

Tuesday, 14th November, 1944

# COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

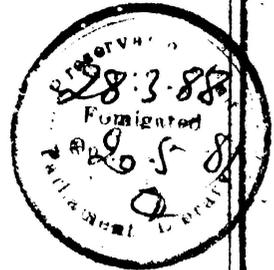
VOLUME II, 1944

(8th to 21st November, 1944)

## SEVENTEENTH SESSION

OF THE

## FOURTH COUNCIL OF STATE, 1944



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## COUNCIL OF STATE

Tuesday, 14th November, 1944

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

### MEMBER SWORN:

The Honourable Mr. Douglas Daintry Warren (Nominated Official):

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### OPENING OF FRONTIERS OF EUROPE AND ASIA TO GIVE REFUGE TO VICTIMS OPPRESSED BY GERMANY.

**30. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH:** With regard to the proposal made by President Roosevelt of the U. S. A. at a Press Conference, on or about the 24th March last that the free peoples of Europe and Asia should temporarily open their frontiers to the victims of oppression by Germany, will Government state whether the persecuted Jews of Hungary, and the Balkans, or of any other territories, or nationalities have been given temporary refuge in India? If so, how many of them have been given such shelter?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH:** The policy of the Government of India to admit into India Jewish refugees from persecution subject to certain conditions dates from a time previous to the declaration made by the President of the United States of America. Government have permitted entry to about 1,200 persons seeking refuge in this country.

#### WHEREABOUTS OF ESCAPED INDIAN PRISONERS FROM GERMAN PRISONERS' CAMP AT EPINAL.

**31. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH:** Will Government state the circumstances relating to the escape of Indian prisoners from the German prisoners Camp at Epinal in the general confusion that followed the bombing of that town, on or about the 11th May last and their entry into and internment in Switzerland? What is the number of such prisoners? What is their condition; and where are they at present?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR FIROZ KHAN NOON:** The camp referred to is Front Stalag 315, Epinal. It consisted of masonry buildings, several stories high in which the prisoners of war were housed. This camp was hit by about 26 bombs from American planes flying high over this area on the 11th May, 1944.

A part of the wall surrounding the camp and stretches of barbed wire were demolished and in the resultant confusion, a large number of Indian prisoners of war succeeded in escaping and crossing into Switzerland. The escapers were fired upon by German sentries but it appears that no organised attempt was made to stop them. They were helped by the French, including the police and militia.

A representative of the Indian Red Cross Committee visited the camp on June 22nd, 1944. According to his report the strength of the camp at the time of bombardment was 3,029 of which 40 were killed, 80 wounded and 700 were missing. Many conflicting reports are, however, being received as to the numbers reported to have been killed, wounded or who have escaped. The Man of Confidence at the Camp reported to the Protecting Power that 35 were definitely known to be killed, 73 wounded.

Of the escapers, 497 are now known to be interned in Switzerland, mainly concentrated at Losone, Ticino. Their condition is reported to be good. One report states that a number of escaped prisoners of war had joined up with the Maquis (French patriots). They were supplied with uniforms and arms by Allied planes. Another report says that a party of 30 Indians was known to be operating with the Maquis, and it is possible that the bulk of those who did not cross the border into Switzerland have joined to Maquis.

**NOTE:—**Questions in the name of the Honourable Raja Yuveraj Datta Singh were put by the Honourable Mr. V. V. Kalikar.

## UNITED PROVINCES POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION BOARD.

32. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : (a) Have Government received copy of the following resolution passed by the U. P. Post-War Reconstruction Board, which met on or about the 29th July at Government House, Lucknow, under the presidentship of H.E. Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of the U. P.:

" This meeting of the Post-War Reconstruction Board, U. P., places on record its sense of disappointment that in the memorandum on the post-war development of civil air transport in India prepared by the Government of India, in the Department of Posts and Air, for the consideration of the Reconstruction (Policy) Committee for posts and aviation, most inadequate provision for the promotion of civil air transport in the U. P. has been made.

It is accordingly hereby resolved to recommend to H. E. the Governor that he should forthwith invite the attention of the Government of India to the fact that of all the capitals of important provinces, only Lucknow has been excluded from the proposed air routes, and that Cawnpore, having in view its present and growing importance as an industrial centre, is insufficiently linked with the other industrial centres of India ; that accordingly there should be included in the proposals for the post-war development of civil aviation in India a trunk air service from Cawnpore via Bhopal to Bombay and also feeder air services linking Cawnpore with Delhi via Lucknow, Bareilly and Rampur and with Calcutta via Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Patna and Asansol, these two feeder air services being regarded as essential links between the proposed trunk air services."

(b) What steps have Government taken or propose to take to supplement their proposals on more just and adequate terms ?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN : (a) Yes.

(b) The plan proposed in the Memorandum for the post-war development of civil air transport in India is a basic plan for the whole of India and has been drawn up to provide a system of air services which are necessary in modern conditions for the proper development of India as a whole socially, commercially and industrially, having due regard to what is practicable and capable of being achieved within a reasonably short period after the war. The plan therefore provides, as a first step, for trunk services and essential links, but does not preclude other services which may become necessary later. While there will inevitably be some divergence of opinion as to the limits of this initial plan, the Government of India do not agree that the proposals are inadequate. They are however always open to suggestions for improvement of the plan and will give careful consideration to all such suggestions which they receive. I place on the table a copy of the reply given to the Post-War Reconstruction Board United Provinces as it deals fully with the points raised in the Resolution mentioned by the Honourable Member.

*Copy of the letter No. 2105-V/44, Dated New Delhi, the 6th October 1944, from Sir Gurunath V. Bewoor, C.I.E., I.C.S., Secretary to the Government of India, to The Secretary, Post-War Reconstruction Board, United Provinces, Lucknow.*

I am directed to refer to your letter No. 2982/XXVIII—Es., dated the 9th August 1944, forwarding, for the consideration of the Government of India, the resolution passed by the United Provinces Post-War Reconstruction Board containing recommendations on the subject of the development of civil air transport in the United Provinces during the post-war period.

2. The Government of India welcome the criticisms of the Post-war air transport and aerodrome and air route construction plans, which have been submitted by the Provincial Government. The suggestions are dealt with in detail below, but in considering this question the Provincial Government will no doubt bear in mind the general principle on which the plans were based, viz., to provide a system of air routes and air services necessary in modern conditions for the proper development of India as a whole socially, commercially and industrially. In the initial stage the scope of such a plan must necessarily be limited by the resources of the country, and there must inevitably be some divergence of opinion as to the precise limits of the initial plan. In particular it should be remembered that the transport plan specifically excludes as it must do in the initial stage, air services which are mainly or relatively of local interests although the aerodrome and air route construction plan provides for the construction of a number of aerodromes to enable operations of this character to be undertaken. The Provincial Government no doubt also appreciate that it will be open to Provincial Governments, Indian

States and private interests to supplement any plan which may ultimately be adopted by the Government of India.

3. The comments of the Government of India, in the light of their existing knowledge, on the United Provinces Post-War Reconstruction Board's recommendations are as follows :—

(i) *Lucknow should be linked with the trunk air service through Cawnpore.*

The distance from Lucknow to Cawnpore (45 miles) is too short for the successful operation of a separate air service, except with very small aircraft. Such a service could be operated by local interests. It would appear preferable to provide such a connection between Lucknow and Cawnpore as part of a service from the United Provinces to Bombay, such as is proposed in the second suggestion of the Board. An alternative method of putting the capital of the United Provinces on the air routes in the early stage would be to divert the Calcutta—Delhi—Peshawar air service through Lucknow in place of Cawnpore but as this has not been suggested by the Provincial Government or by the United Provinces Post-War Reconstruction Board, the Government of India assume that their proposal to route this service through Cawnpore is accepted as being the better solution.

(ii) *Cawnpore should have a trunk air service to Bombay via Bhopal in addition to the Peshawar-Calcutta service.*

The Government of India recognise that there is much to be said, even from an all-India point of view, for a direct air service from the United Provinces to Bombay. From that point of view, however, and having regard to the necessity of keeping the plans within limits which are likely to be attainable within the country's financial resources, it appeared to the Government of India that direct air service from Delhi to Bombay was of greater importance and that the air service from Bombay to the United Provinces cities should at least follow the establishment of the main air services scheduled. The aerodrome and air route construction programme has been so drawn as to provide aerodromes not only at Bhopal but at Indore and other important places which might be included on the air route between the U.P. cities and Bombay. At this stage of planning, it appears to the Government of India that the financing of an air services between Lucknow, Cawnpore, Bhopal and Bombay is a matter for the States and Province particularly interested.

(iii) *Cawnpore and Lucknow should have link air services to Delhi through Bareilly and Rampur and to Calcutta through Gorakhpur, Patna and Asansol.*

The inclusion of Lucknow and Patna on the main Calcutta—Peshawar air service in place of Cawnpore or other stopping places appears to the Government of India to be open to consideration, but Bareilly, Rampur and Gorakhpur cannot be included as landing places on such a service. Services to such places must either be dealt with on a local basis or await the completion of the initial plan before they can be considered for inclusion in an all-India programme. The Provincial Government will observe however that the aerodrome and air route construction programme provides for a number of aerodromes off the main air routes, in the United Provinces including Bareilly and Gorakhpur.

(iv) *Cawnpore should have a super aerodrome either in addition to the four proposed at Delhi, Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta or in place of one of these.*

It has been decided to abandon the use of the term 'super' aerodrome, since it is liable to minister pretation. Provisionally the term 'international' aerodrome will be used to designate aerodromes provided for world air services, of a standard above that needed for the operation of internal air services of the future, will be increasingly of such a type as will make one or two landings only in India, and the aircraft used on these air services will require larger aerodromes with more extensive equipment. Karachi and Calcutta, the airports of entry and exit on the trans-India route, Delhi the capital of India; and Bombay which apart from its importance as a commercial city is conveniently situated on a route which is likely to become of world importance, appear to the Government of India to be the only four cities at which it will be necessary to incur the expenditure involved in providing an airport or aerodrome for such world air services.

#### CONVENING OF A CONFERENCE IN AFRICA AND INVITATION OF INDIA THERETO.

33. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : (a) Did the South African Government issue invitations to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and to representatives of British territories in East, Central and South Africa, including India, to attend a conference, convened to discuss local air services and cognate matters concerning civil aviation ?

(b) Has this Conference been held, and, if so, who attended on behalf of India.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: (a) Government understand that certain proposals were under discussion between the Governments concerned for a conference to discuss local air services and cognate matters relating to civil aviation in Africa. India is not concerned with these matters and was not invited.

(b) Does not arise.

#### INDIA'S REPRESENTATIVE TO THE COMMONWEALTH COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

34. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : (a) Are Government aware that the Commonwealth Communications Council, in which representatives of the Canadian, Australian, South African and New Zealand Governments

participated, was held in London about the first week of April last, under the Chairmanship of Sir Campbell Stuart, for examination of communications by cable, and wireless throughout the British Empire ?

(b) Who represented India in this council ?

(c) What were the proposals discussed so far as this country is concerned ?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: (a) Yes.

(b) Mr. P. J. Edmunds, Chief Engineer, Posts and Telegraphs, represented India at the last meeting of the Commonwealth Communications Council.

(c) I would refer the Honourable Member to the Press Communiqué which was issued on Wednesday, August 23rd, 1944, a copy of which I lay on the table.

*Press communique*

The Commonwealth Communications Council have submitted to Governments of U. K., the Dominions and India proposals for a reorganization of Telecommunication Services of Commonwealth and Empire by Establishment of Public Utility Corporations in United Kingdom, in each of Dominions and in India which would be separately owned with necessary linking arrangements. Advantage was taken of recent visit of Prime Ministers of Dominions and Representatives of India to have a preliminary discussion on proposals. No decisions were taken but without entering into any commitments it was agreed that proposals should be examined in detail.

SPECIAL TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE TO GOVERNMENT SERVANTS.

35. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH: (a) Is it a fact that Government have sanctioned a special travelling allowance of Rs. 300 to those officials earning over Rs. 200 a month ?

(b) What is the approximate amount of money which this concession will cost to the tax-payer ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: (a) A travelling allowance has been sanctioned to those Government servants who have been in service for at least a year and do not draw dearness allowance.

(b) Government regret that they are unable to give an estimate of the cost involved. It may be possible to get the figures for the current year by about March 1945 when Government would be prepared to furnish them to the House.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: Is the Rs. 300 allowance given once in a year ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: Once in a year. That is correct.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Is it a substitute for dearness allowance ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: No, Sir. It is not.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: I understood the Honourable Member to say that no dearness allowance was paid and Rs. 300, were to be paid as travelling allowance. Am I to understand then that is in the nature of some sort of substitute for dearness allowance ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: Sir, With your permission I shall explain the position. In the first place, Rs. 300 is not a lump sum allowance. It is the maximum which may be drawn by officers of the relevant class who go on leave. As regards the exclusion of those who draw dearness allowance, Government took the view that most members of the class of Government servants who draw dearness allowance are locally recruited and therefore the incentive to travel in their case is much less. Secondly, it was felt that the work of Government servants of that particular class which draws dearness allowance is largely routine in character and therefore leave and travel and change of environment is not so necessary in their case. Having due regard to the object of the concession, Government considered that it was not necessary to encourage this particular class of Government servant to take leave and travel and thereby increase the burden which is already falling on the Railway systems in India.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR:** Is it a case of compensation for dearness of travelling expenses?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH:** I should hardly describe it as that. Government desired, in order to keep their servants fit, that they should take leave as far as possible at least once a year. They found, however, after a short while, that owing to the expense of travelling—to that extent the Honourable Member is right—Government servants were not availing themselves of the concession of being allowed to take leave; and in order to make it possible for Government servants to take leave and travel and thus get a change of environment, they decided to give this travelling allowance.

**APPOINTMENT OF MR. P. C. YOUNG AS COAL COMMISSIONER**

**36. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH:** (a) Is it a fact that one Mr. P. C. Young has been appointed Coal Commissioner? What are his special qualifications, and antecedents; and what is his salary and other allowances, if any, per month?

(b) Is it a fact that Mr. Young has made a number of appointments in his organisation? How many such appointments have been made; and out of them how many are Indians and how many are Europeans and what are their salaries?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR FIROZ KHAN NOON** (on behalf of Supply Department): (a) Yes. Mr. Young joined the State Railways Imperial Engineering Service on 1st October 1908. He was Secretary Indian Railway Board, 1914-16, Assistant Inspector General of Transportation, France, 1917-18, General Manager, Kailan Administration, Tienstin, 1928-32, and was subsequently Director, Chinese Engineering and Mining Company. Prior to his appointment as Coal Commissioner, he was Coal Supplies Officer, Scotland. His salary as Coal Commissioner is £5,000 per annum; he gets no other allowances except travelling allowance for journeys performed on duty as for a Class I officer under the Supplementary Rules of the Central Government.

(b) No. All gazetted appointments are made by Government of India.

**FIVE YEAR PLAN OF POST-WAR CIVIL AVIATION**

**37. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH:** Will Government give the main features of the five year plan of post-war civil aviation, which has been prepared for the consideration of the Reconstruction Policy Committee indicating the air connections between the commercial and political centres of India, with extensions to China, Rangoon and Kabul; together with financial commitments, if any, recurring and non-recurring as well as the policy to develop civil aviation with Indian capital under Indian management and the employment of trained Indian personnel? What other obligations, if any, the plan involves?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN:** The Honourable Member is referred to the Memorandum on Post-war Development of Civil Aviation in India and to the Record of the First Meeting of the Policy Committee on Posts and Aviation, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. These provide the information asked for by the Honourable Member.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** Is it customary for Government to publish the names of members of the delegation which they send? Are the names always published?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN:** I think so.

**SMUGGLING OF GOLD FROM INDIA TO MIDDLE EAST**

**38. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH:** Will Government state the circumstances under which gold worth over Rs. 14,00,000 intended to be smuggled from India to the Middle East, was seized by the Bombay Customs preventive staff from three Arab dhows anchored in the Bombay harbour about April last?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES:** I place on the table of the House a statement giving the desired information.

## Statement

Acting on information the Bombay Customs, early in April 1944, carried out an intensive search of four Arab vessels (Dhows) then lying in the port of Bombay, viz :—

- (1) Boom MUSAFFA.—*Nakoda* Abdul Rehman Abdulla Bin Muhammed, *Koweit Reg. No. 619, Karachi Reg. No. 4557, Owner.*—Jassim Abdulla Bin Muhammed of Koweit.
- (2) Boom TARIFF.—*Nakoda* Salim Bin Yusuf Bin Abdul Jadar, *Koweit Reg. No. 863, Karachi Reg. No. 5227 Owner.* Abdul Latiff Bin Muhammed Al Thaniyan of Koweit.
- (3) Boom TOWFIQ.—*Nakoda* Saud Bin Fahad Abdul Aziz, *Karachi Reg. No. 4555 F. C. Owner* Abdul Mohsin Ahmed Al Abdulla of Koweit.
- (4) Boom RAZDAN.—*Nakoda* Mohammed Fahad. *Koweit Reg. No. K. T. 865. Karachi No. 4155 F. C. Owner* Fahad Bin Abdul Aziz Samad of Koweit.

All these vessels were destined for Koweit.

2. The search, which extended over several days and involved probing of the vessels' decks timbers and fabric, resulted in the discovery on the 6th-7th April 1944 of sovereigns and gold jewellery cunningly concealed aboard as follows :—

Name of Vessel	No. of sovereigns	Jewellery found
		(approx. value)
		Rs.
1. Boom Musaffa . . . . .	12,008	2,000
2. Boom Tariff . . . . .	6,225	1,075
3. Boom Towfiq . . . . .	10,452	4,000
4. Boom Razdan . . . . .	Nil	28
	28,685	7,103

The value of the seizures is approximately Rs. 14 lakhs.

3. All the sovereigns were found packed similarly, that is to say in lots of about 50, each lot sewn in cloth and then inserted in a rubber balloon. It is believed that this method was adopted in order to enable the sovereigns to be carried aboard, a small quantity at a time, inserted in the carrier's rectum. During the search one Arab carrier actually came aboard with sovereigns so concealed.

4. The taking or sending of gold to any place or country outside India, except with the permission of the Reserve Bank of India, is prohibited (D.I.R. No. 90-B). The sovereigns and jewellery were therefore seized and confiscated under the orders of the Collector of Customs, Bombay.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Has any case been instituted and conviction secured?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: No, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Do the Government propose to start any prosecution?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: I think that matter is still under consideration, but Honourable Members will realise that it is useless instituting a case unless we have almost cast-iron information on which to base it.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Is it not possible that if no case is instituted the liberty of people will be jeopardized?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: I do not understand what bearing this question has on the liberty of the people.

## CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE DEATH OF MR. GIANCHAND LOKWANI

39. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH: Have Government made enquiries through Red Cross organisation or otherwise and state the facts and circumstances under which a Sindi youth named Gianchand Lokwani, who was holding a British passport, was condemned to death by a German military tribunal at Agrioola, about 31st October, 1943, and shot dead?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: Gianchand Lokwani was condemned to death by a German Court-martial at Aquila in Italy on the 31st October 1943 and executed on the 18th December 1943. The Protecting Power has been requested to obtain a full report on the case, but this has not yet been furnished by the German Government.

## INDIA'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE "FIGHT OR ANTI-INFLATION CONFERENCE."

40. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH: Are Government aware that a "Fight or Anti-Inflation Conference" opened in Cairo, on or about the 24th April last with financial experts from 14 countries including India? Who

attended the conference on behalf of India and what were the topics discussed and decisions arrived at with special reference to those affecting this country ?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: Yes, a Conference of representatives of the Middle East Governments was held in Cairo from 24th to 29th April 1944 to discuss anti-inflationary measures for the Middle East. Sir Theodore Gregory, Economic Adviser to the Government of India, attended the Conference as an observer on behalf of the Government of India. The Conference did not discuss any topic or arrive at any decision affecting this country.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Was India invited to participate in it?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: The authorities in the Middle East expressed a strong desire that Sir Theodore Gregory should attend.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Did they mention the name of Sir Theodore Gregory, or did they only send a general invitation? Was the invitation sent to the Government of India or to Sir Theodore personally?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: The request came to the Government of India; but Dr. Gregory is no stranger to economists in the Middle East.

REPATRIATION ON AN EXCHANGE BASIS OF BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR

41. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH: Has the attention of Government been drawn to the statement of Mr. Eden, the Foreign Secretary, in the House of Commons, on or about the 3rd May last, that "investigations regarding the repatriation on an exchange basis of British prisoners of war who have been for 3 years in enemy hands have been completed and as a result Britain has taken certain action on which he could not yet properly make any statement"?

Will Government state whether "British prisoners" include Indian prisoners also; and what is the result of certain action which Britain has taken with a view to the repatriation or exchange of Indian prisoners in enemy hands? What is the approximate number of such Indian prisoners?

THE HONOURABLE SIR FIROZ KHAN NOON: Yes. I am not yet in a position to answer this question, except to say that British in this case undoubtedly includes Indian. Information as to the number of Indian prisoners of war who have been in enemy hands for over three years is being collected.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Have we received any list of prisoners of war from the Japanese Government?

THE HONOURABLE SIR FIROZ KHAN NOON: No.

TRANSFER OF HEADQUARTERS OF INCOME-TAX ASSESSEES FROM ORISSA TO CALCUTTA

42. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: (a) Will Government state the number of Income-tax assesses who have since got their headquarters transferred from the Province of Orissa to Calcutta, either by forming Limited Companies or otherwise (and how many of them have got their headquarters at one particular place—126-C, Creek Row, Calcutta) since the beginning of the war?

(b) Will Government state the amount of total income assessed on each such assessee in the last three years of their continuance in the Province of Orissa and the first three years of their transfer to Calcutta and in how many of them has there been a change in the nature and volume of their business before and after such transfers?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: I have called for a report from the Commissioners of Income-tax concerned in regard to part (a) of the question and a reply to that part will be laid on the table of the House in due course. As regards part (b), I would invite the Honourable Member's attention to section 54 of the Income-tax Act which forbids the disclosure of information of the nature asked for.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Will the Government also enquire into the reasons for these transfers?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: If we consider it necessary.

NUMBER OF APPEALS FILED WITH THE APPELLATE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF INCOME-TAX, PURULIA.

43. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: (a) What is the total number of appeals filed from the Province of Orissa (including Sambalpur) with the Appellate Assistant Commissioner of Income-tax, Purulia, in the years of 1942-43, 1943-44 and 1944-45?

(b) What is the total amount of travelling and other expenses drawn by the Appellate Assistant Commissioner in disposing of these appeals with his headquarters at Purulia?

(c) What is the total travelling and other expenses of the Appellate Assistant Commissioner of Central Range, Patna, in hearing of the Excess Profits Tax appeals from Orissa in the aforesaid period?

(d) Will Government consider the desirability of posting a permanent Appellate Assistant Commissioner at Cuttack, the Capital of Orissa, with powers to hear both the ordinary Income-tax and Excess Profits Tax appeals?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: The information in regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) is being collected and a reply will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

(d) Yes, they will consider the suggestion.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Is it not a fact that this information is published in the report of the Central Board of Revenue? I mean information regarding the number of appeals from each province?

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: The Assistant Appellate Commissioner has jurisdiction not only over Orissa but over part of Bihar. We know the total number of appeals disposed of by him, but we do not know the number of those appeals which relate to Orissa, which is the point asked for in this question. We can only tell that by reference to the A. A. C.

THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: I did not follow the Honourable Member's reply to part (d) of my question.

THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES: I said Government would consider the suggestion. But of course for the purposes of consideration we need the information covered by parts (a), (b) and (c) which we have not yet received. We will consider the suggestion in the light of the information brought to light when we get the reply for which we have called.

PUBLICATION OF DECISIONS OF DIFFERENT INCOME-TAX APPELLATE TRIBUNALS

44. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: Will Government consider the desirability of permitting the publication of the decisions of the different Income-tax Appellate Tribunals functioning in India for facility of the public and co-ordination of their decisions, like those of the High Courts?

THE HONOURABLE MR. SHAVAX A. LAL: Government have carefully considered the question and have come to the conclusion that no useful purpose would be served by permitting the publication of the decisions of the Tribunal which is not a Court of record and is not bound by its decisions.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Do Government consider that it would not serve any useful purpose in the way of guidance to the litigant public?

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member is asking for opinion and not information.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: No; I am asking because in the High Courts—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Please do not argue. Put your question.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Do the Government consider that the publication of these decisions will help or not help the appellant public?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Is Government aware that the publication of these decisions will confuse and confound both the litigant public and the lawyers? (*Laughter.*)

AMOUNT OF MONEY ORDERS, ETC., RECEIVED IN THE POST OFFICES OF ORISSA PROVINCE FROM THE BEGINNING OF WAR

45. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: Will Government state the total amount of Money Orders and Insured articles sent from and received in the Post Offices of Orissa Province from the beginning of the War up-to-date?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: The total amount of money orders sent from and received in the Post Offices of Orissa Province from the beginning of the war up to the 30th September 1944 is Rs. 7,20,01,830 and Rs. 11,54,64,377 respectively.

Information regarding the total value of insured articles sent from and received in the Post Offices of the Province for the period in question, is not available as records containing the information are preserved only for limited periods, that is 3 years in respect of articles sent and for 18 months in respect of those received. Further, in regard to insured articles received for delivery, the collection of information even for the limited period of 18 months would involve an amount of time and labour which would not be commensurate with the value of the results likely to be achieved.

NUMBER OF ORIAS EMPLOYED UNDER THE BENGAL NAGPUR RAILWAY

46. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: Will Government state the number of Oriyas in employment under Bengal Nagpur Railway and in what cadres and will Government consider the desirability of raising the number of such employees?

THE HONOURABLE MR. D. D. WARREN: Government have no information, as staff statistics are not maintained on a provincial basis. Recruitment is, likewise, not made on that basis and Government do not contemplate a departure from the rules on the subject.

THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: Do Government propose to collect the information?

THE HONOURABLE MR. D. D. WARREN: Government do not think that they will be justified in war time in embarking on an investigation of this nature which will involve inquiries into the province of origin of every employee on the Railway. For the Honourable Member's information I may say that inquiries were made in 1930, when it was found that about 7,800 Oriyas were employed on the Bengal Nagpur Railway, representing about 9 per cent of the total number of employees.

THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: As labourers or in what cadres?

THE HONOURABLE MR. D. D. WARREN: In all cadres.

NAMES OF PROVINCIAL LEADERS OF NATIONAL WAR FRONT ORGANISATIONS, ETC.

47. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: (a) Will Government state the names of the Provincial Leaders of the National War Front Organisation in different Provinces with their salaries and allowances?

(b) Is it a fact that the Governor of the Orissa Province functions as the Leader of the National War Front, Orissa?

(c) In which other Provinces does this practice obtain? If not, will Government consider the desirability of having a non-official leader for the Orissa Province in place of the Ex-Premier, who held the leadership?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: (a) A statement showing the names of various Provincial Leaders is laid on the table.

The Provincial Leaders do not draw any salary. Some of the Provincial Leaders, however, draw travelling expenses for tours which are undertaken specially for National War Front work.

(b) Yes.

(c) Besides Orissa, Madras is the only other Province where the Governor is the Leader. The appointment of the Leader is at the discretion of the Provincial Government.

*Statement showing the Leaders of the National War Front in the different Provinces.*

His Excellency the Governor	Madras.
His Excellency the Governor	Orissa.
Dr. Sir A. P. Rahman	Bengal.
The Honourable Saiyid Sir Mohd. Saadullah	Assam.
C. P. N. Singh Esq., C.I.E.	Bihar.
The Honourable Honorary Major Nawabzada Malik Khizar Hayat Tiwana	Punjab.
The Honourable Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah	Sind.
Sir Morapant Joshi	Central Provinces.
Sir Rustom Massani	Bombay.

THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: May I know the names of the provinces where Governors are the Leaders of the National Front?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: I said Orissa and Madras.

**NAMES OF ORGANISERS OF THE SONG PUBLICITY IN DIFFERENT PROVINCES**

48. THE HONOURABLE MR. NIKUNJA KISHORE DAS: (a) Will Government state the names of the organisers of the Song Publicity in different Provinces with amounts of salaries and allowances drawn by each?

(b) Is it a fact that there has been no separate non-official organiser of Song Publicity in Orissa since the death of the last incumbent? If so, why?

(c) Is it a fact, that the Song Publicity Organisation is scheduled to be a wholly non-official one, in order to inspire larger public confidence?

(d) What administrative control does the Central Publicity Department exercise over the Provincial Song Publicity organisations and in what manner?

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN: (a) A statement giving the required information is laid on the table of the House.

(b) Yes. The question of appointing a Song Publicity Organiser in Orissa is being considered in consultation with the Provincial Government.

(c) No.

(d) There are 12 Song Publicity Units one in each Province and the Central Unit which operates in the Delhi province, Ajmer Merwara and parts of the United Provinces and the Punjab. The Central Unit and the Punjab, U. P. and N.-W. F. P. Units are directly under the administrative control of the Government of India, the other units are under the administrative control of the respective Provincial Governments.

*Statement.*

Name of S. P. O.	Name of Province	Salary. Allowance	
		Rs.	Rs.
1. Mr. Harichand Akhtar	Punjab	500	Nil
2. Mr. A. D. Shaikh	Delhi-Ajmer Merwara, etc.	500	Nil
3. Mr. Shaukat Thanvi	U. P.	500	Nil
4. Mr. Syed Rasool Raza	N.-W. F. P.	500	Nil
5. Mr. Nazir-ud-Din	Sind	500	Nil
6. Mr. Balasubrahmanium	Madras	500	75
7. Mr. R. S. Dinkar	Bihar	450	Nil
8. Mr. S. C. Biswas	Bengal	450	Nil
9. Mr. K. S. Bardoloi	Assam	300	Nil
10. Mr. M. D. Shahane	C. P. & Berar	Nil	(honorarium 100.)

The posts are vacant in Orissa and Bombay.

**CONDITION OF HEALTH OF BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD.**

49. THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: (a) Will Government state what the state of Babu Rajendra Prasad's health is?

(b) Do Government propose to release him to enable him to organize relief measures in Bihar for combating epidemics in that Province?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: (a) Dr. Rajendra Prasad is a chronic asthma patient. He had an attack in September but has since improved considerably and his general condition was recently reported to be satisfactory.

(b) No.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA: Is it a fact that his body weight has gone down very considerably during the last few months.

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: I regret I have no information as regards his present weight. The general position as regards the weight of security prisoners is satisfactory.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA: Are Government aware of a large number of meetings held in Bihar demanding the release of Dr. Rajendra Prasad merely for epidemic relief, and I hope Government consider epidemic relief work as non-political.

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: I am prepared to take the Honourable Member's word for it.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Has Dr. Rajendra Prasad been running any temperature in the evenings?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: I am afraid that is a medical question which I cannot answer without notice. I have informed the House that his general condition is reported to be satisfactory.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Has he been examined by a Medical Board?

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: Not that I am aware of, but he has received medical attention.

SELECTION OF ARMY OFFICERS BY *Ad hoc* TRIBUNAL FOR EMPLOYMENT IN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION.

50. THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: Will Government state:—

(a) The number of Army Officers who appeared before the *Ad hoc* Tribunal, presided over by the President of the Federal Public Service Commission and assisted by other experts in psychiatry and psychology for employment in the Civil Services?

(b) The number selected by the *Ad hoc* Tribunal,

(c) The number allotted to each Province in India,

(d) The pay and conditions of service of the officers selected by the *Ad hoc* Tribunal for employment in civil administration.

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: (a) and (b) So far only 48 military officers have been finally selected out of 125 who appeared before the interview Board. Further tests will be conducted in the near future.

(c) The allotment so far made to the Provinces is given below:—

Bengal	34
United Provinces	1
Central Provinces and Berar	1
Bihar	1
Orissa	1

(d) The officers selected are temporarily released from army service and their pay fixed on the basis of the pay of rank only, certain other allowances which they are entitled to draw on the date of their appointment to temporary civil employment being drawn in addition to pay. The period of service with the civil administration is the duration of the war in the Far East and probably some period thereafter unless for any reasons it is decided to replace their services at the disposal of the War Department at an earlier date.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Is the President of the Federal Public Service Commission a psychiatrist. The question says: "assisted by other experts in psychiatry and psychology for employment in the civil services."

THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH: I think the Honourable Member is unnecessarily pedantic. The President of the Federal Public Service Commission is not a psychiatrist nor is he a psychologist, but the Selection Board over which he presides consists among others of psychiatrists and psychologists.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Will the Honourable Member state the number of Europeans, Non-Muslims and Muslims out of the 48 selected?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH:** As between Europeans and Indians the proportion is 50: 50. I have not got figures as regards communal proportions. For obvious reasons we were not in a position to apply the communal proportion rules to these temporary appointments.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU:** Why is it considered necessary to assist the President with psychiatrists and psychologists?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH:** This particular form of test which has been adopted by the Army and has proved very successful, consists partly of intelligence tests. These tests are conducted by men who have had a great deal of experience of that kind of work, and they are in modern parlance called "psychiatrists" and "psychologists".

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** Will the Honourable Member lay on the table at a future date the number of people recruited on a communal basis for the information of the House?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. E. CONRAN-SMITH:** I must ask for notice of that question, it is one which requires consideration.

**COLLECTION OF TAXES ON INCOME IN EACH DISTRICTS OF THE PUNJAB AND BENGAL FOR THE LAST 3 YEARS.**

**51. THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL:** Will Government place on the table a statement of taxes on Income collected in each district of the Punjab and Bengal during each of the last three years?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR CYRIL JONES:** The information in the form asked for is not readily available and its collection would involve an amount of time and labour for which the justification in war time is not apparent.

**NOTICE OF MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT**

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** I have received notice of a motion for adjournment which I will now read:—

To

The President,  
Council of State, New Delhi.

Sir,

I shall move that the House do adjourn to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance namely, the negligent and careless manner involving grave interference with civil liberties in which the censorship authorities acted in putting into an envelope with the Allahabad post-mark of 5th November, 1944 addressed to Dr. Kailasnath Katju a letter addressed to Mrs. Pandit.

I am,

Yours obediently,

P. N. Sapru.

Do you consider the action of the Postal authorities as illegal?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU:** (United Provinces Southern: Non-Muhammadian): No, Sir, I do not consider the action of the Postal authorities as illegal. Under the Act of 1898 Postal authorities have the right of opening letters, but what I consider improper is the careless discharge of their duties by the postal authorities. What they did was, they opened a letter which was addressed to Mr. Katju, then they put into that envelope a letter which was addressed to Mrs. Pandit. That letter was from some lady friend of hers. This was a very careless way of doing things. If you want to have censorship of this kind, then have it in an intelligent manner. Whether there should be censorship of this kind or not is a different question altogether. We do our activities in open and there is nothing we wish to hide from the public. My charge is that the postal authorities, who are under the control of the Government of India acted in an irresponsible and negligent manner. I am not challenging the legality of what they did but the manner in which it was done.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Your contention is that the postal authorities, in the case of a particular individual, has acted carelessly.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU:** That is my position.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL (Bombay: Non-Muhammadan): It is an illegal act on the part of the postal authorities to send a letter addressed to one person to another person. Opening may be legal but sending it to another person is certainly illegal.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Do you mean to say that there cannot be mistakes or accidents of this kind?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Law knows no mistakes. Ignorance of law is no excuse.

THE HONOURABLE MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): It may be livil to send one person's letter to another.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Each Honourable Member must ask my permission before he addresses me. The motion is in charge of another Honourable Member. (To the Honourable Mr. Sapru) Your contention is that inconvenience was caused to Mr. Katju on account of this negligence?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Inconvenience was caused both to Mr. Katju and to Mrs. Pandit and it is desirable that in the public interest this kind of thing should not occur in the future, and it is from that point of view a matter of urgent public importance, and Council should take notice of it. That is my line, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Will you be startled if I tell you that the President of the Council of State is not spared in this matter and his letters, English as well as Indian letters, are not also exempt from censorship?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: That is what is happening to every one of us.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): If you will permit me, Sir, Government ought to be severely censured for behaving in this way towards the President of the Council.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I do not blame the Government. What is good for the citizen, I want only that same protection. I do not want any other protection.

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: You would not like your letter, may be of an intimate business nature, to reach Raja Govind Lal or Sir Shantidas Askuran. The censor who censors these letters ought to have commonsense enough to exercise his powers in a responsible manner. It is the most improper thing that a lady's letter should reach a gentleman's hands and *vice versa*. These things are getting very common. A letter addressed by a Government Department to me reached me after about 10 days. I do not know what happened.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I quite understand you, but you cannot contend that this was intentional. It was a pure accident. You are aware that at this time, when the war is going on, millions of letters pass through the post office and they are examined by the censor. Sometimes, by accident, one person's letter may go to another person. Is that a sufficient ground for moving an Adjournment Motion?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: If he could have avoided the negligence, then he would be guilty in civil law.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I do not dispute your legal proposition. In that case Mr. Katju can proceed against them in the civil courts. I am only concerned now whether such an unintentional thing is a ground for moving an Adjournment Motion. There is also another difficulty. This action took place in Allahabad, somewhere outside the province of Delhi. Why should I allow this Motion to be moved?

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: So far as your point that this censorship took place in Allahabad is concerned, I would say that the legislation is an all-India legislation and that the post office is a Central Department. So far as carelessness or negligence is concerned, that is no excuse in law.

For negligence one can get very heavy damages in civil law. In order that they may not make themselves liable for negligence, Government should at least exercise some proper control over their officers. That is my contention, and that is why I say the matter is of urgent public importance. This is a sort of thing which may happen to every one of us. We know that our letters are censored, but we have not had this experience which Dr. Katju has had and that is the sort of thing which every one of us may have. It is therefore in the public interest desirable that the authorities responsible for it should be told that they acted improperly and without sufficient and proper attention. We should censure them for negligence. That is the object of my Motion.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I shall not trouble the Government Member. I think an individual grievance of this sort is not, under the Standing Orders, a matter of urgent public importance and I therefore disallow the Motion.

#### BILLS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LAID ON THE TABLE

SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL. In pursuance of rule 25 of the Indian Legislative Rules, I lay on the table copies of the following Bills which were passed by the Legislative Assembly at its meeting held on the 13th November, 1944, namely:—

A Bill temporarily to amend the Indian Patents and Designs Act, 1911.

A Bill further to amend the Coffee Market Expansion Act, 1942.

A Bill further to amend the Delhi Joint Water and Sewage Board Act, 1926.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIES AND CIVIL SUPPLIES

THE HONOURABLE SIR AKBAR HYDARI: (Industries and Civil Supplies Secretary): Sir, before I move the motion standing in my name I would like your permission to substitute for the word "two" the word "three".

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: You can do so.

THE HONOURABLE SIR AKBAR HYDARI: Sir, I move:

"That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct, three non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Department of Industries and Civil Supplies".

The Motion was adopted.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: With reference to the motion which has just been adopted by the Council, I have to announce that nominations to the Committee will be received by the Secretary up to eleven O'clock on Friday, the 17th November 1944, and the date of election, if necessary, will be announced later.

#### ADVISORY BOARD OF ARCHÆOLOGY

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: With reference to the announcement made by me on the 8th November, 1944, in regard to the nomination to the Advisory Board of Archæology in India, I have to announce that the Honourable Rai Bahadur Sri Narain Mahtha has been nominated for election to that Board. There is one candidate for one seat and I declare him duly elected.

#### MOTION RE FOOD SITUATION

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Before the Honourable Mr. Sen begins his speech, I may inform Honourable Members that I will not fix any time limit as we have obtained two days for discussion of this question. But I hope Honourable Members will strictly confine themselves to the motion before the House and if I find that they are going into any irrelevant matters which have no connection with the food question, I will, with much regret, have to pull them up.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN (Nominated Official): Sir, I move:

"That the food situation in India be taken into consideration."

It is now just over a year ago that the Honourable the Food Member announced at the Fourth Food Conference held at New Delhi that the policy of the Government of India henceforth would be not merely to attempt to evolve a common price policy and to co-ordinate the necessary measures that might be taken by the Provinces to meet the exigencies of the war situation, so far as that could be done through understanding and agreement, but to take direct responsibility for the mobilisation of the food resources of India as a whole and in the discharge of that responsibility to exercise whatever degree of superintendence and control at every stage might be necessary or to invoke whatever powers were essential to ensure success. The House would probably like that I should briefly state the progress made during the last twelve months in the implementation of that all-India policy.

#### BASIC PLAN

The four main Heads under which the Food Department announced their policy in the light of the recommendations of the Policy Committee were Basic Plan, Procurement, Prices and Rationing. The House will probably remember that the first attempt that was ever made by the Government of India to deal with the food problem on an all-India basis, was when they drew up their Basic Plan early in 1943. The Plan called upon the Provinces and States to declare surpluses and deficits with the object of finding out as far as possible what foodgrains were available and distributing them to the best advantage in places where they were most needed. The target figures of surpluses and deficits received from the Provinces disclosed that the deficits were four times the surpluses. The Food Department had little time to carry out statistical investigation and therefore finalised the Plan by applying a formula based on statistics of production and rail and river-borne movements for the three pre-war years and selecting the lowest consumption figure of those areas as a yard-stick with which to ensure a common element of austerity for all. The Plan however failed as most of the Provinces which were regarded as surplus refused to accept the surplus as ascribed to them.

At the Fourth Food Conference in October 1943, the Government of India announced a new procedure for preparing the Basic Plan. The Plan was to be in two stages. The first, a preliminary plan based on declared surpluses calculated on the best information available, movements to begin in accordance with the allocations of this plan and the second, a revision of the plan by discussion with local Governments, when closer estimates of crop production would be available. The formula for ascertaining the surpluses and deficits was to be as follows. Requirements of each Province and State should be taken to mean average production *plus* average net imports or *minus* net exports for the five-year period ending 1941-42. The estimates of the production should be compared with the requirements so calculated and the difference should be treated as the surplus or deficit which should be the target at which the Province or State concerned should aim. The final decision in regard to the determination of surplus or deficit should remain with the Central Government.

The plan, based on the new procedure, has now worked for over 12 months. One of the facts which have increasingly been borne upon those who are responsible for working the Plan during this period has been that unless more active and urgent steps are taken to improve statistical information regarding acreage and production, no Plan based on a formula such as adopted can be fully satisfactory. The House will probably like to know what steps have been taken by the Central Government to improve statistical information. Till last year we had practically no information regarding agricultural statistics in the Indian States. The States were asked, through the Political Department, to furnish figures of acreage and production since 1935-36, and most of the States have made the information available. So far as the permanently settled tracts in British India are concerned, there had been very little objective checks on the estimates of acreage. The estimates of yield were also based on an inadequate number of crop-cutting experiments usually conducted by revenue staff without

[Mr. B. B. Sen.]

sound sampling techniques. Definite attempts have been made since last year to improve the position. In Bengal, a sample survey of the area under *Aus* and *Aman* crops of 1943-44 was conducted under the technical supervision of Professor Mahalanobis. For the year 1944-45, the Government of Bengal have outlined a detailed scheme for a complete plot-to-plot enumeration of the area under *Aus* and *Aman* Paddy supplemented by a sample census. The Bihar Government have also drawn up a scheme of crop surveys extending over a five year period. The first survey under this scheme was conducted in 1943-44. Statistical information in the temporarily settled areas was already superior but technical crop-cutting experiments were also conducted for wheat in the Punjab and U. P. for the *Rabi* year 1943-44, as a check on normal methods with very encouraging results. Similar experiments will be repeated in the main wheat grown areas in future. The question of publishing all-India forecasts for major foodgrains other than wheat and rice is now receiving the attention of the Education, Health and Lands Department.

I may mention another aspect of the working of the Basic Plan. The experience last year has been that few Provinces and States are willing to revise their figures till they are assured of the prospects of the next crops. As a result, as in the previous year, large surpluses which should have been declared at the second stage were declared and released only at the end of the year, with consequent hardship to the deficit areas in need of assistance and also concentrated strain on transport. To make the Basic Plan more realistic even at the first stage, it was decided this year, before the preparation of the Kharif Plan for 1944-45, to hold Conferences with the main supplying and receiving Provinces and States and examine with them their figures of production and consumption and, in the case of deficit Provinces and States, their experience based on their deficits last year and the quotas they received under the Basic Plan. This procedure is proposed to be repeated in future whenever a plan for a new crop year is undertaken.

Reviewing the position generally, I am in a position to say that the last 12 months' working of the Basic Plan gives us the feeling that at both the Centre and in the Provinces we have now a much clearer idea of the minimum needs of the deficit areas and we can hope that in no area in future should we be taken completely by surprise unless there are any unforeseeable developments or any unpredictable natural calamities.

#### PROCUREMENT: GOVERNMENT MONOPOLY

The success of any Basic Plan such as the one formulated by the Government of India must clearly be dependent very largely on an adequate system of procurement. The problem of procurement, however, is one which is much bigger than mere extraction of grains for export under the Basic Plan. Though a few provinces have surpluses of all the major foodgrains, in other cases a province may be surplus in one foodgrain and deficit in all others, or deficit in one and surplus in all others. Again, though a province may be self-sufficient on balance, some of its districts may be surplus and others again deficit, so that inter-district procurement may be of the utmost importance to that province. The essence of the problem is thus not moving of supplies from a surplus province to deficit areas but of acquiring from the cultivator the maximum amount to be obtained from every part of India. The only completely satisfactory solution of the problem of procurement from the standpoint of principle, according to the Food Grains Policy Committee, therefore, was a Central foodgrains monopoly, but as the problems of organisation and administration involved are great, they could not recommend its adoption immediately.

The Committee also observed that while it was probably not desirable to create a completely uniform procurement machinery in every part of India, the Food Department should undertake a careful study of the whole problem, province by province, in order to determine which on balance was the most suitable machinery for recommendation in a particular region.

During the last 12 months, the most outstanding feature in the field of procurement monopoly has been the steady and progressive development of Government monopoly both in British India and in the Indian States. Most areas have started with comparatively simple schemes and as experience has been gained, have developed the schemes further and further towards complete monopoly. When it is remembered that the more Government limits private trading by an extension of monopoly procurement the greater is the necessity for assumption of responsibility by Government for distribution, the anxiety of local Governments to build up and train the necessary staff and increase their practical experience before extending monopoly procurement can easily be understood.

The monopoly schemes vary from a complete monopoly, as in Malabar, where the entire surplus from each holding after deduction of seed and consumption requirements of the cultivator and his family is taken over by Government, to a semi-monopoly, as in Orissa, where no attempt is made to assess surpluses on the basis of seed and consumption requirements of the cultivator and his family and private trade is permitted upto quantities of 10 maunds in each transaction. In some provinces and States, the attempt to procure the producer's surplus has taken the shape of a levy. The basis of assessment for the levy has varied from a completely arbitrary levy such as has been in force for millets in Madras till recently, to a complete physical assessment of the production as is proposed in Kolhapur and the Deccan States. Probably under complete Government monopoly co-ordination and directional control will be all that will be necessary from the Centre. On this question I would value the opinion of the Honourable Members of the House. For the last 4 or 5 months, a senior officer of the Department has been on special duty to study and correlate the procurement systems all over India. His report which has just been submitted is now under examination in the Food Department.

Speaking generally, I may say that the idea of a Government monopoly for procurement of the entire surplus of the producer, from as near the threshing floor as possible has over the last twelve months taken a firm root in Provinces and States, and that the Government of India are following the policy they have laid down for themselves and exercising a close watch over the systems which are developing in different parts of the country. The Centre's most useful contribution to the extension of the principle is to make available to all administrations as full a knowledge as possible of what has been done and how it has been done by other areas, and this the Centre is doing.

#### PROCUREMENT AND "GROW MORE FOOD CAMPAIGN"

The question has been raised why it is that surpluses declared under the Basic Plan by the Provinces and States do not immediately reflect increased production as reported under the "Grow More Food Campaign."

It must be admitted, that there is a marked difference between the estimated increase in food production as a result of the "Grow More Food Campaign" and the food surpluses which are being declared by the Provinces to the Food Department for the purposes of the Basic Plan. The net increase in surpluses declared to the Food Department over the pre-war average of 19 lakh tons was about 7 lakh tons in 1942-43 and 2 lakh tons in 1943-44 as against the reported increase in production of 32 lakh tons and 73 lakh tons respectively over the pre-war average. The difference between the estimated increase in production and the surpluses declared to the Food Department during 1943-44, was particularly striking.

There are of course several incalculable factors. Nobody can estimate or control with certainty how much more or how little is consumed by producers, or how much more or how little they decide to hold as carryover in any year. Again estimates of increased acreage may be falsified by climatic variations or insect pests affecting the actual outturn per acre. Nevertheless the Food Department feels and has felt that agricultural production plans and estimates must be more closely related to procurement plans and estimates and to the

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surpluses and deficits which are being declared by Provinces to Food Department under the Basic Plan.

The question of a closer co-ordination of production and procurement has been under discussion in the Government of India for some time past and has resulted not only in much closer working of the two Departments concerned but also to the formation of a Food Committee of the Viceroy's Council for co-ordination of policy at the highest level on all matters of food to whichever department they may pertain.

#### PROBLEM OF STORAGE

With the problem of procurement are allied two other problems which are of equal and fundamental importance, *vis.*, storage and movement. A few days ago, I had an occasion to visit the Pusa Agricultural Institute in connection with the inauguration of a course of lectures to selected representatives of provinces and States on technical supervision of foodgrains in storage. In the laboratory of the Institute, I found a poster with the following information:—

Total annual production of foodgrains and pulses in India	...	...	...	67.5 million tons;
Total annual wastage at 5 per cent.	...	...	...	3.35 million tons;

Valued at flat rate of Rs. 10 per Md. the total annual loss—over 90 crores of rupees.

The quantity wasted—sufficient to feed 7 million persons.

Perhaps for the purpose of a poster there is a deliberate overstatement in these figures, but even in the Report on Marketing of wheat in India, we find that the normal annual wheat losses due to bad storage at 3 per cent. of the total crop have been estimated at 300,000 tons. These figures reveal the enormity of the problem of storage in this country.

If such is the scale of losses in normal times when the responsibility for quality is distributed among hundreds of thousands of small producers and traders who hold the grain and the even flow of supply according to demand is assisted by an abundance of transport, it is all the more important that they be minimised now when procurement and movement are largely in the hands of Government machinery; when owing to severely restricted movements Governments have to procure whatever they can during the peak of the season and store them pending despatch according to the Basic Plan; when at the receiving ends also Governments have to accept stocks as they arrive and store them as best as they can, without adequate facilities for building new storages or repairing old ones?

The problem of storage seems to fall into two main parts:—

- (1) Provision of adequate and satisfactory storage accommodation, and
- (2) improved technical supervision of grains in storage.

So far as the first is concerned, the Food Department have for some time past been pressing on the Provinces and States the great urgency of the problem and it can be said that the provinces are now conscious of their responsibility in the matter. Apart from the new storage accommodation which has been constructed by several provinces at their own initiative, the Food Department have formulated a scheme of construction of storage at various strategic points in the Major surplus areas with a view to facilitate procurement and ensure an even flow of rail movement throughout the year. The capital cost is to be advanced on a 50: 50 basis by the provinces and the Centre. The Government of India have undertaken another scheme of construction of storage at the main ports and consuming centres for holding a portion of the Central Government Reserve to be built out of the wheat imports. It is expected that about 140,000 tons of storage accommodation under the scheme would be ready before long. In addition to these new constructions, godowns are also being hired and it is estimated that at certain periods of the year as much as 300,000 tons of space would be available for hire.

As regards improved technical supervision, the urgency of the matter led Government of India a few months ago to bring out from England **13 Noon.** an expert with experience not only in the United Kingdom but also in the Middle East. Within the short time that this officer has been here, he has toured most of the major provinces and some to the States and have submitted valuable reports for improvement of storage. It is clear that though considerable work has been done by our Scientists in laboratories, the application of their research to every day practice on any scale has not yet been attempted anywhere in India. The trade of foodgrains had in the past been in the hands of professional traders, and the problems connected with storage, unlike in other countries, had been left to be dealt with according to their traditional methods and practices. The large scale handling of foodgrains by Government machinery since the last two years, however, has accentuated the defects in our system and demonstrated the necessity of urgent action to remedy the defects. Last year grains had to be poured into some areas to meet acute scarcity and distress. The lack of adequate technical organization for inspection of the in-coming supplies for grade condition, dirt content, foreign grains, insect damage etc., and for storing the grains in a scientific way led to losses of which none who can help would like to see a recurrence. I may say, however, that some progress has already been made in the matter since then. Many of the Provinces and States have organised or are organising a special storage section to deal with the problem. The Food Department lately held a course of lectures on technical supervision for selected representatives of provinces and States. It is hoped that now that the Provinces and States have been made to see the problem in its true character and perspective, the foundation will be laid in India of a new endeavour to place storage, whether in the hands of the trade or of Government agencies, on a more scientific basis.

#### PROBLEM OF MOVEMENT

The problem of movement is again, as I have said, another aspect of procurement, on the success of which the success of procurement largely depends. Till the end of last year, provision of transport was left largely in the hands of sellers or those locally responsible for despatch. There was no system of consolidated advance programmes of despatch drawn up in consultation and with the approval of the transport authorities, and consequently no certainty of regular and continuous despatch. There were frequent hold-ups either due to non-arrival of supplies at the stations of despatch or of railway wagons in sufficient numbers, which did not come to the notice of the authorities at the higher levels till the hold-ups had assumed considerable proportions. To remove these difficulties and to place movement on a planned basis, a Directorate of Movement was created in the Department at the end of the year with an experienced Railway official at the head. The functions of this Directorate are—

to assist in the preparation of Basic Plans so that allocations are made from surplus to deficit provinces with strict regard to ease of movement operations and economy of transport:

to place the planned demands for transport on the War Transport Department and the Railway Department responsible for finding transport and to obtain their assistance from time to time where necessary.

This has assisted greatly in the preparation of rational programmes avoiding unnecessary long hauls or cross movements keeping in view at the same time the various limiting factors on different transport routes.

Periodical analysis is now made of the progress of movements in order to ascertain if there have been difficulties of transport and to take action in co-operation with the War Transport Department wherever necessary. For instance, in the case of movements from the North to the South, experience showed that without the assistance of additional shipping, the prospects of meeting the full requirements of the deficit areas in the South were poor and it has now been possible to arrange an increased programme of shipping via Karachi.

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Occasions have arisen in recent months when special measures were necessary to rush supplies and the transport services rose fully to the occasion. Special mention may be made in this connection of—

emergency help to Bombay after the Explosion and to Deccan States which at one time developed symptoms of famine conditions;

emergency supplies to N.-W. F. P. where the failure of the maize crop and the introduction of rationing in large towns necessitated movement of substantial stocks within a short period.

Amongst other directions in which improvement has been effected are preparation of programmes of despatches by supplying provinces on correct lines: establishment of a proper procedure to secure appropriate priorities for movements of foodgrains on Government account.

In short, I may say that the strenuous efforts made during the last twelve months to place movement on a rational and planned basis have met with a substantial measure of success.

#### PRICE CONTROL

The last 12 months have also witnessed considerable progress in the policy of the Government of India with regard to price control. The policy that was announced was that the Government of India would build up price control, in respect of all major foodgrains, first on a provincial and then on a regional basis, that the prices fixed should ensure a fair return to the cultivator as well as bring foodgrains within the reach of the vast majority of the poorer consumers, that the Government of India would co-ordinate statutory price control throughout India with a view to an eventual building up of an all-India price control. During the year statutory price control was instituted for wheat, gram, barley, bajra, jowar and maize. The statutory maximum price of wheat was fixed at Rs. 9-8-0 per maund in the main producing markets of the Punjab, and those for Bajra and Jowar at Rs. 7-8-0 and Rs. 7 per maund respectively. In order to protect the producer if prices fell, Government gave an undertaking to purchase any quantity of wheat offered at Rs. 7-8-0 and of Bajra and Jowar at Rs. 6 and Rs. 5-8-0 per maund respectively. As regards rice, an all-India statutory price was not fixed partly owing to the absence of a homogenous market and partly because of the difficult period through which the Provincial Governments in the Eastern region were passing. The Provincial Governments themselves imposed statutory maximum of rice prices and steadily brought the prices down during the course of the year. The present position in the rice producing areas is this: The statutory maximum producers' price in Bengal is Rs. 12-12-0 per maund in the surplus districts and Rs. 14 per maund in deficit districts. In Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Sind, it is Rs. 11, Rs. 9, Rs. 14 and Rs. 8-8-0 per maund respectively. Rice prices in Madras have been generally kept below Rs. 10 per maund while in the U. P. and the Punjab the statutory maximum fixed by the Government of India is Rs. 18-8-0 per maund.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Are these wholesale prices or retail prices?

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: These are wholesale prices.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN: These are selling prices.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: No, wholesale prices.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN: Will you kindly tell us what is the margin left over for Government or whether there is a profit?

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: I am not going into that question at all. I am simply saying that the prices have come down all over the country, and I am giving you the present prices in the wholesale markets, that is, the prices at which Government are buying.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Did the Honourable Member say that in the Punjab and the United Provinces the price paid to the producer was Rs. 18-8-0 per maund?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN:** Rs. 18-8-0 was the statutory maximum fixed by Government. As a matter of fact, the price in the Punjab is very much lower. The present price in the Punjab varies from Rs. 10-8-0 to Rs. 11. In the United Provinces, according to some it is above Rs. 18-8-0, and according to our reports it is about Rs. 18-8-0 that is near the statutory maximum.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR:** What is the price in the Central Provinces?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN:** It is, I think, somewhere about Rs. 9.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** Is it a fact that in Bengal prices are in some districts below Rs. 9 now?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN:** We have received reports that prices here and there have been lower than the prices I have just given, but these must be distress sales as we found last year.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** Can the Honourable Member give us an idea of the retail prices prevailing in the areas for which he has given us wholesale prices?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN:** I am not in a position to give you retail prices, I will take note of it, and if I am given an opportunity to reply, I will give you what information I have.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN:** Will you kindly tell me whether there is a margin between the purchase and sale prices or whether there is no margin and if there is a margin, if it goes to Provincial Governments or to the Central Government.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN:** I do not understand this question. What I have stated are prices in the wholesale markets. There must be a difference between wholesale prices and retail prices. There is no question of any Government making any profit. Our principle is, no profit, no loss. Government may make a profit in one foodgrain to cover a loss in another foodgrain as probably it, is being done in Bombay.

When these figures are viewed against the fantastic levels reached in certain parts of India last year, there seems to be solid reason for satisfaction in the way that price control has developed—

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** I want the Honourable Member to say something about Delhi prices.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Please do not disturb him.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** He has given all other prices. There should be light and not darkness.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN:** In fact, a stage has been reached when the whole question of the level of prices has to be carefully watched from the producer's point of view as well as that of the consumer. The other day, in another place, two amendments to a motion on Food were carried within a few minutes of each other by the same voters: in one of which it was stated that the prices were beyond the means of the mass of the poor in this country and should therefore be further brought down and in the other that prices were inadequate and should be revised. The Government of India have already set up a Price Advisory Committee consisting of experts who are constantly bringing the level of prices in different foodgrains under their review. The Government of India adhere to their policy that the prices fixed from time to time for the foodgrains should represent a just and reasonable compromise between the interests of the producers and the interests of the consumers.

#### SUBSIDISATION OF PRICES

The question arises what is to be done with regard to those classes of consumers who find the present level of prices beyond their reach; in other words, to what extent the Government are prepared to pursue the question of subsidy. I may say, that subsidised prices for the poorer classes of the

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population is not an entirely new proposal. Already several Provincial Governments have adopted schemes of subsidy. In Orissa, for instance, the scheme of subsidised sales is on the following lines. In rural areas, families of persons belonging to the landless classes and in urban areas families of persons whose income does not exceed Rs. 40 per month, are entitled to purchase at a retail rate of 4½ seers of rice to the rupee, or Rs. 8-7-0 per maund, and 8 seers of paddy to the rupee, or Rs. 5 per maund. These subsidised sales are to be allowed in areas in which there was distress last year, areas which are normally deficit, and such areas as may in future give indications of distress. In some provinces again, subsidised sales have taken the form of reduced prices for the coarser varieties of a foodgrain, the loss being off-set by an increase on the finer varieties. While in others, loss incurred in the reduced price in one commodity is sometimes recouped from the higher price charged for another commodity. The question of subsidy, however, is one of immense complexity and its financial implications are far reaching. The whole question is now under the examination of the Department and, if necessary, will be pursued in an inter-departmental Committee consisting of the Economic Adviser and Representatives of the Food, Finance and Education, Health and Lands Departments.

#### RATIONING

In announcing their policy on rationing last year the Government of India stated that they regarded introduction of full urban rationing as fundamental to a co-ordinated food plan. It is a matter for satisfaction that the number of towns rationed or about to be rationed is now 460 with an approximate population of 42 millions. Rationing has also been introduced in rural areas throughout Travancore and Cochin, for non-producers and inadequate producers throughout the Bombay Presidency. It is shortly to be introduced throughout the district of Malabar. When it is seen that the population covered by rationing is now nearly equal to the population in Great Britain, the progress made during the last 12 months can be regarded as quite satisfactory. In the actual administration of rationing, however, the standard has varied from area to area. In the initial stages of rationing, the Government of India have been prepared to allow considerable latitude to the Provincial Governments in their organisation and working. In some areas rationing has taken the form of provisioning certain classes of the population in towns and cities, leaving the rest of the population in those towns and cities to buy their needs without restriction as to quantity in the open market. Whatever justification there might have been for these provisioning schemes when they were first introduced, there can be doubt that these provisioning schemes can not be regarded as permanent substitutes for full rationing. Such provisioning schemes do not serve the main purpose of rationing *viz.*, distribution of the overall shortage on an equal and equitable basis, and also keep up prices in the open market by allowing the comparatively well-to-do section of the population to buy as they please. Experience and force of circumstances are now combining with the Government of India to persuade the Provincial Governments to agree to take steps to change over to full rationing in accordance with the principles laid down by the Government of India.

Another striking feature in the administration of rationing has been the disparity in rationing scales in different parts of the country. Though the policy of the Government of India has been to try to maintain a minimum ration of 1 lb. for adults daily all over the country, the successful execution of this policy has depended on two factors, *viz.*, the willingness of the surplus Administrations to spare their maximum surplus and the willingness of deficit Administrations to accustom their people to use all foodgrains other than those to which they are normally accustomed. Lately the Central Food Advisory Council at its meeting held at New Delhi passed a resolution to say that the existing disparity of ration scales should be removed and the basic ration per head should be fixed uniformly at 1 lb. per adult per day. The Government

of India have brought this resolution to the notice of all Provincial and State Administrations and have stated that until the Government of India can ensure sufficient supplies to the deficit areas to enable them to sustain a basic ration of 1 lb. the size of the basic ration in surplus areas should not exceed that quantity. In this connection the Government of India have further pointed out the necessity of industrial canteens for supplying cooked food to heavy manual workers and promised to make available the additional supplies that may be necessary for working the industrial canteens.

Though originally it was not in the contemplation of the Government of India to introduce full scale rationing in rural areas, the situation in certain rural areas led the Government of India early in the year to re-examine the whole policy. On the experience of Travancore and Cochin where district-wide rationing is a most difficult situation helped to restore confidence among the people, the Government of India accepted it as a definite policy that where any area was highly deficit, whether a taluk, a subdivision or a district, full scale rationing was the only effective remedy and should be pressed. As early as March this year the Government of India, therefore, suggested full scale rationing for the entire district of Malabar and later full scale rationing for the district of Vizagapatam. Full scale rationing in rural areas, however, involves complete Government monopoly of procurement of the surpluses of individual producers. The pace in introducing rationing in rural areas, therefore, cannot be as fast as in urban areas. After months of study the Madras Government have now decided to introduce district-wide rationing in Malabar. Full scale rationing with complete Government monopoly of procurement in Malabar is the first experiment of its kind in British India. Its progress will therefore be watched with special interest all over India.

#### CORRELATION OF NUTRITIONAL PLANS WITH PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

While progress in the extension of rationing throughout the country has been rapid, we are not satisfied with one aspect of our organization. I refer to the machinery for the scientific improvement of individual diets by controlled food issues under rationing schemes. In Great Britain difficulties created by the war in food supplies have not only been overcome by scientific planning but the standard of health of the people is claimed to have been raised by a more balanced diet.

The problem is of course infinitely simpler in Great Britain. They have only one tenth of our population and they have to deal with a homogenous people who all eat more or less the same kinds of foods and there are no complications of local variation in their reaction to Government's suggestions and plans. Moreover, a much higher percentage of the population is non-producing and so susceptible to food control by rationing. Finally, since so large a population of Great Britain's food is imported, Government is able to secure full and easy control, in fact actual ownership, of all important ingredients at some stage or other before distribution. It is however a fact that special steps have been taken in Great Britain in the matter. In the Ministry of Food in Great Britain there is a Scientific Adviser's Section to advise the Ministry as to the correlation of nutritional plans for feeding the Nation with plans for the import and production of food, for communal feeding, factory canteens etc., and for the feeding of special categories such as children, infants, expectant mothers and invalids. There is no such section in the Food Department in India though considerable research is being carried on by nutrition authorities under the E. H. & Lands Department. Under the Basic Plan, the Food Department mobilise the foodgrains all over India and distribute them on an equitable basis to the deficit areas, but in making the allocations the Food Department have insufficient scientific data before them about the state of nutrition in the deficit areas. For instance, we know that in Travancore and Cochin the staple food, that is rice, is available only in half of the quantity normally consumed by the people. In the present shortage of rice, it is not possible for us to increase this rice ration to any extent. We should, therefore, know the extent of their under and malnutrition so that we may try to provide what is missing through other foodgrains

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and foodstuffs which are readily available. This whole question of linking up nutrition with allocation of supplies is now under examination in the Food Department.

#### POLICY ON EXPORT

On the question of export of foodgrains from India the policy of the Government of India is that India must cease to be a net exporter of foodgrains. The only exception which would be permitted to this policy is the export of small quantities for provisioning ships sailing from Indian Ports and for the use of Indian Seamen of the Merchant Navy within the confines of the Indian Ocean. Small quantities will also be allowed to be exported for the use of vital personnel on our Air-lines of communication in countries adjacent to India and for a few isolated communities mostly Indian in neighbouring countries which cannot obtain sustenance except from India. This policy was adhered to during the past 12 months. On one occasion we supplied 5,000 tons of rice to Ceylon but on the definite assurance that the quantity would be replaced later on this year. We have, however, lately allotted 25,000 tons of gram to Ceylon but this allotment has been made in very special circumstances. There is an excess of gram in the country for which there is practically no demand from the deficit areas. If this gram was not allotted to Ceylon, a very considerable proportion of it would have been wasted.

#### IMPORTS

On the question of imports, the House is aware that the Government of India have been making most insistent and urgent representations to His Majesty's Government regarding the need for imports to the extent of one million tons a year for current consumption and 500,000 tons during the first year for the purpose of a Central Reserve. Lately, with our cordial agreement, Sir Henry French, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Food, paid a visit to India, to see for himself the realities of the situation. We have little doubt that he has been convinced that our demand in this respect is genuine. The total imports of foodgrains that we have received from October 1943 to March 1944 is 8.3 lakhs tons and from April 1944 to date is 3.7 lakhs tons. Total 7 lakh tons. Out of the quantities promised the balance still to come is 4 lakh tons. His Majesty's Government have promised to review the position further in November.

#### BENGAL

I have stated the progress that we have made during the last 12 months in the implementation of our policy in its different aspects. I shall now pass on to a review of the conditions of some of the areas which have caused us anxiety during the past year. The area which caused the greatest anxiety last year was Bengal. In my speech before this House during the Food Debate in March, I said that the situation in 1945 depended a good deal on my own Province and its people, the people of Bengal. A forecast of the rice crop had showed that out of the total all-India excess over normal of 4.1 million tons of rice in 1944, Bengal's share alone was 3.6 million tons. If that great volume of grain could be brought in due proportion into the market, it would not only stabilise the position in Bengal but also in other deficit areas, which were suffering from the loss of Burma Rice, such as Bombay, Travancore and Cochin. In view of the exceptional circumstances then prevailing and in spite of the heavy weight of the crop expected, however, the Government of India considered that there was a case for treating Bengal differently from any other part of India in distributing the surplus of rice available for 1944. That is to say that, without reference to the statistical position either in Bengal or the rest of India, we decided that Bengal must be supplied with quantities of foodgrains equivalent to the whole estimated requirements of Calcutta. This was done to restore confidence, to enable the rationing of Calcutta to begin, and to ensure the success of the Bengal's own internal procurement arrangements as the year proceeded. The decision appears to us to have been

justified by the results. It is true that there have been local shortages in Bengal. But that is a matter of internal distribution more than of supplies in the Province as a whole. In our view, so far as supplies of foodgrains are concerned the position in Bengal has changed and changed very materially for the better. We have now to review our policy for 1945 with regard to Bengal. The improvement in the supply position owing to last year's exceptional rice crop, combined with the progress which has been made by the Government of Bengal in the development of their machinery for the purchase and distribution of grain, and the large stocks which they now hold, justifies the question of Bengal's supplies for 1945 being determined on the same basis as supplies for other parts of India. That is to say, we can take stock of the position on its merits and determine what is essential that Bengal will have. We need not do as we did last year and say whatever the statistical position in Bengal, whatever the needs of the rest of India, we will undertake the whole responsibility for Calcutta. Wheat of course they must have in any case and necessary allotments will be made. So far as rice and other grains are concerned, I assure the House that the reasonable needs of the Government of Bengal will be reviewed in the light of all the relevant facts at appropriate intervals by the two Governments in consultation, and allocations will be made as necessary by the Government of India, from stocks available for the purpose at their disposal. In deciding the amounts to be allocated due regard will be had to any special circumstances in Bengal, especially such as may arise from its proximity to the scene of active operations, as well as to the special need of other parts of India.

#### OTHER AREAS

The other areas which have had to pass through difficult times, are Travancore-Cochin, Malabar and Vizagapatam. In Travancore/Cochin, the ration is still 13 and 12 ounce per day respectively, of which 8 ounce and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  ounce is rice. In Mysore, the ration is 11 ounce per day of which  $9\frac{1}{2}$  ounce is rice. The rationing in Malabar has varied from 3 to 4 ounce of rice in certain areas to 12 ounce of rice and other foodgrains in others. In the coastal areas of the Vizagapatam district also, people have had to undergo considerable hardship. The Honourable the Food Member paid a visit to some of these areas in a recent tour. I myself visited these areas towards the end of August. The Honourable the Food Member returned from his tour with the feeling that every possible endeavour must be made during the coming year to place the ration in these areas on a more satisfactory basis. Unfortunately, the total rice surpluses declared for the Kharif Plan of 1944-45 are hardly adequate to ensure a higher ration than 8 to 10 ounce in any of these areas, even if the rice supply to Bengal from outside is severely curtailed.

In the circumstances the Food Department see no other alternative than to make up the balance of one pound ration by wheat and other foodgrains. The Honourable the Food Member discussed this matter with the authorities in these areas and found them willing to try and introduce wheat to make up the balance of the ration. The people of these areas are, however, not used to wheat and if wheat is to be made a major part of the ration, special steps must be taken to popularise wheat. I may bring to the notice of the House in this connection the efforts made by the Government of Cochin in the matter. Government restaurants have been opened in different parts of the State where special cooks have been engaged to prepare special inexpensive palatable dishes out of wheat and other grains. The demand in these areas, however, is for a preparation of wheat which approximates rice after it is boiled. It is possible, we understand, to prepare wheat in this way—by first breaking the grain and frying it lightly and then boiling it like rice. We are asking the Provinces and States in South India to take all possible steps for having wheat accepted by the people. It is only in recent months, after arrivals of large quantities of wheat from overseas, that we have been able to press on the Provinces and States in Southern India to make up the ration of one pound. It is hoped that the scarcity of rice which makes acceptance

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of wheat by the people in the South essential, would pave the way for placing the diet of the people of the South on a more balanced and nutritive basis for the future.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: May I interrupt the Honourable Member for a second? I thought I understood him to say with regard to Malabar that the ration there varied from three or four ounces of rice to 12 or 13 ounces of other foodgrains. Did he thereby mean to convey that the total ration amounted to a pound, of which three or four ounces was given in rice and the rest in other foodgrains?

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: What I wanted to convey was that early this year the ration in some of the talukas of the district was about three or four ounces of rice.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: There was no ration. There was only provisioning of the rural areas.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: As a matter of fact the Honourable Member himself brought this to our notice during the last debate. The total ration in Malabar now is 12 ounces, of which about nine is rice and the rest wheat.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA: What is the ration in Cochin?

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: The ration in Cochin is now 12 ounces, of which 6½ ounces is rice.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: No. The compulsory ration in Cochin amounts to 10 ounces, of which 8 is given in rice and 2 in wheat for six days out of every eight. During the remaining two days no rice is given. A man can, however, buy as much more wheat as he likes. He is compelled to buy at least two ounces of wheat daily, but he may, if he likes, buy much more than that quantity.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: I do not think the Honourable Member is correct when he says that rice ration in Cochin is 8 ounces. It used to be 5½ ounces about two months ago. After the visit of the Honourable the Food Member, they have raised it to 6½ ounces of rice, out of a total ration of 12 ounces.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I was there only a few days ago, and if the Honourable Member will allow me to state the facts, I will do so very briefly. The rice ration there is 8 ounces a day, but this is given on the assumption that only four-fifths of the population will take rice. If all the people took rice, the ration would be 6.4 ounces only.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: We shall be extremely interested to hear the facts which the Honourable Member has at his disposal, when he comes to make his speech.

#### PROTECTIVE FOOD

I have so far dealt with the implementation of the policy of the Government of India in the matter of foodgrains. The food problem in recent months has, however, become acute all over the country more in foodstuffs other than foodgrains, such as fish, vegetables, eggs, poultry and milk. The production of these foodstuffs is the concern of the Education, Health and Lands Department and if the House desires detailed information on the production of any of these foodstuffs, I have no doubt that the Honourable Member in charge of the Education, Health and Lands Department will be pleased to give the information. The Food Department is concerned with distribution of what is available, and I may say a few words about the activities of the Food Department in the matter. The complaint that the Army were taking an undue share of these foodstuffs in certain areas came to the notice of the Food Department last year, and the Food Department with the co-operation of the

War Department set up Co-ordination Committees at all Command Headquarters composed of representatives of the Army and of the Provincial Governments and States. These Committees have since split up into Provincial, regional and functional sub-committees. About 40 such committees and sub-committees are working at present. These committees secure a unified and co-ordinated system of procurement paying particular attention to the requirements of civilians as well as the necessity for conservation of stocks for breeding and for seed purposes. The main objective is that the requirements of the Army are met with the minimum disturbance in the market and every effort is made to increase production by the Army units so that the Army off-take from the available supplies is reduced to the minimum. In the matter of milk, side by side with the activities of the Education, Health and Lands Department for increased production, the Food Department are taking steps to get the Provincial Governments to control the use of milk in industry for the purposes other than food, to control the supply of milk to confectioners, hotels, restaurants and canteens and its use for such purposes as ice-cream, cream cakes and sweets, and to co-ordinate and control supply of fresh milk to the Defence Services by local purchases. It has been impressed on the Provincial Governments that in the present state of short supply of milk, it is of the utmost importance that necessary steps should be taken to ensure supply of pure milk at reasonable prices to priority consumers like children, hospitals, schools and Maternity Welfare Centres. Some Provinces have already made some progress in the matter. In Bombay, a scheme estimated to cost Rs. 17 lakhs has been enforced for supplying half a pound of milk per day per child at subsidised rates on milk cards. In several other places export and slaughter of useful cattle have been prohibited and other measures taken to stop the use of milk for non-essential purposes. A good deal of work, however, remains to be done in this field both for increased production and for better distribution, and I can assure the House that the Departments concerned are fully alive to their responsibilities in the matter.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN: How many provinces have taken these steps and how many have not?

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: Very few provinces have commenced work. I think Bombay is a pioneer in this respect.

#### PROSPECTS OF THE COMING YEAR

The House will probably like me to say a few words about the prospects of the coming year. From all reports, the Kharif crop this year on an overall estimate would be about normal. Last year, the rice crop was phenomenal. But as I have said, out of an estimated total yield of 4.1 million tons about the normal, the share of Bengal alone was 3.6 million tons and Bengal needed a good proportion of this surplus to make up the yearly carryover which she had lost during the famine. While, the position in rice in 1945 is likely to be better stabilised in the North-Eastern region as a whole than in the past year, difficulties in South India due to the loss of imports will remain undiminished. The position on the whole, therefore, in rice will remain at the best delicately balanced in 1945 and will call for the utmost vigilance and care on the part of the Administrations in the deficit areas and sustained efforts on the part of the Administrations in surplus areas to procure whatever surplus they can. The position in millets is slightly less favourable than last year; but even last year great difficulties were experienced in procuring millets declared under the Basic Plan. The difficulties were to some extent due to artificial reasons, such as lack of despatching instructions in time and consequent slowness in procurement during the height of the season. Steps are being taken to see that these artificial reasons do not impede procurement this year. We have also the hope that the large acreage which has been released from short-staple cotton in the State of Hyderabad this year will be brought under Rabi jowar in 1945 and will give us a substantial surplus for export to deficit areas.

[Mr. B. R. Sen.]

The silver lining in the whole situation, as the Honourable the Food Member said in the Lower House, is the more optimistic position regarding imports and if that position is maintained, we should be able to go through the next year without having to face any calamity of a major magnitude. We are utilising the imports not only to meet the wheat demands of the deficit areas to the full but also to supplement the rice deficiency of the deficit areas in the South and millets deficiency in the Bombay Presidency and some other areas.

#### LONG TERM PLANNING

I have so far dealt with what the Food Department are doing to meet the immediate problems relating to food in the country. But the food problem in this country is not one of solution of crises from day to day only. It has also a long range aspect. Even in normal times a large majority of the population of this country do not have a balanced diet, while the supply of protective food for children, pregnant women and nursing mothers of the poorer classes has always been all too inadequate. It has not been possible to undertake any long range planning so far, as we have had all our energies concentrated on preventing local shortages and keeping the country going at least on its pre-war consumption levels. Nor did we have so far the control over the food distribution machinery so necessary for effecting any permanent improvement in the country's food economy. Now that food rationing has been extended to 42 million persons and is still being extended, and now that procurement is approaching a monopoly basis in most of the deficit areas, we think that time has come for an assessment of requirements on a proper nutritional basis, an examination of existing supplies and prevailing food habits, particularly in the deficit regions, on the basis of these requirements and with special reference to the vulnerable classes, and finally, the formulation of a policy that will effectively secure for the people of the country, at least in the post-war period, a decent standard of food consumption. For this purpose, we propose immediately to appoint a Planning Adviser who will be a whole-time officer working on these problems, collecting and analysing data and formulating preliminary proposals for the evolution of a planned food economy in India. I have no doubt that the House will welcome the fact that the Government of India are no longer satisfied with pre-war consumption levels in the country but have set up before themselves the task of permanently raising those levels to the desired nutritional extent and thus bringing about a concrete rise in the standard of life of the people—an obligation on which, I am sure, there can be no disagreement between the Government and the people.

#### CONCLUSION

I have given to the House in barest outline the developments in food administration in the country during the past 12 months. It is, I claim, a record of steady, though not spectacular, progress, a record of singleminded endeavour on the part of the Food Department to implement the policy that they have placed before themselves. In carrying out this policy it has been the earnest desire of the Department to associate public opinion with their work, public opinion without which, as has rightly been said more than once both in this and the other House, food administration in no country has the least chance of success. I hope this House, of Elder Statesmen will judge our work with that spirit of detachment that is expected of it and guide us with useful and practical suggestions.

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAJTHA** (Bihar; Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, this is the third time that we are having a food debate in this House, but year after year, we have heard nothing but promises for the future. Even so we have heard today of a large number of committees that are said to be working. The Honourable Mr. Sen, just now mentioned that there were 40 to 45 committees already working under the Department of Food. He also mentioned a large number of lectures arranged by his Department. All these are merely devices to cover up and screen the

bad record of work of the Department during the previous years. Then the Honourable Mr. Sen referred to price control measures and claimed big credit for the achievements of the Price Control Department. I did not intend to refer to this subject, but I have in my hands a telegram from the Honorary Secretary, Indian Collieries Union. I hope copies of this telegram have also been sent to the various Departments of the Government of India, and many of the members here have received copies of it. The Secretary of the Collieries Union states that in the colliery areas the retail price is lower than the price fixed by Government, and that some of the collieries are being forced to buy at prices higher than the price fixed by Government. I have referred to this question to call the attention of the Food Department to this scandal, and if the Honourable Mr. Sen will so desire, I will place the papers in his hands.

The other day the Honourable the Food Member at another place, and here today the Director General of Food, the Honourable Mr. Sen, have paid themselves wholly undeserved compliments and claimed that the work they had done during the last three years was extraordinarily good.

As I wish to be as brief as possible, I have no hesitation in saying at the very outset that the handling of the food problem during the last three years has disclosed a great amount of inaptitude. The fact remains today that the ruling prices are far beyond the reach of the poor people in the country and that the steps, whatever they may have been taken to prevent and eradicate corruption have proved abortive. There does not appear to be much of sound and dependable machinery even today for procurement from surplus areas and supply to deficit areas. Besides, the failure of Government to subsidise food for the poorest consumers and the effective elimination of the middle-men and profiteer makes, in the ultimate analysis, the prices uneconomical for the grower, in so far as the cost of production has increased in manifold.

Sir John French, to whose visit the Honourable Mr. Sen referred, had to admit what a sorry contrast India was to the United Kingdom. The Honourable Mr. Sen too today said that during war the health of the people of England had actually improved. We all know that the U. K. is deficit in the matter of food supply by about two-thirds of the requirement of her people: but, all the same, her food position is a hundred times better than that of India. Long before the idea crossed the mind of the Government of India, the Government of Great Britain had already built up huge stocks of food, and when on account of the subversive activities of German sub-marines England's food position seemed apparently to have become somewhat shaky, there was a tremendous uproar in the Parliament and there was grave dissatisfaction in the country. The Food Minister, Lord Woolton, was left with no alternative but to pacify the House of Commons with the declaration that the shortage would only be found to be temporary. The Gregory Committee here recommended as far back as September, 1943, that Government must procure one and a half million tons of food stuff within 12 months. Government, however, were able to import only about eight hundred thousand tons. The plea put forward was the want of shipping space. But, we all know that during this period Whisky and many other articles of luxury and waste were imported. There are certain other things which go also to bring out into bold relief, the general attitude of the Allied Nations of whom India is counted as one.

India is fighting for the victory of Allied Arms, I believe, with as much vigour and determination as any other country that has stood up against the Axis powers. It is, therefore, rather interesting and somewhat disillusioning to recollect that when Greece was fully under German occupation, the United States Office of War Information stated that "three Swedish vessels loaded with 15 thousand tons of American grain, recently, left New York harbour for Greece to off-set starvation conditions". It might well be imagined how much negotiation must have had to be made with the enemy perhaps through the Red Cross and surely the transport must have necessitated the use of neutral vessels. No such negotiation in the case of India is, or would have been,

[Rai Bahadur Sri Narain Mahtha.]

necessary. It would be highly interesting to know, if the Food Department were willing to disclose the information, whether America, Australia, or Canada were approached for this full supply recommended by the Gregory Committee, and, if so, with what results. I believe that if the Government of India had taken care to eliminate luxury goods there should have been enough shipping space available to bring to this country the million and a half tons recommended by the Gregory Committee.

As far as I have been able to gather the cost of bare animal requirements in the matter of food in Britain has not gone above 40 per cent. In Calcutta, however, the rise in the retail prices of cereals and other vital commodities of food has been by about 7 hundred per cent. In England food subsidies have played the most important part in the control system. In 1938 the cost of living index in Britain was 140½, in 1943 it was 166. Undoubtedly the rise would have been as phenomenal as in India, but for the subsidies sanctioned by Government and the early procurement of food stuffs. I learn from newspaper reports that the amount given as subsidies in 1938 was 15 million pounds and in 1943 it was 190 million pounds. The Honourable Mr. Sen said that subsidies are being given in Orissa and that rice is sold to the poorest classes at 4 seers, 12 chataks for a rupee. Evidently this scheme has not been extended to an extent indicated by the circumstance of the situation. Flour, cereals, and potatoes are sold in England without any restriction and the rise in the price being only about 30 per cent., Carbo-hydrates may be said to be well within the reach of all. There is definitely no shortage of Calories for the British people. India was definitely deficit even in normal times in the matter of food supply and we have known that even during pre-war years with imports from abroad both the quality and quantity of food were below any reasonably accepted standard of sufficiency.

Another fact which no one ought to lose sight of is that whereas the population of British India *minus* Burma has increased by 14 per cent. between 1911 and 1934, agricultural produce has not increased at any appreciable rate. It was, however, only in the 4th year of the war that the proposition of declaring India a net importing country was for the first time mooted by the Gregory Committee. Till then exports of foodstuff from this country had merrily gone on. In 1942-43 we exported 1 lac, 85 thousand and 9 hundred tons of wheat as against 45 thousand tons exported in 1940-41 and 7 thousand, 8 hundred tons in 1939-40. We were so generous in our exports that the Chairman of the U.K.C.C., Sir Francis Joseph, declared with a certain amount of righteous elation that India was one of the main supply bases of the United Nations and that it was Indian wheat that saved Persia from undergoing a famine. These facts are too eloquent to need any comments.

Sir, the next point that I would like to consider is the fixation of ration. It has not been fixed on a uniform scale in all areas. It is one pound and two ounces of atta or rice in Delhi; it is ¾th of a pound per day, per head in Malabar and it is ¼th of a pound again in south Kanara and I hear that it is lower in Cochin. According to all scientific investigators the physiological needs of the adult human body is the expenditure of 140 to 180 grains of Nitrogen in 24 hours while the body is in rest. In cases of those who undertake physical exertion of a normal kind it is 300 grains and in cases of great physical exertion it should be about 500 to 600 grains. Now if this amount of Nitrogen is not provided by some kind of food, one pound of rice giving about 70 to 80 grains, the human body must prey on its own tissues so long as any remain to be preyed upon. I find from the 2nd Volume of the 'Famine Campaign in South India' by Digby, that in 1873-74 when the scarcity in Bihar was occupying much time and attention one of the chief subjects of consideration was the amount of food required daily by the people who were to be fed at the expense of the State. Lord Northbrooke, Viceroy, on the data that if 1½ pound is enough for an adult, one pound per head will feed a population including children of all ages put the quantity at half a seer or one pound of

grain for each man, woman and child. Sir Richard Temple, who took over charge of the Famine Portfolio, when he succeeded Sir George Campbell as Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, put the quantity at  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a seer, that is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  pound. In urging the adoption of this standard Sir Richard put forward the argument that the lowest diet provided in Bengal gaols for non-labouring prisoners was equal to about 1 seer or 2 lbs. The Duke of Argyll, who was at that time Secretary of State for India, supported the larger estimate and ordered its adoption. The controversy, however, continued for some time and finally after the distress in Bombay in 1876 as a measure of economy the ration was fixed at one pound of grain *plus* half an anna. It is, strange, therefore, that after the experience of previous famines and after the settlement of this question at that time the Government of India should now have further brought down the ration per head.

There is only one point more that I would like to deal with. In reply to a question at another place the Food Member recently admitted **1 P. M.** that 1 lac, 46 thousand maunds of *atta* and *maida* were rendered unfit for human consumption on account of bad storage in Bihar and ultimately had to be sold to starch-makers and jute-mills for the manufacture of sizing. He also admitted that in Khulna Railway Colony 4,023 bags of *atta*, 944 bags of flour, 979 bags of rice, and 979 bags of *dal* were damaged beyond redemption during transit and storage and during rains and that 3 thousand tons of foodgrains had to be destroyed at the Botanical Gardens Depot in Calcutta on account of deterioration. He seemed to draw comfort from the fact that this represents only a small percentage of the total stocks. It is not possible for us, however, to be as complacent about it when perhaps the same percentage of population in Bengal might have died, or have virtually reached the verge of death due to malnutrition.

In view of the facts that I have mentioned above it is not possible to hold any other view than that the Government of India have failed to look after the well being of the people by not stopping exports of foodgrains, by not arranging adequate imports to cover the shortage in this country and by failing to arrange proper distribution of the stuff available here from the surplus to the deficit areas. It is idle to talk to the peasantry of this country about Grow More Food when they have not the economic ability to do any more than they are doing. The high prices may be enough incentive, but the cost of production can not be sufficiently lowered except by subsidising seeds, fodder for cattle and by making available to him agricultural implements at reasonable prices. If, however, we had a Government in this country responsible to the people over whom the Government rules, things would have been brighter and materially different. I would ask the Food Member and other Members of the Government of India to absent themselves from felicity for a while and for a season go and draw their breath in pain with those over whose lot they sit and play.

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

The Council met after Lunch at Half Past Two of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE MAHARAJADHIRAJA SIR KAMESHWAR SINGH OF DARBHANGA (Bihar: Non-Muhammadan):** Sir, now we have before us an account of how the Food Department of the Government of India has worked and what it has achieved. The policy outlined in the Gregory report has been generally followed; but I regret to say that the draw-backs in the administration have not been eradicated to the extent to which they should have been. I do not wish to say the same things that I said when I spoke in this House on the Gregory report. The suggestions that I made on that occasion have been recorded in the proceedings of this House and I would invite the attention of the Government to those suggestions because to my regret I find that up to now no action has been taken on them. On the present occasion I will confine my observations

[Maharajadhiraja Sir Kameshwar Singh.]

to the situation prevailing in North Bihar and particularly in Darbhanga and Purnea districts where even according to Government estimates rice crop would be below the average. These are essentially rice producing and rice eating regions. During the last rainy season these areas suffered for want of rain and very little land could be cultivated. Towards the end of the season it rained heavily, many rivers were flooded and paddy crop was severely damaged. A large number of people in North Bihar have been and are victims of epidemics like Cholera, Malaria, Diarrhoea, Dysentery and we have been told that malnutrition is one of the important causes of the persistence of these diseases. I understand that several patients brought to hospital were cured of their disease by feeding alone. I invite special attention of the Government to this part of the country. I have become rather sceptic about Government complacency and hope that the Food Member would not be caught napping again.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: There is no complacency.

THE HONOURABLE MAHARAJADHIRAJA SIR KAMESHWAR SINGH OF DARBHANGA: I am glad to hear that. If the yield is adequate I hope the machinery for distribution will also be made to work properly.

The Honourable the Food Member has cited the steady fall in the prices of rice and wheat as the main proof of the success of the Government policy. Upto the point at which the undue profiteering by middlemen is eliminated the fall in price is justifiable. But has he taken into consideration the plight of the growers who have to provide for the necessities of life from the produce of their land? So long as the prices of their necessities of life remain at a high level it amounts to penalising one section of the community for the rest. I need not tell the House that peasants are the back-bone of the Indian society and if as a result of any policy it is broken 'FAILURE' will be writ large on the forehead of that policy. I strongly urge upon the Government that just as maximum prices have been fixed for principal foodgrains minimum prices should also be fixed by taking into consideration the needs of cultivators and due protection be given to them from unfair demands of other sections of the community who sell their goods and services to them.

Again the Honourable the Food Member has expressed his intention to have a long range plan for post-war period so that the people of this country could look forward to have more food, better food and balanced food. But, Sir, this gives me little consolation when I find that during this period of war lakhs of my countrymen are dying not in the battle-fields but in their own homes for want of proper food. When the Food Member claims that the policy is sound, he may be technically right but for all practical purposes he has not succeeded in touching even the fringe of the problem. I should have been happy if he would have told us that by his planning for the war period he has not allowed any one to starve and he has so controlled production and distribution that people in general have more food, better food and balanced food at a reasonable cost. I am led to think that upto now the Department have been muddling through without any definite plan. Even if there is a plan it is not properly worked. Broadly speaking, the Department may well claim credit for the soundness of its policy outlined in the Gregory report, but it does not yet deserve much credit for the proper execution of the plans based on that policy which the Food Member has characterised as 'details'.

THE HONOURABLE KUMAR NRIPENDRA NARAYAN SINHA: (West Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, coming as I do from that unfortunate Province of Bengal I feel I shall be failing in my duty if I do not join in this Debate. In all conscience the food situation of my dear Province is far from satisfactory. The Government notifications from time to time, the statements of the Honourable Minister in charge of Food Supplies, the Pious utterances of the Heads of Food Department, either at the centre or in the Province, the observations and ipse dixits of foreign experts—all that do not go to ameliorate the distressing

situation even partially. The whole Governmental propaganda machinery, although vainly proclaiming that everything is well with the province only attempts to minimise the evil. Thus in spite of the Government and their propaganda, the whole of the province is going deeper and deeper into the depths of misery in the form of economic ruin, deprivation in health, mass destitution and widespread depopulation. But the weakness of the Government is noticeable in their sensitiveness to honest criticism from even well-meaning quarters and in their attempts at hiding the truth. Really it was a most unwise step for the Government to withhold prices of rice from being published in the *Calcutta Gazette*. Equally demoralizing it is for the Government to refuse medical examination of their stored foodstuffs by the authorities of the Self-Governing Institutions created by the Government when the Government is in the market as the dealer of the food commodities.

Sir, several crores of maunds of rice, I understand, have been purchased on behalf of the Government in the mofassil districts of Bengal during the last 7 or 8 months and are being stored in *Kuchha* Godowns on the country side. Our people are not aware what the authorities are going to do with the huge accumulated stocks and at what price they are going to be disposed of. While in the mofassil markets, private dealers are selling rice at Rs. 10 or less at the present moment, it cannot but be considered only profit-making when the Government chooses to sell that commodity at Rs. 16 or more. I wonder why this important aspect of the matter is escaping the notice of the authorities. The next rice season will be on in a couple of months before which the accumulated stock will have to be disposed of or kept in rot-proof places. Huge stocks of rice and other food commodities being allowed to rot at places without their being distributed to the needy and hungry at the opportune time is now public property as a great scandal on the part of the provincial Government. I cannot say whether the recent official changes in the department of the Civil Supplies, promotion or demotion whatever they may be, are only a reaction to the great public agitation in the matter.

Sir, while it may be admitted that some amount of relief has been brought about in the supply of rice and wheat, still the ruling price of rice is beyond the reach of a very large percentage of the people. The quality of wheat that is allowed is too meagre for each individual need, while the *Atta* given is in most instances totally unfit for human consumption. Flour and *Suji* have almost been withdrawn from circulation for reasons best known to the authorities. Mustard oil, which is undeniably an essential ingredient in all Bengalee homes, termed "edible oil" in Government vocabulary, has been allowed to be freely mixed with oils from other seeds causing injury to the heart, stomach and eyes of the consumers. In place of *Ghee*, we have the vegetable *Ghee*, glorified by the poetical appellation *Vanaspati*, about the health-building properties of which medical experts have always held very low opinion. In fact for that very reason the military authorities fight shy of supplying that precious commodity to the members of the Indian fighting forces. But our woes do not end here. The recent unusual rise in prices of vegetables, fish, milk, oil, clothing and other necessities of life cannot but fill us with utter dismay and despondency. How will the people keep body and soul together when all essential foodstuffs and necessities of life have thus gone beyond their reach in price? People are ever where languishing by reason of dearth of food and want of health for lack of common remedies such as quinine.

Sir, all attempts to control either price or supply have become a positive nuisance to the consuming public. The men charged with the duties of control have thoroughly failed to rise to the occasion. The magnitude of the evil of the scheme of control bears veritably no proportion to the few suspensions, degradations, arrests and convictions connected with the evil.

Sir, in the most distressing situation that has arisen in my province, the Civil Government is being considered more or less powerless. The public have come to believe that the Government has lost all consideration for the Civil

[Kumar Nripendra Narayan Sinha.]

population. Every sort of supply of foodstuffs is allowed to be purchased for the military. All *Hats*, *Bazars* and *Markets* are being depleted by the Contractors for the behoof of the military. Supplies coming from afar by railways or steamers are all captured by the contractors for supply to the military. The contractors have been bound down by agreements to give regular supplies to the military of different foodstuffs on pain of losing their tender and suffering criminal prosecution on their failure to do so. Sir, I do not for a moment grudge the military for their supplies when they are really engaged for the defence of our lives, hearths and homes; but that is no reason why the needs and necessities should be neglected of the vast Civil population who by payment of their direct and indirect taxations and by undergoing uncommon hardships so materially contribute to the up-keep of the military. The military does fight for the Civil population, but it is also the civil population that feeds them. Thus it is improper—nay disastrous, if the civil population is to be sacrificed for the needs of the military. Unless the unnatural situation that has arisen by the present state of affairs in my province is remedied tactfully, the bitterness that has been caused by the helpless situation will engender great social and political evils causing estrangement between the rulers and the ruled.

Sir, one or two words more and I shall conclude as I think I am exceeding my limit. It is quite painful to us to find that the U. P. Government is levying a surcharge of Rs. 4 a maund on mustard oil or edible oil and Rs. 2 per maund on mustard seed allowed to be exported to Bengal when the situation as regards that essential commodity for Bengalees is so fraught with difficulties. Besides the quota allotted to Bengal of the mustard oil by the U. P. Government is quite inadequate for her needs. I would therefore appeal to the Central Government to take the matter up immediately with the U. P. Government in order to bring about some amelioration of the distressing situation. Next the price that has been fixed by the Central Government for vegetable *ghee* has proved quite unsatisfactory for the exporters leading to wholesale black market operations.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern Non-Muhammadan): My Honourable friend, Mr. B. R. Sen, closed his speech with the hope that he would receive our assistance and co-operation in the task of procuring and distributing food over the whole country. What steps have Government taken to secure our good-will and assistance? We are asked today to help Government in solving a problem which concerns the whole country, but have Government taken the trouble of placing before us adequate information in regard to the various parts of the country, so that we as a body may be in a position to offer it our considered advice? Instead of following this course, it has left us to ascertain the facts ourselves. In such a state of things it is scarcely possible for Government to expect that goodwill and support from the members of the Council which he might reasonably have hoped for otherwise. Sir, I feel that the omission to which I have drawn the attention of Government is a serious one. They are well aware of the fact that the Central Legislature as a whole is keenly interested in the questions of production, procurement and distribution of food. The debates that take place twice a year ought to be a clear indication to Government of the importance which the representatives of the people attach to these essential questions. I strongly press on them, therefore, the need for giving us at or shortly after the commencement of each session a publication which will give us adequate information on the most important points concerning the production, procurement and distribution of food. We should be told what the acreage under the foodgrains is, and what is the normal yield per acre in every area. I attach some importance to the second point because I was surprised to find when I went to Cochin and Travancore that although the all-India production of rice,

So far as I remember, amounts to about 700 lbs. per acre, the corresponding figure for Cochin and Travancore had been assumed to be 1,000 lbs. per acre. If my information is correct, it shows that not much reliance can be placed on the figures relating to the average yield per acre of rice, or for the matter of that, of any other foodgrain. I know that Government themselves realise that the methods in force at present for determining the yield of foodgrains are defective and that they are taking steps to remedy these defects. I hope that the crop cutting experiments to which my Honourable friend Mr. B. R. Sen referred and any other measures which Government may take will enable them to have the data required for a correct estimation of the yield of the wheat and rice crops. But, apart from the information relating to acreage and yield, the pamphlet which may be supplied should contain a brief description of the policies of the Provincial Governments regarding the procurement of foodgrains and their distribution. The pamphlet should also contain information regarding the areas that have been rationed and the extent to which the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee have been carried out. Again, it should enable us to know what the prices of foodgrains are and what are the prices of the articles required by the cultivators, to what extent people are making regular use of the ration cards held by them and how far the poor man is being helped to purchase his food at a reasonable cost, what steps have been taken to import foodgrains, whether the transport arrangements are satisfactory, whether the States and the Provinces concerned have taken any steps to popularise wheat, what are the subventions given to the Provincial Governments by the Central Government and the purpose for which they are given and so on. I understand, Sir, that a fairly large subvention has been given by the Central Government to the Government of the United Provinces. I should like to know what is the extent of this subvention and for what purpose it has been given, what was the loss sustained by the U. P. Government, what were the causes of this loss and what steps have been taken to minimise it in future, in so far as it was not due to the distribution of wheat and other foodgrains at a low price to persons whose income does not enable them to buy sufficient food for themselves and their families at the market rates. I hope, Sir, that Government will treat the suggestion that I have made seriously and will take care to provide us with the information that we need to offer considered criticism at the commencement of each session so that we may have time to acquaint ourselves with its contents.

Sir, my Honourable friend Mr. B. R. Sen covered a wide ground in dealing with the important issues that arise in connection with the procurement and distribution of food. But I am surprised that he was absolutely silent, or nearly silent, on two very important questions. The most important question to which he should have forcibly drawn the attention of the House was the inability of a fair percentage of the people to buy adequate food for themselves. He referred to the steps that are being taken by the Orissa Government to open subsidised shops for the benefit of the poorest classes. He also told us that the question of subsidising the poor man's food was under the consideration of Government.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: He also referred to Malabar and Cochin, I understand.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I will take them up later, Sir. But since you have referred to Malabar and Cochin, I should like to say immediately that, so far as I know, no concession is being shown to the people of Malabar in respect of prices. Government servants certainly belong to a privileged class everywhere, but the common man has to buy food at the market rates even though his resources may not permit him to buy an adequate quantity of food for his needs at the prevailing prices. As regards Cochin, the Cochin Government has lowered the price of wheat by 3 pias per lb. I am not

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.]

aware that any other kind of assistance is being given to the poor man in order to enable him to keep body and soul together. Sir, it is difficult to

3. P. M. speak on such a question with regard to the whole country. But after having travelled over from one-third to one-half of India, I think I can say without exaggeration that about 25 per cent. of the people are unable to buy sufficient food daily for their requirements. On the basis of the information that has been given to me I could have mentioned a higher figure, but I want to be as cautious as possible. I therefore place the percentage of those who require assistance at 25. In Cochin the full adult ration of rice is about 8 ounces per head, but this ration has been fixed in the hope, or at any rate in the belief, that only 80 per cent. of the people would be in a position to buy the foodgrains to the full extent to which they are entitled. The Cochin State expects that only four-fifths of the people would be in a position to buy 8 ounces of rice daily. The average adult ration per day therefore comes to only 6.4 ounces per day. In other words, if the Cochin Government felt that every consumer who was entitled to take advantage of the Government's offer would do so, it would have to reduce the ration of rice which it gives 6 days out of every 8 from 8 ounces to 6.4 ounces daily.

As regards Travancore, Sir, the position is even more difficult according to my information than in Cochin. I had the privilege of meeting a number of public men at Aleppy. Some of them were members of the State Congress, and some of the State Assembly, and some were connected with co-operative societies or had other means of receiving reliable information. According to them between 40 and 45 per cent. of the people are unable to get adequate food regularly. No one suggests that the poor people starve daily. But what is happening is that food that ought to suffice for 4 or 5 days is made to last for 6 or 7 days. The poor people, the people with straitened resources, buy food for 4 days and buy nothing for 3 days or if they are compelled to buy the whole week's ration at once, then all the ration cards held by a family would not be made use of.

Now, in the light, Sir, of what I have said the question of subsidising the poor man to enable him to buy his food assumes a much greater importance than was given to it by Mr. Sen. The question is a very important one. I know that the financial burden involved in it will be serious. But the present state of things is so unsatisfactory that whatever the expenditure involved in cheapening the cost of the poor man's food may be, immediate steps should be taken by Government to relieve his sufferings. I know, Sir, that even before the war there were millions of people in this unfortunate country who lived on the verge of starvation. But Government cannot use this fact to deny food to people who often did not have enough of it before the war. It ought to realise that their lot is harder than it was before the war because of the serious rise in the prices of foodgrains. These unfortunate people ought to receive their special care. Apart from this, rationing implies a social aim. It means that the Government have set before themselves the objective of providing everyone with the minimum food required to maintain him in good health. In view of this, Government cannot take shelter behind the plea that what is happening now is nothing new and that even before the war a fairly substantial percentage of the people of this country found it difficult to maintain not only their strength but even their lives.

The second question on which my friend Mr. Sen was absolutely silent was the quality of the foodstuffs that are being supplied at the present time. Wherever I have gone I have been inundated with complaints regarding the bad quality of rice, wheat, atta, and indeed of every kind of foodgrain that is being supplied at the ration shops. Sir, I could refer to the quality of the rice and wheat that are on sale in rural areas in Malabar. I could similarly refer to the quality of the foodgrains that are being sold in those parts of Travancore that I saw. I could speak of what is happening in the district of Coimbatore

in Madras, but I will not do so. I will refer only to what is happening in areas which concern the Government of India far more directly and closely than Madras or Travancore.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** What is the cause of all that?

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** Either the Honourable the Food Member or the Honourable Mr. Sen ought to answer this question.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** But what is your opinion? The Council would like to know your own opinion.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS:** Bad storage, Sir, if you will allow me to say so.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU:** And bad purchase.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** Bad storage is one of the reasons for the bad quality of the foodgrains that are supplied, but that is not the only reason. The other and even more important reason is the corruption that prevails among officers connected with the Department. Instances have been given to me in every province in which the rice or other foodgrains when imported contained an appreciable quantity of dust and grit—

**THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS:** And stones.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** I met some time ago a purchase officer of a Provincial Government who, when he complained to the appropriate officer of the Provincial Government in whose area he was making purchases regarding the quality of the foodgrains supplied to him, was advised to take whatever was being given to him lest he should have to report to his Government that he was not in a position to buy anything at all. In Delhi itself, till about two weeks ago the wheat that was sold contained quite a lot of dust and grit. During the last two weeks its quality has improved. Rice too of a better quality is being supplied now. While formerly mostly broken rice was on sale, now several other qualities of rice are to be found in the ration shops. Take, again, sugar and Khandsari sugar. The quality of sugar too is better than it was some time ago, but sugar of a good quality is not to be found uniformly in all the ration shops, and the khand-sari sugar is undoubtedly of a very inferior quality. Delhi is an area for which the Central Government are directly responsible. If they can allow inferior foodstuffs to be sold in this city, how can we expect them to put any pressure on the Provincial Governments in order to make them improve the quality of the foodstuffs sold by them? Ajmer-Merwara is another area for which the Government of India are directly responsible. According to my information, red wheat, barley, maize and millets are all, generally speaking, of an inferior quality, and in regard to wheat, barley and millets the complaint is that while the good stuff has been stored in the godowns of Government, the rotten stuff is being rammed down the throats of the people. I understand that a specimen of the wheat on sale at a ration shop in Ajmer was sent to the Public Analyst to the Government of the United Provinces. His report shows that the sample sent to him contained 10.7 per cent. of 'dirt and earthy material, 12.3 per cent. of barley, and 2.7 of other miscellaneous grains'.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Is your information authentic?

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** Sir, it was given to me by a public man of Ajmer, and I do not think that he is capable of committing so serious a crime as forging the signature of the Public Analyst. The quantity of wheat in the sample therefore amounted to 74.8 per cent. only. If Government want to be in a position to exert their moral pressure on the Provincial Governments, they ought to put their own house in order first.

Sir, according to the Gregory Report, we ought to import into this country about 1½ million tons of foodgrains. To be more accurate, the Committee recommends that we should maintain a reserve of half a million tons, and get a million tons annually for consumption in the country. If the needs of the people are considered, I have no doubt that the deficit in the quantity of foodgrains required in this country would turn out to be much more than a million or a million and a half tons.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** So far as I could gather from the speech of the Honourable Mr. Sen, it was due to shortage of shipping accommodation.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** On that point my Honourable friend Rai Bahadur Sri Narain Mahtha has given an adequate reply.

Sir, the import of food is therefore one of the most important points which concerns the country. According to the information which the Honourable Mr. Sen has been good enough to supply to me and has supplied to the House this morning, we received slightly less than 700,000 tons of foodgrains during the period September, 1943, to 11th November, 1944. Now, my Honourable friend the Food Member in his public statements on the food question has, I believe, repeatedly told us that we have received about 800,000 tons from His Majesty's Government. I should like to know how he came to make this statement when even up to the present time we have not received more than 700,000 tons. I am aware of the fact that His Majesty's Government have promised to send 400,000 tons more during the rest of the current year. I do not know whether they will be in a position to fulfil their promise. But even if we receive this additional quantity, we shall have received in the course of 18 months only 1,100,000 tons of foodgrains as against the 2,000,000 tons to which we are entitled.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** A million and a half tons, according to the Committee.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** The Foodgrains Committee recommended that we should in the first instance obtain a million and a half tons of foodgrains, and that half a million out of this should be used to build up a reserve the remaining million tons being used for distribution in the different deficit areas. The quantity that we require to import annually is therefore a million tons, but we have not been able to build up even the reserve of half a million tons which the Food Department laid great stress on. I do not want to find fault unnecessarily with the Food Department, but in view of the importance attached to the question of imports by the Central Advisory Council and the public at large, I think we are entitled to complain that the Food Member has not treated the question as seriously as he should have done, and that he has deluded the country with a more optimistic account of the situation than is warranted by the facts.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** That is untrue, I did not delude the country.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** If you say that the position is good and that the imports are 800,000 tons of grains—

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** I will explain.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** — and that more would be coming obviously you are creating a greater sense of security than the facts entitle you to do.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** I will explain that.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** I shall listen to my Honourable friend's explanation with great interest, but I can assure him that the feeling to which I have given is shared by most of the members of this House.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** It is wrong data: I will correct your data when I get up to speak.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** The data have been supplied by the Food Department, not data collected by me.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** You have not correctly read the statement, if I may say so.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: My Honourable friend says that I have not correctly read it. I will therefore read it to the House the information supplied to me by Mr. Sen:  
The heading is: Arrivals of Food-grains.

	Tons.
April 1943—March 1944 . . . . .	326,323
April 1944—Nov. (11th) 1944 . . . . .	368,450
	694,773
Balance . . . . .	405,227
	1,100,000

I take it that balance here means the balance to be received.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: May I straight-away correct this. The figure that I gave related to ships nominated to carry foodgrains. Some of these ships are still on the sea: they have not yet arrived. The figure which Mr. Sen gave relates to arrivals in India. I cannot guarantee the arrival of ships in this country on a particular date.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I think the latest public statement on the subject was made by the Honourable Member about a month ago, and we have not yet received the entire quantity.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: This is what His Majesty's Government said we would get by the end of September, but they did not guarantee. These days ships take much longer than we anticipate. They could only nominate ships.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRADY NATH KUNZRU: If His Majesty's Government did not guarantee it, why should the Food Member, instead of giving us the figures relating to actual arrivals—

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I never gave actual arrivals. You are misrepresenting—

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I take strong exception to the words used by the Honourable Member. I ask the Members on this side of the House to tell me, whether they are not under the same impression.

A FEW MEMBERS: Yes.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Will you read my statement?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:

"Of this quantity 650,000 tons have already been received, and 95,000 tons have been shipped."

This is a copy of the speech I have received from the Information and Broadcasting Department of the Honourable Member's speech in the other House.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Will you kindly total it up?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: The parts of the Honourable Member's speech which were published in the Delhi papers did not contain this information, but I was referring not to what he said or did not say in the Assembly, but to what he said in the statements made by him before the Assembly met.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: May I inquire whether you are quite satisfied that those ships have not been diverted to other channels.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: They have not been diverted to other channels. We have got bills of lading.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I shall be very glad if the quantity promised by His Majesty's Government and more is received. But my point is that the Government of India as our spokesman should talk only of the actual quantity of food received and should not tell us what they hope to receive. They have been hoping for a long time to persuade His Majesty's Government to implement the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, but they have not succeeded so far.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** That is begging the question, if I may say so.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** It is not begging the question in the slightest degree. What I have said shows that greater pressure has to be brought to bear on His Majesty's Government in order to make them send more foodgrains to this country than they have as yet done. We know their difficulties, but if in spite of them they are feeding the people of England, why cannot they shoulder the responsibility of sending a million and a half tons of foodgrains to this country. This quantity is a bagatelle as compared with that required for feeding the people of the United Kingdom.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** You may clear the situation further by stating the tonnage of the ships on the seas now.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** The tonnage on the seas as I said in the Assembly, is nearly a lakh of tons. It has still to come, but we have got bills of lading for it.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** There is another important point that I should like to urge in this connection, Thanks to the efforts of the Indian community in the United States of America, and particularly of Mr. J. J. Singh, the U.N.R.R.A. rules have been changed, and the authorities connected with it can be approached for assistance in the matter of import of foodgrains into this country. I should like to know whether the Government of India have taken any steps in this connection. According to a reply recently given in the House of Commons, the Government of India have not approached the U.N.R.R.A. authorities for any help in connection with the import of foodgrains into this country. I should like to know why they have not taken advantage of the amendment in the rules relating to the scope of work of the U.N.R.R.A. to which I have referred. However, even if they have not been alert in regard to this matter so far, will they take immediate steps to take advantage of the change in the U.N.R.R.A. rules and ask for adequate assistance for this country?

In spite, Sir, of the unfortunate turn the discussion took, I should not like to withhold its due meed of praise from the Food Department. I think every one here will admit that the Food Department is more efficient now than it was 12 months ago. It realises better now the needs of the country and is endeavouring to face the problems that have to be solved in a realistic spirit. It has however to go a long way yet—

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:** I agree.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:**—In order to deal effectively with the problems that must be effectively grappled with before the production, procurement and distribution of food can be placed on a satisfactory basis.

I was glad to hear, Sir, that my Honourable friend Sir J. P. Srivastava proposes to set up a Planning section in the Food Department. This will, I am sure, be regarded as a step in the right direction throughout the country. Adequate importance may not have been attached to it owing to the disbelief of the people at large in the desire or capacity of the Government to assist them properly. But we need not for that reason minimise the importance of the step announced by the Food Member. We all feel, Sir, that the food difficulties of India will not end with the conclusion of the war. Indeed, if the food available in this country is to be properly distributed, and if more food is to be grown, and the diet of the people is to be improved, it is necessary that the Food Department should be continued for many years to come. The Food Department should take such steps as would enable it to receive the maximum degree of public co-operation.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Rationing will have to be continued for several years after the war.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** I think so. If the diet of the people is to be changed, if it is to be made more balanced, rationing will certainly have to be continued for a pretty long time. There is no

other way, in my humble opinion, in which those elements can be introduced into the food of the people of India, particularly in the rice consuming areas, which are necessary for the maintenance of health and the development of strength. In view of this, it is necessary that the Food Department should be so constituted as to receive the maximum degree of public co-operation. I am, however, sorry to say that the facts that are within our knowledge do not warrant us in regarding this Department as an Indian Department. If we look at the superior personnel of the Department we find that generally speaking the key posts are held by Britishers. Again, during the last year, more Britishers have been appointed. Government required a Storage expert. They found nobody in this country who could help them. They have, therefore, appointed a European as their Storage expert. Again, Sir, they have appointed a white man as their Storage Adviser or Administrator. I do not know what his exact designation is. To refer only to one more instance, a retired R.A.F. officer, who, I understand, had no previous experience of rationing, has been appointed Assistant Rationing Officer. This is not the way in which my Honourable friend opposite can win our confidence and receive our co-operation. I draw attention prominently to this point in order to impress on him the importance, indeed the urgency, of staffing the Planning section, which is going to be created with Indians. In spite of the backwardness of this country in scientific matters I understand that it is possible for Government to get sufficient experts who will help them in laying plans for the future and in considering the food question from the nutritional point of view.

Sir, my Honourable friend Mr. B. R. Sen confined his statement to a consideration of the position regarding foodgrains. He was, however, entirely silent in regard to the distribution of sugar and jaggery. They are however, among the necessaries of life. Even if the production of sugar in this country is inadequate, I should like to know whether steps cannot be taken to increase the production of jaggery. I read a notification issued by the U. P. Government the other day in the newspapers the effect of which was to discourage the manufacture of jaggery. We cannot produce enough sugar. Is it not necessary that we should encourage the production of *gur* unless Government feel that whatever the quantity of sugar and *gur* produced in the country may be, the transport arrangements are not sufficient to enable them to send these things to the areas in which they are most wanted. If this is not their position, I would suggest to them first to increase the production of *gur* and second to import sugar from Java—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Can you do it now?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I do not know whether it is possible. It is a question of shipping space. But I see no reason why the Government of India should not inform His Majesty's Government of their requirements in respect of this essential foodstuff. Instead of being reasonable themselves, they might leave it to His Majesty's Government to decide whether it can comply with their request.

I have already referred, Sir, to the question of importing food from outside. I should now like to turn to the question of producing more food in this country. Mr. Tyson in the debate that took place in the other House recently claimed that the yield of rice in the year 1943-44 was 80.6 million tons as compared it with the average of the three prewar years, which was 26.5 million tons. If more rice has been produced in the country it can be of use to us only in so far as it is made available to the consumer. But if we are unable to procure even a grain more of rice than we could before, what is the good of the E. H. and L. Department telling us that its efforts have enabled it to increase the production of rice in this country. According to Mr. Tyson's statement we had in 1943-44 4.1 million tons of rice more than in the three years before the war. So far as I remember this surplus related mostly to Bengal. It was thought that the yield of the rice crop there exceeded the average by about 3½ million tons. The Bengal Government has in the first place denied the accuracy of the figures put forward by the Government of India. No less a

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personage than the Governor of Bengal has said that the first estimate of the yield of the rice crop was—

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Lands Member): If I may say so, these figures were supplied by the Bengal Government.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: If these figures were supplied by the Bengal Government, then it is for the Honourable Member and the Government of India to put pressure on the Bengal Government to part with some of the surplus which it has at its disposal now. In any case, Sir—

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Is the surplus established, Sir?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: That is a point—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: According to Mr. Sen nearly three-fourths of the total surplus goes to Bengal.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: In any case we have not been able to purchase any rice from Bengal. On the contrary the Central Government has during the last 12 months sent 230,000 tons of rice to Calcutta. It is clear therefore, Sir, that this surplus of 4.1 million tons to which Mr. Tyson referred in the Assembly is a myth. It is of no practical use to anybody in this country. It may be useful to the E. H. and L. Department from a statistical point of view, but it can give no satisfaction whatever to the Food Department or the public at large.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: May I interrupt the Honourable Member and say that it is not altogether a myth. The Honourable Member visited Bengal last year and discovered the scarcity there was in the villages and in the towns. That vacuum has been filled up by this surplus. Then again he must have noticed the decline in price that has taken place in Bengal in rice. That is also due to the surplus which the producer now is bringing into the market—

THE HONOURABLE MR. P. N. SAPRU: Not due to the bumper harvest?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: Of course due to the bumper harvest that Bengal secured. We have also tested these figures and statistics by simple crop tests and I think we can say that these figures were not far wrong when the Bengal Government supplied them to us. More and more rice is coming to the market. That is the result of the present bumper crop. As regards Calcutta, the Government of India undertook to supply the town of Calcutta from outside sources. But the Bengal Government as far as I remember—I do not know the exact figures—have made large purchases and built up some stocks. Perhaps the Honourable the Food Member will tell you what those stocks are. I would not claim that this result is due to the policy which the Agricultural Department has followed. It is due to two factors, price incentive and a good monsoon. A bad monsoon can spoil all the efforts of the Agricultural Department. The Gods were good and we secured a bumper harvest.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT (to the Honourable Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru): I have allowed you more than one hour. Will you now try and conclude your speech?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I am sorry to have taken so much time, but I will finish very soon. Even my Honourable friend Sir Jogendra Singh has referred to the easier position that prevails now in Bengal. But did Bengal require 3½ million tons more of rice in order to tide over last year's crisis? Bengal had normally a carry over of about a million tons so far as I remember. It did not therefore need all the 3½ million tons for its own needs.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: The Honourable Member knows that the imports from Burma came to about 1½ million tons every year. That deficit has been made up also.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I certainly know what the imports from Burma were. But I also know that the position in the country for which really the import of foodgrains was required is no easier in respect of rice than it was before.

Sir, this brings me to the two suggestions that I want to make. One is that in order to bring about better co-ordination between the production of food on the one side and its procurement and distribution on the other, these tasks should be entrusted to one and the same Department. I do not want to cast any reflection either on the Food Member or on my Honourable friend Sir Jogendra Singh, but I cannot but characterise the present arrangement as exceedingly unsatisfactory. The responsibility for all the questions connected with the availability of food should be shouldered entirely by one Department.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Do you not think that under the present system a wholesome check is kept on Departments?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I did not know that the policy of checks and counter-checks had to be resorted to even in regard to the constitution of the Viceroy's Council.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: That prevails in the best of Governments.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I thought that the Members of the Government were the trusted colleagues of His Excellency the Viceroy—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: What about their Departments?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: There is no team spirit.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Let me say again Sir, without casting any reflection on any of the existing departments of the Government that the present arrangement which involves divided responsibility is a highly unsatisfactory one.

The other suggestion that I want to make is that the Government of Bengal should be asked to shoulder its burdens to a much greater extent than it has done. My Honourable friend Mr. Sen referred to the matter and said that in future the needs of Bengal would be considered on their merits. I do not quite understand what he meant. If he meant that Bengal would continue to receive assistance in the matter of the import of other foodgrains than rice, I have no objection to his statement. But if he meant that the Government of India might even continue to send rice to Calcutta, then I must say that this is quite unjustifiable and that he has not given sufficient consideration to the needs of other parts of India, particularly of Madras, Cochin and Travancore. If what has fallen from my Honourable friend Sir Jogendra Singh is correct, if it represents the position at the present time, there is no reason why the Government of India should go on lavishing its assistance on Bengal.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: Because it is more vocal, and Madras is not.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I do not entirely agree with my Honourable friend. I think that the position of Bengal was an extraordinarily difficult one last year, and it required all the assistance that could be given to it. But as the position has happily improved, it is the duty of the Government of India to ask the Government of Bengal to

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.]

stand on its own legs and to use the resources which have been so freely placed at the disposal of Bengal for the relief of the unfortunate people of Madras in general and of the west coast in particular.

Sir, I do not wish to take the time of the House any more, but if you will extend your indulgence so far as to enable me to raise one more point, I shall be very grateful to you. What I want to say now concerns the popularisation of those foodgrains to which the people in the rice-consuming areas are not used. A great deal has been said about the duty of the people living in Orissa, Madras, Cochin and Travancore to accustom themselves to the use of wheat. I am entirely of that view myself, and I think it is the duty of every public man who has the interests of his countrymen at heart to support any move on the part of Government which would make the diet of the people more balanced and therefore more nourishing. But we can ask the people to change their dietetic habits only to a limited extent. If men, who have all their lives been used to rice, are suddenly asked to switch over to wheat or maize or millets, the Government of India cannot expect to receive a satisfactory response. Suppose the people of the Punjab or the United Provinces were asked to take half their rations in rice, would there not be a public outcry against Government? This illustration should enable the authorities to realise that their policy with regard to an alteration in the diet of the people can succeed only if it is kept within manageable bounds. Taking the daily adult ration to be 16 ounces, I do not think that the people can reasonably be asked to take more than three or four ounces of it in wheat. Apart from this, if unfamiliar foodgrains have to be popularised, adequate care must be taken to see that their quality is good. Further, proper steps must be taken to show the people how the new foodgrains can be used. The Cochin Government deserves every praise for its enterprise in this connection. I think it is the most efficient administration in the country which has co-operated with the Government of India in the procurement and distribution of foodgrains and the popularisation of wheat. I wish that Madras and Travancore and other places would take a leaf out of the book of Cochin and establish restaurants which would enable the people to know what palatable dishes can be made of wheat. The Cochin Government is not incurring very heavy expenditure on this account. Its restaurants both in urban and rural areas are so popular that private agencies have come forward to take them up, and I understand that the Government is required to give a subsidy of only about a thousand rupees monthly in the shape of house-rent, etc.

Lastly, Sir, I should like to point out that the Food Department would succeed to a very large extent in accustoming the people to wheat if it could supply them with more sugar and jaggery. Most of the people who do not know how to prepare wheat on the western coast use it in the form of gruel. They do not like it unless it is properly sweetened, and if the Central authorities can supply the people of the western coast with a larger quantity of sugar and jaggery, I have no doubt that they will be able to push up the sale of wheat. Mr. President, I am very grateful to you for the indulgence which

4 P.M. you have shown me. I have been able to put forward the main points which it was my desire to bring to the notice of Government and the Council. I hope, Sir, that in spite of the fact that we have pointed out serious defects in the administration and the policy of the Food Department, Government will regard us as engaged with them in a common task, the task of improving the health of the people. We are prepared to extend our co-operation to them, but there rests a corresponding responsibility on them in this connection. They have to take us into their confidence to a greater extent and supply us with much more information than they have been inclined to do up to the present time.

THE HONOURABLE SIR BUTA SINGH (Punjab: Sikh): Sir, I have heard with attention the Honourable Mr. Sen's speech, and I have no doubt that the Food Member and he himself have given their anxious care to resolving the

difficult problem of procuring and distributing food over this vast Continent. I cannot however conceal that certain aspects of the Food Policy, so far as I understand have puzzled me.

One of these is the Regional Controls over the outflow of supplies from surplus Provinces and States to the deficit areas by putting a ring round Provincial Boundaries and allowing foodgrains upto the quantities and to destinations previously decided upon. These controls have impeded the natural channels of trade which secured food and distributed it through their multifarious agencies, guaranteeing quality and equitable prices of grains all over the Country. The Primary Producer has been denied the advantage of free market. In enforcing this policy of Controls the Government of India should be deemed to have taken upon itself the consequent obligation of ensuring that all available surpluses are purchased in good time and transported early and that a fair price is paid to the producer.

The working of the Basic Plan in the Punjab has shown that in practice the Government of India is unable to fulfil their obligations. For a few months after May 1943, when a record crop of wheat was marketed, the transport was completely inadequate and considerable quantities of foodgrains got damaged on Railway platforms and elsewhere. Transport difficulties have been experienced, to a smaller or greater extent since then. Probably these transport difficulties would have been there even if the Government of India had not imposed export restrictions on account of heavy War traffic, but even with such transport that is available, there is widespread belief that booking restrictions and priority manipulations have operated to the detriment of the Punjab Grower and Trader.

Apart from this, however, the Government of India have signally failed to take over surpluses and the most noticeable example is of gram. Early in 1944 the Punjab had an additional surplus of about 200,000 tons of gram of the 1943-44 crop. The Government of India could not indicate any method of disposal and ultimately allowed the movement of this quantity by traders on private permits. The Punjab Government taking into account the transport situation, issued permits for a very much smaller quantity, but even this quantity was not transported as these movements were given as low a priority as (9).

In 1944-45 the situation was worse. After accepting a large quota of gram for export, the Government of India failed to get the necessary despatching instructions and destination stations from the Recipient Provinces and a number of them repudiated their quotas. The result was that the entire exportable surplus of my Province was locked up. This resulted in the deterioration of valuable foodgrains and consequent loss to the country when scarcity prevailed over wide areas. After about six months of the crop year passed and after repeated protests from the Punjab, the Government of India have now allowed export under private permits. It will be noticed that six months transport has been lost and now these gram movements have to compete with urgent movements of khariff foodgrains and cotton, particularly of rice, which is immediately required in deficit areas. The quantity of gram which can move under this system is extremely limited and unfortunately the surplus of this year's crop has also been allowed to go waste and the Central Government have failed to discharge their obligations.

There is a strong rumour, and I would like the Government to deny it, if I am wrong that the Bengal Government is selling in the Punjab Railway receipts of gram, which Bengal Government have stored in the Punjab for being taken to that Province at Rs. 7-12-0 per maund when the market price of gram in the Punjab is about Rs. 6-4-0 per maund only. It is an open secret that gram export is extremely remunerative business and there is a scramble for gram permits, which indicates that it is not because there is abundance of gram or that the prices are low in those Provinces who are unwilling to take quantities allocated to them, but there seems some other reason. It is difficult to understand what mysterious reason exists behind the refusal to take gram by provinces where high level of prices prevail. In face

[Sir Buta Singh]

of difficult shipping position regarding imports it is unfortunate that an important foodgrain of this country should be allowed to go waste in this manner and both the Grower in the Punjab and the Consumer in other Provinces should suffer. My remarks about gram apply to pulses also. The Punjab's surplus has been artificially locked up.

Another fact which is noteworthy is the disparity of prices which exists between the neighbouring Provinces. Normally difference of price of wheat and rice between the Punjab and the United Provinces was of a few annas per maund, but now whereas the prevalent price of wheat in the Punjab is about Rs. 8-4-0 a maund, the price in the U. P. is Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 higher. In the case of rice the same disparity exists. This situation deprives the Punjab Grower and the Trader his legitimate profits and deprives the U. P. Consumer of getting his requirements at a reduced price. The normal working of economic laws has been interfered with and the Punjab Zamindar rightly complains that his interests are being subordinated to those of others.

A great deal is being said now regarding a good deal of money flowing in villages. Some of this money in the Punjab comes from those who are giving their lives in the defence of the Empire, and it is a matter over which Government should not mourn, but rejoice that the general condition of the large population is improving and should set about to secure this improvement permanently.

The Grow More Food Campaign so successfully working in the Provinces and States will have a serious set back unless the Government of India's policy is based on long term prosperity of the Grower who should be assured a fair price for his produce, as prices are the best incentive to encourage Grow More Food Campaign.

It appears to the Food Growers in the Punjab that the Government of India seem on the whole, to be far keener at driving a hard bargain in the matter of prices than in obtaining supplies and seem to have no conception either of immediate necessity of encouraging production of foodcrops by the payment of adequate prices or of the necessity of a long range policy of supporting the agriculturist. Instead they seem to take as their standard of fair prices, the price which prevailed in the years before the War and to contemplate with equanimity return to those conditions. The fact is that in prewar years, the prices of foodgrains in India generally and in the Punjab particularly were far below than even the cost of production. The present war, it is true, has given an impetus towards higher prices but those who know the condition of the agriculturist in the Punjab, their standard of living, and what is more, the exorbitant prices they are being made to pay for their much needed consumption goods, will realise that these prices are at best, a just return in terms of present day conditions. The present state of affairs is that wheat prices were depressed from about Rs. 12-8-0 last year to Rs. 9-8-0 early this wheat-year and Rs. 7-8-0 in about mid-September. It was only after repeated protests from growers that the wheat price has improved from the low and uneconomic level of Rs. 7-8-0 to about Rs. 8-4-0 now.

The Government of India have interfered in the manipulation of foodgrain prices, and by arbitrarily stopping making purchases, they aim at depressing the prices in the Punjab. We are convinced of this particularly in view of higher prices paid for wheat to Sind. In Sind although the Government buys wheat under its own scheme at lower rates, the Government of India have been paying Rs. 9-8-0 per maund consistently. In U. P. prices rose even above the statutory maximum. With such circumstances prevailing in other wheat exporting Provinces there is no reason for the Government of India to aim at depressing the price of wheat in the Punjab, by deliberate stoppage of purchases. The position with reference to the Government of India's purchase policy in the Punjab is more glaring in respect of rice. This

commodity, as Sir Henry French pointed out after his recent Food Survey in India, falls short of all India requirements. Then, why under such conditions large surpluses were not immediately purchased and removed from the Punjab and supplied to deficit areas?

Finally, I should like to say that it is not any rigid adherence to a policy conceived in the secluded isolation of Delhi but an elastic policy which takes into account the day to day position of the producer and the consumer and modifies its policy to meet the position that will benefit the Country.

THE HONOURABLE MR. K. W. MEALING (Bengal Chamber of Commerce): Mr. President, the whole question of foodstuffs for the people is of such vital importance that I feel I should not fail to make some contribution to this debate.

Of all human requirements, food is the most important and, in time of war and disruption the balance of production and consumption is not only liable to get out of adjustment but is most difficult to get back into balance.

In normal times a balance of a sort—not always a very good sort—is maintained by the law of supply and demand, the law of economics. In abnormal times the balance is destroyed and unless Government steps in quickly and effectively, the people suffer. We all know that that is what has happened in India. The balance was destroyed and Government were reluctantly persuaded to step in both late and, to a large extent, inefficiently.

What is wanted is more efficient food planning based on real knowledge. It seems to me we have three main and several subsidiary problems. The main problems, to my mind, are three in number:

*Firstly* the growth and distribution of enough food of all types to stop starvation.

*Secondly* to prevent the pendulum from swinging to the other extreme and prices falling below production cost. These two comprise the immediate problem.

*Thirdly* the planning for the future, of a better diet both quantitative and qualitative for the masses of this country.

Now, Sir, it may be, I say it may be, that we are reaching a stage when as a result of the high prices of recent months, the first objective may be reached. But, unless special action is taken, how are Government going to solve the second problem? And by what means are they going to achieve the third objective?

The first difficulty, I suggest, lies in the lack and utter unreliability of statistics. No business however small can be run successfully in the absence of reliable figures of output, cost, market value, sales and profit or loss. The Government of India have, with the Provincial Governments, perforce entered the biggest business in the country, the food business, and I regret to say that I can place no reliance whatsoever in the figures—the so-called statistics they have so far produced. I fear that in this matter the Provincial Governments are probably the chief offenders and clearly unless the Government of India can get reliable statistics from the Provinces they obviously cannot collate them so as to have anything of value real in their planning. If this is the position, Sir, it can only be described as lamentable. I must urge, therefore, that whatever steps however drastic may be necessary to rectify this position they must be taken and reliable figures obtained.

When this has been done it should be possible for a definite plan to be evolved and the co-ordination of the Provinces in that plan secured. That plan and that co-ordination should decide what is, under present conditions, a fair and proper price both to the producer and consumer and should not, once that stability has been secured, be allowed to fluctuate to the detriment of one or the other.

[Mr. K. W. Mealing]

Then, Sir, there is the question of enforcement. Enforcement of fair weighing, enforcement of the controlled price and, what is no less important, enforcement of quality and severe punishment for adulteration. This applies especially to the problem of Milk. Milk, the most important article of diet to the coming generations, is in lamentably short supply and is particularly subject to adulteration. If Government set up a special section with wide powers and adequate finance for the sole purpose of encouraging the supply of milk and milk products it should be a great boon to the people.

It is natural that in discussing foodstuffs our thoughts turn principally to foodgrains. We are liable to overlook the fact that other foodstuffs equally important from the point of view of balancing the diet are getting completely out of hand so far as prices are concerned. I realize that control of foods which are quickly perishable is a far more difficult problem than that of foodgrains which can be stored, but this problem is also becoming one of urgency and hardship to the poor. Milk, vegetables, fish, eggs, all are standing at absurdly high prices.

Sir, previous speakers have referred to India's population. The future food production of the country must be correlated to the needs of this expanding population unless disaster is to overtake India periodically.

Now, Sir, I must say a word about Bengal. We have made our mistakes in Bengal. That I cannot deny. We have been roundly criticised for those mistakes. Indeed I have been among the critics. But, Sir, I ask the indulgence of this Honourable House to say something in defence of the Province from which I come.

No other Province except Assam stood for months in daily expectation of invasion on a large scale by land. In such conditions can you blame the poor cultivator for being more inclined to hide or realize his asset than to cultivate and plant for the possible invader to reap? What other Province has had such a strain put upon its transport, its storage, indeed its whole economic life—again I say with the exception of Assam—as Bengal had whilst the war moved towards its eastern border.

I am not here to defend the actions or inactions of the Government of Bengal at that time, but I do know that among the Ministry and officials in Bengal today there are men who are honestly doing their best to improve the food situation in the Province. No other province (except, as I said before, Assam) has been or still is so near to or so much affected by, the impact of war, and I ask the other and more fortunate provinces who have not been through this experience, to have some compassion, some sympathy in their hearts for Bengal and Assam. In undertaking to feed one specific and easily demarcated part of the Province, namely Calcutta, the Government of India has shown some compassion and for that they have Bengal's thanks.

But, Sir, assuming that the overall situation is appreciably better, there still remain the problems of price stabilization, adulteration and enforcement, and to these I would direct the Food Member's urgent attention.

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. K. DAS (Orissa: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I did not want to take part in the debate, but since I found that nobody here or elsewhere has been able to give a proper account of the woes and difficulties of Orissa I thought it my bounden duty to give to Honourable Members of this House some account of its very grave predicament. Some of the members here have spoken, and spoken vehemently, about the unreliability of statistics of crops and of exportable surplus. Orissa is supposed to be a surplus province. But I spoke on it during the last food debate and I then said and I still maintain that Orissa is not a surplus province. Although Government statistics, which are as everybody knows most unreliable, shows it to be a surplus province, it is not one. I also made it clear last time that Orissa's exportable surplus was made up of two factors, the yield of crops from Orissa proper

and the yield of crops that flow into Orissa from feudatory States. Orissa is surrounded by a large number of small feudatory States and crops from these areas get through the river Mahanadi which flows through Cuttack. Orissa's crop yield is estimated on the terms of these two figures, from Orissa proper and from Orissa States. I still maintain that Orissa is not a surplus province and the statistics on which the Government of India have taken it to be a surplus province are open to question. Surpluses in recent years have been nil and added to that the recent floods have played great havoc in the country and have denuded it of about 2 lakhs acres of crop in the districts of Puri, Ganjam and Balasore. The loss of 20 lakhs of its produce has added to its misery. It is a matter of regret that the Government of India have not taken notice of this natural calamity and have levied a quota of about 21 lakhs maunds of rice on Orissa on the assumption that Orissa's exportable surplus amounted annually to about 30 lakhs of maunds. Sir, last year the Food Secretary while referring to overenthusiastic activities of certain officials in certain provinces really meant Orissa and had it not been for the good offices of the then Ministry and those also of some of the district officers there, who were able to prevent the outflow of foodgrains from Orissa to Bengal and the neighbouring provinces, the famine in Orissa would perhaps have been of a worse character than was experienced or visualised in Bengal. In spite of this fact, the Government of India chose not to take cognizance of these calamities and difficulties and levied a quota of about 21 lakhs maunds of rice on Orissa. Sir, this has accentuated the situation in Orissa. As a matter of fact, there is acute food shortage in the countryside and from reports that I have received it is very clear indeed that people in the districts of Ganjam and Puri are suffering very badly.

Another point that I want to make is that, in spite of all efforts the Provincial Government have chosen not to reduce the price of paddy available to the poor man. Although, as the Honourable Mr. Sen has said, several subsidised grain shops have been opened where rice sells at 3 to 4 seers to the rupee, the number of such shops is very limited indeed, and I doubt very much if more than about 10 such shops have been started over the whole Province up to now. The usual price now obtaining in Orissa is about 2½ seers a rupee. That works out at a little more than six annas a seer, whereas before the war the usual price of coarse rice in Orissa was somewhere around 16 to 20 seers to the rupee. As I have said, the people are in great difficulty, especially the poorer classes who have very limited purchasing power. As you know, the people of Orissa are extremely poor. They have no industries to employ them. For some years past they had been migrating to other provinces to find a living. Now, with the Japanese invasion of Burma, and with the coming of industrial centres under the threat of enemy action, most of the landless labour class have come back to their homes. There is thus no employment for them at home and they are practically starving, with the price of rice ranging between 2 and 2½ seers a rupee. If it is not the intention of the Government of India to fix a statutory price in provinces but to leave it to the goodwill of the provincial authorities, it should be the concern of this Government not to disturb the natural outflow and inflow of trade in those areas. For example, I would like to point out that if these 21 lakhs of maunds of rice were not taken out from Orissa, I believe the natural causes of demand and supply would operate and prices would naturally come down. To take it out at such a time, when, as I have said, about 20 lakhs of maunds of paddy have been lost, to that province, it would be most cruel to the people and it would spell disaster to them.

I have just another point to make, and it is that, if the food policy of the Government of India is to be co-ordinated, I agree with the Honourable Pandit Kunzru when he said that production, procurement and distribution should be practically in one department, because only by placing the responsibility on one particular department can the whole thing be managed well. If rationing has to go on for some time even after the war, and if balanced diet has to be provided to all the people of India, the Government of India should

[Mr. N. K. Das]

in the first instance try and collect very reliable statistics of outturns and then launch on an all-India policy of controlling foodgrains and of providing a balanced diet to the people.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Before I adjourn the House, I would like to give a general warning to Honourable Members who have not spoken today. As I understand there are many Honourable Members who are desirous of speaking on this subject, their speeches will have to be very brief tomorrow. At 4 o'clock tomorrow evening I shall call upon the Honourable the Food Member to give his reply.

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The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, the 15th November, 1944.