

17th February 1943

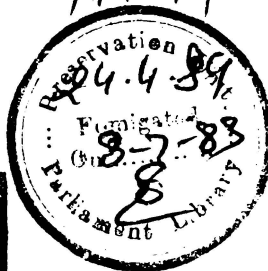
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

Official Report

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(10th February to 2nd April, 1943)

SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1943



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 17th February, 1943.

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:

Major-General Ernest Wood, C.I.E., M.C., M.L.A., (Government of India: Nominated Official).

STARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

(a) ORAL ANSWERS.

CLASSIFICATION OF SECURITY, POLITICAL AND MARTIAL LAW PRISONERS.

111. *Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the War Secretary be pleased to state what are the rules and orders for placing Security, Political and Martial Law prisoners in different categories?

(b) Are the rules and orders and discretionary powers uniform in all Provinces?

(c) Will Government be pleased to revise the rules and make them more liberal in the case of political prisoners under the Martial Law?

(d) Is it a fact that the Martial Law authorities in Sind do not classify the political prisoners according to their status and mode of living?

(e) If so, do Government propose to instruct them to classify their prisoners in accordance with the classification of other prisoners?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: (a) to (e). There is no class of prisoners recognised as "political prisoners". Security prisoners are ordinarily divided into two classes according to the state of their health and their education, status and mode of living before arrest. The practice is not uniform in all provinces, though the same general principles are ordinarily observed.

The question of the classification of Martial Law prisoners is a matter for the discretion of the Martial Law Administrator. As regards Martial Law prisoners in Sind, Martial Law Tribunals are authorised to recommend classification for persons sentenced to imprisonment by them. The deciding authority on such recommendations is the Chief Administrator of Martial Law. Even if no recommendation is made by a tribunal, the Chief Administrator is always ready to consider any application for special treatment made by a prisoner. I may add that a few security prisoners detained under Martial Law and a few convicted women prisoners have been placed in "B" class. The Government of India see no reason to interfere with the discretion of the Chief Administrator of Martial Law in this matter.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Does the Honourable Member know that some Advocates of Sind have been sentenced under the Martial Law and they are undergoing imprisonment in Sukker and Larkhana?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: Sir, I only know one case which was brought to my notice by the Honourable Member himself: I know of no other case.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I know from the Honourable Member what class is given to him?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I think, Sir, he is given "C" class.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Is the recommendation of the Sind Government considered by the Martial Law Authorities in giving classes to prisoners?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: No, Sir, the Sind Government does not come into the picture at all.

RECRUITMENT OF MILITARY OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS.

112. ***Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Will the War Secretary be pleased to state how many military officers and soldiers have been recruited in each province in India, particularly from Sind, since the end of the last Session of the Central Legislative Assembly?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I regret that owing to security reasons I am unable to give the figures required. I may say, however, that the Sind figures both for officers and other ranks are low in comparison with those of other Provinces and that special efforts to increase recruiting from Sind are being made.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Has the former distinction of martial and non-martial race been removed during this war time?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: I rise to a point of order. Am I to ask the first five questions or any five out of those standing in my name?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The first five questions because the Government Member may not be ready to answer the others.

COMMITTEES AND CONFERENCES CONVENED BY THE CIVIL DEPARTMENTS OF
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

113. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to lay on the table a list of all committees and conferences convened by the civil departments of the Government of India from the 1st April, 1942 till the 1st February, 1943?

(b) Was the permission of the Finance Department obtained for the expenditure of these committees and conferences? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: Sir, as the Honourable the Home Member is indisposed, I have been asked to give the answer on his behalf.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Very well.

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) A statement has been laid on the table of the House.

(b) Yes, in all cases where it was required.

Statement containing List of Committees and Conferences convened by the Civil Departments of the Government of India, from the 1st April, 1942, till the 1st February, 1943.

Kazaks Committee; Area Selectors Committee; Conference of non-officials and officials; Women's Conference; Food Production Conference; Anti-Locust Conference; Quinine Conference; Medical Stores Supply Committee; Transport Advisory Committee; Conference on evacuee problems; Conference of Murserymen; Marketing Officers' Conference; Tea Block Purchase Conference; Tea Control Conference; Second Rubber Control Conference; Third Coffee Control Conference; Indian Cotton Textile Industry Panel; Fifth Price Control Conference; Sixth Price Control Conference; Meeting with the Representatives of Trade and Industry; Reconstruction Committee (Trade International Trade and Agricultural Policies); Advisory Panel on Drugs and Medicines; Food Conference; Meeting of Senior Regional Inspectors of Technical Training and others; Meeting of Chairmen of National Service Labour Tribunals and Publicity Officers; Advisory Committee of the utilisation Branch of Geological Survey of India; Conference to consider fall in output of coal in Bengal and Bihar coalfields; Labour Conference (First Tripartite Conference); Advisory Panel of Accountants; Meetings with Steel Companies; Meeting with sub-committee of the Federation of Woollen Manufacturers in India; Meeting with Federation of Woollen Manufacturers in India; Meeting with Boot Manufacturers; Conferences with the Tanning Industry; Conference with Oil Companies; Meeting with Tyre Manufacturing Companies; Wool Conference; Tentage Conference; Conference of Provincial Representatives; and Security Conferences.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Are these expenses provided from the budget already sanctioned for a particular Department or special sanctions are obtained for these Conferences?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: When Conferences are foreseen at the time when the budget is framed the expenses are included in that budget; but if any emergent need arises to hold a Conference after the budget is framed then the sanction would naturally be obtained.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmed: Will these supplementary grants come before the Legislative Assembly?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: Certainly. If the voted grant has been exhausted, it will be necessary to obtain a supplementary grant.

PAPEE CURRENCY POSITION.

114. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member please state what is the value of the currency notes of Rs. 5 and upwards now in circulation?

(b) What is the amount of the paper currency reserve and where is it kept?

(c) What is the value of paper rupees (i) now in circulation, and (ii) in store, but not in circulation?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) The attention of the Honourable Member is invited to the weekly accounts of the Issue Department of the Reserve Bank of India which are published in the Gazette of India.

(b) The old paper Currency Reserve ceased to exist on the inauguration of the Reserve Bank of India. A statement of the assets and liabilities of the Issue Department of the Reserve Bank of India is, as stated above, published weekly.

(c) (i) Under the Currency Ordinance, 1940 Government of India notes of the denominational value of one rupee are current in the same manner and to the same extent and as fully as the silver rupee. No distinction is therefore maintained in the accounts of the Reserve Bank of India between silver rupees and one rupee notes.

(ii) It is not in the public interest to publish information in regard to reserve stocks of currency.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: May I know what is the value of our metallic reserve according to the market value?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I am sorry, I cannot give that information. Honourable Member is aware of the present price of silver and that the value of silver in the rupee at the present moment approximates to the face value.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: I thought I will get ready reply from the Department which has got the figures before them and which, unfortunately, I have not got.

RELIEF TO GOVERNMENT SERVANTS FOR FALL IN PURCHASE VALUE OF RUPEE.

115. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member please state what is the purchasing power of a rupee compared with its purchasing capacity in 1938?

(b) In view of the fact that daily labourers have raised their daily wages on account of the fall in the purchase value of a rupee, what action have the Government of India taken to give relief to their servants having fixed incomes?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) The rise in prices in India since 1938 has exhibited considerable variation as between different commodities and services, and from place to place. It is not therefore possible to give an adequate statistical picture of the general change in retail prices and consequently of the change in purchasing power of the rupee.

(h) I would draw the attention of the Honourable Member to the various Notifications which have been published from time to time prescribing the rates of dearness allowance for Central Government servants, the last of which was dated the 19th January, 1943.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Is it not a fact that the Government of India always prepared a price index of food-stuff taken as a whole both of retail as well as of whole-sale articles? If so, what is that? They also have a price index of all the articles—eatable and non-eatable. Will the Honourable Member please state what is the price index?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: No, Sir, I am not aware that a single consolidated index of the kind mentioned by my Honourable friend is regularly published. I know that there are a large number of indices framed of various kind which are published in different centres in relation to different commodities, but I do not think it is possible to give a single index figure which would indicate the current purchasing power of the rupee.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Is it a fact that the index figures are published in the *Trade Journal* of India every year? May I know whether the Government have calculated these figures for the last two years? If so, what are those figures?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I am not in a position at the moment to give properly considered figures.

SHORTAGE OF SMALL COINS.

116. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member lay a statement on the table showing the position in regard to the availability of small coins?

(b) Is he familiar with the sufferings of the poor who deal in pice and annas?

(c) What action, if any, has the Honourable Member taken to remove their difficulties on account of the shortage of these coins?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) I regret that the question has been so framed as to leave me in doubt as to the information sought. I may, however, state that the output of small coin has been stepped up from 70 million pieces a month last autumn to 125 million pieces a month and will be further increased from March next.

(b) I am aware of the inconvenience and hardship which has been occasioned by the anti-social activities of hoarders and those who are selling small coin at a premium.

(c) Apart from the increase in output, vigorous efforts have been made to check hoarding and the selling of small coin at a premium by the detection of offenders, making such offences triable summarily, pressing for deterrent sentences and by publicity. The remedy lies to a large extent in the hands of the public who should circulate such coins as may come into their possession and assist the police in the detection of offenders.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: How many cases have been detected and tried and punished with a view to having a deterrent effect against hoarding?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: There have been quite a considerable number of cases, but I could not give precise figures. I require notice.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: What is the maximum amount of fine imposed or imprisonment awarded?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I seem to remember having seen one in which a sentence of five years rigorous imprisonment was imposed.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Will the Honourable Member give us figures for the small coins necessary in India for daily transactions, if these figures are available?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I do not think that can be a matter of precise determination from time to time.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Has the Honourable Member got any idea about the present conditions because business people are suffering from want of small coins?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: As I explained the other day in the course of the debate, we started off the war with a very large number of small coins in circulation and since then, we have added a very large quantity indeed. But judging from the present situation, the country is still capable of absorbing a further large quantity and all we can do is to go on producing them to our maximum capacity and put them out so long as the demand continues.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: What is the amount of small coin which in his opinion is required for daily transaction? Has he got any idea?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: You cannot give a precise figure at any time nor is it a static figure. It all depends upon the change of economic conditions. As my Honourable friend is aware, the requirements of the demand for currency notes have gone up very greatly and it is reasonable to assume that the same factors also operate to some extent as regards requirements of small coins.

FORGED INDIAN CURRENCY NOTES IMPORTED FROM ENEMY COUNTRIES.

117. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member please state if it is a fact that forged notes in Indian currency have been poured into the country by enemy countries?

(b) What is the estimated value of those forged notes?

(c) How were they brought in the country?

(d) What action have the Government of India taken to punish the agents who brought those notes and who deliberately circulated them knowing that those notes were forged ones?

(e) How is the financial position affected by the introduction of those notes?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) No.

(b) to (e). Do not arise.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: May I know whether it has been brought to the notice of the Government that some forged notes and counterfeit coins were put into circulation in Burma by Japan and that these notes were brought by the evacuees from Burma into India?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I thought the Honourable Member's question related only to forged currency notes. Does he refer to coins or notes?

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: I am referring to currency notes.

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: As far as we have been able to determine, the answer to his question is in the negative.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Does he mean that the attention of the Government was never drawn to any note which has been forged by Japan and introduced in India by the evacuees?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: We are constantly coming across forged notes which we follow up, but we have not yet come across forgeries which we consider attributable to a deliberate plan of that kind.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: What is the value of these forged notes which have come to the notice of the Government?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I could not say that. Forgeries are being detected constantly.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Are these forged notes exactly similar, or are they made at different places and at different times? What is the information of the Government?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: They are different forgeries. Obviously at times, the notes are being made at different places in the country from time to time.

SHORTAGE OF SMALL COINS.

†118. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member please state what the total number and the value of small coins required in India for daily transaction is?

(b) What is the number in circulation according to the book value of the currency authorities?

(c) What are the causes of the shortage?

(d) What action have Government taken to meet the shortage?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) and (b). The information is not available.

(c) and (d). I would invite the attention of the Honourable Member to the statement I made in this connexion in the course of the debate raised on the adjournment motion of Babu Baijnath Bajoria on the 10th February last.

DESIRABILITY OF MINTING SMALL COINS OF CHEAP METALS.

†119. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** Will the Honourable the Finance Member please state if Government propose to consider the immediate need of minting small coins (half anna, one anna, two annas and four annas) of cheap metals and making the possession of other coins a punishable offence after a certain date?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: The black market value of the metallic content of all half-anna, one anna, two anna and four-anna pieces now in circulation is far below their face value and is likely to remain so. No question of a substitute alloy therefore arises.

STERLING ASSETS ACQUIRED BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA SINCE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

†120. ***Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** Will the Honourable the Finance Member lay on the table a statement showing the sterling assets acquired by the Government of India since the outbreak of the war and how did the Government utilise the sterling credits and the manner in which they propose to utilise the balances?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: A statement showing the position at the end of January 1943 is placed on the table. As the Honourable Member is aware Government have already announced their decision to redeem the Railway Debentures also aggregating about £31 million in nominal value. The question of the utilisation of these balances is constantly engaging the attention of Government.

Statement showing the accumulation of Sterling Assets of the Reserve Bank since the outbreak of War to the end of January 1943, and their disposal.

	(Crores)
	Rs.
1. Sterling assets held by Reserve Bank, August 1939	64
2. Sterling purchased by Reserve Bank from September 1939 to the end of January 1943	3.44
3. Sterling payments by His Majesty's Government	5.05
	9.13
4. Sterling amounts involved in repatriation schemes	-3.59
5. Purchase of Railways	-21
6. Other Sterling commitments	-92
7. Sterling holdings of the Reserve Bank at the end of January 1943	-4.41
	-9.13

†Answer to this question laid on the table, the questioner having exhausted his quota.

ABUSE OF POWERS OF SANCTIONING PROSECUTIONS, ETC., BY ASSISTANT INSPECTING COMMISSIONERS OF INCOME-TAX.

121. *Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state if he is aware of the complaints made through the Press or otherwise that the present authorities, that is, the Assistant Inspecting Commissioners exercise their powers of giving sanction for the prosecution of persons and assesseees arbitrarily in order to recover excessive amounts of income-tax or with a view to deterring them for making appeals?

(b) Is it a fact that very large and prohibitive amounts are recovered from persons who are prosecuted for compromising cases with them?

(c) Is the Honourable Member prepared to lay a list on the table showing how many prosecutions were made in the Sind Division and under what sections of the Act? How many were compromised and for what amounts to be paid together with the amounts of evasions made since the present Assistant Inspecting Commissioner has held the charge?

(d) In view of the taking away of powers of giving sanction by the executive authorities of the Income-Tax Department, do Government propose to transfer these powers to the Appellate Assistant Commissioners and the members of the Tribunal by amending section 53 of the Income-Tax Act? If not, why not?

(e) Is there any standard fixed for the Inspecting Assistant Commissioner to recover amounts in compromising cases commensurate with the amounts evaded? If not, do Government propose to fix a standard in proportion to the tax avoided? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) There have been some complaints but not recently.

(b) and (e). No. The amounts are fixed with due regard to the seriousness of the case, the amount of tax evaded and the penalties leviable in respect thereof. A standard cannot be prescribed since the seriousness of the case has also to be taken into account in fixing the amount of the composition fee.

(c) The information has been called for and will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

(d) Government do not propose to transfer these powers to the Appellate Assistant Commissioners or the Tribunal, since the task of sanctioning prosecutions is a purely administrative function and it is undesirable that such powers should be given to bodies of an appellate character. The Honourable Member's attention is invited in this connection to my reply to part (g) of starred question No. 514 asked by Khan Bahadur Shaikh Fazl-i-Haq Piracha in the Legislative Assembly on 27th March, 1941.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I know if these sanctions for prosecution are reviewed by the Commissioner of Income-tax?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: In so far as it is in the nature of an executive act, I expect the Commissioner would be aware of cases in which prosecutions were being sanctioned.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: As there are complaints that exorbitant amounts are being taken and that with a particular motive, will the Honourable Member instruct the Commissioner of Income-tax to look into these cases and see that the complaints are removed?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I do not quite understand how the Honourable Member expects me to treat a complaint that the penalty is exorbitant when the individual penalised has made a dishonest attempt to evade his legitimate dues under the Income-Tax Act. I am not prepared to have complaints of that kind investigated, but we do take steps to maintain a kind of standard in these matters and the whole subject is under supervision by the Central Board of Revenue.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I request the Honourable Member to send a copy of these questions and answers to the Commissioner of Income-tax in Bombay?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: I have no objection.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Thank you.

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE REGARDING ALLOWANCES, ETC., TO DEPENDANTS OF BRITISH AND INDIAN OFFICERS AND OTHER RANKS BECOMING CASUALTIES.

122. *Sir F. E. James: Will the War Secretary be pleased to state:

- (a) if any steps have been taken by his Department to give prompt advice and assistance regarding allowances, allotments, pensions, etc., to the dependents in India of British and Indian Officers and British and Indian other ranks who have become casualties, i.e., taken prisoners or listed as missing or even killed; and
- (b) if he is aware of the great importance of giving this advice and assistance as promptly as possible, and if he is satisfied with the steps that have been taken?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: (a) Yes, Sir. A Family Assistance Bureau has been set up at General Headquarters where all queries from families of British Officers, Indian Commissioned Officers and British Other Ranks concerning their allotments, allowances, pensions etc., are dealt with and publicity has been given to its existence. In addition, a pamphlet on "Matters of Interest to British Officers and their Families in India" has been published which contains all the necessary information. Moreover, Station Staff Officers have instructions to render all possible assistance to British families in this country.

For Indian Other Ranks, there is a pamphlet entitled "Matters of Interest to Indian Soldiers and their Families" which was first published in 1940 and is now being revised. This pamphlet contains detailed information regarding allotments, allowances, pensions etc. In addition to this personal advice on these subjects is always obtainable through the District Soldiers' Boards and the Civil Liaison Organization both of which have been very considerably expanded.

(b) The answer to both parts is in the affirmative.

Sir F. E. James: May I know if the Honourable Member is aware that the location of the office dealing with the subject is in Simla, which results in considerable delay in the disposal of cases, which delay causes actual distress to dependants? Would he therefore consider the advisability of locating that office in a more central place in India?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I will certainly have that examined.

Mr. C. P. Lawson: Would the War Secretary please say whether he is aware that considerable distress has been caused to dependants of prisoners of war by the sudden cutting down of their allowances, and would he take steps, whatever the reason for such cuts, that due warning is given to the dependants of such prisoners so that this distress may be avoided?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I will take steps.

REDUCTION IN PAY OF INDIAN ARMY OFFICERS WHEN TAKEN PRISONERS OF WAR.

123. *Sir F. E. James: (a) Will the War Secretary be pleased to state if it is a fact:

- (i) that the pay of officers of the Indian Army is reduced when they are taken prisoners;
- (ii) that the pay of officers of the British Army is not reduced when they are taken prisoners; and
- (iii) that in the case of the officer of the Indian Army who is a prisoner of war he receives as his pay an amount equivalent to what he would have received were he serving out of India but not in the Indian Army?

(b) What is the reason for the above differentiation?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: (a) (i). Yes.

(ii) Yes, but the British Service Officer when captured loses his allowances such as light, fuel, and ration allowances. Elements representing these allowances are included in the consolidated pay of rank of the Indian Army Officer.

(iii) Yes.

(b) The pay structures of the two services are different, but the orders are designed, by placing the Indian Army Officer in the position stated in (a) (iii) above, to approximate his pay in captivity to that of his British Service colleague.

Sir F. E. James: But is my Honourable friend not aware that the net result is that the pay of officers of the Indian Army is actually less than the pay of officers of the British Army when they are taken prisoners? That is the case. Why is that differentiation? Is not the one equal in value to the other?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I have a statement in front of me which shows that the officers of the Indian Army in captivity actually receive more than the British service officers when in captivity, and I think I did supply a copy of that statement to the Honourable Member.

Sir F. E. James: Yes; it certainly was not clear from that statement which my Honourable friend did supply to me as to why the pay of the officers of the Indian Army should be reduced when they are taken prisoners. My Honourable friend must realise that that has its effect upon the dependants and those who have to maintain themselves while the Indian Officer is in captivity.

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I have already given an answer. I have said that this reduction is designed to approximate the pay of the Indian Army Officer in captivity to his British service colleague.

Sir F. E. James: Will my Honourable friend accept the fact that it does create or has created a large amount of dissatisfaction and will he look into the matter further?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I will, Sir.

MEMBERS OF CENTRAL LEGISLATURE APPOINTED ON SALARIES OR ALLOWANCES BY GOVERNMENT.

124. *Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani: Will the Honourable the Home Member please state:

- (a) the names of members of the Central Legislature who have been appointed on salaries or allowances under the Government of India since the Amendment of the Ninth Schedule to the Government of India Act, 1935; and
- (b) the amount of salaries or allowances paid to each and the date of such engagements?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) No member of the Central Legislature has been appointed on salary or allowances under the Government of India since the amendment of the Ninth Schedule to the Government of India Act, 1935.

(b) Does not arise.

RECRUITMENT OF AREA ADVISERS, TECHNICAL ADVISERS, WARNING OFFICERS, ETC.

125. *Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Civil Defence be pleased to state how many officers, such as Area Advisers, Technical Advisers, Warning Officers, etc., have been appointed by the Civil Defence

Department since its inception for technical advice, instruction and supervision, in the centre and in the provinces? Who are those officers? What are their qualifications?

(b) What qualifications were prescribed to select candidates most suitable for such responsible posts as Area Advisers, Technical Advisers, etc.?

(c) Do these officers possess (i) actual Blitz experience; (ii) previous experience of the kind of work entrusted to them; and (iii) intimate knowledge of the locality or province to which they are assigned?

(d) If not, do Government consider that these qualifications are not required for these officers to discharge their duties satisfactorily?

(e) Did Government take steps to ascertain whether others, including Indians, with such experience and qualifications were available, if they were not aware of such persons?

(f) Did Government advertise these jobs? If not, why not?

(g) Do Government realise that, in view of the increasing need for non-official co-operation to ensure success to civil defence measures, it is advisable to get Indians with local knowledge and experience to fill these posts?

(h) If Government consider that Blitz experience is necessary as also training in British Air Raid Precaution Schools, are they prepared to consider the question of selecting suitable Indians who have local knowledge, technical experience and study of civil defence, and send them abroad for experience and training?

(i) If Government are not aware of persons in India who possess adequate local knowledge and vast study of civil defence problems, do they propose to take steps to ascertain whether such persons are available?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: (a) A Statement is laid on the table.

(b), (c), (d), (e) and (f). No qualifications were prescribed. It was a question, as soon as the need for creating a post arose, of getting the most suitable man available at the earliest possible moment, preferably one with previous experience but failing that one of tested character and merit and then of training him as quickly as possible. The Government of India would have been glad, in all cases, to have advertised the posts, as was done in the case of the Air Raid Warning Officers, had the imperative necessity of speed not compelled them to adopt the method of direct selection.

As will be seen from the statement, some of the officers possess actual blitz experience and some had previous knowledge of the work entrusted to them. As regards (c) (iii) none of the Government of India officers deal with one locality or province and so the question does not arise.

(g) In view of the answer to (c) (iii) this does not arise.

(h) In the earlier days of preparation men with previous training and, if possible, with Blitz experience were essential and very great difficulty was found in obtaining enough of them. With the setting up of six Civil Defence Schools in India capable of giving all the training that is necessary and with some experience of actual Air Raids on Indian towns, though none of these have yet approached Blitz intensity, it is not necessary to send men abroad for experience and training.

(i) There are many persons in India now who possess adequate local knowledge and knowledge of Civil Defence problems but they would only be available for employment under the Government of India if the Provincial Government under which they are serving was prepared to release them. We will certainly consult Provincial Governments as to whether they have any such officers they would be prepared to release for duty at the Centre if required.

Statement showing the Names and Designations of the Technical Officers serving under the Civil Defence Department.

Names.	Designations.	Qualifications.
Brig. A. J. Reeve (British)	Director, Operations and Training.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has no ' Blitz ' experience. 2. Was responsible for the protection from Air Raids of Air Craft Factories, Shadow factories and all dependent factories in U. K. on behalf of the Air Ministry. 3. Knows the whole of India with the exception of Orissa and has served 21 years in the country in the Indian Army.
Lt. Col. C. J. Toyne (British).	Deputy Director, Operations and Training.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Had ' Blitz ' experience during the year 1940-41 in London Region. 2. (a) Was A. R. P. Officer Battersea from March 1937 to September 1937. (b) Was Regional Officer of home Office (A. R. P. Deptt.) and Ministry of Home Security, from Sept. 1937 to November 1940. 3. Was an Officer of Indian Army from 1918 to November 1935. Has toured India extensively.
Major R. J. F. Sansome, R. E. (British).	Structural Precautions Officer.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has no ' Blitz ' experience. 2. (a) Was entrusted with the work of design and construction of Air Raid Shelters and Accommodation in Southampton prior to leaving for India. (b) Before his transfer to the Civil Defence Department he was entrusted with the work in India of design and construction of buildings for Military purposes including Air Raid shelters, Bomb proof-Structures and other buildings for Passive Air Defence purposes. (c) Was a lecturer on the structural side of Passive Air Defence in the staff of Engineer-in-Chief's Branch, when Passive Air Defence was started. (d) Conducted a series of full scale experiment with 500 lbs. bombs. (e) Is an Associate of Institute of Civil Engineers (Chartered Civil Engineer) 3. He has been in India since April 1940 and is familiar with all types of buildings, etc.
Mr. G. Scholes, B.Sc. (Hons.), (British).	Central Chemical Adviser.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Had ' Blitz ' experience in England upto September 1941. 2. (a) Was an Identification Officer in England. (b) Had experience in War Gases at the University of Manchester. (c) Was a research chemist of I. C. I. and Dye stuff group, which is closely attached to war Gas production.
Mr. V. R. Fenn (British).	Fire Fighting Adviser.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Had ' Blitz ' experience from the outbreak of war till 17th July, 1942 in the East end of London. Attended ' Blitz ' fires at Manchester, Bristol, Southampton, Portsmouth and Coventry. 2. He has 21 years professional fire brigade experience during which period he rose from the ranks to the position of Divisional Officer. All his services have been spent in the East of London.

Names.	Designations.	Qualifications.
Mr. H. Waddington (British).	Camouflage Representative.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Has no 'Blitz' experience. (a) Is a registered Architect of Great Britain and N. Ireland. (b) Extensive study of air photography in connection with Archaeology in U. K. Palestine, Egypt and India (1928 to 1942). (c) Trained at Camouflage School, Kirkee. Has toured in Delhi, Rajputana, Central India, Punjab and United Provinces while employed in Archaeological Survey Department, Government of India since July 1937.
Mr. J. S. Vorley, C.B.E., I.F.S. (British).	Deputy Director Warnings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Had 'Blitz' experience in Burma. Was Commissioner of Civil Evacuation in Burma. In I. F. S. he was Deputy Conservator of Forests.
Mr. W. F. M. Davies, I.F. (British).	Area Adviser, South- ern India Army Area.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Has no 'Blitz' experience. Received training at the Civil Defence Staff School Calcutta. Has been an Officer of Indian Police since 1927.
Wing Commander, A. H. S. Steele-Perkings, C.B.E., R. A. F. (Retd.) (British).	Area Adviser, East- ern India Army Area.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Inspector, Home Office (A. R. P. Department) 1935-1938. Wrote "C" series Home Office A. R. P. memoranda (Public Utilities). Had big part in working out Port of London A. R. P. Scheme. (a) Was Director of A. R. P. in Hong Kong. (b) Has served in the R. Navy and R. A. F. Has toured extensively throughout India.
Lt.-Col. B. K. Sheorey, I.M.S. (Indian).	Assistant Director General, I. M. S. (A. R. P.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Had 'Blitz' experience during the battle of London 1940-41. (a) M. B. B. S. (Bombay). D. L. O. (London). F. R. C. S. (England). (b) Professional experience of about 14 years. (c) Hospital experience—Held 8 Hospital appointments in England 1934-41. (d) Surgeon, E. M. S. Metropolitan Hospital, London (Ministry of Health appointment from Sept. 1939 to Jany. 1941). During this period did all major Air Raid surgery at the Metropolitan, Hospital, London.
Lt.-Col. E. K. Yiend (British).	Deputy Director Schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Air Raid experience in U. K. Instructor Chemical Warfare School India 1930-1936. A. R. P. Officer Coventry 1936-1938. A. R. P. Officer Croydon 1938-1940. Was an Officer of Indian Army from 1916-1936. Stationed all Provinces except Bombay, Orissa and Bihar.
Mr. E. G. D. Robertson (British).	Assistant Director Schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Air Raid experience in U. K. and Burma. A. R. P. training in U. K. 1940. Incharge Central A. R. P. Training, Burma.
Capt. T. Marlow (British).	Commandant Staff College.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Blitz experience in U. K. 1939 to November 1941. Regional Officer S. E. Region, Ministry of Home Security 1938-41. Officer in Indian Army. Great War.
Lt.-Col. H. I. Bulkley R. E. (Rtd.), (British).	Commandant Indus- trial School, Cal- cutta.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Blitz experience in U. K. 1939-1942. Structural Precautions Adviser to Ministry of Supply U. K. 1940-42. 12 years military experience of India.

Names.	Designations.	Qualifications.
Mr. E. J. Little (British).	Commandant, Instructors School, Calcutta.	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1939—to June 1942. 2. A. R. P. Officer Southend 1939-1942.
Mr. L. G. Mirchandani (Indian).	Commandant, Instructors School, Hyderabad.	1. No air raid experience. 2. 2 years various A. R. P. Training in U. K. 1938-1940. Asst. A. R. P. O. Sind Government 1940-1941.
Mr. J. E. Lee (British).	Commandant Specialist School, Lahore.	1. Blitz experience 1939—June 1942. Ministry of Home Security Regional Officer 1939-1942.
Major C. A. Spong (British).	Commandant Specialist School, Bombay.	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1939—June 1942. 2. Ministry of Home Security Regional Officer 1940-1942.
Mr. H. W. Birkett (British).	Deputy Commandant Staff College, Lahore.	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1939—June 1942. 2. County A. R. P. Officer Cornwall 1939-1942.
Mr. F. G. Caudery (British).	Deputy Commandant Industrial School, Lahore.	1. Blitz experience 1939 to June 1942. 2. A. R. P. Training Officer Amersham U. K. 19 8-42.
Major S. McCullagh (British).	Deputy Commandant Instructors School, Calcutta.	1. Blitz experience U. K. 1939 to June 1942. 2. Deputy County A. R. P. Officer Bedfordshire 1939-1942.
Mr. R. Billimoria (Indian).	Deputy Commandant Instructors' School, Hyderabad.	1. No blitz experience. 2. Chief Warden Calcutta 1940—January 1942.
Mr. P. F. Croyadill (British).	Dy. Commandant Specialist School, Lahore.	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1939 to June 1942. 2. Rescue Services Training Officer Hendon 1939-1942.
Mr. J. M. Mollison (British).	Dy. Commandant Specialist School, Bombay.	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1941 to June 1942. 2. A. R. P. Officer Hornchurch and Peterborough 1941-1942.
Mr. H. B. Fooks (British)	Gazetted Instructors.	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 2. Training Officers under U. K. local authorities.
Mr. M.V.W. Stratford "		
Mr. A.W. Goddard "		
Mr. T.W. Martin "		
Mr. B.L. Sahney (Indian)	Gazetted Instructors.	1. Air Raid experience in Burma. 2. Held War time appointments under Burma Government.
Mr. P.G. Gollerkeri "		
Mr. A.B. Advani (Indian)	Gazetted Instructors.	1. No blitz experience. 2. Held A. R. P. appointments under Provincial Governments or Departments.
Insp. J.H. Webb (Domiciled European).		
Mr. K.K. Kapani (Indian)	Junior Instructors	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1939 to June 1942. 2. Instructional appointments under U. K. local authorities.
Dr. P.K. Banerjee "		
Mr. W.T. Rose (British)		
" W.J. Gane "		
" F.G. Benson "		
" S.S. Shanks "	Junior Instructors.	1. No blitz experience. 2. Trained in Central C. D. Schools. Held Civil Defence appointments under Provincial Governments.
" H.G. Evans "		
" W.A. Barker "		
Mr. B. B. Moonje (Indian)	Junior Instructor	1. Blitz experience in U. K. 1939—June 1942. 2. Stretcher Party paid member and Incident Officer London County Council 1939-1941.
Mr. C. O. Lynsdale (Anglo-Burman).	Junior Instructor	1. Air Raid experience in Rangoon 1941-1942. 2. Divisional Warden, Rangoon.
Mr. S.B. Mathur (Indian)	Junior Instructors.	1. No blitz experience. 2. Trained in Central C. D. Schools. Held Civil Defence appointments under Provincial Governments.
" R.B.N. Mitter "		
" P. D. Mehta "		
" O. P. Shori "		
" S. P. Borker "		
" R. d'Silva (Anglo-Indian).		
" G. E. Mitchell (Domiciled European).		
Mr. K.C. Saigal (Indian)		
" S.K. Brahmachary "		
" P. J. C. Godfrey (Anglo-Indian).		

Names.	Designations.	Qualifications.
Mr. M. Khan Bahadur (Indian)	Sub-Instructors	1. No blitz experience. 2. Trained in Central C. D. Schools and held A. R. P. appointments under Provincial Governments.
„ S. Jilani (Indian)		
„ Barin Dutt „		
„ O. C. Williams (Anglo-Indian).		
„ W. S. Khan (Indian)		
„ R. C. Lawrence (Anglo Indian).		
„ P. C. Chatterjee (Indian)		
„ S. J. Ahmed „		
„ R. D. Ishwar Singh „		
„ S. M. Hussain „		
„ Jagdish Raj „		
„ V. P. Dhawan „		
„ L. L. Sharma „		
Mr. S. L. Tandon (Indian)	Sub-Instructors	1. Blitz experience in Burma. 2. Held A. R. P. appointments in Burma.
„ G. C. Davis (Anglo- Indian)		
„ P. H. Treaham „		
Major H. Pigot (British)	Ex-Commandant In- structors' School, Calcutta (Resigned).	1. Air Raid experience 1940. 2. A. R. P. Officer Marylebone-London 1939-1940. 3. 20 years Officer in Indian Army.
Mr. R. Adisesiah (Indian)	Ex-Instructor Staff School, Calcutta (Resigned).	1. No air raid experience. 2. College Professor. Warden Service Officer, Delhi. Trained at Central Schools.
Dr. P. G. Horsbŭrgh G.M. (British).	Ex-Commandant Specialist School, Bombay (Trans- ferred).	1. Intensive Blitz experience 1940—June 1942. 2. M. O. I/c. Casualty Services Midlands Area U. K. Member of Advisory Panel Rescue & Casualty Services Ministry of Home Security.
Captain R. Playford (British).	Ex-Instructor Staff School Cal- cutta. (Reverted to Military Ser- vice).	1. Blitz experience 1940 to May 1941. 2. A. R. P. Officer Northern Area County Durham U. K. 3. Officer in Indian Army 1916-1922.

SUMMARY.

No. other than Indians or Anglo-Indians.	35
Number of Indians	29
Number of Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans	8
	72
Number with Blitz experience	37

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: May I know whether the Honourable the Leader of the House is in charge of Civil Defence?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: For the purpose of answering questions in this House, yes.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Is there no representative of Civil Defence in this Assembly?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: No; not today.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Very unfortunate.

PAY AND SAVINGS OF INDIAN SEPOYS.

126. ***Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** Will the War Secretary please state:

(a) the pay of an Indian Sepoy in the Army; and

(b) what amount, if any, the Indian Sepoy is in a position to save after defraying his expenses to send home to his dependents every month?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: (a) Full information on the subject is contained in the Press Communique, dated the 30th September, 1942, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

(b) As will be seen from the Communique the soldier is entitled to free rations, clothing, and accommodation, which term includes the provision of lighting, water, furniture, and conservancy. It follows that the soldier is in a position if he so desires, to save his pay almost in its entirety.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: May I know why the Honourable Member cannot give us a definite idea as to how much he can save, taking into consideration the expenses he has to incur?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I have already given the answer: I said that a soldier is in a position to save almost the whole of his pay if he so desires.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: How much is the question?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: Almost all his pay, I have said.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: The whole of his pay can be saved for sending home?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: Yes.

Sardar Sant Singh: Will the Honourable Member place that communique of September 1942 on the table of this House?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: I have placed it in the library.

Sardar Sant Singh: I want it on the table of the House.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I think it is sufficient if it is placed in the library.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Is it not a fact that Indian sepoy, after meeting their expenses, cannot save more than 5 or 6 rupees a month to send to their families?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: No; that is not a fact.

DESIRABILITY OF RAISING THE PAY OF THE INDIAN SEPOYS, LANCE NAIKS, NAIKS AND HAVILDARS.

127. ***Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** (a) Does the War Secretary propose to raise the pay of the Indian Sepoys, Lance Naiks, Naiks and Havildars in these days when the cost of living has gone up very high? If not, why not?

(b) Has the percentage of deserters among the recruits increased because of insufficient pay?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: (a) No such proposal is before Government at present. The matter is, however, constantly under review and, as will be seen from the Communique, to which I have referred in answering the preceding question, substantial concessions were granted as recently as the end of September last with special reference to the cost of living.

(b) No.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: May I know what was the percentage of deserters in 1941 and in 1942?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: Sir, I regret I am unable to give this information for security reasons.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPLY OF FOODSTUFFS FOR DEPENDENTS OF INDIAN SEPOYS.

128. ***Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** Will the War Secretary please state if any arrangements are made for the wives or nearest dependents of the Indian sepoy serving in the army to secure food grain in these days of food scarcity? If so, what?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: No such special arrangements are made unless the wives or dependents are residing with the soldiers in unit lines.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: As the Honourable Member is aware that great hardship is being experienced by the wives and children of Indian sepoys serving in the army due to food scarcity, in view of that fact, are no arrangements being made for supplying them with food grains and other necessities of life, namely, standard cloth, etc.?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: That is not possible.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: May I know why it is not possible?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: Because the soldiers' families live in innumerable villages and it is impossible to set up an organization which will cover these innumerable villages.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: But have any arrangements been made for them in towns?

Mr. C. M. Trivedi: There are general arrangements.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: I am asking if any special arrangements—not general—have been made.

(No reply was given.)

PLAN FOR GUARANTEEING FREEDOM FROM WANT TO DEMOBILISED WAR SERVICE-MEN.

129. *Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Will the Honourable the Defence Member please state if Government have got any plan laying down a programme to guarantee freedom from want of necessities of life to the men who would be demobilised from such services as the army, the navy, the airforce and technicians after the war? If so, what?

The Honourable Malik Sir Firoz Khan Noon: Government are fully impressed with the necessity of doing everything possible to ensure that men who have joined the armed forces may ultimately be reabsorbed into civil life with the minimum of dislocation and hardship. At the moment winning the war and concentrating all our attention on the destruction of our enemies is our first duty.

However Government recognise that the demobilised soldier will be one of the most powerful agencies in the readjustment and development of society after the war. They are therefore doing everything in their power to fit serving members of the forces for the part they will have to play, and it is naturally one of their first objects to secure as far as possible that men who are eventually discharged from the armed forces should be not only supplied with the necessities of life but equipped to earn a good livelihood and to take a part, perhaps a leading part, in a general movement for the improvement of living conditions.

It is too early yet to be able to foresee, except in a very general way, the situation with which it will be necessary to deal, and plans are of necessity largely in a tentative stage, though every effort is being made to push on with them as circumstances permit or indicate. I may however mention certain directions in which plans and preparations have already reached an advanced stage. A fund is being built up at the rate of from twenty five to thirty lakhs of rupees a month to be used after the cessation of hostilities on schemes for the permanent benefit of *ex-service* men. A complete card index of the Indian Army has been prepared, in which all the necessary details concerning each individual man are recorded, including technical qualifications.

It has been decided that the scheme for training technicians will be continued for a year and a half after the war. This will enable those men who have been called up before completing their technical training course to complete the course after the war, and thus fit themselves for technical employment.

Government have also under active consideration the creation of a net work of employment exchanges throughout the country which will deal with technical personnel, and with which employment and welfare bureaux for discharged members of the armed forces will interlock and co-operate. It is hoped that

this will go a long way towards helping the large number of technically trained personnel who will be eventually discharged from the services to find a place in industry to the mutual benefit of both.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Apart from the fund that has been mentioned, we should like to know what definite plans the Government has in its view? That "everything possible is being done" is a vague answer. We would like to know whether any definite plans have been made, and whether a start has been made to carry them out?

The Honourable Malik Sir Firoz Khan Noon: I have given the House the plans on which we have been working but we are quite willing to receive any fresh ideas that any Member of this House or the public is willing to bring forward. You must not forget that all these plans are bound to involve large expenditure and the number of people at the top of society in India who can be taxed for all public services is limited. Therefore our means of doing something for the soldier will be limited by the amount of money which will be at our disposal. However, that does not stop us from considering any plans that may be suggested. I have one or two other plans on which our officers are working, but I should not like to mention them at this stage.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I would like to mention to the House that whenever any question requires such a lengthy statement which has just been read out by the Honourable the Defence Member, it is not the practice that it should be read out at length but the purport of it may be given and the full answer laid on the table.

Sardar Sant Singh: What the Honourable the Defence Member has said is all very well, but may I ask him at this time whether the Government has in mind the appointment of a Committee like the one which was known as Rowlett Committee, and to pass a Bill like the Rowlett Bill which did so much harm?

The Honourable Malik Sir Firoz Khan Noon: Do you suggest that one should be appointed?

Sardar Sant Singh: I am asking the Government whether they have a mind to do it, or not. I want an assurance that it will not be done.

The Honourable Malik Sir Firoz Khan Noon: Does that refer to the Home Department or to the Defence Department?

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

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CELEBRATION OF THE RED ARMY DAY IN INDIA.

130. ***Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** Will the Honourable Member for Information and Broadcasting please state:

- (a) if his attention has been drawn to the item of news sent by 'Reuter' from London on January 30th, 1943, and published in the *Hindustan Times* of January 31st, 1943, to the effect that "Sunday, February 21st, will be celebrated as the Red Army Day in Great Britain. In London a meeting at the Albert Hall will be addressed by at least one Cabinet Minister. Other demonstrations are being organised by the Ministry of Information in several large towns.";
- (b) if he has considered any arrangements to celebrate Sunday, February 21st, 1943, as the 'Red Army Day' in India by organising demonstrations in large towns; if not, why not; and
- (c) if he proposes to have a message sent to Premier Stalin, the Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army, expressing this country's high admiration of the successes achieved by Soviet Russia?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: (a) Yes.

(b) No, this is a United Kingdom celebration.

(c) No. But the High Commissioner for India has been invited to represent India at the meeting at Albert Hall. Arrangements have also been made for the participation of the Indian Merchant Navy and of the Indian Forces in marches past of fighting services, etc.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: May I know the reason for not celebrating the Red Army Day in India?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: This is a United Kingdom celebration and therefore we do not celebrate it.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Is the Honourable Member aware that this is being celebrated in Great Britain and other countries and therefore is it not appropriate for us to celebrate February 21st as Red Army Day also?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: I am asked whether a particular celebration is being celebrated on a particular day. I have given a reply to that and have added that India is allowed to take part in the particular way which I have mentioned in my reply.

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Does the Government contemplate any other way of celebrating this?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: The suggestion is there, and the Government will give due consideration to it.

Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad: With reference to part (b) of the question, may I know what is the reply to "If not, why not"?

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: I think, answer to that question is given in the reply itself.

ANNUITY PAYMENTS TO BRITISH INVESTORS ON INDIAN RAILWAYS.

131. ***Mr. K. C. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state what was the aggregate amount of annuity payments that remained to be paid to British investors on Indian Railways as on October 1st, 1942, and when these various annuities would have terminated in the ordinary course?

(b) What was the lump sum payment that the Government of India have paid over or agreed to pay over, to His Majesty's Government in lieu of the annuities above referred to?

(c) On what basis have the value of the annuities been computed so as to make up the amount to be immediately paid over to His Majesty's Government?

(d) What are the specific advantages, if any, to India in the arrangement under which, in return, for the lump sum payment to His Majesty's Government, they would make available to the Government of India sums equal to the instalments of the several annuities as and when they fall due?

(e) Is it a fact that the lump sum payment represents in effect only an investment at 2½ per cent.? On what terms was the Government loan raised at the time to provide the money for the said lump sum payment?

(f) Are the Government of India continuing to shoulder any legal obligation to the annuitants until they are paid off by His Majesty's Government?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) The aggregate amount of annuity payments which remained to be paid after the 1st October, 1942, was £34,114,654. The annuities are payable generally in half yearly instalments terminating on various dates between 1948 and 1959.

(b) £30,054,250.

(c) The lump sum payment represents the total of the present value as on 1st October, 1942, of each annuity allowing interest at 2½ per cent. per annum.

(d) As I have pointed out on more than one occasion the real gain to the country from repatriation lies in the liquidation of external obligations which might prove an embarrassment in future and their replacement by internal debt.

(e) The reply to the first question has been given under (c) above. Although some of the annuities run for as long as 17 years others terminate much earlier and repayment by His Majesty's Government commences during the first year. The result is that the average period during which the capital will be held by His Majesty's Government is about 5 years. The appropriate sterling borrowing rate for such short term money is 2½ per cent. per annum.

As regards the second question, the transaction was financed to the extent of 15 crores by a reissue of the 3 per cent. Loan, 1963-65, at a price of 95, the balance of 25 crores being covered by the issue of treasury bills at the prevailing rates which do not average more than 1 per cent. per annum.

(f) The legal obligation for the payment of the annuities under the various Purchase Acts rests with the Government of India, where it remains. But the agreement with His Majesty's Government effectively ensures that they will make available to the Government of India the sums required to meet the liability as and when it falls due and that no further payment from the revenues of the Government of India will be required for the purpose. His Majesty's Government have therefore virtually taken over the financial liability.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

RATIO OF MUSLIMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL EXCISES AND SALT, NORTH-EASTERN INDIA.

22. Hajee Chowdhury Muhammad Ismail Khan: Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state:

- (a) the present strength of Muslims and non-Muslims, and the total of the different services at present working in the Department of Central Excises and Salt, North-Eastern India; and
- (b) if the ratio of Muslims is below what has been fixed for them according to the Central Communal Ratio Rules?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) The information asked for by the Honourable Member is as follows:

	Muslims.	Non-Muslims
Gazetted Officers	13
Executive subordinates	48	91
Ministerial staff	26	39
Total	74	143

(b) In accordance with the orders relating to communal representation in the Services, 25 per cent. of vacancies filled by direct recruitment in the gazetted grades and 50 per cent. of such vacancies in the subordinate executive and clerical establishments are allotted to Muslims. The existing deficiency of that community in the Department which is due to the transfer, at the time of its formation, of officers already in service in the old Central Excises and Salt Department, Northern India, irrespective of communal considerations, cannot be remedied all at once but will automatically disappear in course of time.

PAUCITY OF BENGALI MUSLIMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL EXCISES AND SALT, NORTH-EASTERN INDIA.

23. Hajee Chowdhury Muhammad Ismail Khan: (a) Is the Honourable the Finance Member aware that the province of Bengal pays the highest excise revenue and yet there are very few Bengali Muslims in the Department of Central Excises and Salt, North-Eastern India?

(b) If the answer to above be in the affirmative, does he propose to devise means to increase the number of Bengali Muslims according to the population basis?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) and (b). Bengal is not the province in which the highest excise revenue is collected nor is recruitment to the services of the Department made on the basis of revenue collections. Out of 74 Muslims employed in the Department, however, 35 are Bengali Muslims and their number is bound to increase in course of time as Muslim officers who belonged to the old Central Excises and Salt, Northern India who were transferred to Bengal on the bifurcation of the department vacate their posts.

NON-APPOINTMENT OF MUSLIMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL EXCISES AND SALT, NORTH-EASTERN INDIA.

24. Haje Chowdhury Muhammad Ismail Khan: (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state if appointments which were due to Mussalmans in the Department of Central Excises and Salt, North-Eastern India have so far been given to non-Muslims?

(b) If the answer to above be in the affirmative, is he prepared to give future appointments to Muslims by way of redressing their legitimate grievances? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman: (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

STATEMENTS LAID ON THE TABLE.

Information promised in reply to part (b) of starred question No. 34 asked by Mr. J. Ramsay Scott on the 15th September, 1942.

AVAILABLE AMOUNTS OF POWER ALCOHOL AND RECTIFIED SPIRIT.

United Provinces	Nil	But shortly about 57,000 gallons a month will be available.
Punjab	115,687	gallons.
Other provinces	Nil	

Information promised in reply to starred question No. 59 asked by Mr. K. C. Neogy on the 12th February, 1943.

PROVISION OF BROTHELS FOR FIGHTING FORCES IN CALCUTTA.

Extract from "Calcutta Diocesan Record", dated November, 1942.

DO OUR TROOPS WANT MORE BROTHELS?

Are we fighting for the right?

In Calcutta at the moment, in the very heart of the residential area, respectable people are being asked to turn out of their houses by the authorities in order to make way for brothels. We think it right that the facts should be made public.

Here are the facts—they are facts.

The area affected lies between Marquis Street and Ripon Street. Residents have been visited by the police, accompanied by prostitutes, and told that their houses are required "for brothels for the military".

Protests have met with the answer, "We know we cannot force you to go, but it will be no use you making complaints against your neighbours after this becomes a brothel area; such complaints will not be noted in the police diary". This was then illustrated by the instance of a resident in Ripon Street, who made a complaint against the unseemly conduct of a neighbouring house and was told that Ripon Street was in the brothel area and that therefore the complaint would not be entered in the general diary.

Already the scheme has begun to take shape. Objections made in recent months by local residents to the immoral use of certain houses have had no effect. Fresh houses are being turned into brothels already. There are indications that the building next door to Saint Mary's Home and Hospital for Aged Women is to be used as a place for the medical examination of prostitutes.

Further protests have been made to those in authority, but as yet without any effect. The Metropolitan has taken up the matter and we ask the support and prayers of Christian people for him in his effort to stop these disgraceful proceedings.

There are those—some of them in high official positions—who think an unnecessary fuss is being made. We would ask them how they would like it if they were visited by police sergeants, with car-loads of public women to inspect their houses, and told to clear out and let their comfortable homes become brothels. We would ask what sort of an outcry would

be made if some of the more desirable parts of Ballygunge, Alipore or Chowringhee, inhabited by wealthy Europeans, were chosen for the new brothel area. We would ask how senior government officials, who are prepared to wash their hands of the matter, would like it if their quarters were requisitioned for brothels.

But because it is only some poorer people, chiefly Anglo-Indians, who are concerned, it doesn't matter.

We are told that the police are taking these measures for the protection of the respectable families in the neighbourhood. We are not told that the respectable families of the neighbourhood have petitioned the authorities to be excused from the 'protection' which they will be afforded by the establishment of brothels all round them.

We are even told that these things are necessary for the physical and moral (!) well-being of the troops.

We believe we are right in saying that the British Army has long ago faced this question and that it is against army regulations to keep licensed brothels for the troops. The only plea for opening this new area is the presence of our armed forces, so whether they will be officially licensed or not is a mere matter of words. They are meant for the troops.

In Calcutta there is of course already a 'bad' area; but surely one is enough and we do not want another, which is to be thrust before people by being situated in the very centre of the city. Those who want brothels will find the existing ones. To establish this new area would only dangle the temptation before the men of our forces, many of whom are mere lads. They should be protected, and not enticed, by the authorities.

We are not such fools as not to realise that there will be in every army a certain number of men who will use such places, but we believe it is a slander on the hundreds of thousands of decent men in the ranks to suggest that they demand the multiplication of such facilities. We have discussed the matter with a number of them and find that they all condemn the whole business.

We know too that there has been a great deal of venereal disease among the troops here, but experience in other countries has shown that the establishment of controlled brothels does not remove or even mitigate the venereal scourge. Experience—as in the Rhine army in 1920-23—has shown that the abolition of regulation has decreased the ratio of disease in the forces. A more effective measure in Calcutta would be to see that the men did not have so much time hanging on their hands with nothing to do. In particular they should be provided with plenty of facilities for playing games and for other healthy recreation.

But whether the men want it or not, the first question which a Christian must face is *is it right?* And surely there can be no doubt about the Christian answer to that question.

We call this war a crusade for righteousness. Is this our crusade?

We talk about the blessings that British rule brings to India. Are these the blessings that must follow in the train of the British army?

We hold up our hands in horror at the immorality of the wicked Nazis and the savage Japs. Are we any better if we allow this to go forward?

Is this a foretaste of the new and better world we are building?

When our troops are quartered in their own country, are brothels multiplied on their behalf? In Chester, in Bristol in Plymouth, in Bath, in York—in a dozen other lovely old English towns, do the benevolent authorities go round clearing decent folk out of their homes in order to plant brothels in the heart of the town?

Such things would not be tolerated in England. Then why in Calcutta?

We believe that the conscience of decent people both here and in England will revolt against the action of the authorities in Calcutta once the facts are known.

We demand that the whole scheme be dropped.

Extract from "Calcutta Diocesan Record", dated December 1948.

DO OUR TROOPS WANT MORE BROTHELS?

An article published under this heading in last month's DIOCESAN RECORD may have given rise to a false impression—that 'the authorities' referred to were the military authorities. Actually we were not at all sure who was really responsible; our purpose was to draw attention to an intolerable situation, in the hope that 'the authorities' whoever they might be, would realise the profound resentment which their actions had caused, and in view of it would change or modify their policy.

We now have the personal assurance of high military authorities that they are in no way responsible for the procedure against which we protested, that they have not deviated at all from the official Army policy with regard to 'brothel area', and have neither suggested nor instigated the measures taken recently in the Marquis Street neighbourhood. For the sake of the honour of the Army we welcome this assurance. The responsibility seems to be entirely on the civil police.

In one particular we were wrong: the building next door to St. Mary's Home is to be used as a prophylactic treatment centre for the men, not as an inspection clinic for prostitutes. Further, one phrase, 'there has been a great deal of venereal disease among the Troops here' though true is misleading: the amount of disease has increased considerably, but that

is because such a tremendous number of Troops are in, near, or passing through Calcutta. Actually the percentage, we are assured, is extremely low, much lower indeed than in peace time—a fact which reflects great credit on both the military authorities and the men, and we are very glad to hear it!

This clears the situation considerably; but the burden of our complaint still stands. What about the respectable people in the Marquis Street area who have 'unofficially' been turned out of their houses, and all the rest whose lives are being made unbearable by a barrage of solicitation in the street and a series of 'invasions' in their houses. Further, what about the numbers of young girls being procured for this trade and brought into Calcutta? And finally what about the welfare of the Troops themselves? The American Medical Association insist emphatically that 'the control of venereal disease requires the elimination of commercialised prostitution'.

These are some of the questions involved, and to which an answer is required immediately in the interest of us all—military and civilian. We trust that something will be done without delay.

DISPENSING WITH THE QUESTION HOUR ON THE GENERAL BUDGET PRESENTATION DAY.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim). I may inform Honourable Members that in accordance with the usual practice no allotment as regards questions was made in respect of the meeting for the 27th February fixed at 5 P.M. for the presentation of the Budget and that there will, therefore, be no questions on that day.

MOTION RE THE SITUATION AS REGARDS FOOD AND OTHER NECESSARIES.—*contd.*

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The motion now before the House is that of the Honourable Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarker, regarding the situation in the country as regards food, fuel, drugs, etc.

Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali (Lucknow and Fyzabad Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): The other day figures were given here to show how meagre was the help which the Government of India was giving to its own poor employees under a scheme. Besides that there is no other scheme worth its name to help other poor subjects of the Crown—rather, they are saddled with taxations and subscriptions of different kinds. Sir, the Honourable Member for Commerce quoted figures of shortage of staple food in the country and for the export of food grains outside the country in his speeches in reply to the country's demand for stoppage of exports. But, I will remind him that figures will not fill hungry stomachs. He does not even take note in his figures of imports of food grains. Has that not gone down much from 1940-41, when it was in grams, pulses and flour 10.6 crores and in 1942-43 it was only 30 lakhs of rupees? Does he ever take this into consideration? During this winter I daresay that millions will die of hunger or cold, because of high prices for every necessity of life. Our Honourable Members of the Government of India and other high authorities here and in provinces are enjoying blazing fires in their offices and homes, from coal and other fuel, besides the use of electric heaters. They have no difficulty about food and clothes. They can afford to buy everything. But go to any city, town or village, and see the condition of the poor. Thousands lie under the trees or on footpaths or even in the open shivering from cold and dying for want of food, etc.

It is said, Sir, that transport difficulties for food grains will be overcome after some time. Are we to understand from this that troop movements and war necessities will be subordinated to the needs of people of India in future? If not, then where is the sense in such palliations? Will it be sense for any Member of the Government to say that priority will be given to the transport of food grains when the supplies will be available and so forth? I am afraid that with the present rate of export, the supplies will never be available to the

masses of India. There has been juggling in figures and so there will be and is, juggling in statements and assurances. Now, Sir, we have it that the Government of India's control scheme has failed miserably and a condition of chaos is created. This acute shortage of everything is bound to create a serious conflagration some day not distant. The Government of India's complacency is very much surprising indeed, specially in regard to food grains, salt and fuel. The pity is that Government and its officials do not listen to non-officials and consider themselves safe in their offices. Even the advice of the All-India and Provincial Chambers of Commerce carry no weight with the Government. I warn the Government that if the masses of India get desperate, it will be difficult both for the Government and the people to manage them. The half measures taken by Government in their policy of control and not taking the people on the spot, in the markets and their respective places, into its confidence, has all the more affected the already bad position. The removal of control over wheat from 25th January last has made the position worse in certain places, as day to day change of policy was bound to unsettle business.

Here, from Delhi, the all-powerful Government of India issues orders and communiqués to Provincial Governments which some do not endorse even, as the local conditions differ. If the peasants and traders or banias have hoarded up as much as they could to make profit, we cannot blame them easily as Government itself has hoarded up. The cultivator or peasant knows that he must keep enough to feed himself and his family till the next harvest is ready. He has to buy his other necessities too from his own stock as he has no other means for doing that. He says that he expects no help from any quarter, but only kicks and blows from Tehsil and the thanas are his lot. In my own province they are asked to give two pice or one anna on every rupee of their rent as the Zamindar is asked to pay Rs. 10 per cent. of his Revenue as subscription for war purposes. Once the Tehsildar asks for that, then the Thanadar and often the S. D. O., do the same in order to show and prove their loyalty to Government only to get a title or promotion or both and this routine goes on. This all is done in utter disregard of the condition of the people. Sir, from the peasants and Zamindars you can either have payments in cash or in kind but you shall have to leave something for their upkeep and living. Thus God only knows how much goes to the war fund and how much to whom. Realizations are made in different ways and means. Somewhere there is a wrestling match, somewhere there is an exhibition or so, and an official can escape punishment for all his sins of omissions and commissions if he just gives something out of his spoil for the war fund.

It is said, Sir, that in his turn the Bania or trader has also hoarded. He too thinks that he may make hay while the sun shines as he can easily escape blame after doling out cash and grain to those who are guardians of peace and order and sell his commodities at a price that is convenient to him. Why should he care for the consumer when he knows that Government has no safety cover for the consumer. The control scheme was in fact an experiment at the cost of the Indian consumer. There was no complete, well cut and dried schema from bottom to top. It was an inverted sort of scheme. There were no definite data of articles of produce in land or a calculated estimate of quantities of requirements.

Now, Sir, licenses have been issued for sale of necessities of life to those mostly who are favourites and it requires very great patience if one goes to the shops of licensees to buy. They pose as worst dictators and if one dare raise his voice of protest, he will never get his quota of supply the next day. There is no check at all for their arbitrary ways of distribution. The Government will not take the municipal and local boards or town area members or zamindars of the locality for effective supervision of supply depots of licensees.

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Now, Sir, the scheme of "grow more food" too was adumbrated and such land where non-food crops were cultivated was utilised for growing more food crop. Even the recommendation of the Imperial Council of Agriculture for the utilisation of uncultivated land of which there is a great scope, was not accepted. The area of cultivable waste land other than fallow is about 15 crores of acres while the area under cultivation is only 23 crores of acres. If the services of retired Indian agricultural officers and experienced zamindars could be obtained, then there is every chance of more produce. But as red tape will not permit that, Government will not attend to such suggestions even. I would also say that, whether it be about the political situation in India or it be about failure of Government control scheme, etc., the people are blamed both by the Government of India and at home. God only may help us from such friends of ours!

I will make a few suggestions, as has been desired by the Honourable Member. One, stop the export at once. Secondly, non-officials of this House and from Provincial Governments, zamindars of locality, be taken into confidence and consulted in matters relating to rates, requirements, etc., of food and fuel commodities. Thirdly, Government jungles be worked at once for wood fuel and charcoal and the produce supplied to Provincial Governments for sale. Fourthly, All-India Chambers of Commerce and Provincial Chambers, Zamindars and representatives of peasants be asked to advise the Government and their advice should be carefully considered.

Mr. N. M. Joshi (Nominated Non-Official): What about the consumers? They are the people to advise.

Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali: That I have said—representatives of peasants and zamindars should be taken. Fifthly, consult and follow the advice of the Imperial Council of Agriculture. Sixthly, no more taxation on necessities of life if war funds are a necessity. Don't use a double edged sword and thus cut bothways.

From the statements made by the Honourable Member so far, it can be deduced that he is paying lip sympathy to his countrymen about the most serious position in the country in regard to food and other necessities of life. He has been saying something that after March 1943, if the present conditions continue, the export of food grains would be stopped, that is, when the new grains will be expected to come in. But, in fact, the time to stop export was the present when Indians were dying. Such an undertaking is only tantamount to a bitter pill

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member's time is up.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee (Bombay Central Division: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I have very carefully listened to the lucid speech that the Honourable the Commerce Member made the other day. We have also read the proceedings of the various conferences that have been held and recently a large number of publications that have been placed before the public with regard to foodstuffs has given us a lot of information.

To me the question does not present a great deal of difficulty. It may be surprising to many here, but I make bold to say that so far as this country is concerned, as a businessman who has been trading, or whose people have been trading in rice and other foodstuffs for the last 140 years—I make bold to say that there is no much fear of ourselves suffering from scarcity of foodstuffs in this country. (Interruption.) Why we are suffering is a question. So far as production is concerned, I may once again say that we ought not to suffer. It is a well known fact that if India is divided according to the provinces, we find that right up to the time when Burma was taken away, Bengal used to export

rice. Once it was Bengal which exported rice to Arabia, Hejaz, to Abyssinia, to Basrah, Zanzibar, Mauritius, to Colombo and to Natal. In fact, it was only after Bengal preferred to have more of jute cultivation and also to send its superior rice to those countries and buy Burma rice which was sold much cheaper—we find that Bengal had to rely a good deal, specially the Eastern Bengal and Assam, on the Burma rice. So far as Western Bengal is concerned, I am prepared to be corrected by the Honourable Member who comes from there, it produces enough rice not only for local consumption but even for export. Chittagong was considered a rice exporting port, and Puri and Cuttack, including the Madras port of Cocanada, were also exporting rice. Therefore, I contend that if there has been any deficit in Bengal in rice, it is due to the sudden action of the enemy in taking away Burma, but that, too, not to a large extent. If you take the U. P., so far as I have been able to make out, the U. P. has never been importing rice or other foodstuffs from outside except a little wheat. So far as the Punjab is concerned, she has never imported foodstuffs, but has been exporting wheat and even rice. In the year 1936-37 there was a regular agitation in the country, as a result of which, we endeavoured in this House to stop the import of wheat from Australia, so that the Punjab wheat and wheat growers could get a sufficient price for the article. So far as 1936-37 is concerned, our records will also show that the Punjab had enough wheat, enough to export not only to other parts of India but to outside. And recent figures show that the Punjab has supplied, to the amazement of other provinces, rice for military purposes to almost all parts of India.

An Honourable Member: When?

Mr. Hoesseinbhoj A. Lalljee: It is a fact and I do not think it would be denied by my Honourable friend, the Supply Member, that for military purposes, right up to 1940-41 supplies for troops in certain parts of Bengal and certain parts of Karachi were also purchased in the Punjab.

Therefore, I contend—and I am only concerned with that part of it—that the Punjab has got a large quantity of rice besides wheat. The price of wheat in the Punjab has been about Rs. 4 per maund and I do feel that this price did not give a sufficient return to the agriculturist. Far less sufficient would it be now if we now say that Rs. 6 per maund would be a fair return to the agriculturist in the Punjab for the simple reason that for years together they have suffered and also for the reason that all other necessities of life cost much more now than they used to before and everything depends upon the price of other necessities of life. Then, we come to Sind. Here, again, we find that Sind never imported rice but exported it to the Arabian and African ports and after the Sukkar Barrage the yield there has also gone up than it used to be before. As to the Central Provinces and Rajputana, they used to supply to Bombay *jowar* and *bajra*. Even today, I make bold to say, in certain parts of the Gwalior State and in Rajputana there is enough quantity of *bajra*. The price of *bajra* there has not increased much but the same question of the higher cost of necessities of life equally affects them and they are entitled to better prices. Then, we come to our province of Bombay. Here, many years before, the cotton cultivation in the Central Provinces, the Nizam's dominions and in the southern part of the Bombay Presidency was increased, we had enough of *jowar* and a good deal of *bajra*. Even now we have a fair quantity of *jowar* being produced in the Bombay Presidency. But the Bombay Presidency has always relied to a very large extent on the Burma rice and that is due to the fact that the production of *jowar* and *bajra* had been going down. We produce a certain quantity of rice in Konkan which is of a very superior type. It used to be exported before but at present, I am glad to say, its export has been stopped. Just as in Bengal, our superior rice was exported and we imported the Burma rice and the hit to the Bombay Presidency has been very bitter because of the

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fact that we are having famine conditions in certain parts and the production of *jowar* has been considerably reduced, and the Burma rice has been stopped. So far as the Madras Presidency is concerned, there used to be a lot of rice there and we had Resolutions brought in this House in 1937 that the inferior Siam rice ought not to be allowed to be dumped in parts of Madras. It is a well known thing that Madras, like Bengal, live entirely on rice and nothing else. In these circumstances, we have got to consider the deficit after the exports have been eliminated. We have got to replace the Burma rice by some superior rice in Konkan and also with the superior rice of Bengal. We have got to replace it by the surplus of wheat that is available in the Punjab and by *jowar* and *bajra* that is available in Rajputana and the Central Provinces.

We have also to take into consideration the position that has arisen because of the price control. A lot has been said in this House since the beginning of the war that there should be price control and I believe naturally one desires that there should be price control, but as a businessman I say that the price control, if you ever attempt to do it, must be done very carefully. If it is not done carefully, then the moment you declare it you create an impression that there is a scarcity or there will be a scarcity and the prices will go up and therefore everybody must be careful. That is the first impression which is created. If you speak for price control, it means that you are speaking something that would create something like panic. I do not like, therefore, that specially in the present circumstances, except on rare occasions, we ought to speak much of the price control here and price control there. The price control in various provinces has not resulted in any benefit whatsoever. I make bold to say that today we are receiving far more complaints about the supply of foodstuffs than was the case before the price control was resorted to in the country. None of the Members in this Honourable House will say that the price control of articles of foodstuffs has had any good effect so far as the supplies are concerned.

There is a lot being said with regard to hoarding. Naturally when you create a sort of panic, everyone who is able to make a little saving tries to hoard a little or more.

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney (Member for Indians Overseas): Does the Honourable Member think that saving for one's requirement and hoarding are one and the same thing?

Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee: I am coming to saving as well. I am only referring to the two most important points of high prices, scarcity and hoarding. These are the very commonly used phrases and a lot has been said about them. I admit as a businessman that as soon as the price control comes in and as soon as the businessman see an opportunity, they do hoard as much as they possibly can and so do those who can manage or afford to do so. But the question of questions is this. The scarcity in India with regard to foodstuffs is mainly of rice and due to rice which did not come from Burma last year. If your export and import figures are taken you will find that the whole deficit and all the cry we had in the country has been due to the fact that rice from Burma is not available. It is also an established fact that if the price of one of the foodstuff commodities goes up or there is scarcity of it, the consequential effect must be apparent on all other foodstuffs. If you agree with this premise, I contend that even if our exports are restricted as they are restricted now including the military requirements, then also there is some deficit and that is due to the Burma rice not being available.

The real deficit therefore is of Burma rice and that can be and should be reduced and that great difficulty must be considered as the first great concern of the Central Government. I contend that they should look into it. Now, Sir, I was dealing with the hoarding of foodstuff. You have got to consider one of the most important points in that as well. To hoard foodstuff in

large quantities is not an ordinary thing for the simple reason that it is a well-known fact that wheat cannot be hoarded for more than four months once it is sacked and put into godowns.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan (Agra Division: Muhammadan Rural): No?

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: I can tell you from experience that wheat cannot be hoarded for more than four months except when a very special care is taken or in the fields underground, which cannot be done on a large scale.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad (United Provinces Southern Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): We can hoard wheat for four years.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: But not in godowns. You cannot hoard wheat for more than six months.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi (Dacca *cum* Mymensingh: Muhammadan Rural): No, no.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: My Honourable friend says, "no, no". Here today fortunately we are likely to have the opinion of an expert brought in by the Honourable the Commerce Member in the person of Major-General Wood, who has lot of experience, and I boldly say he has a lot of experience, in the matter of foodstuff and supplies generally and since the war he has been in charge of a very important Department.

Mr. M. Ghiasuddin (Punjab: Landholders): In hoarding?

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: He will tell you that so far as military is concerned in many stations before the war and even now they cannot make use of the wheat after six months although kept with all the care; and they take in new stock every six months at every important fortress like Aden although it is in very good godowns. I repeat it has been the practice of Military Government to stock wheat for periods of four months or at the most six months, after which they will take it out. That has been also the experience of businessmen of great cities who hoard in godowns. I have not such vast experience with regard to hoarding of wheat. I cannot tell you about hoarding of wheat in the fields or by the cultivators: but you must remember when you have got any complaint to make with regard to the wheat hoarded by businessmen you have got to make sure of the places—where it could be hoarded in large quantities and that is in godowns and in large towns where financial and many facilities are available. Well, I may say once again that so far as wheat is concerned it cannot be hoarded in godown in large cities and in large quantity safely without being affected by the worms for more than six months, in fact, over four months. Wheat flour and atta cannot remain for more than three months.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: There you are right, but sometimes not more than two months.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: You can ask somebody else, if you like. Sir, with regard to *jowar*, it cannot be kept safely in the same good condition for more than four months, in godowns wherein again only large quantities can be stocked by businessmen.

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: What?

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: You cannot put it in godowns and such other places: but they do keep small quantities under-ground, it is kept by agriculturists and that lasts for more than eight months, but that *jowar* is not of the same quality as the *jowar* that is brought out fresh and used by many of us.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Because of the hoarding bogey.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: They are not hoarding. It is not a hoarding bogey.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: This I can understand. Go on.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Now, again with regard to prices. Sir, as I have pointed out it is very essential that there should be a central board or that the Central Government should look into various statistics, and get at once from districts the statistics, which District Collectors can very well do from every district of the quantity of foodstuff, specially staple foodstuff, of the districts on which the rural areas dependent in those districts. If you get these figures you can very well lay down your hands upon the fact that how much each district and each province requires a particular commodity for their actual consumption. It is a fact that besides the price control, besides the little hoarding, great difficulty has been that of the transport which is one of the main cause for high prices. Transport, as we know very well, during the last whole year had to be mainly occupied by military purposes to a great extent. To get a wagon one did pay at least from twenty-five rupees to fifty rupees per wagon specially since the last one year. It is a well known fact.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Bribe?

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: Why do you not bring it to the notice of the Honourable the Railway Member?

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Now, Sir, paying of that premium was not the only thing. There is a further difficulty, and that is being mostly and invariably experienced and that is of obtaining priority certificates. It is not an easy thing, to obtain that certificate from Provincial Governments and their subordinates, besides it is also very difficult to obtain these priority certificates from other concerned quarters. A wagon did cost or would cost in these circumstances ordinarily to a businessman more than a hundred rupee note.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: All these persons should be prosecuted.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: First see what the facts are. Don't please go away with the idea that in India at present and up till now, as it is situated, there is or there is not a great scarcity of food-stuff. That is first thing, that must be studied and that deficit should be adjusted. . . .

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: What is the meaning of a hundred rupee note? I did not follow.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: I do not want to say to a great lawyer who has experience of all the worldly matters. But what I wanted to point out is this that it is the Honourable the Railway Member who has to look into this matter immediately. Once you are an elected member you are responsible to legislature and then you are a minister.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: Election does not ensure.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Minister does. Any how, we did know and we do know that last year all our transport—I mean the railway transport—had to be used and was rightly used for transportation of troops and other war materials; as at various places our war condition then was very very serious, and we have to bear the consequences of that position but now we have to look to the other side as well. We have also to take into consideration that for some important war reasons a large stock of our rolling stock had to be sent out although we could ill-afford, however it is good that so far as war is concerned it helped a great deal in organization of supplies at those places. Here again I contend that it was really only in three provinces that such a thing as a great shortage did happen owing to this transport difficulty and these three provinces, I contend, were Bengal, Bombay and Madras which are dependent on rice. I really fail to see why this loud cry of great scarcity is

raised with regard to other Provinces. I feel it is due to the fact that the impression of scarcity has gone abroad so widely although—I do not see any justification for that impression, mainly that a very large quantity is being exported to foreign countries. Sir, I am not here to defend the Treasury Benches, but I may tell you that the export of foodstuffs to foreign countries is less than in certain years before the war. Certain quantities have been shipped for our troops, but they cannot be much because the number of Indian soldiers abroad is not much. I do not put them at more than four lakhs of our people outside the country and that is not much to provide with from India if it was necessary.

I first dealt with the regular export from this country, then with regard to the requirements of the military and thirdly there is also the impression that we have been sending out foodstuffs for the consumption of civil population outside India. There again, if we take the figures for 1937, 1938 and 1939, we do find that in those years the exports were more than they are just at present. There again I must say we have got to consider that we had the Burma rice to replace. At present we have not got Burma rice. Sixty per cent. of the staple food of the people in this country is rice. Therefore, it behoves us to ask the Government to be more careful, not only careful, but that they should not allow much export of rice to countries outside India for the consumption of the civil population. We are now asking for wheat from Australia. With all good wishes on the part of the Government, it is very difficult to get large quantities from Australia, and I am doubtful we will get large quantities from there soon.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member's time is up. He must now conclude his speech.

Mr. Hoosainbhoj A. Lalljee: All right, Sir, All I wish to say is this. My only appeal to Government is that they should have district statistics and keep control in the hands of the Central Government and they should rely more and more upon themselves than pass on the responsibility to or rely on the Local Governments, who it must be admitted have failed to discharge their duties in this respect satisfactorily.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Mr. President, Sir, the Honourable Member for Food in his exhaustive speech opening this deliberation explained to us fully how the position stood and asked us for constructive suggestions. I have been listening to the speeches that have been made till now; but very few of them struck me as offering any constructive suggestions. Most of the speeches criticised the Honourable Member, unaware of the fact that he took over the Food Department only the other day.

I will deal with the question in the light of the present situation and of the future. I would confine myself to the situation regarding food and fuel. Regarding the food situation, there is no shortage in any acute form in the North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Punjab, Central Provinces, United Provinces and Madras. I am open to correction on this point. North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Punjab are surplus Provinces. In Madras, there is a slight shortage of rice, but the Province is confident that it can overcome this shortage. In the United Provinces, there is no acute shortage, but certain areas have registered shortage because of restrictions in the free movement of foodstuffs within the Province. Therefore I need only deal with Bengal, Bombay and Delhi. Bombay is an industrial Province and depends for food supply on imports into the Province. In Bengal there are several difficulties about which I shall deal later on.

Before I go into the question of the Provinces, let me deal with control measures in general. Without comprehensive statistical figures of production and consumption, no administration can effectively enforce control. The machinery provided for the enforcement of control was totally inadequate and

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inefficient. The officers in many instances did not understand the technicalities of the trade they were supposed to control. I am sorry to say that bribery, corruption and favouritism in issuing permits were also prevalent to a large extent.

Then, Sir, the Provinces also failed to co-operate with the control measures for selfish reasons. Sir, the Government, to my mind, should have followed the example of the Eastern Group Supply Council who first worked out the plus and minus position of countries regarding the war requirements and then proceeded to equate demand and supply. The position today, in short, is this: while the occupation of Burma, Siam and the Dutch East Indies struck a vital blow at the import requirements of India's food position and the supply of foodstuffs shrank, the Allied military forces which were being daily reinforced, a happy lot of Italian prisoners who were brought here and a large number of evacuees from the eastern theatres of war inflated the demand for foodstuffs.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: May I ask one question? My Honourable friend was a member of one of the sub-committees of the Eastern Group Supply Conference. Did they equate the balance sheet of foodstuff for these countries also?

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Yes Sir. They did.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: And what was the position of India?

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: I am not in a position to disclose that. I am under an oath.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Can he tell us whether the result was plus or minus?

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: That also I cannot disclose here; I know the position, but I cannot disclose it.

Sir, the export of foodstuffs has continued despite this difficult position in her own requirements. Between 1939 and June 1942 over a million and a half tons of foodstuffs had been exported. This includes rice, wheat and other grains. Even now rice is being exported to Ceylon. In the case of wheat, the country went on exporting it until a very acute shortage resulted in a panicky market and the Government had to arrange for import of wheat from Australia. Sir, the Government contends that the export of rice now is insignificant in comparison to the total requirements of India. Nevertheless, I submit it is unwise at the present moment to export any rice at all until efforts are made to make India produce in excess of her requirements. I would, therefore, urge that all exports must be stopped until India becomes a surplus country.

Another difficulty which is experienced in distributing foodstuffs is that certain provinces have imposed restrictions on the movement of foodstuffs. These restrictions only complicate the situation.

The main foodstuffs in regard to which there is acute shortage are wheat and rice. Now, Sir, let me deal with wheat. When Government fixed the ceiling price of wheat at the end of 1941, the Government was still exporting wheat and these exports nullified whatever effects the control may have had over the prices. Rally Brothers, Louis Dephres and the U. K. C. C. were all Government agents buying freely in Karachi and Bombay for exporting wheat.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra (Presidency Division - Non-Muhammadan Rural): Where were they exporting?

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Wherever they exported my point is that it went out from India.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: For the use of Indian Army?

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: I am not concerned with that: I am only concerned with the fact that it went out of India.

What was the result of that in India? Here there was a ceiling price and wheat in the market could not be sold at more than that price. Government themselves began to buy freely, through their agents in Bombay and Karachi, at higher prices than the controlled rates—thus themselves violating the price which they had fixed for others. And, let me add that this was the cause of failure of the fixation of ceiling price for wheat. In the Punjab the dealers found that they were liable to prosecution if they sold wheat at prices higher than the fixed ceiling price. The result was that all wheat in the market went underground and sold to the public only in black-markets. This benefited neither the farmer nor the man-in-the-street.

Then there is another factor. When the Government controlled the price of wheat they did not control the price of *baira* and those who had *baira* to sell started profiteering on that, and sold it at higher prices than even wheat. The same thing has happened with sugar. When they fixed the ceiling price of sugar, they did not fix the ceiling price of *gur*, with the result that the poor man had to pay for *gur* a higher price than sugar itself.

Sir, in regard to rice, by the Government of India's denial policy they wanted to remove all surplus rice from areas within the enemy threatened zones to safer areas in Bengal. The Government of India ordered that this rice should be removed from certain areas, and the Bengal Government was carrying out their behest. The result was that whereas the Government of India ordered to buy rice in the mofussil—not in Calcutta—at Rs. 6/8/- a maund with a latitude given to the agents to go up to ten per cent. more, the Government of Bengal by a notification fixed the ceiling price of rice in Calcutta at Rs. 6/8/- per maund. The Honourable Mr. Somerset Butler, who has the experience of the working of the rice control scheme in Burma, was the officer who was entrusted with the work of carrying on the denial policy, and who had instructed the buying agents to buy at Rs. 6/8/- per maund in the mofussil while the Secretary to the Commerce Department, Government of Bengal, had fixed the maximum price of rice in Calcutta at Rs. 6/8/-. How could that be possible? He did not even take into account the railway fare that would have to be paid in order to bring rice into Calcutta. That resulted in the entire rice in Bengal—it is not a deficit province—going underground and into black market. There was no shortage of rice in fact. The result was that no dealers brought rice to Calcutta out of fear of being prosecuted if they sold it at a higher rate than Rs. 6/8/- a maund. The Government of India's agents were buying rice in the mofussil at Rs. 6/8/- plus ten per cent. at discretion. How then could the merchants sell that rice for Rs. 6/8/- in Calcutta. So they stopped importing rice to Calcutta and that resulted in an artificial shortage of rice in Calcutta.

Sir, I would also like to tell this House that chaos prevails between the Government of India and the Provincial Governments. There is no co-ordination between the two. Provincial Governments ignore the Government of India and the Government of India ignores the Provincial Governments. And I wish to tell you how the business men suffer. The Government of India had certain commitments for exporting rice to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and the Persian Gulf. This is not only this year. Rice used to be exported from Bengal and India to these countries for a long time. When this question came up for consideration in 1942, the Government of India, instead of allowing the merchants to export freely to these countries, had controlled the rice and arranged for the issue of permits for exporting it. That is to say, no merchant, who was not in the rice export trade before and who had not traded with the different countries, would not be allowed to export now; but those who were in the Export trade already would be entitled to so export upon obtaining a license for his quota which was to be fixed according to what he used to export before. So the merchants in Bengal (they are mostly Muslims) obtained their quota from the Government of India to export to Saudi Arabia certain quantities of rice. But they had no shipping facilities.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member's time is up.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Well, Sir, I cannot finish this within the time allotted. It is a big thing.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall (Member for Railways and War Transport): Sir, before I speak on the subject of fuel I should perhaps say one word on the subject of transport of foodstuffs. I have said elsewhere, and I say it again on the floor of the House that the War Transport Department and the Railway Department appreciate that the movement of the people's food is a matter of the highest importance and when it is offered for transport it will be moved. At the present moment we are not getting any substantial complaints about delays owing to absence of transport, but if any Members have such complaints to put forward, I shall be only too happy if they will submit them, since we in the Transport Departments are only too anxious to investigate them and to help the transport of food.

On the subject of fuel several Members asked that fuel should be included within the subjects to come under discussion in the motion. But I have listened to the debate and so far I have not heard very many substantial complaints.

Mr. K. C. Neogy (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): I propose to speak.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: I have had no food cooked in my house for want of fuel last night!

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Mr. Bajoria complained that in Calcutta quite recently coal was selling at Rs. 7-8-0 per maund and he complained that it was unobtainable in Delhi, and if obtainable, it was wet. He said that this was a direct responsibility, I think, of the Railway Member. That of course is not correct. The direct responsibility for these high prices is that of the merchants who have taken advantage of the stringent position to bleed the public.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: May I inform the Honourable Member. . . .

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is not giving way.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The Government have assumed the responsibility for distributing the supply of fuel according to priority needs. For that purpose they have appointed a Controller of Coal Distribution with Headquarters in Calcutta. He has the responsibility for despatching, according to a priority list laid down by Government, coal for shipmen for naval purposes, for locos, for government requirements, for munition factories, iron and steel industries, and so forth. He is also responsible for the allotment and control of wagons which are normally classified as "public". Honourable Members know that there has been for some time, for a variety of technical reasons, into which I cannot enter in full today, a shortage of wagons on the Bengal and Bihar coal fields. Now, if there is a full supply of wagons, an adequate supply of wagons can be made for purposes of "public" supply, but if for any reason the supply of wagons is short overall, then those wagons which stand in the lowest priority suffer.

As regards "public" supply, in March and April of last year public wagons were getting an allotment of 13 or 14 per cent. of the available wagons. But owing to the shortage of wagons which subsequently developed, the percentage of wagons which "public" supply has been getting has subsequently dropped to a figure of 5 per cent. and that 5 per cent. represents not only a smaller percentage but a smaller total number of wagons available. Therefore it is not surprising that this has resulted in a shortage of coal

supplies for domestic consumers and small industries. But in that connection I should point out that that fall in the percentage is more apparent than real, because an increasingly large number of industries have been included under the heading of priority. It is estimated that, if we can get a full supply of wagons to the coal fields, 5 per cent. of the full supply will be sufficient to meet the needs of domestic consumers and small industries. But it is obvious of course that with this shortage came the profiteer's chance. I will not dwell on that, but it is sufficient to say that during this period, coal was being charged at the rate of Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 a ton—or even more, I believe. . .

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Fifty or sixty rupees.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: If we had adhered strictly to the priority list, "public" supplies would have had no wagons at all; and therefore in the course of the year a scheme was gradually developed to take care of this position and "public" supplies were put on a low priority to ensure that they would receive a due proportion of the wagons available. The provincial coal scheme was introduced as from the 1st January, 1943. The scheme was designed to achieve three principal objectives (a) to ensure the equitable distribution of the available coal between the different provinces and consumers, (b) to make possible a control over prices and (c) to maintain as far as possible the organisation of the coal distribution trade. The scheme is based on the following system. Quotas are drawn up by the Controller of Coal Distribution for each province in consultation with Provincial Governments, the detailed distribution of the quotas being left to the Provincial Coal Controller. In order to co-ordinate the quota for each province with the supply given to each colliery, the provincial quotas were also worked out for each colliery on a quarterly basis and these have been issued for the coal trade in the form of a pamphlet. Collieries will only be allowed to load for each provincial area a number of wagons allotted to them within the quota of that province. Collieries will not be allowed the option of booking wagons to any consignee or any destination in the province. The Provincial Coal Controllers are expected to recommend names of the merchants to whom the coal is to be consigned on which the Controller can base programmes directing them to book to those consignees. The scheme, I think, has been admirably conceived, but seeing that it involved the co-operation of a large number of officers and of merchants and collieries, it is perhaps not surprising that some of the provinces have not been able to get the scheme into full operation as quickly as they desired. . . .

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: The scheme is excellent but it lacks common sense.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I maintain that it is a good scheme and it is working well in some places and it will soon be in full operation everywhere. It would not be right to attach blame to over-worked officials for these difficulties in bringing the scheme into operation, and I am glad to say that in his last report, dated the 12th February, the Controller of Coal Distribution reports that most of the difficulties have been resolved.

As I mention earlier, the satisfactory working of the scheme is dependent on an adequate supply of wagons. For various reasons this, at the moment, is not satisfactory. (Interruptions.) There are a number of technical reasons involved and I can assure the House that the supply of wagons to the coal-fields is one of our major preoccupations. It is largely or partly due to the shortage of locos and wagons, but it is also a matter of railway operation. There is shortly to be an important meeting in Delhi on this subject and it will be a great disappointment if in the near future there is not a substantial improvement in the general supply of coal wagons on which the supply for "public" purposes also depends.

[Sir Edward Benthall.]

Coming to the question of prices, the Controller of Coal Distribution has arranged with the colliery associations that the maximum price of coal charged by the colliery companies shall be Rs. 12 f.o.r. colliery and for coke Rs. 16 f.o.r. colliery. (*An Honourable Member*: "Very high".) As the Honourable Member says, these prices are very high; they are double what the collieries can get for priority contracts, but they are at least a very very long way below the prices which collieries were charging before the scheme was brought into operation; and if the scheme results in the co-operation of the trade in sticking to these prices, I think—at any rate, I hope—that the House will agree that Government were justified in agreeing to these prices.

As a result of the voluntary fixation of these prices at these levels, Provincial Controllers are in a position to fix the local price for coal and soft coke based on the maximum colliery price plus freight, surcharge, handling charges, cartage and a commission and reasonable profit. What that price should be is their affair. The Provincial Controllers have ample powers to deal with any one who exceeds the control price. Apart from the question of prosecutions, they have the power, of course, to strike the dealers who exceed the prices off the list of those who will receive coal. But in maintaining any price, of course, the assistance of the public is necessary, and I hope that Honourable Members will bring to the attention of the local authorities any cases where the price is exceeded.

I will now deal briefly with the situation in Delhi and Calcutta as they have been mentioned. In Delhi, as the House probably knows from the press, there has been a dispute about the composition of the so-called Delhi Coal Banyan. I need not go into the details of that dispute. Suffice it to say that I understand it has been amicably settled and that the numbers of firms composing the Delhi Coal Banyan have been increased in order to preserve the normal distributive machinery of the coal trade. . . .

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: How can they think of giving Rs. 11 per ton for coal to these banyans? My Honourable friend knows, as his firm was a very big firm dealing in coal, that only 4 annas per ton is given for selling coal. . . .

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Order, order; the Honourable Member has had his speech: he cannot speak a second time.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: May I say that largely owing to the disputes which have taken place about the composition of the banyan, the supply has not been on a satisfactory basis. The requirements of Delhi are stated to be some 320 wagons per month, although the Controller of Coal Distribution considers that this is rather more than is necessary. In the month of December only 137 wagons were received. Of these, as the House knows, from my answer to a previous question, 34 were booked away from Delhi after they had arrived here. In January, 125 were consigned to the Deputy Commissioner; and 195 more were authorised, making a total of 320. But for various reasons which are not yet clear, only 33 of these were despatched in January, and only 32 of them arrived in February. The position of soft coke is also. . . .

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: Did the Honourable Member say that out of 320 wagons only 34 arrived?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: 125 were consigned to the Deputy Commissioner and arrived; and of another 195 authorised by the Coal Controller only 33 had been despatched in January. . . .

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: Where have the others gone?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The answer is that there have been difficulties between the collieries and the dealers in Delhi. The amount has been authorised but it has not yet been despatched.

When you come to the question of price, I understand from a meeting which I held yesterday, that the price of coal has been fixed in 1 P.M. Delhi at Rs. 1-8-0 and that it is available at that price.

Some Honourable Members: Not available at all. Black market is going on. Where can we get? We never get coal.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I passed some coal carts as I was coming to the Assembly. As regards soft coke, I am informed that the price is Rs. 1-9-0 but that it is extremely difficult to obtain at that price. There are stocks of coal in Delhi but soft coke is in short supply at the moment.

To turn for one moment to Calcutta, 3,600 wagons per month are allotted to Bengal for the disposal of the Director of Civil Supplies. Owing to the dislocation of business which resulted in Calcutta round about Christmas-time merchants were extremely slow at that time in placing their orders although wagons had been allotted. As a result of this, in the middle of January the Controller of Coal Distribution asked the Director of Civil Supplies to appoint agents. Some delay took place in the appointment of these agents largely, I think, because a number of coal merchants had left Calcutta but eventually they got together a meeting of merchants who had not left Calcutta and it transpired that they could only guarantee to take 130 wagons out of 200 which the Controller of Coal Distribution was prepared to make available. That was the position in the middle of January and towards the end of January. But coal began to arrive there from about the 21st January and the position has greatly eased and I have received a telegram yesterday to say that coal is freely available in Calcutta and selling at a rate three annas above the control price.

Let me say one or two words on charcoal and firewood. They are, of course, provincial and local subjects. They are produced throughout India and supply must be locally organised; there is not a great deal which the Central Government can do to assist the supply. But so far as I have been able to ascertain, the shortages which we have had reported to us from Simla, Karachi, Bombay and the Punjab, and also Delhi, at various times, are mainly shortages of supply rather than of transport. I do not say that there are not troubles over transport but they have in the main been temporary. As regards Delhi, the requirements of Delhi are some 140,000 maunds per month, that is, the civil demands, and large quantities of charcoal come from neighbouring Indian States. In the last six months of 1942 the supply of wagons for charcoal to Delhi was 95 wagons per month. In the months of November and December the supply rose to 155 wagons, but in January, 1943, the supply was only 28 wagons and this was due to a dispute, I understand, with the Gwalior State. There is no time to go into the reasons for that dispute, but from February 5th the Gwalior State undertook to release 166 wagons, and on the 12th I heard that 60 wagons were awaiting despatch. Unfortunately, these wagons from Gwalior have to come over a very congested section of the line. There is difficulty in moving them and all the other traffic we have to move over that section, but we are allotting six wagons a day, that makes 180 a month, which, as you will see, is a great deal more than was supplied at the highest point in the latter part of last year. I am informed by the local authorities that the supply should be adequate, and Honourable Members will realise that in addition to what comes in by rail, a certain amount, and a very considerable amount, comes in also by road. The control price is Rs. 3-8-0 and I understand that the actual market price is about Rs. 4.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: On paper only.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I think that is the price one has to pay if you can get it. As regards firewood, this is also a matter of provincial

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and local supply. In Delhi, the price is some Rs. 80 to 150 per unit of 112½ maunds, that is apparently the unit of the timber trade. The retail price seems to bear an unsatisfactory relation to that price. But again there is little that the War Transport Board and the Railway Department can do in assisting the provision of firewood to various centres. I do not think from enquiries which I have made throughout the country that shortages are due really to paucity of wagons, but we are, as I said before, only too anxious to look into it in cases where shortages of firewood or charcoal are attributed to shortages of wagons and we should be very glad to receive representations.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member's time is up.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: One more sentence. If shortages occur I would recommend those concerned to make immediate application to the Divisional Superintendent of the Railway.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: I was rather surprised at the speech just delivered by my Honourable friend, the Railway Member. We were not discussing to-day the entire coal problem. We may discuss it on some other occasion. We are concerned only with fuel necessary for household purposes. That is the real problem with which we are concerned in this motion. I say that the system that he has devised lacks common sense. In a small town if coal is not obtainable, we can fall back upon wood fuel, but in the case of a big town like Delhi, we depend almost entirely upon coal for cooking our food. We should not make the distribution of coal according to the population of Provinces, but on the principle whether an alternative form of fuel is available. In a place like Aligarh or a town with even a population of a lakh, if coal is not available, if we can fall back upon wood, we shall not remain hungry. But in the case of Delhi, if coal is not supplied, people go without food. Therefore, in the distribution of coal, you should have taken that factor into consideration, namely, that there are certain towns like Cawnpore, Delhi, and Calcutta, where cooking depends entirely upon coal, that must have priority compared with those towns where an alternative fuel is available. And that is a factor which my Honourable friend has entirely omitted in his plan of distribution. He says he gave a number of wagons to various provinces. There are certain provinces, for example, the Central Provinces, which really do not want many wagons of soft coke for domestic use because they have plenty of firewood. But Delhi is a place where on account of the habits of life and the way in which the kitchens are built for cooking purposes, there is no alternative for coal. Therefore, greater priority ought to be given to those towns which have got a large population and where cooking depends very largely on charcoal and which cannot be replaced by the ordinary wood fuel. That is a point which was not taken into consideration. When I came to Delhi about a month ago in connection with some Select Committees, I noticed the scarcity of charcoal in Delhi. I realised that the Members of the Assembly will be coming here in February and I foresaw the trouble and wrote to the Controller and other authorities concerned that at least one wagon load of charcoal should be given to the Members of the Assembly who will be coming to Delhi to attend the Session. We can bring flour and sugar with us but unfortunately we cannot bring charcoal with us from our own places. In spite of my repeated writings there was no response from any quarter.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Was that charcoal or soft coke?

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: One or the other, I do not mind; both are required for cooking purposes. So, when the Members of the Assembly are treated in this way, one can easily realise what would be the position of other

people who cannot speak for themselves and who have to suffer all these privations of life. You may make any arrangement for the supply of coal for Government purposes; we are not concerned with it. We are only concerned with the coal required for cooking purposes. In this case, you have to fix the percentage of the coal that is required for cooking purposes in each town separately. So far as its distribution is concerned, what you have to consider is this, whether in that particular locality an alternative form of fuel is or is not available. If an alternative form of fuel is available, then quota may be fixed at lower figure. If the alternative form of supply is not available, then you have to give a proportionately larger quantity of coal as the share of that particular town. If my Honourable friend can give us time, we can discuss the question of coal as a whole. I am prepared to discuss this matter with him and point out the mistake in the distribution and the allotment of priority.

I now come to other problems of food. May I just remind the Honourable the Commerce Member, who unfortunately is not here, that the control of price without previously controlling the stock is putting the cart before the horse and is bound to fail. Any person having common sense will understand this. I am sorry that the Government of India did not appreciate this point. . . .

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I think the Honourable Member should stop now. He can continue his speech after lunch.

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

The Assembly re-assembled after Lunch at Half Past Two of the Clock, Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang (one of the Panel of Chairmen) in the Chair.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: - Sir, before lunch I was referring to the maldistribution of kitchen coal. I said there are certain places where alternative form of fuel is available and at other places it is not. More coal ought to be given to those places where alternative form of fuel is not available. The other point is local distribution of the coal. That is about the jurisdiction of the Central Government.

Now, coming to the question about control in general I said I wanted to press this point first that the control of prices without previously controlling the stock is putting the cart before the horse and is bound to fail. It is astonishing that this fact was not noticed either by the Economic Advisers of the Government of India or by those experts and other persons whom the Government of India invited for advice. The stockists in this country form a compact body and they have got their own combination and they control the entire market in India. These parasites of the country are the advisers of the Government of India who pull them not only by nose but also by ears. It is the common experience both in India and in America that the propaganda of abstinence was carried on not by the representatives of social reform but by wine sellers. Prohibition pays the wine seller more than open market. The stockists first filled up their granaries, then contrived the system of control of prices and when the control price was fixed they withdrew the grain from the market, and hoarded it in their granaries and resorted to the practice of black market. These very same persons carried on a propaganda that the absence of wheat was due to three causes, (1) the Government was exporting wheat to foreign countries. Export of wheat is less than 1/2 per cent of the total production; (2) the Government was purchasing large quantities for military requirements; (3) there was a shortage in production. This was not correct, as we had bumper crops last year. This propaganda was intended to side track their concealment. The stockists continued to sell the wheat at higher prices by black market. The moment the control was withdrawn wheat began to be sold in abundance but at high prices. During the wheat control period it remained hidden somewhere. It came out only at back door. The Government of India could not control these stockists even if they had desire to do so. They would not desire to

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do so even if they could control them. There are only two ways of controlling wheat market. I discussed this matter at a very great length during the budget discussion last year. These two methods are practised in Bhopal and Rampur. Bhopal Government control the entire stock of wheat in the entire State of Bhopal and they fix price at Rs. 5 per maund. There the seer is of 96 rupees and not of 80 rupees. Nobody is allowed to export wheat, there is an export duty levied by the Government. So everybody in Bhopal can get wheat at the rate of rupees five a maund—a seer being of rupees 96 and not of 80. The other method which I would like to call for the present, the Rampur method and that is this: the Government purchased last year about ten per cent of the requirements and kept the wheat at different places. The moment the prices began to rise, the Government began to sell that wheat in certain quantities and the result was that the prices went down at once and the grain came out in the market. This continued up to the present moment. The price of wheat is about the same as it was at the harvest time. They had no shortage: These are the two ways by which you can remove the evil. But, Sir, the Government of India do not want to adopt either of the two methods. They had their special policy and they call it "control system". This system is devised and praised by those who are being benefited by it.

Now, I should like to point out that so far as the control of wheat is concerned we should clearly define the duty and functions of the Government of India, Provincial Governments and District Authorities. I think if these things are done and followed properly there may probably be some good done to the general public during the coming year. Now, the Government of India ought to lay down the policy. They should fix the quantity of export. It is the Government of India alone which can decide this factor. They should determine the requirements for military purposes and they alone can do so. They are the right person to impose control on the movement of grains from one province to another. The Government of India should be the clearance house of wheat between Provinces. No person should be allowed to take from one Province to another without reference to the Government of India. They should prescribe the penalty for the misuse of the rules. The penalty should be severe and should have deterrent effect. At present the penalty is written off if a person subscribed to the war fund a sum of, say Rs. 2,000 or so and the accused is let off easily. I call this civilised corruption. This ought not to be allowed.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: It is not civilised, but barbarous.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: A minimum penalty ought to be fixed by the Government of India and this should be sufficiently high so that it may have a deterrent effect. These are the points which come within the province of the Central Government. The Central Government should also keep statistics of the produce and requirements of the Provinces, districts and Indian States.

Now, coming to duties and functions of the Provinces, they ought to maintain a Department under them and they should know the exact production of each district. They must control the movement from one district to another. We have been accustomed to be almost self-sufficient in each district. This has been so for ages, on account of transport difficulties. In exceptional cases, in particular towns owing to abnormally low rainfall, some necessity might arise to get wheat or rice from outside the district. At present shortage arises because the dealers in one district export the entire quantity of wheat to outside places and thus shortage is created artificially. If this export is controlled from the outset, then shortage will be minimised. The Provinces should also keep a register of the entire stock in their Provinces. They should be able to tell the Government of India which are the

surplus districts and how much they could supply the Government of India for export and military requirements. The quota allowed to the Provinces for export for military requirements should be determined by the Government of India, but purchases should be made through the District Magistrates and not by the Government of India through their contractors. The moment the contractors come into the field, they upset the market price; they have the sanction of the military authorities and the District Magistrate will have to abide by their word.

Babu Baijnath Bajoria (Marwari Association: Indian Commerce): You mean contractors for military purposes?

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Yes, military contractors. They will upset the arrangements of District Magistrates. The District Magistrate should take stock of the products in his own district, in each tahsil and taluqa. The Government of India and the Provincial Governments ought to fix price limits and within those limits, the District Magistrates will determine the price to be fixed in their own districts. The District Magistrate, on behalf of the Provincial Government, should purchase from 10 to 20 per cent. of the requirements of each district and should keep them in the same way as the Rampur State has done which I just now described. In that case, the stock which has been purchased by District Magistrates can be utilised in the town areas of the district, because the villagers will never be badly off as far as foodstuffs are concerned. It is only the people of the bigger town who are affected. If these stocks are kept with the landlords, or with the stockists on commission basis they can be brought out when necessity arises. In this way, the stocks will be equalised throughout the year.

In the distribution of grains, we have many complaints, and this is a point which the Government of India ought to consider in consultation with representatives of consumers. The Government are in the habit of consulting only those who hold stocks of grains. They should also consult the consumers. Now, the interests of the consumers are absolutely neglected. As far as the Commerce Department is concerned, they always invite the opinions of merchants and dealers, but very seldom they consult the opinion of the consumers. In this sense, I think the Labour Department should protest, because the Labour Department is expected to deal with and look after the interests of Labour, and whether they do so or not is to be seen later on.

Mr. Chairman (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): The Honourable Member's time is over.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: I will conclude by saying a word about standard cloth. If you leave it to merchants, they will never expedite the supply of standard cloths. The Government of India should definitely say that so much percentage of the production ought to be reserved for standard cloth, its price should be fixed at a small margin of profit and standard cloth should be distributed among the people. If you ask the Punjab to give food to Bombay, they will expect in return standard cloth. If Bombay refuses to give standard cloth to Punjab and U. P. then they will retort by saying, you keep the cloth and feed yourself on cloth and currency notes which you have accumulated by exploiting the consumers. The Government of India are the clearance house, if they take an article from one province and they should supply other articles produced by other provinces at reasonable prices.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: Sir, I am very sorry to speak in the absence of the Honourable Member for War Transport. To my mind, his half-hearted reference to coal as a low priced commodity, in his speech while introducing the Railway Budget, partially explains the difficulties that have been felt in regard to the supply of coal and coke. My Honourable friend's remarks refer to what he said

[Mr. K. C. Neogy.]

were technical reasons which had led to the shortage of wagons. The House has absolutely no idea, I take it, as to the extent to which this shortage has been allowed to go. I put a few questions the other day in order to be able to judge the situation as regards the supply of wagons for coal, and answering my questions, the Honourable Sir Edward Benthall laid on the table certain statistical statements. From these statements, it appears that during 1941, coal booked under public supply, which I may tell the House includes fuel for domestic consumption, as well as coal for small industries which do not enjoy a high priority, coal booked under public supply in 1941 represented 1,96,617 wagons in the up direction; as against that in the complete year 1942, the number of wagons available in the up direction was 37,838, that is to say, one-fifth of what the position was in 1941. Then take the down direction, the wagons available for public supply in the year 1941 represented 1,74,767 and in the year 1942, the figure dwindled to 51,035, or one-third of the number of wagons that were available in 1941. The Honourable Member for War Transport owes an explanation to this House as to how this extraordinary shortage came about. I dare say the technical reasons which he mentions are not sufficient to explain this kind of drastic reduction in the supply of wagons on which depends the supply of coke and coal for domestic consumption as well as the small industries. Sir, I should not like to go more into details in this connection because I hope to have an opportunity of debating this point at greater length in connection with the railway budget. But, Sir taking up another statement made by him in reply to a question of mine, it appears that with effect from January this year there was a change in the system of the distribution of wagons for coal. From the 1st of January was introduced what has been termed the 'Provincial Quota System' under which certain allotments of wagons are made to the different provinces by the Controller of Coal Supply, it being left to the provincial authorities themselves to regulate this allotment as best as they may in regard to the distribution of the coal. Now, Sir, this is the statement that he made as regards the number of wagons that had been sanctioned and the number of wagons that formed the monthly quota province by province. The monthly quota fixed for Bengal under that scheme is 3,600 wagons against which from the 1st of January to the 15th of January only 623 wagons were actually sanctioned. It may be said that this was due to the difficulties which Bengal was experiencing at the time due to the Japanese bombing, in so far as the traders in certain cases were not available and the machinery could not be put into operation. Now, let us take up the other provinces. Take the case of Bihar: The monthly quota of wagons was fixed at 1,050 against which up to the 15th of January the number of wagons actually sanctioned was 320—less than one-third. Take the Punjab: The quota was 1,220—I may tell the House that this quota includes Delhi; when they refer to the Punjab, they include Delhi for this particular purpose—against which up to the 15th of January 243 wagons were actually sanctioned. Take the case of Bombay: 600 represented the monthly quota as against which 55 wagons were actually sanctioned up to the 15th of January. As regards my Honourable friend Dr. Ziauddin's province, with which I have great sympathy in his present difficulties, the monthly quota sanctioned was 900, and what do you think was the number actually sanctioned as available? 'Nil' up to the 15th of January.

Now, Sir, it is more than 'technical difficulties' that are responsible for this kind of negligence, if nothing worse. I should like to take this opportunity of mentioning that the Controller of Coal Supplies, who has been placed in charge of the distribution of wagons, enjoys the confidence of the trade. Mr. Farukh is his name and I have never met him, but people who have dealings with him have nothing but praise for him. He is a man of ability, integrity and tact and if things have gone wrong it is because he has not been allowed a free hand, or because his recommendations have not been carried out in full. In these

matters of control, the first essential is to choose the right man, and here we have got the right man according to the reports which I have received from various quarters, but perhaps he is not being allowed to function properly. I am in a position to state that in defying his instructions some of these provinces adopted methods of distribution of coal which were ultimately responsible for the mismanagement, the shortage of supply, and the high prices that rule. I understand that in defiance of his recommendations certain provinces, including Delhi province appointed banyans for the purpose of distributing coal, instead of relying on the pre-existing machinery of supply, namely, the normal trade channels. I should very much like my Honourable friend, Sir Henry Richardson, to undertake an enquiry as to the quantity of palm oil that is being used as a necessary lubricant of the control machinery.

Now, Sir, let us come to prices. I have in my hand a statement which the Honourable the Commerce Member made in reply to certain questions of mine the other day in connection with the high prices of coal. My Honourable friend, the Member for War Transport, said that for high prices merchants were responsible because they thought that this shortage of wagons gave them a chance for profiteering. Now, Sir, this is what I find in the statement made by the Honourable the Commerce Member as regards Calcutta. "So far as Calcutta is concerned" reads his reply, "the most potent factor was the abnormal conditions which prevailed from about the 21st of December which resulted in the disappearance of large number of dealers, delays in placing contract, and in unloading coal from wagons and in distributing from depots. Elsewhere among contributory causes were the shortage of wagons and profiteering." So far as Calcutta is concerned, I take it that the Honourable the Commerce Member does not think that profiteering played any very large part.

Now I should like to give the House an idea about the range of prices. Sir, in Bombay I find between December 3rd and December 31st the wholesale price of coal ranged between 0-13-0 annas and Rs. 1-2-0 per maund. From January 7th to January 21st the prices ranged between Rs. 1-4-0 and Rs. 1-5-0. Now, take the case of Karachi: Between January 2nd and January 23rd the wholesale price was stationary at Rs. 2-2-0. Taking the case of Nagpur, no quotations are available for December, but from January 2nd to January 16th the price remained fixed at Rs. 1-11-0. Coming to Calcutta, between 5th of December and the 19th of December, that is to say, before bombing actually started, the wholesale price varied between Rs. 5-8-0 to Rs. 7-8-0. If the Honourable the Commerce Member does not think profiteering to be at the bottom of this—as I take it he does not, judging from his statement—then it was definitely a shortage of wagons that was responsible for forcing up the price like that before the bombing actually started. Then, between 2nd and the 30th of January the wholesale price in Calcutta has varied between Rs. 6 per maund and Rs. 7-8-0 per maund.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: Does the Honourable Member know whether the Bombay maund is of 28 lbs. and not of 82 lbs?

Mr. K. C. Neogy: It must be assumed to be the standard maund when the Government makes a statement like this.

Coming to Delhi, the figure for 15th December is Rs. 2-12-0 a maund, and on the 15th January the price shot up to Rs. 4 a maund, but I may tell the House that I purchased coke early in January at Rs. 5-2-0 a maund, and from January 18th the price mentioned is Rs. 1-8-0 a maund though at the present moment no coke is available. So far as the Calcutta price is concerned I know

3 P.M. that the control price of coke has been fixed at Rs. 1-2-0 a maund ex-Railway depot, although just before the Session started, when I was in Calcutta, I could not secure any supplies for my own household, even though I had agreed to pay up to Rs. 4 a maund. But that is not the point on which I am at the present moment. How has this particular price been arrived at? Now, Sir, I hold in my hand a notification by the Controller of

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Coal Distribution, in which he informed the public that the coal trade (I am quoting from it) had agreed to the following maximum prices for coal:

Hard coke	Rs. 25 per ton f. o. r. colliery siding.
Soft coke	Rs. 16 " " ditto.
Other coal	Rs. 12 " " ditto.

Now, Sir, take the case of soft coke. Soft coke is put at Rs. 16 f. o. r. colliery siding according to the agreement of the coal trade itself as advertised by the Controller of Coal Supplies. Railway freight from the railway colliery siding to Calcutta is a fixed figure of Rs. 4-13-0 a ton. The present unloading and depot charges represent eight annas a ton. Therefore in all, when the coke actually comes to the depot, it costs the depot holders Rs. 21-5-0 a ton. I must here pause and admit that it is not the full quantity of a ton that he actually gets. What he gets is something less, which is 24 maunds, as representing a ton. Therefore for 24 maunds of soft coke he has to pay Rs. 21-5-0. But according to the wholesale price fixed under the Government of Bengal's orders, he would be getting Rs. 27 as the price of 24 maunds of soft coke at the rate of Rs. 1-2-0, which leaves a margin of profit of Rs. 5-11-0 per ton, while the average maximum profit which the trade could ever dream of getting was never more than Re. 1. As a matter of fact it was very much less. The profit used to be between eight annas and a rupee a ton, against which this generous Government of Bengal fixes a profit of Rs. 5-11-0 a ton. I should not like to make any comments on this though we have heard stories as to how the price came to be fixed, but even then, if coke was actually available at this figure, one would not perhaps have minded, but it is not so unfortunately.

Sir, I should have liked to deal with the other questions, but the time that I have been left with is too short to enable me to do anything like justice to the other points involved in this motion.

Now, there is one general observation which I should like to make and it is this. I do not doubt the sincerity of the Honourable Member in charge when he said that he welcomed this debate, but I cannot help feeling that this House deserved better treatment. It is only after certain motions of adjournment had been tabled that the Government agreed to set apart some time for a discussion of this all important question. This is, of course, how the House has been treated consistently in this as well as other matters. Now, Sir, during the last Session non-official Members initiated a general discussion of the question regarding food supplies and price control, and there was a specific motion of adjournment in this House dealing with the question of supply of wheat. Any decent Government in the world would have taken the Legislature into its confidence with regard to the vital issues involved in the question. But what do we find was done? The Legislative Assembly had its last meeting on the 2nd of April . . .

Mr. Chairman (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): The Honourable Member's time is up.

Mr. K. G. Neogy: We find that on the 6th April the Honourable Member in charge, who was then Member in charge of Education, Health and Lands, holding his first food production conference, and elaborating his plans and making a statement as regards the position. The invitations for that conference must have been sent out earlier, during the period while the Assembly was in Session, and yet the Assembly was ignored.

Mr. J. D. Tyson (Secretary, Department of Education, Health and Lands): My intervention in this debate will be confined to the subject of drugs and of food production, and though I am taking my coat off I wish to assure the House that my intentions are entirely non-belligerent.

My Honourable friend, Mr. Deshmukh, seems to think that there is a policy on the part of Government to discourage the production of drugs in India. In fact, I think he said that it was the policy of Government to obstruct drug

production. That would be a sufficiently remarkable policy in view of the shipping position. As a matter of fact, Government are on the look out all the time for indigenous sources of drugs. The Director General of the Indian Medical Service, as a Supply Officer, has a special establishment called the Production Planning Department, with branches covering drugs, dressings, and instruments, and whenever a possible source of supply in India is reported, what is called an "educational" order is placed, and if the firm can produce the drugs or the instruments up to standard and in quantities that justify it, then orders are placed. Without going into details, I can assure the House that there has been in this way a very remarkable increase in the number of essential products that are now produced in India which were not produced in India before the war. Many of these drugs are now, so far as Government Departments, civil and military, in India are concerned, obtained entirely from Indian sources. If they are not obtained entirely from Indian sources, it is because the present supply from those sources is not sufficient. One reason that prevents our obtaining all the drugs that are required on the civil and military side of Government from Indian sources is the absence of the raw materials in India. I will mention two groups: one is the mercury group, to which, I think, belongs that intriguing drug calomel. The Geological Survey tell us that there is no mercury in India. Another group is the bismuth group. I believe there is no indigenous supply of bismuth in India. It obviously would not be worth while, facing the great difficulties of war time, to try to procure raw materials from abroad in order to establish the manufacture of the drugs of these two groups in India, if the raw materials are never likely to be available in India.

Then the other reason why we may not be able to manufacture any particular drug in India is not the absence of basic raw materials, but the absence of the necessary plant or of chemicals which are required for the treatment of that basic raw material to produce the drug in question. I have in mind. . .

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: Will the Honourable Member kindly enlighten us on this point? Why is it that the Drugs Act which was passed by this Legislature two or three years ago has not been given effect to in the provinces?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I do not think that question arises at all. . . .

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: It does. You have done nothing to prevent the spread of spurious drugs, which was the main purpose of the Drugs Act.

Mr. J. D. Tyson: The purpose of the Drugs Act was not particularly to increase production of drugs. I grant it certainly was intended to control spurious drugs. I was speaking about the very important coal-tar group of products. It falls really into two groups—Phenol and its less complex derivatives, and the second group is the more complex derivatives. We have got the basic raw material—a certain quantity of it anyhow—in India for manufacturing this group of products; and when we get the necessary plant—and we hope to have it—it will be possible to manufacture the less complicated products—those that go to the manufacture of aspirin, for example, will be made available. But as regards the more complex ones, it is necessary to have a whole series of highly manufactured additional chemicals, some of which are not available in India. Also for manufacture on a commercial basis, it is necessary to have very special equipment.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: What about the quinine position? ,

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I may perhaps illustrate the difficulty in the case of two drugs which have been referred to by Mr. Deshmukh, and in that connection I shall make a passing reference to the quinine position. Sulphathiozol was the first of these products. It is covered at present by a British India patent. It has been found efficacious in the treatment of plague and the Bombay Government have moved the Government of India under the Indian Patents

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Act for a license for the manufacture of this drug under section 22 of that Act which provides that any person interested might present a petition to the Governor General in Council alleging that the reasonable requirements of the public with regard to any patented invention have not been satisfied and praying for the grant of a compulsory license or in the alternative for the revocation of the patent. . . .

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh (Nagpur Division: Non-Muhammadan): May I know what has been the result of that?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: The application has been referred to the High Court of Calcutta as is provided in that section; and we must await their decision; but I would only say that if the Honourable High Court of Calcutta decides to give the petitioning Government a licence I still fear that they will have great difficulty in manufacturing the drug, because one of the principal requirements, Chlorosulphonic acid is not obtainable in any quantity in India. . . .

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Is the Honourable Member aware that this drug is not now manufactured in the United Kingdom; it is manufactured in the United States and is imported into India from those places?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: It has to be imported; that is the whole point. Then take atebirin. We are not affected in this case by any patent. It is a German invention, and atebirin is one of the same group. The Bombay Government applied quite a long time ago for facilities to manufacture 300 lbs. of atebirin. . . .

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Is any application necessary, because in the war, the patent of any enemy firm automatically lapses?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I have said that no question of patent arises in this case; but they wanted to spend a good deal of money and it is a "section 93" province and it was not in their original budget and so they had to come up to the Government of India for permission. On the advice of the Drugs Supply Committee who pointed out that out of 31 ingredients, 12 would have to be imported—12 tons of chemicals to manufacture 300 lbs. of the product—we decided that shipping space could be better utilised. After the fall of Java which cut off our supplies of quinine, we re-examined the question. The Bombay Government then wanted to manufacture about 500 lbs. of atebirin, but they said they would require some additional equipment; they said they could manufacture at the Haffkine Institute up to 2,000 lbs. but for that they wanted a great deal more equipment, all of which would have to be got from outside. Now, it is very definitely Government's policy in the plan for dealing with the quinine shortage, to utilise atebirin. We have to economise in our quinine supply by using atebirin wherever at present quinine is used under medical supervision; that is to say, in hospitals. We cannot go further than that, because atebirin is a new drug, in some ways perhaps rather a dangerous drug, and it should only at this stage be administered under medical supervision. But we have placed orders for atebirin to replace the quinine that is administered under direct medical supervision; and the kind of figure that we have in mind is between 17,000 and 20,000 lbs. of atebirin. I ask, what is 300 pounds or 500 pounds, here or there, when we are dealing with figures like 17,000 and 20,000 pounds? This drug is being manufactured on a huge scale in the United States of America and on a big scale in the United Kingdom; and at a time when we have to conserve every ton of shipping space, it is quite clear that supplies must be obtained in the smallest possible bulk. . . .

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: How much do you expect to get?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: We hope to get about 20,000 pounds of atebirin. . . .

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: In the present year?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: Yes, in the present year. We have no case for pressing for shipping space for the equipment and the drugs that will be necessary to

enable this atabrin to be manufactured on a commercial scale. We cannot even press for it as a research matter. The process of manufacture is involved; it is difficult, it may even be dangerous; but there is no mystery about it. It is not a research matter. As a matter of fact atabrin, and I think, sulphathiazol, have been manufactured on a small scale, on a laboratory scale, in India. However, to encourage a pioneer effort, we are prepared to try and facilitate the manufacture of a certain amount of atabrin at the Haffkine Institute, the product to be used in Government institutions only, so that we shall not come into any possible conflict with the trade, if we can get the subsidiary chemicals and equipment that will be necessary before they can come into production. . . .

Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh: Why was this manufacture of atabrin at the Haffkine Institute in Bombay discontinued?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I do not know that it was ever really begun; they wanted to manufacture 300 pounds: it is possible for them to have manufactured a pound or so, but they did not manufacture anything like 300 pounds. It was for that that they wanted plant and chemicals.

I come now to the question of foodstuffs. The department for which I speak in this House is responsible for the production side of the food grains problem, a responsibility which, of course, we share with, and largely discharge through, the provinces. Until the loss of Burma, I think I am correct in saying that there was no sign of any shortage of food in India. Our "grow more food" campaign, therefore, began after the loss of Burma, and, in fact, after last year's *rabi* crops were in the ground. It could only, therefore, take effect in respect of the *kharif* crops that have been reaped within the last few months. As a result of that campaign, in the *kharif* season alone—the *rabi* figures not yet being available—51 lakhs of acres, over 8 million acres, of land not previously under food crops were brought under food. About half of that was transferred from cotton to food crops. It is true that owing to the failure of the monsoon in some places and cyclones in others, not all that sowing came to harvest. That is a kind of thing that happens year after year in India, and India is not peculiar in that in the world. In the *kharif* alone we did produce nearly three million more tons of food than was produced in the *kharif* of the previous year in spite of their being a shortage of rice in Bengal of very nearly three million tons. I think that the Government of India and the Provincial Governments and States which have collaborated to obtain that result are entitled to claim that to that extent they have mitigated a difficult situation.

Last year we proceeded, at rather short notice, on the principle of asking Provinces and States what they thought they could do in the way of increasing food production. This year we have gone further. We have asked them to undertake an "all out" production, the very maximum production possible. To ensure that they realise what is expected of them we have held out before them certain targets which we expect them to attain. Those targets are in nearly all cases in line with the maximum that they have ever produced in that particular kind of crop. In order also that no desirable scheme should be omitted merely for lack of funds, we have offered them financial assistance from the centre for approved schemes, and schemes are coming in now for examination. We have also arranged to create a post of Director of Agricultural Production for Food, a post to be filled by an officer of the status of a Director of Agriculture, who will advise us, and, if the provinces so wish, advise the provinces about schemes.

Then as regards vegetables. I think Mr. Deshmukh is under the impression that we are exporting large quantities of vegetable seeds abroad. I can reassure him that we are not. We have always exported a certain quantity of vegetable seeds, especially onions, to countries where there is a large Indian population, but when we found some months ago that private firms were exporting small quantities, very small consignments of vegetable seeds, we

[Mr. J. D. Tyson.]

placed a ban on the export of all seeds except oilseeds, without reference to the Government of India, and such export is only allowed after we have satisfied ourselves that it can be allowed without danger to our own seed position. In fact, we are taking steps to import vegetable seeds from America for our own purposes. I want to say one thing in conclusion about vegetables. I think pressure on the vegetable markets in India admittedly comes entirely from the presence in our midst, the welcome presence in our midst, of very large numbers of troops. Ordinarily, the peasantry in India grow their own vegetable and people in the urban areas depend for their vegetable supply on market gardeners to bring in their vegetables from the suburbs.

Mr. Chairman (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): The Honourable Member's time is up.

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I shall just say two words. We propose therefore to meet this difficulty by mass producing, getting provinces to produce the vegetables in mass for the military both for dehydrating and for eating fresh. And if we can take the military demand, which is admittedly a very great demand, off the market, we believe that the ordinary supply position will be restored, in fact, rather improved because there are more vegetables being grown under the stimulus of high prices.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: I want to make a proposal to Government, and if they agree, there should be another day allotted for this debate, because we think that sufficient debate has not taken place and the public point of view has not come sufficiently before the Government. We have had the points of view of the mercantile community represented in this House.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: The workers' point of view has not been placed.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: Neither the workers' nor the public's point of view has come out sufficiently before the Government. To meet that difficulty, another day may be given.

Mr. Chairman (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): This point may be placed before the President on his return.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: I am putting it before the Government.

Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt (Bombay : European) : Sir, as the Leader of my Group has discussed the subject of food in his speech of day before yesterday, I will mainly confine myself to other matters implicit in the motion. I would like to commence with the subject of dearness living allowance which has, in some respects, been discussed during the debate upon Mr. Jamnadas Mehta's adjournment motion.

Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani (Tirhut Division : Muhammadan) : On a point of order, Sir. How is dearness allowance admissible on this motion?

Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt: If the Honourable Member will allow me to continue my speech, I shall be able to show how it is relevant. I was saying that the question of dearness living allowance.

Mr. Chairman (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang) : I hold that the matter is irrelevant to this discussion

Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt: I bow to your ruling, Sir, but I think it has a definite bearing on inflation and the question of food and

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: Without money you cannot get food; so both go together.

Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt: I will deal with it on a later occasion. Now, I would like to deal with the question of price control, and particularly with that of drugs. Once there is control of what I term primary distribution,—and this applies to food as well as drugs or any product for that matter—I maintain there can be a control of the price asked by the retailer provided that Government is sufficiently determined to control that price.

I appreciate only too well that in normal times the price is fixed by supply and demand, but so far as drugs are concerned, they are either manufactured in the country, imported through agents who are representatives of the manufacturers overseas, or by dealers who make their purchases through indenting houses.

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

I think I am correct in saying that no reputable manufacturer, certainly none of the great Pharmaceutical Houses of International repute, have raised their prices disproportionately to the increases in their cost of selling, but the Government will be as well aware as myself that profiteering of the most gross order has been taking place in the retail trade of this country.

We all know of the reasons of the shortage of quinine and that the main reason is due to the fact that Java is in the hands of the Japanese, but, Sir, I would ask what manner of man is he who, as my Honourable friend, Mr. Deshmukh, has asked, corners quinine to make his fortune in a country where malaria kills hundred of thousands of souls a year or insulin, or the hundred and one other therapeutics upon which the life of man depends? What manner of man is he and what punishment does he deserve?

Had my Honourable friend Mr. Neogy, with all his knowledge or parliamentary finesse, tabled first a resolution calling for the severest penalties for these individuals and that the Government of India Act, if necessary, be amended to ensure uniformity of action between Central and Provincial Governments, before calling for the House to be dissolved, I venture to think the country would have cause to be more grateful to him.

My Honourable friend, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, a day or two ago demanded that profiteers be hanged. That is his opinion, and his sincerity cannot be questioned, for it will be recalled that he was speaking upon, and supporting, a resolution condemning alleged excesses. He is entitled to his opinion but I should like to tell the House of some of the punishments meted out to those individuals in Great Britain who disobey control orders. The firm of Woodlands Chemists and three Directors were fined £40,000 for exceeding control orders by £28,338.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: We do not know, Sir, how this is relevant to the motion under discussion.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I do not think the Honourable Member can now discuss what was said on Resolutions that have already been moved in the House. The Honourable Member must confine himself to the motion before the House and not go into any questions which arose on a previous debate.

Mr. E. L. O. Gwilt: Well, Sir, I make my submission that the control of price has a definite bearing on drugs.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If the Honourable Member can make it relevant to the motion, then it is all right.

Mr. E. L. O. Gwilt: I commenced by talking about the dearness allowance which I thought was relevant to the issue, but I was ruled out of order by the Chairman. However, I will continue if I may. I was saying that the firm of Woodlands Chemists and three Directors were fined £40,000 for exceeding control orders by £28,338. The United Chemists Association of Cheltenham were fined £10,000 and these merely for exceeding of quotas in the sales of Cosmetics, and lest the House should think it is only the large concerns against whom the British Government have taken action, I would quote the case of a stall holder who was fined £20 and £5 costs for overcharging four pence halfpenny (about four annas) for the price of a chicken. For offences contravening Food Control Orders one man has recently been sent to penal servitude for four years and fined £2,000, another to eighteen months imprisonment and fined £2,000.

[Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt.]

I have heard it argued that despite control orders in Great Britain black markets exist. I have just given evidence that they do, but only at peril to those who trade in them, and when they are caught the penalties must make them wonder whether the racket has been worth while and, as will be clear to anyone who reads the English papers, black markets are the exception in England. In India they are unfortunately the rule.

Unfortunately time at my disposal is insufficient for me to explain a method whereby the price of essential drugs can, I think, be controlled even in this country, but I shall be grateful if the Honourable the Commerce Member will give me the opportunity of discussing the matter with him on some other occasion. The scheme is not infallible—no scheme is—but its success is dependent upon penalties for those who disregard control, and I venture to think that if severe action were taken tomorrow against those who indulge in anti-social activities and profiteering in essential drugs, the price of a large number of those medications upon which life depends would be substantially reduced the day after.

Before I finish, Sir, I would like to give one of the reasons where authority is responsible for some of the shortage in drugs and consequent profiteering and one which I feel cannot have escaped the notice of the Honourable the Commerce Member. If the Army and Supply Departments are short of a drug, they have—and very properly—the power to requisition the stocks of a commercial concern. I submit, Sir, that should such authority do so and the drugs have been imported, the Commerce Department should, on production of the receipt of such goods, issue immediately a licence for their replacement.

I would, however, like to point out that when the same drugs are repeatedly requisitioned, it is indicative of the fact that there is *prima facie* evidence that the forecasting arrangements of the authority concerned are inefficient and that Government are treating commerce as their stockists.

I make one last plea. The Government is importing wheat; I trust it will never be permitted to fall into the hands of speculators, for every bushel imported into India to keep down speculative prices means that that amount less of war material can be shipped to this country, and England, which knows what sacrifice means, loses an equivalent amount of shipping space. It is perhaps not generally realised that whether a ship is sunk in Arctic waters or in the Indian ocean, the effect upon the food situation in England, which is very much more acute than I hope it will ever be in this country, is immediate.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: Sir, before you resumed the Chair, I had made a suggestion, which was postponed till your arrival, that the Government be pleased to allot another day for the discussion of food question

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): We will go on with the debate for the present.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadian Urban): All the Parties have agreed and the Honourable the Food Member has also agreed that another day may be given.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That I do not know. We will go on with the discussion. I understand, Dr. Banerjea will not speak.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Not today, Sir.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: Sir, although Government has been very generous in allotting one more day, I propose to take advantage of this opportunity today because I feel it is better to take off my chest what I have to say instead of keeping it weighing on my mind. Sir, I propose to take a general, though very brief, survey of the food situation in India. I feel that the whole situation is due to the failure of Government to realise the importance of the supply of food to the civilian population. It is also the failure of Government to make plans beforehand to meet the difficulty which was bound to arise. Sir, a

little thought would have told the Government that in all countries on account of the war difficulties regarding the supply of food had arisen. Even in America these difficulties have been experienced soon after the beginning of the war with Japan. I, therefore, feel that the real responsibility for the present situation is upon the Government of India—their failure to realize the importance of the food supply and failure to plan how to meet them. Sir, the Government of India should have shown more foresight in planning to meet the food situation. The Honourable Member himself has admitted, that people in India have not got much confidence in this Government and the responsibility for the present situation is attributed to that cause. Secondly, the Honourable Member himself has admitted that even in normal times India was not a surplus country as regards food. Therefore, the Government should have made greater effort to meet the situation which was bound to arise. I, therefore, feel that Government of India should have made plans from the very beginning of the war to meet the food situation. They should have, in the first place, thought of increasing the food supply by increasing the production of food-grains, they should have shown foresight and made a plan in time for increasing the production of this country. The Honourable Member himself admitted that 'grow more food and fodder' was taken after Burma was taken by the Japanese. Sir, I would like the Government, at least, now to make serious efforts to increase the production of food-supplies in this country. I was glad to hear that the Government of India is now thinking of appointing a special officer.

An Honourable Member: They have decided

Mr. N. M. Joshi: I would like the Government of India to take up this question very seriously. Let them have not only one officer in the Food Department looking after the question of food but establish a strong section in the Food Department. Sir, I would like the Government of India to issue instructions to the Provincial Governments to grow more food. They must make a thorough enquiry and set up necessary machinery so that our food supplies will be increased.

Then, Sir, the next question that I would like to take up is the question of export. There again the Government of India had shown lack of appreciation of the fact that difficulty as regards the food-stuff was bound to arise. Therefore they should have taken special steps to stop export of food grain from this country long ago. They exported wheat to Arabia and to the Middle East. It could have been exported to Arabia and to the Middle East with as much ease from Australia as from India. Therefore they should not have exported wheat to Arabia and to the Middle East.

Then there is the question of export of textile goods. The Government of India has exported and still does export textile goods. Prices of textile goods in India have gone up three times and even the industrialists are not anxious to export their goods to foreign countries as the Government of India takes away from them 80 per cent. or something like that by taxation. I do not know why Government of India should be anxious to export textile goods at this time. I feel, Sir, that the administration of the control for export is also very weak in spite of the fact that the Government have got so many officers in that Department. In Bombay, permits are issued without much difficulty for exporting essential goods which are necessary for India.

Then there is the question of imports. We have just heard from Mr. Tyson about drugs. The Government of India can certainly give priority to the medicinal drugs over whisky and other drinks. There is enough quantity of whisky and other drinks in this country, while there is so much shortage of medicinal drugs. Now, Sir, I would come to the question of price control. In the matter of price control the policy of the Government of India has been all along that of vacillation and a dilatory one. They take lot of time to begin to control prices and when they began to control prices there again they hesitated and they established control over wheat leaving aside other essential articles of food with

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the result the control of wheat was not successful on account of the inter-relation of the prices of different food grains. Then when the Government of India established control over wheat their effort as regards the enforcement was very weak. People began selling goods at higher prices in spite of controlled prices. Not only that the Government of India was so weak that their own Military Department purchased wheat at a much higher price than the prices fixed by the Government as controlled prices. I, therefore, feel that the Government of India should make up their mind as to whether control is a good thing or not, and if it is good they should enforce their controlled prices . . .

The Honourable Mr. M. S. Aney: What is the opinion of the Honourable Member?

Mr. N. M. Joshi: I shall give that immediately. I am definitely of opinion that during the war period we cannot do without control. I would suggest to the Government of India that they should not hesitate to take firm action against people who break law. Prices should have been controlled in all cases of food grain and other essential articles and the Government of India should have kept very heavy penalties for those who broke orders.

Then, Sir, Government again while controlling the prices did not follow up the process of control and regulation in securing supplies. If you merely control prices you are bound to have black markets. Government must, when they exercise control, take up every thing in their own hands. Here again the Government was very weak. Government should treat this country as one unit but the Government of India was weighed with the idea of Provincial Autonomy and instead of taking the work of supplies into their own hands they left it to the Provincial Governments. I think it was a great mistake. I am not suggesting that the Government of India should have appointed their own officers in the Provinces. Government of India could have certainly used the Provincial Officers as their own Officers. This could have been done and they should have done.

Then, again, Sir, the Government of India were very tender towards the commercial community. They followed the policy of allowing the traders to continue to have their share in the business of distributing food grains. I feel, Sir, that the Government were very wrong in that matter. I am not suggesting that they should have thrown these traders and merchants on the streets. They could have employed these merchants and traders as their own employees, if they liked. But it was a wrong thing to follow a weak policy as regards control. They should have taken the whole business of supply and also of distribution in their own hands.

Then, I come to the question of lifting of price control. The Government have made a great blunder in lifting price control for wheat. I feel that if Government had followed the right policy as regards their dealing with the Provinces, there would have been no necessity for lifting price control. The Government of India have been forced by the Government of the Punjab, in spite of what they say, to lift the price control. The black marketeers have won against this Government. Now, I come to the question of effect of lifting this price control. After all if you want the people to have sufficient food, you must give them that food at a price within the capacity of the people of this country. If you lift the control the price too will go up. It is no use your making the wheat available at a price, at which the people cannot purchase their food. If Government are prepared, they can do as the British people have done, namely, to give subsidies. If the market price is higher, the Government of Great Britain is willing to subsidise the business, but they fix reasonable prices and the consumers are not to pay more. The Government of India should give subsidies; if they lift price-control.

Now comes the question of distribution. I feel that the right principle of distributing food grains in the country at such a time is according to the needs

of the people. A province which has surplus grain cannot have, on that account, the privilege of having more food grains than a province which is deficient. There must be mutual co-operation between the provinces. If Bombay is deficient in food, and if the Punjab has a surplus of food, then the Punjab must give her surplus to Bombay and Bombay, in return, must give her grain to the Punjab. I, therefore, feel that the food grains available in the country should be distributed on the principle of the needs of the people and distributed in such a way that every individual should have equal share in the matter of food. In giving food you cannot make a distinction between an individual living in a surplus Province and an individual living in a deficient Province. I feel, Sir, that the Government of India have neglected this question of distribution entirely. Until recently the Government of India did nothing. You must, when your supply is not enough, introduce rationing. The Government of India neglected this question of rationing. They thought of it only recently, knowing full well that without rationing, you are not going to solve this problem. The Honourable the Commerce Member stated that the problem is an urban one and not a rural one. I feel that the Honourable the Commerce Member is not well informed on that subject. I know that the problem of securing food is as acute in villages as in urban areas. If he had stayed in Bombay for a little longer than he had stayed, he would have known that the population of Bombay is going up very rapidly on account of the mere fact that in Bombay the people can make a row and force the Government to get some food. If you cannot get the full quantity of food, you can at least get something in Bombay, but in the villages, in the districts, the people find it very difficult to get food and so they leave the villages and come to Bombay. I, therefore, feel that the Honourable the Commerce Member is not well informed when he says that food problem is confined only to urban areas and does not exist in rural areas. I have one suggestion to make to Government and it is this. Government may create a machinery to deal with this problem. They may have price control, they may also arrange for production of food and do the other things, but they lack in one thing. In India the Government of India have not got the confidence of the people and they also cannot secure the co-operation of the people and without having the confidence of the people and the co-operation of the people this problem is not likely to be solved. I know that in Bombay the Government of Bombay have opened Government grain shops and when they first started these shops, there were queues which they could not manage. When suggestions were made to them that they should secure the co-operation of the representatives of the people, the queues, to some extent, were less. I, therefore, suggest to the Government of India that although they may have a strong machinery, the Food Department, and a very capable Food Department, still if the problem is to be solved and people are to be satisfied as regards the solution of the problem, then they must create a machinery by which the confidence of the people and the co-operation of the people will be secured. I suggest to them that they should have a representative Council at the Centre. I am told that Government of India have got some kind of Advisory Council. I do not know what the constitution of that Council is. I suggest to them that they should make the Food Council a representative one. Your experts on the Food Council may be very good people, but they will not secure for you the confidence of the people. I also suggest to them this. that this representative machinery should be established at every stage and at every place. I know, Sir, that the Government of India and the Local Government are supplying large quantities of grain to industrial employers in this country. I know that although the employers have got grains, the workers are discontented because the employers refuse to have the advice of the representatives of the workers. This is necessary because ordinarily the workers have very little confidence in their employers and in India the people in general have got very little confidence in the Government. The

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Honourable the Commerce Member himself has admitted that. I, therefore, suggest that in order to secure the co-operation of the people and the confidence of the people, they should establish representative organisations to advise them at every stage and in every place.

Mr. Frank R. Anthony (Nominated Non-Official): There is one aspect of this food situation which, although it has been touched upon by many of the speakers, I feel has not been sufficiently emphasised or clarified. We have heard the case of the businessmen put forward before the House. But I feel that the point of view of the consumer, and particularly of the poorer consumer has not received sufficient attention. One of the Honourable Members, I think it was Sir Henry Richardson, made a plea for a much firmer handling of hoarders and profiteers by Government. I would certainly endorse that plea, and I should like to attempt to elaborate and strengthen it. I feel that one of the darkest spots on Indian life today is the manner of its reaction to the war with regard to this question of the food situation. There has been and there still is an amazing lack of not only of business morality, but of common decency among large section of the business elements in this country. Unfortunately, Sir, it is poorer people who are suffering. The Honourable the Commerce Member told us that it is essentially the industrial and the urban population that is being affected, but he was corrected by an Honourable Member of this House and I am inclined to agree with that Honourable Member who told him that if anything the rural population is being affected as much, if not more than the urban population. The people in touch with rural conditions tell us, and I am not disposed to disbelieve them, they tell us that the agriculturist is increasingly faced with the grim prospect of grinding poverty, and that the labourers in the villages are today faced with the stark prospect of utter starvation. I believe, Sir, it was the Honourable Mr. Hoosenbhoj Laljee, who said that there is not really an absolute or natural shortage of food-stuff in this country. I agree with him. I am inclined to believe that this shortage is essentially an artificial and deliberately induced one. No thinking person can resist the conclusion that those who are handling the sale and the distribution of foodstuffs are indulging in the most ruthless hoarding, the most pitiless profiteering. Many Honourable Members today referred to the acute shortage of foodstuff in Calcutta. I was very recently in Calcutta, Sir, and I was told by the most reliable persons that during the recent panic-stricken exodus from Calcutta, which included many merchants, these merchants were offering huge hoarded stocks of cereals to anyone and practically at any price. I have served on several committees, and it is the same old sordid and tragic story in this country—profiteering, more profiteering, and still more profiteering. Devoid of civic consciousness, devoid of the elementary sense of duty that they owe to their country and particularly to their poorer fellow-countrymen, many of the businessmen in this country are minting fortunes out of the starving cries of India's poor, and it is unfortunately a problem which is assuming increasingly menacing proportions. Profiteering is being practised on an increasingly brazen scale. Profiteers have evolved a system of blackmail and coercion based on the threat of withholding supplies—the supplies necessary to life—from the average person, and these persons are, therefore, afraid to level charges against them. Any provisions for control, any provisions for any regulations with regard to the control of prices, will necessarily be futile and fall on barren ground unless they are backed up not only by the sanction of the law but, if necessary, Sir, by the terror of the law. And this problem constitutes an increasing menace to the Government. If Government persists in its present policy of drift, particularly if Government persists in its present policy of leniency, it will inevitably be overtaken by a situation which will ultimately be completely out of its control. The only way to bring these business freebooters to heel is to impose the most

drastic penal measures. We are living admittedly under the most unusual conditions and unusual conditions demand unusual measures. One Honourable Member said that profiteers should be hanged. If I had the time, I could probably make out an exceedingly good case for hanging people who indulge in this kind of hoarding and profiteering. But what do we find, unfortunately, in this country. We read of cases where merchants are prosecuted every day for hoarding and for profiteering, and in the next line we read of the imposition of the most ridiculously small fines, fines which, as Sir Henry Richardson remarked, have made Government a laughing-stock in this country. Do Government seriously believe, Sir, that these persons—small businessmen, big businessmen, whom I would call the national blood-suckers in this country—does Government seriously believe that these national blood-suckers mind paying fines, fines which at best represent a microscopic proportion of the murdering profits which they are extorting from the people? And, Sir, while I listened to this debate, I found few concrete suggestions made to Government to enable them, effectively, to meet this situation. If Government is even partially to find a solution to this problem, Government is bound to impose a compulsory jail sentence. This sentence can be left to the discretion of Government. But it is necessary, in order to call a halt to this profiteering, to impose a compulsory jail sentence on all profiteers and hoarders. Offer rewards for information leading to the discovery of hoarded stocks, confiscate all stocks belonging to those found guilty of hoarding, appoint special staffs to track down hoarders and profiteers. These measures Government can and should evolve and if Government fail to evolve and to adopt these and other measures, Government will inevitably expose itself to the charge that it is not prepared to adopt these measures because those who have vested interests in this matter and big businessmen, who are indulging in ruthless profiteering, are pulling the strings so as to influence Government to continue its present ineffective policy.

Sir, as I have said, we are living in unusual conditions and unusual measures are necessary to overcome these unusual conditions. If people in time of the war, when the nation is fighting for its very existence, do not spontaneously show a sense of business morality, a sense of civic duty, then these must be imposed, they must be induced, if necessary, by the most drastic legislative measures. Impose the most drastic penal provisions. Strike into the hearts of these persons the terror of the law, persons whose only God at present is the profit-motive. I say, Sir, and I say it emphatically, that the Government cannot, except to the peril of the whole country, Government cannot continue to play with this problem.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: Sir, the one thing that has been brought out during the two days debate is that there is no dearth of food in this country. It is not that enough food does not grow, or that it is less than in the years previous, or that even with the conquest of Burma the food supply of the country has become less. I have in my hand the figures of the food production of this country from 1932-33 to 1942-43 (the last year's figure is, of course, an estimate), and the average production of food in this country during those eleven years is forty-nine million tons. That is the average production of food in this country during the last 11 years. The war period is, on the other hand, singularly fortunate, when the average is, as I shall read it out, 53 millions, 50 millions, 53 millions and 52 millions. The average of four years is something like 52 millions. So the war period has produced more food by 3 million tons in this country than the average of the last 11 years. This broadly is the situation. Why is it then with so much production, larger by 3 million tons than the average of the previous 11 years, the public have waited for food, formed queues, and have gone to black markets, but have got part only of what they need at heavy cost and in most cases did not get what they wanted. The situation became very acute in October, 1941 and its seriousness has steadily grown since then. My Honourable friend, the Commerce Member, was then wrong in saying

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that before Burma fell there was no trouble. Burma did not fall in October, 1941. Therefore, the only question is whether the State is in a position to see that the distribution of this food is done equitably among all the population. That is the only problem, and whatever stands in the way of that equitable distribution should be dealt with in an equitable manner. If the Government are exporting too much to foreign countries, that must be stopped. If the Government are giving too much to the military, that must be stopped. If the Government are winking at provincial cantankerousness, or so-called provincial autonomous governments, whose autonomy seems to figure so largely when they want to starve their neighbours; if there are hoarders; if there are profiteers—one and all should be dealt with impartially, with sole regard to the needs of the masses of the people.

But I am sorry to say that Government have failed in each and every respect. Government have the usual feeling that they know everything, and that anybody who is an outsider knows nothing. All that they have done is to appoint some Director, some Controller, some Deputy Controller. They have held conferences, they have issued communiques, they have appointed food advisory councils; the Honourable the Commerce Member has rushed from Bombay to Calcutta, Calcutta to Delhi and Delhi to Lahore. With all this, the food situation has not relaxed at all. Let this be borne in mind. The Government always say that they are fully alive to the situation. They are doing their best to relieve it. These are idle words when in a city like Bombay with 92 Government shops, before each of these shops is open the next morning, 500 people make their beds there so that they may get their food the next morning; when every one has in this way to spend 10 to 12 hours for getting food, and thereby losing a full working day, with the food supply of the country constant, what have you to say of Government's policy? I am not at all impressed by all these appointments of Controllers and Directors. I am not at all impressed by these councils and communiques and conferences. The net result of all this has been nil. The situation of food supply was worse in 1936, even before Burma was lost, and still there was no such dearth as unfortunately has happened on account of this total failure of Government to retrieve the situation.

Now, one reason given has been that the transport service of the country was not able to cope with the transport of food. That was perhaps true in the year 1940, and 1941 to some extent, but as soon as the railways awoke to the needs of the food situation in the country there has been a real improvement. All I know of railways is that sufficient equipment is placed at the disposal of anybody who wants to transport food. I do not know about fuel. I do know about food. Of course, you cannot cook food without fuel. Therefore, unless the fuel supply is there the food supply is useless. But I do not think the railways can be blamed for the impossibility of getting food, since at least during the last twelve or fifteen months the railways have been fully alive to the needs of the transport of food, and the Honourable the Member for War Transport gave us an assurance the day before yesterday that the food will in any case be transported.

About export of food to foreign countries. I find that there used to be, before the war something like 4,500,000 tons of food exported to foreign countries, and since the war that amount has increased by about 200,000 tons. But the ordinary trade having been closed to seaborne traffic, the stoppage of these 400,000 tons of food for export purposes became automatic. It could not be transported. So why did Government allow it to be transported to other countries while this country was not getting food? Because the Government did not realise that their policy of food distribution was absolutely chaotic, that there would surely be utter chaos in the distribution of food as time went, and that a few hundred thousand tons of food supplies to our allies and to our friends in the Middle East perhaps did not matter. That was probably at the

bottom of their allowing export of foodstuffs to foreign countries, but now at least I hope that, when we are starving, the Government will not export any food to foreign countries until the food situation is absolutely right. The last known export had been 7,26,000 tons. It is a very big figure. Seven lakhs tons of food to be exported when people do not get food and that also for civilian purposes! What was exported for military purposes, I know, but I cannot tell you. And what is being purchased for the military in this country I know, but I cannot tell you. The only thing I say is that, looking at the situation of food supply for the civilian population, it is to be hoped that the military authorities will see to it that they do not take away any food that is not absolutely necessary.

The next source of mischief is the failure of the provinces to pool their resources. It is a very sad spectacle to me that any province should hoard food, should refuse to part with it, and that the Government of the province should be behind it. It is to me a very sad commentary on the un-neighbourliness of the Indian people, because it is clear that this has nothing to do with communalism. If the Punjab Government does not export food to other parts of India, Muslims as well as Hindus starve. If the U. P. Government does not export food to deficient areas, Hindus and Muslims both starve. Therefore it is not a communal problem. It is a problem of provincial narrowness, which I am sure the population itself does not share. It is the few big people in high offices and their entourage and their privileged supporters and lackeys, who, in order to make money out of the miseries of the poor, have been able to persuade the Provincial Governments not to part with food for the starving population of the rest of India.

This unneighbourliness is a very sad commentary on human nature; and it cannot be sufficiently condemned at a time when this country is fighting the war, when the entire resources of the nation should be placed at the disposal of the State in such a manner that the war can be carried on most efficiently; and no war can be carried on efficiently unless the population is fed. The people who are hoarding food, the provinces which are hoarding food, are fifth columnists; they are the friends of the enemy. The German or Jap can kill me when he comes; in the meantime these people are killing me. I agree with my friend, Mr. Joshi, that the Government of India is not powerless. The Government of India Act gives His Excellency the Governor General full power to pull Provincial Governments by the ear and to teach them their duty, to behave properly with the rest of the population. It is the Government of India who have to be blamed for not making full use of their powers; while they are arresting the political malcontents by the thousand, this treacherous fifth columnist who is starving the population is still supposed to be a respectable section of humanity. The head of the Provincial Governments, men whom the Government delight to honour and with whom they compromise for murder—what is this story going round openly, that Government compromise with murder by taking money from those who have starved the population? The man who is profiteering or running a black market or hoarding is a potential murderer, however respectable he may be. He is a murderer, and that the Government of the country should compromise with such a criminal by accepting a secret subscription to the war bonds or a fine, is to my mind a most shocking spectacle, if it is true. It has been openly alleged. You have never contradicted it. At least, we know that none of these people, who have given such sums, have been since punished. That is true also. The punishment that has been given is what is given to people who adulterate milk in the streets of Bombay—a fine so small that it pays the man to carry on. In the last war, that great novelist, Miss Marie Corelli, was found guilty of having hoarded potatoes of a few pounds; swift came the arms of the law and she was fined—I remember though it is now 25 years ago—£500. Here my friend today quoted the British example of

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£40,000 against people who in this war refused to obey and carry out the orders. That is how wars are conducted. That is how a nation puts its will behind the conduct of the war. Here with ample food supply and no need for any shipping—in England the whole or, at any rate, a large part of the food has to be brought from abroad—here the food is growing inside the country and still the population is starved. Let alone the high cost, even those who want to buy cannot get it; and in the meantime the profiteer is making his fortune. Out of the misfortunes of the people, fortunes are being made every day; and the Government looks on idly unconcerned, although they say they are doing all they can. If this is all they can, all I can say is that it is a poor doing that they can. I have advised the Government of Bombay, and I advise the Government of the Delhi Commissioner also, to have a police ring round Malabar Hill in Bombay and round New Delhi here, and they will find people who are very respectable; people who call themselves patriotic people who have no end of condemnation of Government for the miseries of the people, they are the biggest offenders in hoarding five years' food. If the Government of Bombay places Malabar Hill in my hands, I can supply one month's food to the city of Bombay out of the hoardings of the so-called respectable people; and Bombay is not a special sinner. People who have got the money out of panic, out of disregard of the needs of fellow human being, store in excess of requirements, creating shortage which was already acute. But Governmental action is very lax, and the control without supplies is a meaningless thing. Supposing Mr. Joshi proclaimed a strike and took a red flag, but there was no worker behind him, people will laugh at him next morning. Supposing he goes to Delhi junction saying "Strike, strike, strike", but the trains are running. The Government in proclaiming control of food without stocks are like Mr. Joshi without his followers in a strike

Mr. N. M. Joshi: I will not commit such a mistake.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: I did not say you would. It will be just like that. I merely say that supposing that happens

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member's time is up.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: Yes, Sir; I close. All that I say is, therefore, that what is needed is Government control, Government action, and the action of the State, because otherwise it is leading to the liquidation of the war effort. It has got the worst effect on the war effort of the country, by increasing the discontent.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: Sir, I will first take the question of fuel because it was debated greatly in the morning before lunch, and the Honourable Transport Member had some difficulty in meeting the points raised. I will here give him, not the point of view of the merchants, but of the consumer and the man-in-the-street who is suffering. The Government here—I do not know which Government it is—have given licenses to some people to sell coal, and the public has to deal with these people. As soon as these license holders get a supply of coal and it is known in the surrounding locality, the people rush there and after half an hour the people are told that the whole of the coal has been sold out and that no more is available. If you go to the dealer only fifteen minutes later, the man says "Oh, I have sold everything, but there are some people who have it: the government has fixed Rs. 1-8-0 but if you give me Rs. 2-8-0 I will manage to get the coal from those people and send it to your

place. But make the cash payment first." When the man is asked where the coal is, he says "I am not going to divulge that to you; you will get the coal at your place if you make the payment." That is how things are going on; and because you cannot do without coal, you have to pay Rs. 2-8-0. When you get this coal for Rs. 2-8-0 you find there is at least five seers of water mixed, just to increase the weight: you get only 35 seers. This is an everyday business going on here and I do not know why the Honourable Member has not been put to this experience himself, but if he makes inquiries from his people who bring supplies from the market, he will come to know that this is so. This is not in one place only. In many places in New Delhi it is an open secret that this is going on—and in Delhi city also. I think the system of appointing licensees to a small limit is wrong in principle, and in policy. What the Government should do is that if they appoint some license holders they should see that in the whole city of Delhi nobody else keeps any quantity of coal whatever, and if coal is found in the possession of anybody else besides those license holders, a full enquiry should be made where he got it from, and if he cannot give a proper answer, sufficient deterrent punishment should be awarded, not merely a fine of Rs. 20 or 30 or 100. The Honourable the Railway Member said you will have to pay Rs. 4 if you can get charcoal. It is a big if. You do not get charcoal easily. I do not blame the Honourable the Railway Member or the Transportation department for this. My point is, whether one Member is responsible, or another Member is responsible, or the Local Government is responsible, the fact is that the public are suffering and we want to bring to the notice of the Government the difficulties which the public are suffering, and not what the merchants are feeling in getting supplies. I have got no concern with the merchants. I want that I should be able to purchase from somebody, some quantity. About sugar: Government made a mistake about *gur* and the Central Government did not give proper instructions to Provincial Governments, when they fixed a very high price for wheat and did not put a correspondingly high price for sugar-cane. The result was that the cultivator does not find it profitable to grow sugar-cane and sell it at eight annas per maund, whom he can sell wheat at eight seers a rupee, and the prevailing price is six seers a rupee. That will certainly induce him to divert all his energy and fields for the production of wheat, ignoring sugar-cane. The result is that in many places, in Rohilkund and Meerut divisions where *gur* and *rab* are mostly manufactured there is a tug of war with the people who supply sugar-cane. I am a zamindar and not a cultivator myself, I have got a lot of tenants who grow both sugar-cane and wheat. I find in several villages of mine where there was a lot of sugar-cane grown, these people are not thinking of growing sugar-cane to that extent. They have been deserting and there is difficulty where to supply. Some people are dragging towards the refined sugar, and other people want for the manufacture of *gur*. All this is going on because the prices have not been properly fixed and control price is in the case of one commodity fixed, and the other commodity is not fixed on the same basis and on the same ratio. The whole difficulty of sugar supply is on account of the wrong policy which had been adopted by the Government, and unless that policy is revised there will be difficulty next year also.

As regards salt, I think there can be no greater scandal than what the Government has committed this time in the matter of salt. I am sorry that here—I do not know whom I am going to address, because the Transportation Member is not in charge of salt, and neither the Commerce Member is here nor the Finance Member who are the only two persons interested in this subject. Government have given instructions to the District Magistrates to appoint agents to get the whole supply of salt and distribute it. You know that the District Magistrate is interested now a days only in the man who can give a little bit of help in the war effort. Whether he can deal with the supply, or whether he knows anything about this business at all, or not whether he has got any money

[Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan.]

in his pocket or not,—agencies have been given to paupers who cannot bring even Rs. 1,000 before the District Magistrate from their houses and they have been given agencies for the whole district. People could not get even two pice worth of salt in many places for their daily requirements. These agents, because they were paupers, they had no money of their own, they were not tradesmen, they were not merchants, they knew nothing about business, they wanted to make a lot of money, and they gave sub-contracts to other people after getting a lot of money in cash into their pockets. They wanted to get rich quick. If a man wanted two lakhs of rupees, you give him an agency of a district for salt and he gets two lakhs next day by sub-contracts. The sub-contractors come and make all the profit which they can do, and the difficulty is felt by the public. This is a most scandalous state of affairs—to give this salt contract in this manner to one or two individuals. What the Government ought to do is, they must have their own depots and supply salt to people who deal in salt in different places—not in one tahsil, but there should be distribution to the different villages in the tahsil and the small towns and not given to one man who gets about 20 wagons a day or 2 wagons a day and he sells at the highest price. It has been brought to the notice publicly in one Garden Party that a General's wife had to pay a bribe of Rs. 3 in order to get half a pound of ordinary salt. As far as wheat is concerned, we cannot be satisfied and the public can never be satisfied with the procedure adopted by Government, and with what is read out to us—we have taken this step, we have appointed so many people, there are about 20,000 people in the offices sitting in front of tables, issuing different orders which are contradictory to each other, people not knowing anything at all as to how the public is feeling. That does not satisfy the public at all. What the public wants is result. What is the result that you have achieved? Government's justification can be this that after a year they come to us and say, "Look here, by our action we have done such and such a thing for you." If you come before us and say that you have appointed 20,000 men to deal with this problem and that you have spent two crores of rupees on this, then we say that you have wasted our money, you have taxed us for nothing, you have squandered our money and you stand as guilty persons before the public. You have done absolutely nothing. What is the result of what you have done? In the beginning of the year, at the harvest time, Government fixed the price of wheat as eight seers for a rupee for the whole year. Now, within two months they changed the order and fixed the price as six seers for a rupee. Then, they went on purchasing and here I do not want to repeat what has already been said by Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi. In short, they committed blunders after blunders and now they have committed another blunder by lifting the control altogether. There is no price control now. The day the control was taken away, do you know what was the result? In a place like Lyallpur where wheat used to be sold at Rs. two and annas four or Rs. two and annas thirteen and in any case at less than Rs. three per maund, it began to be sold at Rs. 10-6-0 per maund. This I heard on the radio only day before yesterday. Now, when you fixed the price of wheat at Rs. five per maund at other places, it was being sold at Lyallpur at Rs. four a maund.

Sardar Sant Singh (West Punjab: Sikh): The price of wheat was fixed at at Rs. five per maund.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: My friend comes from Lyallpur and I accept his statement. But the price of wheat there now is Rs. 10-6-0 per maund. To whom have you given this profit? For whose sake this generosity has been shown by the Government? That is what I want to know. For whose benefit was that order passed that wheat shall not be sold at a higher price than Rs. five per maund and for whose sake it is changed? You had to satisfy the cultivator

because the Punjab Government said that the agriculturists of their province will not be satisfied unless you fixed that ratio. You consented to their request and you ought to have forced the Punjab Government that they must enforce the law. Sir, the Government of India have become the laughing-stock of the whole country. That is why the confidence in the present Government has been lost. There are many things which have been attributed towards the causes of agitation and disturbances but we cannot ignore that there was also the element of these mistakes committed by the Government in respect of the food control and the question of food supply. People began to suffer and they did not know what to do. Of course, other people took advantage of the agitation which was in the minds of the public. The other side took advantage of the situation with the result that your employees who are getting small salaries cannot make their both ends meet. Sometimes we cannot get a seer of wheat in the whole market. There is another ridiculous thing and that is the order of rationing. In Meerut, the place where I come from, the rationing order says that two ounces of wheat flour will be given to every child up to the age of 14 and four ounces of wheat flour for every adult in the whole day. Of course, it may be all right for my European friends who eat meat, vegetables, fish, eggs and other things and just a piece or two of bread, adding butter to it. That is the English food. But so far as the Indian food is concerned, the whole thing consists of wheat, other things are just as butter is to the English food. They are mere luxuries, but the staple thing is wheat. And now you are giving us only four ounces of wheat per man per day. Think of the feeling you have created in the mind of the public. And why should the Congress fail to take advantage of all these mistakes you are committing? Have you got anybody in the public who is siding with you? Is there any section of the public which is with the Government and which has got the confidence of the Government? Whom have the Government taken into their confidence? There may be political differences between Parties and Parties and Government may be exploiting them

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Honourable Member's time is up.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: Unless the Government sets up non-official advisory bodies and takes non-officials into their confidence, it will not be able to remove the difficulties of the public. You should remove the idea from your mind that people who sit with high salaries in their offices can come to your help or rescue. They will never be able to help you. Within a year or two you will have to give an answer for what you have done and you will not be able to acquit yourself creditably if you persist in this policy.

Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban (Sind Jagirdars and Zamindars; Landholders): Sir, the matter which has been causing serious concern throughout India is the food position. Various causes have led to an acute shortage of foodstuffs; the consumer is hit hardest. With a considerable fall in the purchasing power of the rupee, the lot of millions of Indians, whose level of subsistence even in the best of times is probably the lowest in the world, has become worse still. Supplies are scarce and prices are soaring high. It is a truism to say that war can be won not only on the battlefield but also on the home front. Let us not forget the lessons of the last Great War which Germany lost. Apart from the other factors, the home front collapsed for sheer lack of proper feeding of the people. The food problem may be divided into three sections, production, conservation and distribution.

On the first point, I need not say much because I understand the Government of India have already put into operation certain measures whereby the acreage and output will be considerably increased. What has been achieved so far is

[Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban.]
 not enough. More land will have to be brought under cultivation and better methods employed with a view to obtaining a bigger yield. Government will, I hope, not relax their efforts in this direction or rest on oars in the belief that there remains nothing more to be done.

Conservation of foodstuffs is an important problem. In a country which is predominantly agricultural, it is a pity that one has to see and hear about acute shortage. It is no doubt true that the global war has put a great strain upon all countries including India in the matter of food supplies. The defence services in this sub-continent and those in the Middle East and the Eastern borders of India have their requirements to be met. But as I said before, we must never lose sight of the importance of preserving the home front at its maximum level. So long as civilian needs of foodstuffs, cloth and other essentials of life are not fulfilled, there should be no scope whatsoever for any export from India. If it becomes necessary, Indian produce will have to be supplemented by imports from abroad. I need hardly emphasise this aspect of the problem, because unless it is appreciated to the full and measures concerted towards feeding the civilian population in India adequately, the consequences are likely to be disastrous.

I now come to the third point, namely, distribution. Rationing of supplies appears to be on the lips of everyone. It would solve most of the difficulties if it could be introduced systematically and worked successfully. I have read in the papers that in some of the Indian States, rationing of foodstuffs and other articles has met with conspicuous success. It is a system, therefore, well worthy of scrutiny and adoption on a wide scale if found feasible. If everyone is assured of a quota based not on what a dyspeptic, diabetic or ascetic would consume but on what an average normal healthy person requires one of the important factors towards a successful issue of the struggle in which almost the entire world is engaged would have been ensured. In each district, city, town and village there should be Food Boards composed of Government officers, non-official representatives of trade and panchayats, societies or anjumans, as well as of growers, zaminders and consumers. Black markets have played havoc and hoarding has inflicted great hardship on the public many of whom are on the border line of starvation. If all interests are represented on such Food Boards much of the prevailing turmoil and tribulation would be reduced, if not entirely eliminated. A carefully thought out plan which involves obtaining food and other requisites from a surplus part to a deficit place, watch over those whose greed and rapacity know no bounds and spare neither friend nor relation and whose activities in trying to squeeze more out of the needy public require to be sternly curbed even to the point of condign punishment, and proper distribution of the necessities of life including fuel and cloth, will have to be initiated and executed with vigour if the public morale is to be kept up and the war effort is in consequence to be speeded up. The importance of thinking ahead, planning in advance and taking quick decisions and prompt action much in the same way as a well-organised and well-conducted commercial office does, cannot be over-rated. This may mean cutting down some of red-tapism. But it would be well justified if good results are to ensue.

Actually the subject of proper distribution of food stuffs throughout the country, according as the needs of each are, can be easily and successfully handled only by a central machinery organised on a sound and thorough basis.

This machinery can ascertain the production in the country, its need, the production in each province and the needs of all provinces so that it can be easily ascertained as to which provinces are surplus area so far as food stuffs are concerned and which are deficit ones. Without this centrally organised machinery it will be for instance difficult, for a deficit province (say Bombay), to ensure

adequate supplies for its needs. To devise means whereby food-stuffs are easily and promptly distributed to areas, which do not produce enough from places which are known to have sufficient exporting surplus, is not an extremely hard task.

Once these difficulties of ensuring supplies through Government agencies to consuming area are overcome, the problem of price control could be tackled as it should be. So far this can only be achieved by Government itself stepping in and buying from surplus areas and transporting it to consuming centres according to their ascertained needs. Private purchase has to be eliminated.

The general complaint of public is that control of prices has only benefited Government by enabling them to secure supplies for the army and factory hands at controlled rates. The general public has remained and still remains at the mercy of the profiteer and of the black market. The inevitable conclusion is that price control can be successfully enforced by Government machinery and it cannot be denied that the existing administrative machinery in this country is hopelessly inadequate to tackle this gigantic task. But it is apparent that in order to see that the public secures its legitimate requirement throughout all areas at controlled prices, the distribution of all stuff should take place through Government or semi-Government agencies. This means Government Depots and Government Shops in all localities, are to be opened and to obviate hoarding, a system of rationing cards is to be introduced. That appears to be the only way of ensuring more or less perfect distribution of food-stuff.

Another manner in which food situation can be eased is to endeavour to arrange for import of foodstuffs from abroad, which may at least take off the burden of military supplies from the country.

Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon (Sind: Muhammadan Rural). Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan has struck a very fine note. We had a debate in this House on a matter of vital interest for the last two days, not only for building up the morale of people but also to improve their economic condition. But, Sir, I am sorry to find that Honourable Members on the Treasury Benches are not to be found here. It shows how little interest they take in the debates. I find that only one Member of the Executive Council is present, but I submit that this important subject should be the concern of the entire Executive Council.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Two members on the Government Benches have already spoken.

Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon: Then they have gone out after making their speeches.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): They have got other business to attend to. It has never been the practice for all Members of the Executive Council to be present at the same time.

Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon: Sir, I think Sind has been the most fortunate province in India regarding the food problem. First of all I would touch on the problem of sugar. Sugar is distributed through Sugar Controller in India. Every province gets its quota. In other provinces there is no arrangement. But in Sind arrangement has been made for distribution and I hope the Government of India will take note that an example should be set in other provinces as it has been done in Sind. In Sind Province, the Government has compelled the sugar dealers to form into a Syndicate. They get their quota from the Central Government, and the Syndicate then issues rationing cards to hotel managers.

[Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon.]

retail dealers, *halwais* and others, these then receive their sugar and so it is distributed in the Province. That is why there is no hoarding in Sind. In other Provinces you find hoarding, because the Central Government simply gives the sugar to big dealers who do not distribute it accordingly. Sugar disappears at once because there is no Syndicate and there is no office maintained. Therefore, I would suggest to Government that they should ask the Karachi sugar Syndicate to send their representatives to other Provinces also and to have such Syndicates established there.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member can continue his speech on the next day when this subject comes up. The House will now adjourn.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, the 18th February, 1943.