and to which approbation was given by my Honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce. He said that if this concession were allowed, there is no reason why a similar concession should not be given to letters also. I believe the obvious distinction between a letter and a newspaper

can be appreciated by anybody. If they don't appreciate it, then they don't appreciate the purpose of the amendment we are moving. Sir, a newspaper is intended for educating the public, a letter is intended for the information of an individual. Therefore, to put these things on a par and to say that if concession is made in one case, a concession should be made in the other case as well, is confounding the real issue. We are asking that the Government should do their little bit to further the cause of popular education in the villages, it is only in that light that this amendment is moved, and it is in that light we expect the Government to accept it. But, Sir, the Government are blind in discharging their duty.

Sir, it has been stated that the Government are giving considerable subsidy to the press in regard to telegrams and newspapers, and that thereby they have suffered heavily. Now, what are the papers that generally subscribe to these telegraphic agencies? They are big newspapers which are circulated mostly in urban areas. I think that the Government are incurring 12 lakhs. loss on account of that. If that is so, what is the loss you will incur by trying to extend certain educational facilities for the uplift of the rural population? What are you going to do for the uplift of the rural population about which we heard such an eloquent appeal the other day. Has all that enthusiasm for the uplift of the rural population subsided? Is it due to the result of the elections which showed a sudden awakening on the part of the Government to the needs of the rural public? Have not these elections brought the Government a little bit nearer to the village people? The people knew who were their real benefactors. Sir, if there is the slightest desire for Government to do some real, solid service, to the rural population, I feel that they should, at least as an experiment, try to give effect to the proposal which is embodied in this amendment. Therefore, I say that not only those parties who have sponsored this amendment, but even those, who had not so far understood the real purpose of it, should now appreciate the object of this amendment, and all the non-officials on this side of the House should vote for the amendment solidly.

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** Sir, I move that the question be now put.

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** I should just like to say . . .

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Is it on a point of order?

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** No, Sir, I want to speak.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Chair was going to put the amendment . . .

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** If you want to close the debate, you may . . .

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): If the Honourable Member is very keen, the Chair will put the closure after he has finished.

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** Thank you, Sir. I had not the slightest desire to make a speech today or participate in this debate, but the speech of the Honourable the Baronet from Bombay has persuaded me to say just a few words. He put a very simple question to the House and said that the

[Mr. M. Asaf Ali.]

proposal might be a very good one, but would the proposers say whom this proposal was going to benefit? My answer to that is, not only is it going to benefit the villager, but it is also going to benefit the railways, the post office, the Industries and Commerce Departments, all told. And how? Just look at it in a simple realistic way and with a little bit of imagination. I am rather surprised at the lack of imagination displayed by the usually very imaginative Honourable Member for Industries as also by the gentleman who sits behind him, because on this occasion they have shown an absolute lack of imagination as far as this question is concerned. I look at it in this way, Sir. You find that ten tolas can go for a quarter of an anna, which means that a newspaper like the *Statesman*, which perhaps may be weighing more than half a seer, can go for a quarter anna, whereas a vernacular newspaper like the *Taj* or the *Arjun*,—and there are many such which do not weigh even two tolas,—have to pay a quarter anna for each copy. If by chance you accept our amendment, the result will be this. Today these newspapers have got to pay as much as Rs. 6 a year to the post office for each copy. These Rs. 6 have to be paid by the subscriber and by nobody else. My Honourable friend wanted to know who was going to be benefited, whether the villager was going to be benefited or not. Each villager who takes one copy of a vernacular newspaper has to pay Rs. 6 to the post office on the top of what he has got to pay to the newspaper itself. If you take those Rs. 6 away, the newspaper naturally becomes cheaper, and as soon as it becomes cheaper, more newspapers can go to the villages, and as more newspapers will be published, the industry will flourish, more paper will be sold, there will be more printing, there will be more people employed in the newspaper industry. Not only that, but there will also be perhaps more postal traffic as far as newspapers are concerned. There will be far more postal traffic than at present, because if Rs. 6 are taken off, you can imagine how many more people would be prepared to subscribe to newspapers, and if a large number of persons are persuaded to buy newspapers, naturally the postal as well as the railway traffic will increase . . .

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** It is open to them to send them all by the book packet rate. A bundle of newspapers can be sent as a book packet which costs half anna for 2½ tolas. It is also open to them to send these by parcel post. Our point is that newspaper postage is a postage per copy; it is not a postage per bundle.

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** My friend was asking on what principle, and he got angry when Mr. Satyamurti expressed him a little indignantly about this principle. What exactly is the principle? Do you want the English newspapers like *Statesman* or any others to benefit by this particular principle which you are observing now, and not allow the vernacular press to derive any benefit whatsoever from the concession that you are going to make to the journalistic world? The net result of the concession you are making today is that a newspaper which weighs more than half a seer or about ten tolas can go for quarter of an anna, whereas other vernacular newspapers which do not weigh more than about two tolas have got to pay quarter of an anna, which means that today the rich people are benefiting by this particular concession which you say you have made to the journalistic

world, and the poor people, so far from benefiting from it, are really losing something by it, and, therefore, I really do not know what principle is being followed in this matter. It is not a question of your asking the journalistic world to stick to the principle of it by asking them to stamp each copy with quarter anna stamp. You are really asking the papers today to pay Rs. 6 a year on the top of what they have got to pay for the newspaper itself. The result is that the newspapers . .

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** How does the Honourable Member arrive at Rs. 6 a year? There are only 365 days in a year.

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** Will you kindly multiply 60 by 6? You will get 360. Perhaps some holidays like the "Holi", etc., may be deducted, and you will find that they have got to pay Rs. 6 a year.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** But Rs. 6 is 384 pice.

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** You see, a quarter of an anna means one pice and 60 pice means a rupee.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** No, it is 64 pice which make a rupee and not 60 pice.

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** Oh, I am awfully sorry, my mathematics is beastly bad. You can add another four pice, it does not make much difference. My only point is that by making this concession which we are asking you to do, you will certainly benefit by increasing both postal and railway traffic. You will also certainly be stimulating the journalistic industry and you will also indirectly be helping the commerce of the country. That being so, this proposal means that you will be helping all the departments round you and you ought to have no hesitation whatsoever in accepting this amendment.

**Several Honourable Members:** The question may now be put.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** Sir, it was amusing this afternoon to hear the speeches which show the most colossal ignorance as regards newspapers. The argument was put forward that if you allow a certain number of copies to be posted for one pice, you will be helping to educate the masses. First of all, I should like to ask my Honourable friends whether the masses are literate enough to read newspapers. What is the percentage of literacy? Have you ever ascertained the position from a newspaper office?

**Mr. M. Asaf Ali:** Have you ever seen a newspaper office? I have been in the newspaper trade, and I know what I am talking about. And you talk of colossal ignorance!

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** I am the Director of a daily newspaper, and I know more about newspapers than you do. (*Voices:* "What is that newspaper?") (*Voices:* "The Star of India", etc.)

[At this stage, Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) resumed the Chair.]

**Pandit Nilakantha Das:** Do not papers go by packets in thousands over the railways?

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** Sir, my experience of villages . . . (*Cries of "How many have you seen?" "Name one", etc.*)

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member should know that if he wants to address the House, he must do so through the Chair. But if he does not want to address the House and wants to carry on conversations, he must do it in the lobby and not in the House.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** Sir, in the villages what do we find? How many villagers subscribe to a daily newspaper? In Bengal, the village headman subscribes to one weekly vernacular newspaper. . . .

**An Honourable Member:** The *Ananda Bazaar Patrika* goes in any number.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member need not take any notice of these interruptions.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** . . . and what he does is that he goes with these newspapers to the *hat*. He reads to a large number of people who gather round him, because they are ignorant and cannot read or write. What earthly use will it be to the villager if you send him three copies of the same issue, either daily or weekly? The headman is the only person who can read, and the others listen to him.

Then, Sir, it was said that vested interests must be supported and it is intended to benefit the *Statesman* and other English papers with 20 pages and 8 tolas inasmuch as the vernacular papers are so light that they do not ordinarily weigh eight tolas. The latter are therefore being penalised by having to pay three pies; and that therefore the English papers should be charged more. Sir, that again shows colossal ignorance. Vernacular newspapers are nowadays heavier than even the *Statesman* or the *Times of India* or other English newspapers.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** That is a sweeping statement.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** There are many vernacular newspapers which weigh much more than any English newspaper. My Honourable friend, Mr. Satyamurti, asked what principle Mr. Bewoor was fighting for. He said that the principle lay in this point. The point is that we will allow you to post a newspaper only for three pies, but we will not allow it to avail of a parcel rate or book rate. That is the principle. They have fixed three pies for a newspaper of a particular date and for one copy, and it must not be bundled up into a parcel or a packet: you cannot allow book post or parcel post to go for three pies instead of half an anna . . . .

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Who wants that?

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** That is what you want . . . .

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** No.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** Three copies of the same newspaper or as many copies as can go in within three pies—that is what you want; and as has been pointed out by my Honourable friend, the Baronet from Bombay, you want to have a local post office to distribute that and thereby allow a profit, not for the readers, but for the newspapers. I oppose the amendment.

**Honourable Members:** The question may now be put.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

“That the question be now put.”

The motion was adopted.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Does the Honourable Member wish to reply?

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce:** Sir, I replied some time ago.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

“That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, after the entries under the head ‘Registered Newspapers’ the following proviso be added:

‘Provided that more than one copy of a Registered Newspaper of the same date shall be allowed to be sent at the above rates if the total weight is not more than given above.’”

The motion was negatived.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi** (Meerut Division: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I move:

“That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the first entry under the head ‘Parcels’ the following be substituted:

‘For a weight not exceeding twenty tolas—Two annas.

For a weight exceeding twenty tolas and not exceeding forty tolas—Four annas.’”

This amendment will only take us back to the present condition. This is a new thing which has been brought in by the Department. The reason they have given for the change is that there is some difficulty in differentiating between letters and parcels: but, as a matter of fact, in actual practice, this increase in rates will very badly affect the small booksellers. I shall very briefly put before the House the amount of expenses that a subscriber has to pay for a small book costing eight annas previously and the rates he will have to pay at present if this rate comes into force. Take a book weighing 20 tolas—an ordinary vernacular book which does not cost more than eight annas. If such a book were sent previously, that is, before parcel registration came into force, the bookseller had to send the value payable parcel for eight annas for the book, plus six pies for the intimation card, two annas for the value payable money order, and two annas for the parcel: in all he had to send a V. P. P. for 12 annas 6 pies



[Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi.]

for a book costing eight annas. Ever since the compulsory registration was started he had to pay three annas more, and the rate also was further increased, and so the price of the book became one rupee. If the present proposal of Government is to be accepted, the result would be that an ordinary book which is sold at eight annas in the market will cost the subscriber Rs. 1-2-0 if it is sent by V. P. P. That means an increase of 125 per cent. I say, this is very hard on the smaller vernacular book-sellers. It has nothing to do with booksellers who carry on their business on a very large scale. It will be very hard hit and it is only the small book-seller who has been hit all along. I beg to submit that these changes affect the small man and the same question of rich *versus* poor comes in again. It was the same question with registered newspapers and with postcards, and now with the present parcel rates.

There is one point which was discussed in connection with the previous amendment and which is to be discussed in this connection also and which I want to put before the House. It is that in calculating the amount of loss or profit, the post office does not seem to consider the new customs that they are likely to create by these reductions. In the case of newspapers, they do not consider that if they have had to allow a particular concession, the result will be that in many places where no newspaper comes at present, in many towns where the facilities of railway are not available and railway parcels are not carried and local newspaper agents cannot be appointed, they will be appointed if more than one newspaper can be sent at cheap postal rates. Similarly, in case of parcels they do not consider that by decreasing the amount of expenses, they will encourage the sending of these books with small weights. The question is that these little pamphlets and books which are carried in small parcels are to be used by the ordinary man in the street. They are not books of any particular value, and so they could be circulated amongst the villagers. The result of increasing this weight on parcels would affect, not only the small book seller, but also the ordinary villager who will not have the courage of placing any orders with book-sellers for getting those books. As a matter of fact, ever since the post office has made registration of parcels compulsory in case of value payable parcels, the number of books which are sent for has been reduced and this further reducing of rate or rather increasing of charges by increasing the weight would affect them very adversely and would make it almost impossible for a man to send for small books. It is for this reason that I propose this amendment.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Amendment moved:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the first entry under the head '*Parcels*' the following be substituted:

'For a weight not exceeding twenty tolas—Two annas.

For a weight exceeding twenty tolas and not exceeding forty tolas—Four annas.'

**Mr. Sri Prakasa:** Sir, I rise to support the amendment moved by my Honourable friend, Mr. Kazmi. The enthusiasm with which Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi has been opposing all our amendments reminds me of the lines:

" 'Tis all a chequer board of 'nights' and days  
Where 'Gover'nment' with men for pieces play."

I hope that on this at least we may have his support. Sir, the speeches of the Honourable the Finance Member and of the Honourable Member in charge of Industries and Labour tried to convince us that there is an anomaly in the present arrangement, and the only purpose for which the extra charge on parcels is being proposed is to remove that anomaly. The anomaly is just this. If a letter weighs more than three tolas, instead of people sending that letter by letter post, they send it by parcel. Now, Sir, letters weighing three tolas is an anomaly in itself. So far as I can make out, the only person who could write a letter of such proportions is my interesting and Honourable friend, Mr. Chapman-Mortimer. The rest of us have long settled down to quiet domesticity. Letters weighing three tolas and more can only be love letters and a person in that interesting condition will gladly pay a little more than others do. For the sake of removing an anomaly owing to the tendency on the part of one Member of this House, the rest of us, 144 Members, are all to be penalised; and section 144 applied against us. I do not think that is right. I think the best cure for this would be to see that letters weighing three tolas and more are sent by letter post and not by parcel post so that the rest of us could send our small ordinary letters by letter post and our parcels at a cheaper rate. The whole purpose of this amendment is to maintain the rate as it is today and neither to increase it nor to decrease it. I am sure that my Honourable friend opposite will see that our claims are just; and I hope he will agree to maintain the present rate and not try to enhance the income of Government under cover of removing anomalies and in the name of standing for a principle. There is no principle in such matters except the principle of facilitating the public; and if no revenue is at stake, the only way to facilitate the public is to maintain the rate as it is at present, I hope the Government will accept this amendment and let the postage rates on parcels stand where they are today.

**Babu Baijnath Bajoria:** Sir, I rise to support this amendment. The Honourable the Leader of the House, the Honourable Sir Frank Noyce, has said that the more concession the Government give in postal rates, the more we,—Non-Official Members,—ask. Here in the present Finance Bill a small concession was given about book packet, and what has been given there has been taken away under another proposal. Exactly nothing has been given. In the budget speech of the Honourable the Finance Member, he said that the concessions in book packets will cost about eight lakhs, and, by increasing this rate on parcels, he expects to get eight lakhs more. So they cancel one another. I would ask the Director General to agree to this amendment, because why should we be denied the opportunity of sending small parcels weighing less than 20 tolas which is the unit even now for sending parcels. I think 20 tolas should be sent for two annas, and, over and above that, we should be charged four annas for every 40 tolas. There is no justification for enhancing the rates on parcels. Sir, I support this amendment.

**Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad** (United Provinces Southern Divisions: Muhamadan Rural): Sir, I would just like to point out one or two things in this connection. The concession is given for the benefit of the trade, it was intended that by parcels only the commodities should be sent and not letters. But since the rules are there, everybody has been misusing the provision. I openly say that I myself have been misusing it. If in these parcels there is no prohibition whatsoever for these letters, then whenever I have

[Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad.]

to send bundles of letters to Aligarh or whenever they have to send bundles of letters to me here in Delhi, instead of sending them by packets, they send them by parcels. Because the rule is there, people take advantage of it. Why should they not? Exclude altogether putting any letter; in that case the suggestion which is now made appears to be reasonable, and it will be on the lines followed in many other countries.

**Mr. G. V. Bewoor:** I am very sorry that I shall have to oppose this amendment. The Honourable Member, in his speech, gave full reasons for the modification that we have put before the House. It is really unnecessary to add anything to it. The charge of two annas for 20 tolas has been in existence since 1895. Since then, there has been an increase in the postcard rate, in the letter rate, in the book packet rate, but this one has remained unchanged. When the letter rate was half an anna for two tolas, as in the old days, there was very little diversion of the letter traffic to the parcel traffic because it was cheaper to send letters, weighing up to eight tolas, by the letter post.

With the revision in the letter rate now to one anna one tola, what happens is that as soon as a letter weighs more than three tolas, it becomes cheaper to send it by the parcel post. As a result, we find that 52 per cent of our total parcel traffic is below 20 tolas. It is not the case that there are really so many parcels of goods of small weight. The fact is that the letter traffic is being diverted to the parcel traffic and the parcel traffic was intended for the conveyance of goods and articles and not for the conveyance of communications. With the change in the letter rate, the danger of diversion to the parcel rate has become more serious. I have already explained to the House that in most of the advanced countries parcels are not allowed to contain any communication whatsoever, and all communications have got to go by the letter post. The Honourable the Mover of this amendment referred to the book trade. So far as the book trade is concerned, it is open to the book seller to send his books by the book packet rate which according to the new rate will enable him to send up to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  tolas for two annas, because the rate is  $2\frac{1}{4}$  tolas half an anna and for the subsequent  $2\frac{1}{4}$  tolas quarter anna. We admit that the parcel rate change is one which makes it dearer. But as I have said, we have done it for a definite and clear purpose, namely, to prevent the diversion of letters from the letter to the parcel traffic.

The suggestion made by Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad is to prohibit the sending of communications in parcels. I admit that that is a possible solution, but we carefully considered it before putting this proposal before the House. We feel that provision of such a rule would cause greater dissatisfaction among the public because parcels will have to be examined. They will be first suspected to contain communications; the addressee will have to be sent for to the post office and the parcel opened in the presence of the postmaster. This is sure to be a greater source of annoyance and dissatisfaction to the public, and it was in the interests of the public, therefore, that we thought that the change that we have put before the House, namely, of fixing four annas for the first 40 tolas, would be more welcome to the House; in fact, there was an amendment to this effect given notice of by one Honourable Member, but later on he withdrew it. I urge the House to reject this amendment, because we are really trying to put our parcel rate on a reasonable basis, and it is much better that the rate should be fixed at four annas for the first 40 tolas than that the public should be

required to have to send no communication whatsoever. My Honourable friend, Mr. Sri Prakasa, observed that very few people write letters weighing more than three tolas. That is not a fact. There are letters containing enclosures and official communications containing a number of letters replying to different communications from the same officer. As I have said, 52 per cent. of our total parcel traffic consists of parcels below 20 tolas, and one can easily understand that this is not goods traffic; it is mostly letter traffic. I would ask the House to accept the proposal made by the Government and not to accept the amendment moved by the Honourable the Mover.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

"That in Schedule I to the Bill, in the proposed First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for the first entry under the head '*Parcels*' the following be substituted :

'For a weight not exceeding twenty tolas—Two annas.

For a weight exceeding twenty tolas and not exceeding forty tolas—Four annas.'

The motion was negatived.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

"That Schedule I, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Schedule I, as amended, was added to the Bill.

Clause 6 was added to the Bill.

Clause 7 was added to the Bill.

Clause 1 was added to the Bill.

The Title and the Preamble were added to the Bill.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Sir James Grigg:

**The Honourable Sir James Grigg:** I do not move.

**Mr. S. Satyamurti:** May I know why?

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): He is not bound to give any reason. Besides, the Honourable Member knows it.

#### STATEMENT OF BUSINESS.

**The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce** (Leader of the House): Sir, urgent requests have reached us to provide time for the remaining stages of the Arya Marriage Validation Bill which has, we are assured, become an agreed measure subject to agreed amendments, and I have to inform the House that this item of business will be added to tomorrow's list at the end of the Government business put down for the day. If Government business is not disposed of in time to admit of this item being taken tomorrow, we will endeavour to provide time for it on the 30th or 31st March.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Saturday, the 20th March, 1937.