

Wednesday, 23rd February, 1944

# COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

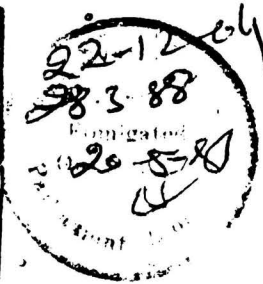
VOLUME I, 1944

*(15th February to 6th April, 1944)*

## SIXTEENTH SESSION

OF THE

## FOURTH COUNCIL OF STATE, 1944



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# CONTENTS

	PAGES		PAGES	
<b>Tuesday, 15th February, 1944—</b>			<b>Thursday, 24th February, 1944—</b>	
Members Sworn	1	Questions and Answers	155—169	
Postponement of the date for the Presentation of the Railway Budget, 1944-45	1	Bills passed by the Assembly laid on the table	169—170	
Messages from His Excellency the Governor General	1—2	Central Advisory Board of Education	170	
Committee on Petitions	2	Standing Committee for the De- partment of Information and Broadcasting	170	
Congratulations to recipients of Honours	2—3	Resolution <i>re</i> Price-control and supply of requirements of agri- culturists—Adopted	170—184	
Death of Khan Bahadur Ihtisham Hyder Chaudhury	3	Resolution <i>re</i> Rehabilitation of the economic structure—With- drawn	184—195	
Governor General's Assent to Bills	4	Resolution <i>re</i> Manufacture of broad gauge locomotives—To <i>be continued</i>	195—202	
Bills passed by the Legislative As- sembly laid on the table	4	Statement of Business	203	
<b>Wednesday, 16th February, 1944—</b>			<b>Wednesday, 29th February, 1944—</b>	
Questions and Answers	5—16	Members Sworn	205	
Notices of Motions for Adjournment	16—18	Questions and Answers	205—212	
Statements, etc., laid on the table	18—19	Statement laid on the table	212—219	
Information <i>re</i> Questions laid on the table	19—27	Standing Committee for Roads, 1944-45	219	
Presentation of the Railway Budget, 1944-45	27—32	Standing Committee for the De- partment of Posts and Air	219	
<b>Thursday, 17th February, 1944—</b>			Standing Committee on Pilgrima- ge to the Hejaz	219
Address by His Excellency the Viceroy to the members of the Central Legislature	33—39		Standing Committee on Emigra- tion	219
<b>Friday, 18th February, 1944—</b>			Standing Committee for the De- partment of Information and Broadcasting	219
Questions and Answers	41—53		Coal Mines Safety (Stowing) Am- endment Bill—Considered and passed	220
Bill passed by the Legislative As- sembly laid on the table	53		Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	220—221
Resolution <i>re</i> Future constitution of India on federal principles— Negatived	53—69		Indian Aircraft (Amendment) Bill —Considered and passed	221—227
Resolution <i>re</i> Amendment of the Defence of India Rules—Nega- tived	69—96		Transfer of Property (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	227
Resolution <i>re</i> Price control and requirements of agriculturists— Moved	97		Insurance (Amendment) Bill— Considered and passed	227
Statement of Business	97		Presentation of the General Budget, 1944-45	228—244
<b>Monday, 21st February, 1944—</b>			<b>Tuesday, 7th March, 1944—</b>	
Members Sworn	99		Statement, etc., laid on the table	245
Questions and Answers	99—110		Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table	245
Statements, etc., laid on the table	110—113		Standing Committee for Civil De- fence Branch of the Defence Department	245
Central Advisory Board of Educa- tion	113		Standing Committee for Roads, 1944-45	245
Standing Committee for the De- partment of Information and Broadcasting	113		Standing Committee for the De- partment of Posts and Air	245
Coffee Market Expansion (Amend- ment) Bill—Considered and passed	113		General discussion of the General Budget, 1944-45	245—296
Central Excises and Salt Bill— Considered and passed	113—121		Statement of Business	296
Statement of Business	121		<b>Monday, 13th March, 1944—</b>	
<b>Wednesday, 23rd February, 1944—</b>			Questions and Answers	297—304
Members Sworn	123		Standing Committee for the Labour Department	304
Death of Mrs. Gandhi	123—124		Standing Committee for the Civil Defence Branch of the Defence Department	304
Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz	124		Cantonment (Amendment) Bill— Considered and passed	304—310
Standing Committee on Emigra- tion	124			
General Discussion of the Railway Budget, 1944-45	124—153			

	PAGES		PAGE
<b>Wednesday, 15th March, 1944—</b>		Death of Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan Tiwana	516—517
Questions and Answers	311—319	Standing Committee for the Department of Supply	534
Standing Committee for the Civil Defence Branch of the Defence Department	319—320	<b>Thursday, 30th March, 1944—</b>	
Resolution <i>re</i> Manufacture of broad gauge locomotives—Adopted	320—331	Members Sworn	553
Resolution <i>re</i> Industrial Commission to review existing industrial situation, etc.—Postponed to next session	332—342	Indian Finance Bill— <i>To be continued</i>	553—567, 567—591
Resolution <i>re</i> Import of chemical fertilizers—Withdrawn	342—349	Central Advisory Council for Railways	567
Resolution <i>re</i> Appointment of an Indian as Director General of Archaeology—Negatived	349—358	<b>Friday, 31st March, 1944—</b>	
<b>Thursday, 16th March, 1944—</b>		Indian Finance Bill— <i>concl'd.</i>	593—612
Questions and Answers	359—370	<b>Tuesday, 4th April, 1944—</b>	
Defence Consultative Committee	371	Members Sworn	613
Central Advisory Council for Railways	371	Questions and Answers	613—627
Standing Committee for the Labour Department	371	Information <i>re</i> Questions laid on the table	625—626
Motion <i>re</i> Food situation— <i>To be continued</i>	371—407	Statements, etc., laid on the table	626—627
<b>Friday, 17th March, 1944—</b>		Message from the Legislative Assembly	627
Death of Mr. Ramdas Pantulu	409—410	Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table	627
Motion <i>re</i> Food situation— <i>concluded</i>	411—445	Central Committee of the Tuberculosis Association of India	628
<b>Wednesday, 22nd March, 1944—</b>		Standing Committee for the Department of Commerce	628
Members Sworn	447	Defence Consultative Committee	628
Questions and Answers	447—451	Standing Committee for the Food Department	628
Indian Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	451	Hindu Code, Part II (Marriage) Bill—Referred to Joint Committee	628—636
Resolution <i>re</i> Permanent exchange value of the rupee—Negatived	451—469	Motion <i>re</i> Nomination of Members of the Council of State to the Joint Committee	636
Resolution <i>re</i> Rights of citizenship for Indians in the U. S. A.—Adopted	469—480	Governing Body of the Indian Research Fund Association	636
Resolution <i>re</i> Employment of women in coal mines—Negatived	480—487	Statement of Business	636—637
Statement by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief	487—488	<b>Wednesday, 5th April, 1944—</b>	
<b>Monday, 27th March, 1944—</b>		Central Committee of the Tuberculosis Association of India and Standing Committee for the Commerce Department	639
Members Sworn	489	Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table	639
Questions and Answers	489—496	Indian Income-tax (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	639—642
Statements, etc., laid on the table	496—497	Motion <i>re</i> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Agreement— <i>To be continued</i>	642—650
Information <i>re</i> Questions laid on the table	497—500	Statement of Business	650
Standing Committee for the Department of Supply	500	<b>Thursday, 6th April, 1944—</b>	
Standing Committee for the Department of Commerce	500	Members Sworn	651
Central Committee of the Tuberculosis Association of India	500	Questions and Answers	651—654
Governing Body of the Indian Research Fund Association	501	Resolution <i>re</i> Withdrawal of Regulations restricting entry of Indian immigrants into Kenya—Adopted	654—668
Standing Committee for the Department of Food	501	Resolution <i>re</i> Increase of Muslims in the Central Services—Negatived	668—684
Indian Coconut Committee Bill—Considered and passed	501—509	Delhi Muslim Wakfs (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	684
Statement of Business	509—510	Protective Duties Continuation Bill—Considered and passed	684—685
<b>Wednesday, 29th March, 1944—</b>		Factories (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	685—686
Members Sworn	511	Defence Consultative Committee	686
Questions and Answers	511—516	Standing Committee for the Food Department	686
Messages from His Excellency the Governor General	516	Motion <i>re</i> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Agreement—Adopted	686—6
Indian Finance Bill, 1944— <i>To be continued</i>	516, 517—534, 534—552		

## COUNCIL OF STATE

Wednesday, 23rd February, 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. N. R. PILLAI (Commerce Secretary).

### DEATH OF MRS. GANDHI.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, since we met last, we have received with profound regret the news of the death of Mrs. Gandhi. Though she was quiet and unassuming to a degree and kept herself in the background, she was a national figure. By her devotion to her husband and her self-sacrifices she won a place in the hearts of millions of her countrymen. I am sure that her death is being mourned today by the entire nation. Our hearts go out to Mahatma Gandhi in his sorrow. Mrs. Gandhi, by the life she led and the work she did for her country, shed lustre on Indian womanhood and raised the moral stature of her country. This is the day of her funeral. You, Sir, and I hope the whole House will, understand our feelings when we say that we are so overcome with grief as to be unable to take part in the discussion of the Railway Budget today. I hope, Sir, that in view of the solemnity of the occasion, the whole House will adjourn as a mark of respect to Mrs. Gandhi's memory. Indeed, it will be fitting if we all send a message of condolence to Mahatma Gandhi in his bereavement and make him feel that all of us, no matter what our political opinions may be, feel deeply for him in his distress.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Honourable Pandit Kunzru and Honourable Members, we are all very grieved to hear the sad news of the death of Mrs. Gandhi and I have no doubt that there will be universal sorrow on this occasion and deep sympathy for Mr. Gandhi. As regards the suggestion made by the Honourable Kunzru, I am sorry to inform him that under the Act of 1935, the day is fixed by the Governor General for the discussion of the Railway Budget and I have no power whatsoever to adjourn the discussion to some other day. The discussion must take place today according to the Act of 1935. However, I am prepared, with the approval and consent of the Honourable Members, to adjourn the House for half an hour out of respect for Mrs. Gandhi's memory and I hope that Honourable Members will agree to that suggestion. As regards the sending of the telegram proposed by the Honourable Pandit Kunzru, I leave the matter entirely to the Honourable the Leader of the House who will let us know what he proposes to do.

\*THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa: Muhammadan): Sir, on behalf of my Party I associate myself with the feelings of sorrow which have been expressed on the occasion of the death of Mrs. Gandhi. I hope that irrespective of our politics it will be realised that this is an hour of trial for a man who has an eminence second to none in India and it will be fitting that we should adjourn for some time and a message of condolence might, if possible to the Government, be sent to the bereaved husband.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN (Leader of the House): Sir, we have received the news of the death of Mrs. Gandhi with sorrow and I agree with you that we might adjourn for about half an hour. As regards the sending of a telegram of condolence on behalf of the House, I do not think we ought to do so as it would be a bad precedent. Therefore, I do not agree to that suggestion.

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\*Not corrected by the Honourable Member.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Is it your pleasure that the Council should be adjourned for half an hour?

**HONOURABLE MEMBERS:** "Yes".

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** The Council will now adjourn for half an hour.

The Council then adjourned till Twenty Minutes to Twelve of the Clock.

The Council re-assembled at Twenty Minutes to Twelve of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Honourable Members, I will put off questions till tomorrow because many members are absent and will not be able to put the questions. I have considered the matter and in order to save time also, we will deal with questions tomorrow. We will proceed now with the Motions.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON PILGRIMAGE TO THE HEJAZ.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. R. N. BANERJEE:** Sir, I move:

"That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct, two Muslims members to sit on the Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz, the term of office of the present members of which expires on the 31st March, 1944."

The Motion was adopted.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE IN EMIGRATION.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. R. N. BANERJEE:** Sir, I move:—

"That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct, four non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee on Emigration during 1944-45."

The Motion was adopted.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** With reference to the Motions which have just been adopted by the Council, I have to announce that nominations to the Committees will be received by the Secretary up to 11 A.M. on Monday, the 28th February, 1944, and the date of election, if necessary, will be announced later.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE RAILWAY BUDGET, 1944-45.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** We shall now proceed with the general discussion of the Railway Budget. I propose to fix 20 minutes for individual members to address the House. I think this is necessary in view of many members having appealed to me that they do not get sufficient time to speak as most of the time is occupied by some leading members of the House. I have therefore come to the conclusion that I should follow the practice which is prevailing in the Assembly of prescribing 20 minutes.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO (Nominated Non-Official):** Sir, I would in the first instance offer my congratulations to the Honourable the War Transport Member for his second very prosperous Budget. He handled the Railway Administration with a firm hand assisted by the Chief Commissioner for Railways and met every possible demand and urgent demands of the military very effectively. This is no small task to achieve and in the present circumstances of the war it is very creditable that the Railway Administration has been able to rise to the occasion. Not only this. The Honourable Member has a very large number of capital works. About 750 miles of railway have to be doubled and a fourth line has to be introduced so as to remove congestion of the war on the three lines of E. I. Ry. In addition to this they had to import 390 engines for broad gauge and 288 for metre gauge. A large number of wagons had to be indented for and in the next month we will have these engines and wagons as required. Then we have got about 106 engines to be delivered next month and also engines and wagons for the metre gauge. All this shows forecasting and ascertaining of the requirements and they accordingly propose to import these. These are for war purposes and the machines that are imported may not last 30 or 40 years, but the whole thing is an emergent war measure. Therefore they have to be imported.

Why? Because India has to fulfil the object of being the base of war in the East. As War Transport Member his function is not only to meet war requirements, but essentially to meet the comforts and conveniences of the people. Every care should be taken and convenience for the people provided; travelling should be made more comfortable and more convenient and more accommodation should be provided. A large amount of balance may be achieved in war-time, but it is necessarily of an uncertain and speculative character. The present high level of balances cannot be maintained after the war. Even a cursory analysis of the Budget would show a phenomenal surplus of 45 crores and an estimated surplus of 52.2 crores for the Budget year, which is 8 crores more than the current year. The passenger earnings, including military passengers in 1943-44 are expected to reach 90 per cent., the Depreciation Fund will reach 87.92 crores, the Railway Reserve will be 20 crores. Nevertheless the liability on the taxpayer is not lightened and railway travelling has not been made more convenient and agreeable. The travelling public are to pay 25 per cent. more. This is to be regretted. The lower class has indeed contributed to the Railway the greater proportion of the balances and they are to be hard hit for it. Why do you kill the goose that lays golden eggs? Do not kill it. This class of travel will become less and less and the passenger trains are drastically cut down and there is a reduction of non-essential goods traffic, the congestion in trains, which is almost like suffocation, and the question of road-rail travel will require serious consideration.

In the face of these difficulties of travel, which passengers are experiencing, and which the administration admits, is it fair that an increase in rates should be made? But the Acworth Committee said:—

“Indian railway rates and fares have always been among the lowest, if not actually the lowest, in the world. They have only been advanced in the last few years very slightly as compared with the rest of the world. A general and substantial increase is overdue. Witnesses from all parts of India have agreed in recognising that rates and fares should be increased, and saying that they will be ready to pay the increases, provided a reasonably efficient service is given in return”.

Now the surtax of 12½ per cent. was condemned. It was intended to meet the Civil Budget and was levied for the purpose of reducing the deficit in the Budget. This was after the first Great War. But then the same difficulty arises now. The difficulty is whether this 25 per cent. is really intended for the purpose for which it was levied. Is it not that it will go and remain in abeyance for a certain number of years before it is actually given effect to. Therefore, it is more for the advantage of the Civil Budget that the railway rates have been raised. It is unnecessary for me to say why it is so. The Acworth Committee, on which there were two eminent Indian members, Mr. Srinivasa Sastri and Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, have supported this. They said:—

“.....but to increase the small existing surtaxes on railway goods traffic, which had been introduced only as a war measure, to an extent estimated to amount on the average to 12½ per cent. of the freight on the goods, and to produce, not for the railways, but for the general expenditure of the country.....”.

So what I would suggest is in the language of paragraph 73 of the Acworth Committee Report that Government may not levy 25 per cent. but as an emergency and war measure, for as long as the war lasts, it may be two years or three years, a rate of 12½ per cent. which was considered to be reasonable, and this may at the same time be adopted for the purpose of the Civil Budget.

Now the rate is opposed by the people; at least we hear much of it in the Press, but if we remember what was said by the Acworth Committee years ago—that the rates prevailing in India are very low—then in view of that and the fact that the rates have not been increased to a very large extent, except two years ago when two Railway Companies raised the rates, it is necessary that there should be an increase, but is it the time to increase the rates when a certain amount of the railway earnings which are very favourable could be deviated for providing comforts for lower class passengers?

[Sir A. P. Patro]

Betterment of third class travel was demanded years ago and it has been strongly urged by Committee after Committee and yet it never dawned upon the Administration to do anything in that direction but now suddenly this idea of forming a fund has come into the mind of the Honourable Member, a fund not for immediate application but to be kept for some time, for some years. Is it to be a permanent fund? The Honourable Member has stated in his speech that it will continue so long as the present condition exists. What it means no one can say. So long as the present condition exists the increased rates will be levied. He has rightly said that this is the first realistic acceptance on a fit scale of ideas which have recently been so prominently placed before the country. No doubt it is true that the ideas are there. They have been placed before the country by the public but he must see to the time when it should be given effect to. Is the higher rate to remain during war-time, and to be abolished at the end of the war? The reasons given in paragraph 34 of the Explanatory Memorandum are not at all convincing. How could this act as an anti-inflationary measure and encourage travel? On the other hand, it has got the effect of discounting travelling. Then another question is: Are our average earnings equal to the average earnings in other countries? The earnings per head here are much below those in other countries. Therefore, the analogy with other countries is not correct. The Railways have simultaneously to meet the demands of civilians and the military. A surtax of 12½ per cent. was levied after the last war. This charge was discontinued. This 25 per cent. increase over and above seems to me to be unjustifiable. It seems that 12½ per cent. would be more appropriate.

With regard to the question of food supply, the Railways are blamed, and necessarily so, for not being able to supply the required number of wagons for transporting food to areas which are in deficit from areas where there is a surplus of food. This is due to the default of the Government in not having a survey made in time. There was no planning. If this Government, like other Governments in other countries, had made a survey, they would have been in possession of the results of that survey. This survey would have shown them which parts of the country were in deficit and which parts in surplus as regards food, and Government would have been in a position to relieve distress to a very great extent by making accumulated stocks in surplus areas available to deficit areas promptly. It is one thing to procure food, it is quite a different thing to be able to distribute it by railway transport or by other means. Government were unwise in not having taken steps at the proper time.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Might I inquire of the Honourable Member what area he has particularly in mind?

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: I have in mind Travancore and Cochin and other areas in Southern India where even now there is a deficit of food. But they are not making a noise, as Bengal is doing; but the sufferings and the deaths and the whole misery in the Travancore and Cochin areas—all these are as bad as in Bengal. Travancore and Cochin have suffered and are suffering still because the help rendered by the Railways has not been adequate and it has not arrived in time. (*Interruption.*) My Honourable friend suggests that firewood is a desideratum in Madras City, and for that railway wagons are not available. No proper conveyance is available for carrying fuel from villages to Madras City, and hence there is fuel shortage in the City.

I have referred to the storage of food. There is scarcity of wagons and locomotives. We know that there is great demand for military purposes. But I would ask what action was taken on the Report of Messrs. Humphreys and Srinivasan? It is four years since they reported, and the Board is still examining the Report. Methods of manufacturing locomotives on a commercial scale were suggested. The annual requirement would be 74 broad gauge and 24 metre gauge engines and an equal number of boilers. The capacity of

the existing factory would be sufficient to manufacture up to 100 broad gauge engines. The workshops at Jamalpur and Kancharapara could carry on repairs and overhauls. The cost of manufacturing a locomotive would be Rs. 98,000, that, is 20 per cent. less than what it would be if locomotives were imported.

I have often pointed out that the Railways are callous to public opinion. The Passengers' Association drew the attention of the Agent of the B. N. Ry. five years ago to certain adjustments which were necessary at Waltair, especially alterations in station premises. That proposal is still under consideration—though it would not cost more than Rs. 8,000 or Rs. 10,000. It is said very rightly that Indian Railways are unpopular. The Acworth Committee said that from the evidence placed before them, the Railways were the most unpopular institutions in India. Moreover, Indian opinion regards them as largely European. Indian opinion also regards them as unfriendly to the development of home industries. It is time, therefore, that an endeavour was made to lay down a well-considered policy in the matter. With this view a conference should be convened of those who are interested in rail travel, so that we shall know what steps should be adopted to improve matters.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN (Bombay: Non-Muhammadian): Sir, the War Transport Member has gone one better than last year and produced an even bigger surplus budget. If any member of the Government of India deserves congratulations on the mere score of getting a surplus budget, he certainly deserves them.

But, Sir, a careful analysis and reading between the lines make one realise how unsatisfactory is the position disclosed by the Budget. We are now accustomed to a series of growing surpluses in the railway budgets. Surpluses are always welcome. I have no quarrel with that. All my quarrel is with what I may justifiably call an under-estimate of the receipts. Since the year 1938-39 onwards, there has been a systematic under-estimate of railway receipts. The budget estimates for the year 1939-40 provided for a surplus of 2.13 crores. The revised estimates put it at 3.61 crores and the actuals, in fact, amounted to 4.33 crores. The gap between revised estimates and actuals is noticeable to an increasing extent in the subsequent years. For the year 1942-43 the surplus originally envisaged was 27.95 crores. The revised estimates put it at 36.28 crores, but the actuals reached a figure of 45.07 crores. I do not think, Sir, I would be a bad prophet if I venture to state that the railway receipts for the year 1944-45 would be more than the amount now estimated. It is, no doubt, a good thing to have one's anticipations more than fulfilled. But, Sir, one cannot resist drawing two conclusions from these figures: first, that there is something wrong with the system of accounting that such large surpluses should be revealed in the interval of only a few weeks; and, secondly, that these surpluses encourage a tendency to great laxity in control over expenditure.

The most noteworthy feature of the current budget is the enhancement of the railway fares at a flat rate of 25 per cent. all round. Sir, it is important to bear in mind that this is the second time that there has been a general increase in the rates of fares. In 1941, the passenger fares were raised by 6½ per cent. and freight by 12½ per cent. The present increase thus amounts to 26½ per cent.

The Government have been rightly condemned by all sections of Indian opinion. Such an increase has no justification. Railway travelling, to put it mildly, is a torture, particularly for the lower class of passengers. No one travels in these days unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. The travelling facilities for the public have been very seriously curtailed. Now with all the increased hardships of travel, we are asked to pay more in the name of post-war improvement of the amenities of lower class passengers.

It cannot be argued that the financial position requires such a rise. According to the Government themselves, the Railways have never known better times. Record surpluses are being made and railways are entrenched in particularly strong position. The balances in the depreciation and reserve funds will total 87.98 crores and 20.85 crores respectively at the end of the current financial



[Sir Shantidas Askuran.]

year. This year is also expected to end with a surplus of 44 crores, of which over 32 crores would be contributed to General Revenue. The budget for the coming year shows a still more prosperous position. What reason is there then for taxing the people? The Government themselves admit that a large part of the increased fares would come from third class passengers.

I would, however, inform the Government that they do not seem to be following a steady policy. Last year in this House the Chief Commissioner for Railways stated that "as on existing charges, railways are able to pay their way and produce a handsome surplus, and as it is the policy of the Government to do everything possible to check inflation, it is not proposed to make any general increase in the coming year in rates and fares". What has happened now to raise the rates? Are the Railways not paying their way or are they not producing handsome surpluses on the existing charges? Why should the Transport Department now forget the wholesome principle enunciated last year and deliberately change their policy?

And what are the grounds, Sir, on which Government seek to convince the House that this increase is within the means of the public? In addition to those mentioned in the Budget statement, the War Transport Member referred two days ago to the enormously increased earnings of the Ahmedabad industrial worker and the profiteering by certain sections of the public. I am astonished that these arguments could be seriously advanced by the Honourable Member. I am tempted to ask the question, how many Indians there are in the position of the Ahmedabad mill-worker or of those who have made fortunes by resorting to profiteering. It is difficult to resist the fear that ticketless travel will increase even beyond its present proportions, and corruption will be even more widespread on the Railways in consequence of this decision.

Moreover, Sir, this increase will have a sympathetic and direct effect on fares on other forms of transport, like buses, and thus increase further the general cost of living. It would have been fairer and more honest for Government to have said that this increase of fares is intended to take ten crores (though it may well be more) out of the pockets of the public as an anti-inflationary measure. That, however, is a point which need not be further discussed in connection with the Railway Budget, as a suitable opportunity will present itself at the time of the General Budget.

Sir, in order that the House may swallow this proposal, the War Transport Member has covered it with an offer to earmark the proceeds of the enhanced fares for the improvement of the amenities of third class passengers. What precisely is implied by this offer, I do not know. In any case, it will not be for this Government, but its successor after the war to take a decision on the matter. I may, however, remind the House that only last November, when my friend the Honourable Mr. Sapru moved a Resolution in this House in favour of building a reconstruction fund for the expansion of education and public health after the war, and my friend the Honourable the Finance Secretary brought forward a number of objections against it. Among other reasons it was urged that Government could not commit themselves in that manner to block grants for specific purposes. Apparently, Sir, within three months of that debate, the Finance Department has withdrawn that objection—

THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES (Finance Secretary): May I point out, Sir, that that analogy in no way applies.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN: In your opinion, perhaps. Within three months of that debate, the Finance Department has withdrawn that objection in the hope of obtaining an additional 10 crores out of the railway travelling public.

There is only one other point. Sir, in the Budget on which I wish to offer a few remarks. According to the programme announced, the Railway Board will acquire nearly 900 locomotives and over 21,000 wagons, taking both broad and

metre gauge requirements, by the end of the next financial year. It will also double 750 miles of sections of certain railway lines; workshop capacity will be expanded in order to cope with the extra volume of repair work that this programme will create. Sir, no one can deny that almost the whole of this is really in preparation for a more vigorous prosecution of the war. Nor will any one grudge the call for sacrifice which this implies for success in the war. But, Sir, all that I do suggest is that this item of expenditure exceeding 27 crores should have been properly included in the Finance Member's war budget next week.

One cannot overlook the fact that this is not the only sacrifice we have made on the transport side in this war. Let me remind the House that in regard to the early stages of the war, His Excellency the Viceroy said in a speech in London a few months ago, just before he came to assume charge, that India had made enormous sacrifices to enable the campaign to be conducted in the Middle East. Several branch lines were dismantled, and railway engines and wagons were transferred abroad in considerable numbers for this purpose to different parts of the Middle East. A Government anxious to help India's industrial development would have made sure of at least one thing: that steps were taken at once to speed up their manufacture, both in our own interests and those of the Allied Nations.

I regret to say, Sir, that nothing was done all these years and the Railway Board has muddled on in the comfortable feeling that large surpluses were being built up year after year. What is the result? Today India's transport system is unprepared to bear the strain of offensive operations against the Japanese and needs to be rapidly overhauled and expanded. Hundreds of locomotives and thousands of wagons have to be imported from across the seas. Before the war ends, the numbers may be very much larger. We are paying for these a great deal more than the pre-war rates and the quality is not so good. All that the War Transport Member can assure us by way of consolation is that progress is being made in carrying out the decision to construct locomotives at Kancharapara and that "plans are being energetically examined for an Indian firm to build boilers as a war measure".

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** May I ask what more the Honourable Member can expect?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN:** It could have been done long before, Sir. When we began to have surplus budgets, that was the time to consider this question.

Sir, the question is what will happen after the war?

For many years, all sections of Indian opinion have been pressing the Government to encourage locomotive manufacture in the country. Had our advice been heeded, we should have been in a much stronger position in regard to the transport system. But on some pretext or other, the suggestion was shelved. Today, Sir, we are paying a very heavy price for inferior quality engines which will be a legacy of very doubtful value after the war. Even now, I ask, is it impossible to utilise part of the shipping space allotted to locomotives for importing plant for their manufacture? I would beg of the War Transport Member to show a little foresight and imagination and make India a manufacturing centre for locomotives.

Sir, when I look at this Budget as the last of a series of surplus ones, I cannot congratulate the War Transport Department on its record of faulty estimates, bad accounting and failure to utilise the opportunities created by the war.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS (Nominated Non-Official):** Sir, I congratulate the Honourable the War Transport Member on the good luck of being able to show a surplus in the railway earnings. Sir, he gives three reasons for an enhancement of the railway fare by 25 per cent. His reasons remind me

[Sir David Devadoss.]

of one of the reasons mentioned by the Secretary of State last year that the famine was due mainly to people overeating because they had plenty of money to spend on food. So far as my province is concerned—I come from Madras—I may assure this House that people have not got too much money to spend on travel. Evidently the Honourable the War Transport Member thinks of the people in the West, in England and other places; when they have got plenty of money they go about visiting various places and enjoying themselves. So far as Madras is concerned, people travel only under necessity. If they have got business to transact or if there is some urgent necessity to go to a place on account of death or marriage, then they go, and not otherwise. I would ask him to compare the figures for the previous years with the figures for last year and see whether the civilian public in Madras have been unnecessarily utilising the railways for travel. Sir, it is very unfortunate that the lower class people should be taxed like this. Twenty-five per cent. more means a great loss to them. I would suggest to the Railway Administration to consider how many people travel with their passes. Most of the trains are filled with railway people who travel with passes. I have been looking into the big volume that was sent with regard to the Railway Administration and I could not find any indication as to the number of people who travel with these passes and I would suggest that at least as a war measure their leave should not be sanctioned without due consideration of all the facts. Why should not they be asked to give up their travel for at least six months? When other people are suffering these people are allowed to travel all the way from Cape Comorin to Peshawar and I can myself vouch for people travelling with me all the way from Madras to the North. Why should not they be prevented for at least 6 months not to make use of the passes. I would ask the Administration to consider what is the number of people travelling on these passes and the number of people travelling, at least in South India, by paying for their travel; and also I would ask the Administration to consider whether the military should not be restrained from travelling freely. I do not mean on business—but people are allowed to travel on leave from one end of the country to the other. That takes up so much room and I think the congestion is entirely due to that. Therefore I say that so far as South India is concerned, people do not waste money on travel simply because they have got money to spend.

Sir, we are now faced with very great difficulty. Time was some 30 years ago when we used to travel at the leisurely rate of 4 miles an hour in what were known as bullock coaches. Sir, bullock coaches are as dead as the dodo. We cannot make bullock coaches in a day. We have not got tyres and other materials necessary for that purpose. Even if we make bullock coaches, where are the bulls? The complaint is that most of the cattle are slaughtered for providing food for the military and also for the prisoners of war kept here in very large numbers. We used to have in Madras what was known as the *jutka*; here they are called tongas. The *jutkas* were very popular some years ago. All that is gone. What was the means of transport for the people? If a man wants to go from Madras to Chingleput he must go only by train. It is only 36 miles. On account of the difficulty of securing petrol the buses too are unable to run. How could he go? He cannot walk 36 miles. In the good old days he used to take nearly 2 days to travel 30 miles in a bullock cart. Considering all these things I think it is not right to say that people at least in the South travel because they have too much money to spend and they should be restrained from spending on travel. So far as the rise in the fare is concerned, the public servants do not suffer, because they will get their fares, whether it is double first or second class, nor the military people. It is only the poor people who have to pay out of their pockets for their travelling will suffer. Then, Sir, it is said that there is going to be a fund of Rs. 10 crores for the amenities to be given to future travellers. What guarantee is there that this is going to be done? I wish the Honourable the War Transport Member and the Honourable the Chief Commissioner for Railways will continue for a long number of years. We do

not know when the war is going to end. Col. Knox has said that at least in the East it is not going to end till 1949. It is five or six years more and what are we to do till then? And further what guarantee is there that the successors of these two gentlemen will carry out this undertaking? Sir, we know how undertakings are broken. They would say that there is some emergency which has to be met and therefore all the 10 crores—or 50 crores in 5 years—will be spent in other ways. It is within the recollection of almost everybody here that after the last war they spent all the surplus money in bricks and mortar. They thought they were going to have a surplus of 20 crores every year and within 2 or 3 years they did not know what to do and they came begging for this and that. They had to restrict road traffic because they said road traffic was killing the railways. Boat traffic was stopped in Madras. The Buckingham Canal was neglected and now when we are in difficulties we find that we cannot get boats to bring firewood into Madras, nor buses to relieve congestion of traffic. Therefore I say that this promise is only illusory. I may say that the Railway Administration is *imperium in imperio*. They can do what they like. We have no control over them. Therefore I think this promise is only illusory.

I will now refer to another subject about which we have been complaining for years, at least in this Council for more than 12 years. Every year we have been asking the Railway Administration to manufacture locomotive engines in India. The reply was: It is more economical to get them from outside and therefore we do not want to spend in making them. Now, Sir, after the war the United States of America as well as England, and probably other friendly countries may dump their goods upon us. They may be able to send us locomotives which would not cost much. Then the answer will be: Why, it is much cheaper now to get from outside. So I do not think we shall ever be able to manufacture locomotives if this kind of argument is adopted. Therefore, what I ask is it is true that it is war time but we are doing so many things for the sake of the war. No doubt it is said that we cannot get the shipping space for the necessary plant. Well, where there is a will there is a way. There are a number of things which are not absolutely necessary for the prosecution of the war—I need not go into details and yet they are imported into India—and therefore if the Government is serious enough they can get all the plant necessary for manufacturing locomotives. Did we not send our locomotives outside at the beginning of the war? Why should not the Government, the War Department and representatives both of the United Kingdom as well as of the United States of America put their heads together and send us a plant for manufacturing locomotives? Therefore, I say that the Honourable the Transport Member should do his utmost to see that this defect is remedied.

THE HONOURABLE MR. ABDOL RAZAK HAJEE ABDOL SUTTAR (West Bengal: Muhammadan): Sir, the most disappointing feature of this year's Railway Budget is the enhancement of fares by 25 per cent. From the 1st of April, 1944, the passengers of all classes on Indian Railways will have to pay increased fares with correspondingly no better travel facilities. Three reasons, namely, the reduction of unnecessary travel and consequent relieving of overcrowding in trains, checking of inflation and building up of a reserve to provide for additional and improved amenities for lower class passengers after war, have been assigned for the proposal to increase the fares. The Government thus wants to kill three birds with one stone. I may tell the Honourable Member, Sir, that the ordinary traveller thinks twice before undertaking the journey whether he must travel owing to the numerous inconveniences he is put to and lack of facilities and it is only in extremely necessary circumstances that he is compelled to undertake the journey. Such being the case I am sure the expectations of the Honourable the War Transport Member to relieve overcrowding will never materialise simply by raising the fares. In these days travelling is most inconvenient and only those persons travel who must travel. The raising or lowering will affect the passengers who travel for pleasure and not those who must travel. The Government must find out a better method of reducing overcrowding than the method of charging higher fares and I would like

[Mr. Abdool Razak Hajee Abdool Suttar.]

the Government to realise that it is a very unfair method of doing so. In the past the Railways have been increasing passenger fares on the plea of deficit budgets and now comes a novel plea that in order to reduce unnecessary travel and relieve overcrowding in trains the fares should be increased not by a nominal amount but by 25 per cent. There might have been some justification for increase on account of deficits, as Government have all along maintained that the Railways are a commercial concern and must pay their way, but on the pleas now put forward there appears to be no justification whatsoever for increasing the fares. Has the Honourable the War Transport Member or the Chief Commissioner for Railways ever realised that the rates and fares are going up day to day whereas the facilities and amenities hitherto allowed to passengers are being curtailed at every stage?

Sir, of the promised amenities for the lower class passengers the less said the better. Promises have been many, but they do not inspire the people. They bring no consolation to the sweated crowd called upon for urgent private reasons to travel. I must say that the reasons advanced for increase in fares are exceedingly disappointing. The present war will continue for at least five years and the income by raising the fare by 25 per cent. will be about 15 crores a year and in five years it will accumulate to about 75 crores. I would like the Chief Commissioner to give the outline and the manner in which he will spend 75 crores after the war or it is only a deception.

Sir, another point which I wish the Honourable Member to realise is that due to the proposed increase in railway fares motor buses are sure to raise their fares also. This will be another hit to the people travelling by road for short distances for urgent reasons of unavoidable character. I want him to tell the House whether he took this aspect into consideration while deciding to increase the fares and whether he has taken any action to see that the bus owners do not increase their fares on the plea of railways having done so.

Sir, another point to which I wish to draw the attention of the House and the Government of India is the insufficiency of the dearness allowance paid to railway employees. My genuine feeling is that the Government had shown utter indifference to the difficulties which the railway staff had to suffer since the beginning of the war. The prices, as is known to everybody, have gone up enormously and the cost of living for an average man has increased to such an extent that it is almost impossible for him to meet the expenses even of his bare necessities of life. Are Government satisfied that the salaries paid to the railway staff are in accord with the rising level of prices? The dearness allowance sanctioned falls too short of their demand and requirements. The question of inadequate dearness allowance has disturbed the poor employees so much that they do not know how to meet their day-to-day expenses. It is very difficult nowadays for an average man even if he keeps his expenditure to an irreducible minimum to make his both ends meet. There is great discontent among the railway staff on this question and I appeal to the Honourable Member in the name of justice and fair play to have mercy on these poor employees and pay his earnest consideration and grant a more liberal scale of dearness allowance. The Administration always claimed that Railways are running on business lines. I would like to know what percentage of the benefit you have given to your own employees. Are you running this business for the sake of profit to Railways and not for the profit to workers? How would you satisfy my Honourable friend the Labour Member on this point? I am aware that the Railways have opened cheap grain shops. On account of bad distribution the grain shops do not benefit the poor people. The shops only benefit the distributor and not the Railway employees. I strongly advocate that the Government should close these grain shops and give dearness allowance in place of grain. They should get a dearness allowance of 100 per cent.—

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** May I ask the Honourable Member whether he is in agreement on this point with the All-India Railway-men's Federation which has approved of this system of remuneration?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. ABDOOL RAZAK HAJEE ABDOOL SUTTAR:** This is only my own feeling. I am not a member of any Federation. I think they are in difficulties and so I thought that as a human being and in the interest of humanity I must bring this point to your consideration.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** I just wanted to know whether he is in agreement about this point with the railwaymen themselves?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. ABDOOL RAZAK HAJEE ABDOOL SUTTAR:**—but taking into consideration the proportion in which the prices of most essential commodities have risen since the outbreak of the war, these shops do not afford much relief to them. They must be paid so much at least that they can keep their body and soul together and may be in a position to clothe and educate their children properly. What is really needed, as I have already pointed out, a liberal increase in the dearness allowance. Nothing short of it will satisfy them.

Sir, before I conclude I wish to draw the attention of the Honourable the Railway Member to the inconvenience of the travelling public on the E. I. R., especially between Howrah and Delhi, for lack of proper arrangements for getting food on the journey. The food obtainable at stations is generally unwholesome and not in any case good. I want him in this connection to consider the desirability of running Indian restaurant cars on Mail trains and the Toofan Express.

With these words, Sir, I resume my seat.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. R. H. PARKER (Bombay Chamber of Commerce):** Sir, this very wonderful budget that we have before us calls, I think, for very few comments. I would like to say one or two words about the depreciation. I am glad to see that the Honourable Member has made special provision on this account for the extraordinary wear and tear that is resulting from the war. I would be interested to know whether the Honourable Member is satisfied in his own mind that it is adequate for this particular purpose.

Most members who have spoken so far have protested against the proposed increase in fares. I do not think any of us like to pay higher fares—but then we do not always like the medicine that the doctor gives us. Sir Shantidas Askuran was rather, I think, unfair on this particular point. It has a deflationary tendency; it does tend to decrease the amount of traffic on the railways. One Honourable Member suggested that there had been no increase in travel. There has been a very large increase in travel. Is that not so?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** Yes; 156 million passengers in the current year.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. R. H. PARKER:** That may not have happened in Madras. But it has happened in India; and you are dealing with India as a whole.

Then, I also welcome the specific reservation of the sums to be received in this connection for future improvement of conditions of travel. I think that is a very proper provision, and it goes a long way to meet the criticism that the poorer man is now providing large sums of money which normally he would not be asked to do.

I must say that I was very impressed with some figures which the Honourable Member gave in the other place the other day when he showed that a large number of third-class passengers spent only twelve annas or less and that the increase in their case was therefore three annas and less. They struck me as very striking figures—a very small increase.

On the criticism of grain-shops, I can speak with personal experience of these shops. The staff like them, and they are a great success in every possible way. Not only do the staff like them from the point of view of getting better quality at a lower price, but, generally speaking, it is not only grain that is sold in these shops; I do not know whether the Railway shops supply other things, but we supply quite a number of things besides grain. It saves a great deal of the time of the staff. They can go and purchase their requirements and avoid a great deal of queuing up. In the main, I think grain shops

[Mr. R. H. Parker.]

are a great success. And they, again, have a deflationary effect. It is something on the same lines as the method adopted in the United Kingdom whereby they have kept down the cost of living.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. Z. M. REZAI KARIM (East Bengal: Muhammadan): Sir, I have heard patiently the speeches made by Honourable Members of this House. I am fully aware that taxation in this country is extremely unpleasant, and it is very difficult for members of the Legislature to take an impartial view and read the budget as it ought to be read. I have no hesitation in congratulating the Honourable Member in charge of the War Transport Department on various commendable features in the budget presented this year. Firstly, no country can expect to have the same kind of income from railways every year. It must be admitted that on account of various circumstances the earnings of Railways have increased to a very large extent and it cannot be expected that the earnings will be kept on the same level after the war. I fully agree with the Railways that something should be done to set apart a large amount of money for future requirements, and more particularly to improve travelling facilities in future.

Another remarkable feature in this budget is—and I hope the Railway authorities are sincere in this—that they have just made a beginning in the manufacture of locomotives in this country. I admit that they have not gone the whole way. I will treat it just as a beginning. It is a deviation from the age-old practice of getting everything from abroad on one score or another. I am not one of those persons who would ever agree that only because it would be economically safe or less costly, locomotives should be indented for from other countries. Even if it would cost more, I am personally of opinion that locomotives should have been manufactured in this country long before. If the Honourable Member in charge of War Transport is really anxious and honest, and if he is voicing the feeling of the Government of India—and I am sure I have no reason to doubt the honesty of the assertion that they are serious in going to lay the foundations of manufacture of locomotives in this country—that is a very important feature in this budget and I feel very great pleasure in congratulating the Department on inaugurating this scheme.

Thirdly, it would have been much better for the Railway authorities not to have mentioned that the 10 crores which they expect to get from the increase in railway fares would be earmarked for the improvement of conditions in lower class travel. That appears to be only for soothing. It would have been much better to leave the money as it was, to be utilised for any further expansion or any further improvement that might be necessary. Probably in his heart of hearts the Honourable Member was feeling that the persons who would be affected seriously by the 25 per cent. increase were the lower class passengers, and he probably thought that the earmarking of this money for use after the war for improving the conditions of third class travellers would have a soothing effect on the minds of people. I am afraid it should not have been done in that way. I personally feel that I must inform the Railway authorities of the situation which prevails in Bengal today; if I did not, I would be failing in my duty to my constituency. The Honourable Member is fully aware of the conditions in Bengal, and he ought to know what is happening there. As you travel from Delhi up to Calcutta, you get one condition. When you start travelling from Calcutta to Goalundo you face another condition. And when you go beyond the Padma river, you meet with quite a different condition. I do not know how I should describe that travel. One has to travel in complete darkness during the night. My Honourable friend the War Transport Member knows it fully well. It is a common feature on the Bengal Assam Railway now to find that there is no light whatsoever in any compartment. Crimes of every kind have started in railway compartments during night travel. And the Railway Department say: "We have no bulbs." Obviously they should have anticipated, when they were working in the war zone, that such a situation would arise. I am of the opinion that the Railway Department have failed to make preparations to get the compartments at least slightly lighted. Travelling has become

absolutely impossible between Dacca and Chittagong and between Dacca and Assam, and more particularly on the eastern side of the Padma river. I, therefore bring this matter to the notice of the Railway authorities so that this state of affairs may be improved, without which it would be very difficult to induce people to believe that the money which they are paying is being properly utilised. Furthermore, it is a natural safeguard against the various kinds of crimes that are being committed. Travelling should be made, if not comfortable, at least tolerable. I would also ask the Honourable Member if he is aware of the fact that corruption is extremely rampant in the Railways. Even if you reserve a berth in the upper class a week before, you do not know whether you will get the seat. The man who seeks to tip the railway official is probably much more comfortable than the man who honestly works with the pangs of his conscience. Such a state of affairs must be corrected and there should be definite rules by which priority of booking should be accepted.

These are the only features of the Budget to which I wanted to draw the attention of the Honourable Member in charge of the Department. I honestly congratulate him over the Budget and I do not think there will be any difficulty if the money which they want to realise by increasing the fares is properly utilised for the future improvement of the railways.

THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR (Madras : Muhammadan): Sir, I join my Honourable friends who have preceded me in the tributes which they have paid to the Railway Administration, to the Honourable Member in charge of War Transport and to his able lieutenant, the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of Railways and the whole railway staff for the very good work done by them during these hard times. Sir, it is a matter of common knowledge that the Railways in India had to part with much of their stock, with many engines and thousands of wagons and carriages, for being used in theatres of war outside India and it is really creditable that with their resources depleted in this way, the Railways have been able to give the service which they have been giving the country during these strenuous times. Again, even though I do not think it is a matter of great congratulation, still it is at least a matter of satisfaction to the Railway Administration that the Railway Budget has been showing surpluses during all these recent years even though a surplus is not quite a healthy sign of the earnings of the railways. It is due only to adventitious circumstances due to the abnormal conditions and the increase of traffic owing to the war effort in this country. But, anyway, so far as it goes, even this surplus is quite welcome. But, Sir, the one disappointing feature is the way in which this surplus is being used. It should have been used to give relief to the public in the country and this has not been done by the railway authorities. Instead of utilising part of the surplus in providing amenities for the travelling public, instead of trying to reduce the railway fares which have always been much higher than the circumstances in the country warrant and the average earnings of the poor man in the country justify, the Railways have taken this opportunity to increase the fares. As this point has been dealt with by most of my Honourable friends who have preceded me, I will not labour it much. I would only refer to one or two aspects of it. My Honourable friends, I am sure, would have gone through the speeches of both the Chief Commissioner of Railways and the Honourable Member for War Transport, and I am sure that most of them, who had studied the speeches with a view to find the real justification for the enhancement of railway fares, would have been bitterly disappointed, because the elaborate reasons which the Honourable the War Transport Member has taken pains to mention in his speech fail to give any justification for the step which he has proposed. On the other hand, the long and elaborate argument in which he has entered goes to show the very weakness of his case. It looks as though it is an attempt on the part of the Honourable Member to try and calm his own conscience, to try and justify the increase to himself. It is nothing better than an apologia for doing a thing about the justifiability of which he is himself not quite convinced. The Honourable Member says that the very first reason for which this step is being taken is to reduce travel. At the same time the



[Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur.]

Honourable Member cannot but admit that in the opinion of the Advisory Council for Railways, with which opinion he concurs, the raising of fares by itself is not going to diminish travel unless the raising is to a penal extent, and unless the fares are raised to a level that it will make travel on the part of the civilian public quite prohibitive and impossible. Therefore, this first argument on which he bases his case falls to the ground.

The next argument is about the deflationary effect which this kind of measure would have. This measure would affect only a part of the population in the country. It does not mean that every one of the 400 millions in India is travelling on the Railways. It is impossible to conceive that such a step would really have a deflationary effect whatever on the economic conditions in the country. So, from this point of view also, the Honourable Member in charge of the War Transport Department has failed to carry conviction with us.

The third argument is that by starting a fund for post-war reconstruction, he will be taking the very first step in post-war reconstruction and thus he will not be laying himself to blame by future Governments on account of his neglect to find a way for proceeding with the improvements which will be required after the termination of the war. For his desire to help in future reconstruction I do give credit to my old friend, Sir Edward Benthall, who has been one of our most popular and esteemed colleagues in this House before he assumed office on the Viceroy's Executive Council. I am really indebted to him for his long vision, for his imagination and for the great tenderness that he is evincing for the future Government of the country. But, Sir, I am constrained to remark that this kind of tenderness that he has in this proposal evinced for the future Government of this country, for making it easy for them to take up the work of the progress of the country, has been displayed by my Honourable friend at a very inopportune time. If any change was needed, it was for giving relief to the public in the country. If the travelling public needed any kind of consideration at the hands of the Railway Administration, it was in two ways. One was to give relief to them so far as the strain upon their purse was concerned. Another relief they require is the bringing in of human conditions in travel. I wonder if my Honourable friend Sir Edward Benthall has ever taken the trouble to take a peep into any of the third class compartments. Has he any idea of the appalling conditions, the inhuman conditions under which the people travel during these days. Not to speak of the third and intermediate class passengers, even the second class passengers are not immune from physical discomfort. Conditions are such that nobody would ever think of travelling unless he is obliged to undertake that journey.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** Could the Honourable Member enlighten me as to the reasons why 156 million more people should want to travel if it was not because they had not more money to spend?

**THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR:** I am just coming to that argument, Sir. But I am now addressing myself to this aspect of the question, the discomfort of travelling. Nobody who has got even the least idea of the conditions under which the people of this country travel would ever venture upon a journey unless he is compelled to do so. As has been observed by my Honourable friend, Sir David Devadoss nobody at least in South India ever undertakes a journey unless it is unavoidable. Nobody ever travels in these days for the pleasure, for sheer joy, of it.

I shall turn to the question put to me by the Honourable Member and show that this argument does not hold water at all. Is travelling the only means by which a man who has got superfluous money can spend? Does travelling give him any return? Does travel give him any pleasure? As observed by my Honourable friend Sir David Devadoss, it might be that in Western countries people do travel for recreation, people do travel for pleasure. But in India the conditions are quite different. Even in better days when travelling in trains was not so arduous, when it was not so difficult, when it was not so repulsive, even then people never ventured upon a journey unless it was to go

and transact some business or to attend on occasions of sorrow or grief or marriage or death. Can anybody imagine, Sir, that in the conditions that now prevail in the country anybody in India would like to travel for the mere pleasure of it when there is no pleasure in it at all? On the other hand, people who travel have to undergo a lot of physical discomfort and agony and even physical torture. The increase in the number of passengers is due to obvious causes. It is the Railways that are responsible for it to some extent, though not completely. It is the Railways which tried their best to put all the motor buses out of use. It is the Railways which discouraged the people from travelling in lorries and buses. They tried to have their canvassers to attract people to the railways, to induce people not to travel by buses but to take to railway travelling. Partly on account of this conduct on the part of the Railways and mainly for the reason that there is not enough of petrol and there is rationing of tyres, the buses have almost disappeared from the roads and the railways have assumed the position of a monopolist. Now the Railways complain of increase in travel. The increase in travelling is not due to the desire on the part of the people with surplus money to find ways and means of spending it, but merely on account of the fact that there is no other alternative form of transport. As has been observed by my Honourable friend Sir David Devadoss, bullock carts cannot be resurrected, motor buses which had been killed cannot be brought back to ply on the roads. In spite of all these difficulties, people have got to travel on account of their necessity. Millions of people in this country, besides having to attend to their business, are obliged to travel on account of social customs and religious observance. Again, Sir, is it not adding insult to injury to tell the poor people who can ill-afford to pay this increased fare that the impost to which they are subjected is one which will be reserved for giving them comfort at some future date? It is not that relief would be given now when it is most needed. Instead of giving relief you want to impose another burden upon them and dangle the hope before their eyes that at some future date they will have some doubtful advantage of having better accommodation for themselves.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Are you in a position to give third class passengers relief now?

**THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR:** If it is possible, do so. Otherwise do not increase their burden. If you are not able to help them to travel in human conditions, then do not add to their difficulty, do not add to their torture. If only money is the consideration, if money is the only obstacle in the way of providing relief; my opinion is that the Railway Administration has no excuse to refuse that kind of relief to the travelling public. They have money enough and to spare. A part of the reserves could be utilised even today for providing those improvements which are so urgently and so badly needed. Therefore the only reason which has induced the Railways to increase the railway fare seems to me to be the desire on their part also to have a share in the general plunder, pillage, loot, that is going on in the country. The profiteer is trying to put his hands into the pockets of the people, the commercial concerns which have Government contracts, and the Railway Administration cannot also withstand the temptation of having a share in the loot. It is nothing but war profiteering, and with no justification.

There is just one word, Sir, about these locomotives. I am not going to enlarge upon that. What I should like to say about this is that everything possible should be done to try and encourage the manufacture of locomotives in this country and if there is any time, any moment, for taking such a step it is just the present time when locomotives are so badly needed and when we cannot hope to get them from abroad. As was remarked by my Honourable friend who has just preceded me, it is not merely a question of money, a question of dearness or the cheapness of a thing, but the fact of the matter is that we should try and do everything possible to encourage the manufacture of locomotives in this country.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** Your time is up.

**THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR:** Again, Sir, there is just one point which I wish to mention about the military traffic.

[Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur.]

I join my Honourable friends who have recommended a curtailment of military traffic, movement of the military personnel, as much as possible. In doing so I am quite conscious that the Defence arrangements and war effort in the country should not be weakened at all but if it is barely possible for the military authorities to try and curtail movement on the part of the military personnel to the very limited extent that it will be possible for them, I would request them to do so. As I have said previously it is not merely the people travelling by the lower class who are affected but those travelling in the second and first class also are not free from this discomfort on account of more military movement. It is ordinarily extremely difficult to get a seat. If you are lucky to get a berth even then at the dead of night some military officer comes up. Some sit near your head, some near your legs, so that you are forced to sit up and make room for them.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Are they travelling for pleasure?

THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR: I don't say that they are travelling only for pleasure but if it is barely possible for this thing to be curtailed I would request the military authorities to take the necessary steps. Sir Henry Richardson in the other House made a suggestion that some of these military officers who go on leave from one end of the country to the other, for instance, from the Punjab to Madras and while on such leave are transferred to a place close to Madras but as the rules now stand these officers are not allowed to go to this new place direct but have to go back to their previous unit in the Punjab and then go back again to the place to which they have been transferred. Such rules should be amended, so that they can rejoin their duty without having to undertake long journeys to the place of their old unit. Such things might be avoided and some way might be found of curtailing travel and movement on the part of military personnel.

THE HONOURABLE LT.-COL. SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR (Nominated Non-official): Mr. President, I support the Budget and wish to offer my heartiest congratulations to Honourable Sir Leonard Wilson and the Honourable Sir Edward Benthall, Railway Members, with which I am sure the House will associate with me in thanking them for the surplus Railway Budget. The financial account rendered discloses the particularly strong position of Railways. The current financial year is expected to close with a surplus of 43.77 crores of which over 32 crores will go to general revenues. The Budget for the coming year 1944-45 discloses an unprecedented surplus of 52½ crores. Knowing as we do the present calls and difficulties of the Railway Administration in these changing and busy war-times, all responsible for its efficient administration deserve our admiration for conducting it so pleasantly.

It is noted with satisfaction that the Railway authorities do realise the inconveniences and difficulties to which passengers from 1st to 3rd class are being subjected. I have noticed myself that at times officers had to sleep in bath rooms and on the floor. Lots of disputes have taken place between the military passengers, railway authorities and police owing to shortage of accommodation in trains. The post-war precautionary measures contemplated by the Government to redress the grievances will not help to solve the present situation, which is full of inconveniences. I would earnestly request the Railway Member to take some tangible steps to avoid all the present shortcomings and subsequent inconveniences to public passengers and troops and officers. I would suggest that instead of running one long train, if it could be divided into two, with more compartments, running after each other at an interval of a few hours, it will ease the situation considerably. The answer may be shortage of railway engines but I am afraid, it is not possible for me to offer a solution for that, which must rest with the Railway authorities. If this proposal is not considered to be workable, I would further suggest that motor traffic may be introduced, as I understand it has worked successfully in the Hyderabad State. If these proposals could be given effect to the question of contemplated increase of 25 per cent. in railway fares could be further considered.

The Railways play an important part in the national structure of a country. The passenger traffic from Calcutta and transportation of foodgrains to relieve distress and meet famine conditions gave us the inkling that the Railways may have yet to be prepared for similar war exigencies.

Sir, I support.

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

The Council reassembled after Lunch at Quarter to Three of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

THE HONOURABLE SIR BUTA SINGH (Punjab: Sikh): Sir, I would have been only too happy to welcome the Railway Budget and I have been trying to discover the grounds on which the representatives of the travelling public could find satisfaction. I am constrained to say that I find that during the course of the year the Railways have suffered in further decline in the already meagre facilities offered to the travelling public. The number of trains has been drastically decreased. On the N. W. R. alone so many as 72 trains have been stopped, and this has caused a very great deal of inconvenience to the travelling public.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Some have just been restored.

THE HONOURABLE SIR BUTA SINGH: How many?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: About eight—from yesterday or today.

THE HONOURABLE SIR BUTA SINGH: There is still such a large number to be restored. I hope the Honourable Member will see that all of them are put on again.

Sir, I was referring to the inconvenience caused to the travelling public. What is more, not only the third class but even in the upper classes it is difficult to find suitable accommodation and the toilet compartments are not even clean or lighted. In several cases the entire train is run without any lights at night time.

Indeed branch lines have been torn away and wagons and locomotives sent out of India.

Third class passengers who contribute 82 per cent. to the Railway revenues cannot find sitting room in compartments and cling desperately to carriage railings and footboards. There is no escape from the conclusion that our Railways were not able to foresee the demands which war was likely to make and to provide for it. Even today what is happening, hundreds of locomotives and thousands of wagons are being ordered from outside. The promise to build locomotives in India remains unfulfilled. Will the Honourable the War Transport Member please tell us what would be the cost of the plant required to equip our workshops to produce locomotives and why it has not been obtained so far? Surely if shipping space can be found for hundreds of locomotives, it would be more economical to procure the required plant and start building locomotives in India.

I would request the House not to support the Budget unless the Department gives the undertaking to procure and produce its requirements in the country itself. It is indeed tragic that when facilities of travelling and ordinary comforts of travel have suffered it is proposed to increase the railway fare by 25 per cent. After what other Honourable Members have said it would serve no useful purpose to repeat the arguments. I am entirely opposed to the increase in the fares and I am not voicing my personal views but the views of the people who are obliged to travel. To put on additional fare is to add insult to injury.

\*THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa: Muhammadan): Mr. President, I have very attentively and carefully gone through the speeches of the Honourable the War Transport Member and our colleague the Chief Commissioner for Railways. I have taken some pains in finding out facts and figures from the papers that were placed at our disposal, and I have to give expression

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

to opinions which may jar on the ears of my colleagues because of the fact that there has been almost general support for Government. I wish, Sir, that the Government should realise and practise what they say. The Honourable the War Transport Member warned us that the expenditure is not in the habit of falling as rapidly as income. That is a truism. No one can deny it. But what measures have the Government taken to control the ever-rising tide of expenditure? The working expenses, including the Depreciation Fund, has gone up from 71.29 crores in 1940-41 to 114.28 crores in the budget year—a rise of 43 crores on 71 crores; whereas the rise in the gross traffic receipts has been only from 117.58 crores to 192 crores—a rise of 74 crores on the income side. I have taken the year 1940-41 as a typical war year, the first complete war year that we had. A rise of 60 per cent. in the income has been accompanied by a similar rise in the expenditure. Now, it is a well known fact that expenses do not rise in the same proportion as income. In the case of higher income, many of the items remain constant—for instance, the capital at charge, and other items. I find that we are not only playing second fiddle to the Defence Department, but that we have almost no voice in the management of our affairs. I would remind the Honourable Member of his speech last year in which he budgeted for the import of a certain number of metre gauge engines, and the number of metre gauge engines that have been thrown on his head are far in excess of his demand. The same thing has happened in regard to metre gauge wagons. There is shipping space available for the import of metre gauge engines and metre gauge wagons from outside, but there is no space for importing things which we require for giving even a slight relief to the travelling public. I have it on the best authority that at the moment we are doubling certain portions of the B. and A. R. If the Honourable Member would look into his papers, he would find that the two railways which make up the present B. and A. R. have been chronic deficit railways. The Railways have during the last five years for which the Honourable Member has given us figures shown an average deficit, in the case of the Assam-Bengal, of 71 lakhs, and in the case of the Eastern Bengal, of 98 lakhs per annum. In the case of Railways which had a deficit of a crore and 69 lakhs for the last five years, their capital at charge is going to be increased by 40 per cent. ! That, Sir, is not a matter to be lightly passed over. The capital at charge of the B. and A. R. was 78.08 crores and it is going to be increased to 93.5 crores. That is due to the fact that you are doubling the railway line and importing at very high cost metre gauge engines and wagons. I do not object to the import. But what I object to is that the Railway should be made to pay for it. It is a charge which should have fallen on H. M. G., not even on the Government of India. I was referring to the capital at charge on 31st March, 1942, and the estimated capital at charge on 31st March, 1945. Within the space of three years, the capital at charge is going to be increased so much. The necessity will not be denied but the honesty of imposing it on the slender backs of the B. and A. R. is open to question. The figures I have quoted are given in Appendix III. This, Sir, is a complete forgetfulness of the happenings of the last war. Not only have we been made to give up necessary stocks of wagons, engines, passenger carriages and railway lines to His Majesty's Government for use in Africa and the Middle East but now, when we are getting them back, we are being charged with exorbitant prices which the Government of India have decided to impose on the Railway Department. I was expecting, Sir, that this would be a suitable time to write-off the extra unremunerative capital in the Railways, that this was the time when we were receiving higher incomes to write-off those bad debts of the old days. But, instead of that, new and heavier burdens are being piled on us—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Will you specify one of those bad debts?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: There was a Rau Committee, a Government of India Committee which sat to examine what were the

unremunerative capital expenditure during the time after the Railway convention and it came to the conclusion that about 100 crores of expenditure was charged to capital which should not have been charged to capital because they were not remunerative. The principle was laid down by Sir George Schuster.—

THE HONOURABLE SIR LEONARD WILSON (Chief Commissioner for Railways): Does the Honourable Member suggest that engines are unremunerative?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What I was suggesting was that on this particular Railway, the doubling of the line, the purchase of the engines and the purchase of the wagons were not called for by the local traffic or by any other consideration except that of war. We are spending some 29 crores this year on the B. & A. R. from Capital and Depreciation Fund. The whole of the Depreciation Fund would be wiped out by this expenditure which is being incurred today. The Railway Department itself felt that these charges cannot be thrown on the shoulders of the Railway and I have the authority of the Standing Finance Committee for Railways for this statement which says that—

“The question regarding the incidence of cost of the works between Railway and Defence estimates is under discussion with the War Department. The approval of the Standing Finance Committee is solicited. The Committee approved but desired that in due course a memorandum should be placed before them explaining the basis of the division of cost of this and other similar works between the Railway and War Department”. I am speaking of the doubling scheme. But no indication has been given by either the War Transport Member or the Chief Commissioner for Railways of what happened between the 15th December, 1943, when the Standing Finance Committee met, and today when the measure is being discussed. Sir, it is very easy for the Honourable Member to tell us that it is easy to talk of reconstruction but difficult to pay for it. I say that it is very easy for the Government to squeeze the money out of us but very difficult for them to satisfy us that equitable and just management will be effected by the trustees, for the example which they have set of throwing the entire military burden on the shoulders of Railways is very bad.

Sir, I should like to mention in passing just a few of the things which have been done at the moment. In his speech on the rolling stock programme the Honourable Member expected 9,708 broad gauge wagons. But what did he get this year? A very small amount—less than one-fourth of what he expected. But, so far as metre gauge wagons were concerned, he got much more than he bargained for, because they were thrown on his shoulders by the U. S. A. War Department. I want a reconciliation of the statement contained in the Finance Committee Report and the statement of the Honourable Member about the metre gauge engines. The Finance Committee Report says that 377 McArthur engines are being received, whereas the Honourable Member himself says that 288 will be received this year. There is a small discrepancy between the speech of the Honourable the War Transport Member, page 6, paragraph 7, where he says that 288 metre gauge engines will be received, and page 86, volume 20, No. 6 of the Finance Committee Report where the number given is 377.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Does it relate to the same period, Sir?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I am talking of the year 1944-45. In the programme which is given in the Finance Committee Report you have provided for 377 in all for B. & A. R.; in your speech you only mention 288. There is a discrepancy of 100 locomotive engines. And the cost is very high, more than 2½ lakhs for each. As you will remember, Sir, in the case of the metre gauge engines, we were almost self-sufficient. The B., B. & C. I. workshop at Ajmer used to manufacture all the locomotives required for the B., B. & C. I. and B., B. & C. I. used to supply also to western metre gauge lines. As you know, there is a network of metre gauge lines from Sind right up to the furthest corner of Assam. But it is very little used for war transport. My complaint is that all the burden is thrown on the E. I. R. and all the passenger traffic is ousted. Mobilisation of the metre gauge possibilities has not been looked up. About the B. & A. R. this is the figure they are going to spend, 11.24

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

crores from capital and 15.49 from Depreciation Fund, total of nearly 27 crores on one railway. The House will remember that last year and the year before last I advocated that all the railway stock which we were making available to H. M. G. should be taken back in kind and not in money. They were in need and then we sent them our stock. Now when we get back the stock from them there should be no cash payment for it either to us or by H. M. G. or the Government of the U. S. A. The very fact that the War Department of the U. S. A. has presented you with these locomotives is enough to justify my claim that it is for war needs and therefore it should not be debited to the railway account.

I regret very much that the Government has seriously failed to take note of the coal situation of the country. Last year the percentage of coal movement was 40 per cent. and the situation was bad enough. This year it has deteriorated to 42 per cent. and there is no indication that the Government is contemplating any relief either for the industries or for domestic consumption. I admit that the war calls for special consideration. During the war you have to subserve every consideration to that war. But concurrently H. M. G. should come to our rescue. There will be no difficulty in providing the West Coast for industrial, commercial, domestic or locomotive use South African coal if only a small amount of transport could be made available by H. M. G. The first duty of the Government in this stress of war is to ask H. M. G. to give us not only shipping space but also coal from South Africa. Ceylon should be taken off our shoulders. We are badly off ourselves. You will remember, Sir, that we used to feed Ceylon with our rice. But last year we realised that we had nothing and we forced Government to supply rice to Ceylon from other places than India. Similarly the coal position is very difficult in India. Coal is not to be had. I have seen railway yards denuded of coal. There are places where there was not even coal enough for ten days in railway yards and yet Government has not realised its responsibility. You must ask H. M. G. to give us coal from South Africa. There is coal available in South Africa. It used to seriously compete with us. But at the moment we do not consider competition. We have to find—it does not matter where we get it from—the things. Therefore we must look out. It is not enough to say that we are doing everything. You should also realise how people are suffering. I ask the War Transport Member to give us a picture of what Railways in England are doing. Have they curtailed their passenger traffic as much as he has done? Has the number of passengers travelling come down very much in England, or has it gone up? We used to get information of what is happening in other parts of the world formerly, but this year the Honourable Member has deprived us of that pleasure of knowing what is happening in his mother country. I doubt, Sir, whether England with all its difficulties would be as unmindful of the trouble of its own people as this Government has been. We have serious complaints against you that you have not considered the difficulties, the hardship, to which we are put merely because of lack of transport. The Honourable Member announced some time back outside the Legislature a scheme for diverting the coal traffic from the Railways to shipping. But he did not mention anything about that in his speech to this House. I think he ought to have explained it more fully to us.

Sir, I should not like to dilate on the points which have been made by my other colleagues about the nearly complete disappearance of electric bulbs, hangers, etc., from upper class compartments. But I may mention that the difficulties to which we are put in the upper class are no less troublesome than the difficulties of third class passengers, although there is no comparison between the two. In the third class compartments we are packed like sardines. There is no other word in which you can describe it and all due to the uneconomic utilisation of stock. There is no question of stock. Stock is available, power is available, but only it is not being utilised fully. By having one train each way a day, you do not conserve the stocks. At the best what you do is to have less use for your locomotive. But that does not prolong its life. Where previously there were five or six trains, we have only one single train. That is

responsible for the congestion. The same stock, the same power, can work two trains, but it is not being worked. It does not matter whether the time is suitable to people or not. People are now suffering so much that they would avail themselves of the opportunity of traveling because of the necessity whenever it might be available.

Much has been made of the fact that there has been an increase in traveling. Government should have taken better statistics than they have done. Our common experience is that in every train there are at least 25 per cent., if not more, of military personnel, traveling in every train. That military traveling was not present last year in such degree. Your figures are inflated because of military traveling. If you care to find from the Defence Department, the number of people who travelled last year and this year you will find an explanation for the inflated figure which you have given.

I have not spoken of the 25 per cent. increase.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Your time is up.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I will speak only on that one subject.

Mr. President when I first came to know of the 25 per cent. increase, I felt that during the war we must shoulder a greater burden than has been thrown on our shoulders so far and realising the good purpose to which it will be put, for amenities for third class passengers, I felt inclined to give my support to this measure. But when I read the speech I found that there have been invidious distinctions. The military has been exempted from this extra charge—

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Military passengers traveling on their own account pay just the same as anybody else.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: There is a world of difference between military travelling on their own and on Government account. The military people are transferred from one place to another. There are no specials. The crowding in the trains is due to military personnel travelling either on Government account or on private account. It does not make any difference. If you wanted really to do this thing you should have increased the fares for the military personnel; every military man travelling on any passenger train, whether he is travelling on Government account or private account, should have been charged. That would have been, Sir, a fair distribution but it is most unfair to ask us that they can share with us in the train space but that they will not share in the cost. That is why I say that it is easy to squeeze money out of us but difficult to make an equitable distribution of it.

Then, Sir, the fact is that no indication has been given by the Government as to who will be the controlling authority for this expenditure. Well, I may frankly state that placed as we are we have very little confidence in the Government at the helm of affairs. If a better method had been adopted of distribution of this additional money, so that the elected members from the two Houses would have had an amount of control which they have, say, in the Road Fund, that would have, Sir, made some justification for the Government to throw this burden on us. It is a primary thing, Sir, that concurrently with taxation there must be control over the purse. You do not give us any control over disbursement. There is no scheme before you and you ask us to consent to this taxation—quite an iniquitous taxation because the burden is not thrown on others. We are singled out and the personnel of other nationalities, of the Allied Nations, is excluded. Why are you excluding them from this burden? Well, that, Sir, shows that the Government is not serious in their demand, that they are not prepared to concede anything to us, and that naturally we cannot do anything better than to return the compliment.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: May I ask my Honourable friend what exactly he wants? He has not made himself clear.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: The military personnel, whenever travelling in ordinary trains, should be made to pay the same as the other people.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: They are, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: When they do not pay, it is a question of filling one pocket out of the other. I wanted to have a bigger fund



[Mr. Hóssain Imam.]

in my hands. If they pay the fund at our disposal would be bigger than it would otherwise be.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Then I take it that the Honourable Member agrees that a fund should be built up by this means. His only objection is that he wants a bigger fund and more people to be charged in order to build it up.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What I wanted, Sir, is that everybody should contribute. There should be no distinction that because I am a blackie therefore I must pay and the others won't.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: I am very glad to have the Honourable Member's support for the principle of our proposal.

THE HONOURABLE SIR RAMUNNI MENON (Nominated Non-Official): I think it is true to say that the most widely criticized and the most adversely criticised item in this year's Railway Budget has been the proposal to increase the railway fares and I think it will be idle to pretend that this proposal is not unpopular. But popularity is not always a criterion of soundness or fairness and I think an Administration will be failing in its duty if it does not take such measures as are considered necessary in the interests of the general community, however unpopular they may be. Now one of the greatest economic evils prevailing in this country at the present time is the very excessive amount of purchasing power in the hands of the public, which has caused, along with other factors, the immense rise in prices which has led to so much suffering and distress; and I think every measure that will have the effect of withdrawing or neutralising this excess purchasing power of the community should deserve our support. While I agree with all the reasons that have been given in support of the proposal to enhance railway fares, to my mind the most convincing argument is the one based on the view that it is an anti-inflationary measure. That is not only a good but an adequate reason for supporting this proposal. It has been argued that the amount of deflation that the proposal will bring about is very slight. That may be so; but if you oppose every anti-inflationary measure on the ground that it does not go far enough then you will be in effect keeping the existing state of affairs in their present condition. Therefore, I do not think that that is a valid objection. It has also been urged that the increase in fares will affect the poorer sections of the community very badly. Well, I am not disputing the fact that it will affect all classes, but if the Honourable the Chief Commissioner for Railways or the Honourable Member for War Transport will be pleased to explain the details of the proposal, perhaps this popular apprehension may be to a certain extent removed. In this connection, I should like to call the attention of the Council to a small point which relates to certain expressions contained in the speeches of the Honourable the War Transport Member and the Chief Commissioner for Railways. I find that in both speeches the printed words conveyed the sense of "suburban and season tickets". That was the sense of the words as printed, but for some reason an alteration in ink has been made, with the result that for the words "suburban and season tickets" we have "suburban season tickets". To my mind the phraseology is rather confusing. It appears to me that what they originally thought was suburban travellers as well as season ticket-holders. If that was so, then I can only say that in the present case second thoughts were not the best. I would have preferred the original meaning to have been retained. Whether that is the present intention I do not know. I should like to ask what exactly is meant by "suburban". Has it any reference to the distance travelled or has it any reference to a particular location, a city, for instance?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: On a point of information, Sir. There is in fact, I understand, no such thing as a suburban fare. There are suburban season tickets, "season tickets" which apply to suburbs. As I explained in another place, however, there is a considerable relief to suburban

travellers, because owing to the fact that no increase on a fare of less than 0-4-0 will be applied, third class passengers travelling over distances of less than 10 miles on ordinary tickets will be exempted, so that in fact there is an exemption for third class suburban passengers. But strictly speaking there is no such thing as a suburban ticket.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR RAMUNNI MENON:** I am very glad to hear the explanation. That will go a considerable way in mitigating the incidence of this burden on the poorer classes of people.

In this connection I should like to ask one question. Take Madras and Arkonam, or Madras and Chingleput, for instance. Between these two sets of stations there are several stations which, I take it, will not be separated by anything like 10 miles. Will a traveller from any of these intervening stations within 10 miles be exempt from this increase?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** Yes, if he is a third-class passenger.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR RAMUNNI MENON:** I am glad to hear that. To my mind, as now explained, the provision will not after all act as a great hardship. I think, therefore, that this proposal should be cordially supported.

I would like to make one suggestion. I do not know whether this has been considered at any time by the Government. In Delhi, and I believe it is true of the provincial capitals in these days, there are so many committees, councils, conferences, and all sorts of bodies. I do not know what the actual figures are, but I take it that there will be at least a certain number of members who are common to several of these bodies. If meetings of these bodies can be so arranged that they all take place within a limited period of time, I am sure a certain amount of economy in railway travelling can be secured. Whether that is a practicable suggestion I do not know. I should like to commend this idea to the Government so that they might look into it.

On the whole, Sir, I give my cordial support to the proposal to enhance railway fares.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** Will this 25 per cent. increase mean the abolition of the surcharge of one anna per rupee?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** No, Sir. But I may point out that this surcharge of one anna is not applicable to fares below one rupee.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM:** Fares above one rupee will have to pay both charges? Twenty-five per cent. and 6½ per cent.?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL:** Yes.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. M. L. DAS (Nominated Non-Official):** Mr. President, Sir, as a member from Assam I shall be failing in my duty if I do not bring to the notice of the Railway authorities the travelling conditions prevailing in our parts, that is, in the B. & A. R. And I shall be failing in my duty as well if I do not say a word in connection with the utilisation of the amount of surplus that has been declared in the Railway budget.

Travelling is no longer a luxury nowadays. Unless people are goaded by unavoidable urgency, nobody likes travelling. Honourable Members that have already taken part in the debate have rightly described the horrors of travelling throughout the country. While travelling we are made to feel as though we are not so many human beings, but so many goods and chattels. This is the position. There is a complaint everywhere with regard to overcrowding. That is the case in our parts also. With a view to stopping travel, very recently, about the first week of the current month passenger booking was absolutely closed on the B. & A. R. for more than a week. And that was done without any notice to the civil administration authorities. This sudden order of closing booking came to the people, especially civilians, as a bolt from the blue. That is the state of things on the Railways. Now, Sir, if this step has been taken to prevent overcrowding in trains, I think such a step will prove a disastrous one. During the week when booking was closed in our parts there was panic all round, and the result was there was a rise in prices of articles, and the

[Mr. M. L. Das.]

people much to their inconvenience remained where they were for some time. So, my suggestion is that if in future under certain circumstances it becomes necessary for booking to be closed, this should be brought to the notice of the Provincial Government beforehand so that in consultation with the Central Government they may arrange bus transport or make some other arrangement that is possible for the convenience of passengers.

With regard to the surplus, Sir, the Railway authorities have held out hopes that they are going to do something for the comfort of lower class travellers with the surplus money. Nobody knows what turn things will take. From Pandu onwards inter-class fares are realised from passengers, but they are allowed to travel like third class passengers. All the cushions from the inter-class compartments have been taken away. Inter-class passengers are travelling just like third class passengers. This is the state of things there. So, I have some doubt as to the application of the surplus in the way the authorities have suggested. Sir, we read while in school: "Trust no future however pleasant. Act, act in the living present, heart within and God overhead." That is what we remember still.

Now, Sir, there has been some talk that the river Brahmaputra is going to be bridged over. Of course that is a costly project. I have put in a question whether Government contemplate it. But in case it is going to be stopped for want of funds, I suggest that a part of this surplus should be utilised for that purpose. When the opportunity is there, part of this surplus may safely be applied for the construction of a bridge over the Brahmaputra between Amanigur and Pandu on B. & A. R. Such a bridge, once constructed, will be of great help in the matter of transport and other facilities. Assam is gradually becoming a province where everywhere there are military activities, and also a lot of other multifarious activities. We are probably going to have double lines as well there. So, a part of this surplus money could be utilised in the construction of the bridge. We should not let go this opportunity that has been offered to us.

With these words, Sir, I resume my seat.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL (War Transport Member):  
Sir, I should like to begin my remarks by saying that I do very much appreciate the attitude of certain Honourable Members, such as Mr. Rezai Karim, Sir A. P. Patro and others who have expressed their appreciation of what the officers and men of the Railways have done. It is good and non-unexpected that Honourable Members of this House would express their appreciation of good work because, being men of experience, they appreciate what encouragement means to people who are carrying out a very onerous task. It is a great encouragement to the railwaymen to hear from time to time expressions of encouragement as well as criticism which is their usual lot. I am not sure that I altogether detected what the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam described as the general support of the House to the Government's proposal to increase fares but I had considerable encouragement because the Honourable Member himself, at the end of his speech, quite clearly gave support to the principle.

Before going on to the question of fares I will deal first of all with certain points raised by various Honourable Members. The Honourable Sir Shantidas Askuran referred to the fact that Government were inclined to under-estimate their receipts. It is very difficult to seek, in these times, to make anything like an exact forecast of what your earnings are going to be. A year ago, when we were trying to calculate the Budget figures for this year, we felt that the level of traffic which had been reached at the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 had approached saturation point and that we could not get much more out of the equipment which we had on the Railways. But, as I said in my Budget speech this year, we were wrong. Increased operating efficiency on the Railways did result in a remarkable increase in the earlier part of 1943 which enlarged the Budget receipts for that year and that new level of earnings has remained fairly constant throughout this year. We reached a high level about a year ago and we are just about maintaining it. We have now the task of trying to foresee what will happen in 1944-45. We can see that we are going to

get new locomotives and a certain number of wagons and we shall have a certain amount of increased income from that source. It is presumed that they will enable us to carry more traffic and further increase our earnings. But, having allowed for that, it is very difficult to see whether it will be possible to move more traffic and therefore get more earnings. As you will have noted from my Budget speech, we decided that the only thing we could do in these circumstances is to take the figures of earnings during the current year and apply them to our Budget for next year and to do the same thing for expenses, only allowing for what additional receipts or additional expenses we can foresee now. It is hoped that we shall increase our efficiency. We are making a drive for increased operating efficiency on Railways and if we can get more traffic through in the course of the next 12 months, then I still hope that our receipts will be larger than our Budget figure. But it is not safe to budget on that. Equally I am very much afraid that our expenditure will be increased above our Budget figure because, in these difficult times, expenses have a way of coming along which you cannot foresee today. But, on balance, I think that the method we have adopted of budgeting is the only practicable one. That method is fully explained in the Budget speech.

The Honourable Mr. Parker inquired whether I considered the additional allocation to Depreciation to provide for the extra wear and tear on Railways resulting from the increased traffic arising out of the war was adequate. The calculation made was a rough and ready one, but it was examined by the special Convention Committee set up by the other House and that Committee thought that, on the whole, the allocation was adequate. I was one of the members of that Committee. As regards the total Depreciation, I have made some remarks in my Budget speech pointing out that the rise in the level of prices, which was likely to prevail after the war, would mean that we shall have to replace our assets at prices very much above those at which they were initially installed. That being so, I took the view, and I still hold it, that our Depreciation Fund as a whole ought to be much bigger than it is. That subject is again a question which is before the special Convention Committee who have asked for an investigation to be carried out into the lives of the assets obsolescence and the level of prices. It is impossible, of course, to foresee what the level of prices is going to be but it is quite certain that the level of prices will be far above the original cost of the assets.

The Honourable Mr. Rezai Karim, the Honourable Mr. Das and other Honourable Members have pointed out the shortage of lights in the carriages. It appears to apply particularly to the B. & A. R. Our difficulty there is purely one of getting the material, getting the bulbs. The difficulty really begins from the fact that the public have been stealing the bulbs and stealing the fittings, wrenching them very often off the wood work in very large numbers. It is just impossible at the present time to get sufficient lights and fittings to replace those that are broken or in many cases stolen. It is not so much a question of getting shipping space to import them as of the procurement of the articles themselves. In any case so far as the bulbs are concerned, we are doing our best to develop the local manufacture so as to assist with those that are imported.

The Honourable Sir A. P. Patro referred to the food supply of Travancore and Cochin. Government is fully aware of the sufferings of the Malabar Coast. The Food Department are fully seized of the position and are doing all they possibly can to help. But I do not think that the difficulties down there have been on the whole due to deficiency of wagons. As every Honourable Member knows, we have given the movement of food the highest priority during the last year and in fact for 18 months now it has had the very highest priority and when the foodgrains are available for movement, generally speaking they have been moved. But in the case of the Malabar Coast it was fed before the war by sea. Rice was imported into Cochin port and distributed from there and that is the way in the main in which that Coast is now being fed—not so much by the Railway except such supply as comes from Madras—but in the main by coastal shipping from Karachi and other ports. The whole question of feeding Travancore and Cochin occupies the constant attention of Government and so far as

[Sir Edward Benthall.]

the Railways are concerned we will continue to see that the wagons are available for the transport of foodgrains.

The Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam referred to the rising tide of expenditure and asked what we were doing to check it. Well, the rising tide of expenditure is largely due to payments to staff in one form or another and other Honourable Members have said that we were not paying enough to our staff. The payments, as I have said in my Budget speech, are in the neighbourhood of 19 crores. That is too much for Mr. Hossain Imam and not enough for other gentlemen. We have gone into it and we think that on the whole the provision that we have made, which includes another 1½ crores for the cheap food scheme in the next Budget year, is reasonable. But we have various other measures under active consideration. The care of our staff and seeing that the conditions of war are mitigated to them have our constant attention. But nevertheless in war-time and with rising prices, our expenses are likely to continue to increase and although we cannot foresee them all, there is no doubt that they will reach new high levels and it is going to be extremely difficult to get them down after the war as rapidly as they have risen.

Again Mr. Hossain Imam—he seems to have raised quite a number of points—complained that the Railways were paying for certain developments which ought to be charged to military expenses. I have explained elsewhere that the expenditure on these works is, roughly speaking, apportioned on assisted siding terms. In other words, all the earth work and other expenditure which will be of no value to the Railways after the war is debited to Defence expenditure and the Railways pay only for that for which they get good value; that is to say, they pay for the rails, the steel work for the bridges and so forth, assets which can be picked up and put elsewhere. So that, generally speaking, you can take it that the Railway only pays for what is a good asset and there can be no unfairness in that. Certain aspects of the allocation are, however, being considered by Government and I think they will be put before the Standing Finance Committee.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What is the quantum of the money which we get from the Defence Department?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: I should require notice of that, Sir.

I should also like to point out in connection with certain figures that my Honourable friend was quoting that, although the Railways incur capital expenditure, they are also getting increased proceeds arising out of this head too. If my Honourable friend will look at pages 27, 42 and 43 of the Explanatory Memorandum, he will see that whereas this Railway was a deficit Railway, it has turned into a profit-earning Railway as the result of this activity. Although this expenditure is incurred, it does yield results; and of course that argument is two-edged, because it is also a full justification for the contribution which we make to general revenues. Since these receipts come out of military expenditure, it is only reasonable that a portion of them should go to pay for the war.

Now, Sir, I would like to say a few words about the locomotive position. I should like to make it quite clear once again that it is no longer a question of whether we are going to manufacture locomotives in the country. That has been decided long ago. We are going to manufacture locomotives in this country as soon as ever we can. It is only a question really now of progress reports. The decision has been made and we are going ahead with it. I find it extremely difficult to convince either of the Honourable Houses or the public that this is the case. But that is the case. We have made the decision and we are doing everything we can to implement it and to build locomotives at Kanchrapara as soon as ever we can. I cannot be more explicit than that—

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: Has the building of locomotives commenced at Kanchrapara?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: The buildings are there.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: No. The engines?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: No, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Make a beginning and we will be convinced.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: We are making that beginning. I have explained in some detail how things stand.

I should just like to say a few words on the locomotive position generally, because Government are accused sometimes of short-sightedness in this matter. On the one hand, we are accused of not ordering enough locomotives and on the other hand of not foreseeing the war and building them in this country. The Honourable Members will recollect that in 1937 the Wedgewood Committee came out and reported, and I have no doubt Honourable Members will remember what their Report said. The Report said that there were too many locomotives in the country and that a number of them should be scrapped. Although you had a technical Committee of a high standing giving Government an opinion, had they foreseen the war a few years later it is quite clear that they would not have given that advice but they would have given the advice that we should build more locomotives because with war always comes increased activity on the Railways. Fortunately we did not follow the recommendation. Had we accepted their advice we should have been in a more difficult position than we are today.

Well, Sir, the Humphreys-Srinivasan Committee reported—it was rather in the nature of a preliminary report—on the construction of locomotives at Kanchrapara. It was decided to go ahead with its recommendation but that decision had to be cancelled when war broke out because of the imperative necessity of turning every possible machine on to the manufacture of munitions and as has more than once been pointed out those munitions very materially helped to turn the scale in the Middle East, without which we would not have been, none of us would have been, sitting in this House and discussing the Railway Budget today, so that the decision to turn Kanchrapara over to munitions was undoubtedly correct.

The next stage in the locomotive problem arose when the Japanese came into the war. It became quite evident as a result of three or four disastrous months that India was going to become a much more important focal point in the war. What happened? My Honourable colleague, the Chief Commissioner, took immediate action and placed orders for more rolling stock and wagons, foreseeing that as India was coming nearer to the war effort, so the activity on the Railways in this country would become greater. Now that does not show a lack of foresight on the part of Government. It is those very locomotives which were ordered so long ago as that—and in which incidentally I took an interest weeks before ever I came to this country—it is those very locomotives which are now just being delivered today, so that there is no question of any lack of foresight in trying to meet the present position and if we could have got more locomotives we would have ordered more locomotives. We have got them with great difficulty and as the result of great pressure. We have got all the locomotives which the United Nations were prepared to give us and I think no possible step was neglected to get locomotives to meet the present traffic crisis which we had foreseen. About 200 metre gauge locomotives were sent overseas and some of these are now returning to us.

Now, Sir, to turn to the manufacturing side, I told this House last year that the decision had been made to proceed. We are proceeding. The whole matter has been under close discussion with the Consulting Engineers. It is a question of adapting an existing plant to the manufacture of locomotives. You can probably proceed in an *andasi* way by installing a few machines and trying to manufacture locomotives but what we want is a first class locomotive shop. The decision of the Board is to proceed with manufacturing half our requirements at Kanchrapara, and the moment the plans are finalized the machinery orders will be placed. A start will be made as soon as we can get the works free from the munitions and the local repairs on which they are at present engaged, and as soon as we can get the machinery erected and the work in hand.

[Sir Edward Benthall.]

But we are not magicians. We cannot wave our hand and say "Let there be locomotives". The setting up of a first class modern locomotive shop, particularly on a site which is already occupied by workshop buildings, does require a lot of careful planning and it is much better that we should get those plans properly prepared now rather than that we should rush ahead, but I can assure the House that we are doing all that we can to get those plans finalized, to get the machinery and to get started.

My Honourable friend Sir Buta Singh said that he did not think this House should support the Government's proposals unless Government could give an undertaking to get all their railway requirements in this country. I think what I have said will convince the Honourable Member that we are getting all our requirements of locomotives in this country and I therefore confidently rely on his support for Government's proposals.

Sir, on the question of fares the Honourable Mr. Padshah referred to my Budget speech and said that after reading it he felt that I was trying to justify my own conscience. Sir, my Honourable friend would, I am sure, have taken precisely the opposite view if I had failed to set out at some length the arguments for Government's proposal. What would he have said if we had simply imposed an increase without giving an explanation? He would have said that we were acting in an irresponsible way. Well, Sir, I have listened to the arguments of the Honourable Members and I have frankly failed to find in their speeches adequate counter-arguments to the argument which I have put out. Honourable Members have not put forward any very convincing arguments either on the effect of the increase in restricting traffic or on the deflationary aspect, or arguments against the post-war fund.

To take the first point first. As I have pointed out we calculate that 156 million more people will have been travelling in the current year than in the year before. I have asked Honourable Members why is that? The Honourable Mr. Padshah says "Due to social reasons". I should like to know why are there more social reasons in 1943-44 than there were in 1942-43? It is perfectly clear. The answer is that in 1943-44 there is more money to spend, more money in circulation and therefore more people travelling.

THE HONOURABLE SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR: I said in my speech that it is the extinction of much of the road transport that has given rise to this increase in the number of the travelling public.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: To a certain extent that has had some effect but exactly the same conditions prevailed in the other year and as a matter of fact to meet that, as Honourable Members know, we are trying to increase the number of chassis available for conversion into buses in order to relieve the traffic in the more congested areas. Sir, the primary reason why so many more people have travelled in the last year is unquestionably due to the greater circulation of money in the country. This increase does not apply only to lower classes. Actually the increase in the upper classes in 1942-43—that is the latest figure I have got—was 76.8 per cent. in the first class, 59.3 in the second class, and only 7.3 in the third class. That was in 1942-43. In 1943-44 there was a sudden up-surge, in the third class in particular, to the extent of another 30 per cent. The increase in the upper classes has been relatively greater. Of course, one of the reasons for that is that there are more officers travelling; and another is that people have more money and are prepared to pay for higher class travel in order to avoid the discomforts of lower class travel.

One Honourable Member—I think Sir David Devadoss—referred to Madras, and said that there was no tendency for increased travel in that area, and that nobody travelled except when compelled to do so. If the Honourable Member will look at the Explanatory Memorandum, page 34, he will see that not only has there been a very rapid increase in passenger traffic, especially third class,—although the upper class figures have doubled our budget estimate—but we anticipate further increases in the ensuing year.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: May I interrupt the Honourable Member? Has he taken into consideration the number of colliers that have been sent from Travancore and Cochin to Assam? That is the cause of the increase?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: We are not concerned so much with the object of the passenger—we have to carry passengers whoever they are. But I will get on to that aspect in one moment.

As regards the question of overcrowding generally, I would like to assure Honourable Members that India is no exception. Honourable Members of this House and Honourable colleagues of mine who have gone to England report that conditions there are exactly the same. Passengers travel all night standing in corridors. And even before I left England 18 months ago the conditions that prevailed there were not dissimilar to those obtaining here. In fact I have heard it said that they are now relatively worse than in this country.

My Honourable friend Mr. Hossain Imam said that the whole of this overcrowding was due to military passengers. That, Sir, is not correct. The earnings from civilian passengers—I have not got the numbers—but the earnings from civilian passengers in the twin years 1942-43 and 1943-44 went up by 10 crores from 40 crores to 50 crores, and the earnings from military passengers not travelling by special train went up from 4.7 crores to 7.7 crores. So, you will see from these figures that the increase in public passengers was much greater than in the military.

The Honourable Mr. Das pointed out the extremely difficult conditions which prevail in Assam. I am aware of that. It was only special circumstances which forced us to cancel those passenger services to which he referred, without giving warning. We will try and give the Government previous notice, and we will also try and give what relief we can in the way of buses, if the Government are in a position to operate them. But I must remind my Honourable friend and the House that in Assam we are getting close to operational areas where the ordinary comforts of the public are apt to be upset by the necessities of war.

I would like to touch on several points raised by the Central Advisory Council for Railways, and particularly so because my Honourable friend Sir David Devadoss was one of the members of that Council. That Council did discuss all these problems of overcrowding at considerable length and on a memorandum supplied by the Railway Board. My Honourable friend on that occasion asked that we should do what we could to restrict military traffic. We had attempted to do so before, and we took it up again after that. We have been trying, in consultation with the Army, to see what can be done in the way of zoning leave for officers, that is to say, linking certain areas where troops are quartered with certain hill stations so as to restrict very long journeys unless there are special reasons for them. We have made various other suggestions in connection with leave rules and suggested holiday camps. In short, we are doing everything that we possibly can, in consultation with the Army, to restrict military traffic. But I would remind my Honourable friend that in war-time and with increasing numbers of troops moving it is extraordinarily difficult to curtail overall the amount of military traffic which takes place.

My Honourable friend Sir David Devadoss also recommended that we should restrict pilgrim traffic. Well, Sir, we have tried to do so. We have cancelled the special trains which used to run to the big *melas*, and we have tried to discourage booking to these *melas*. But it is not effective, for the same reason as I have quoted before—people have money, and they will spend it. And in this country there is an impelling force which drives people to go to *melas*, and go they will. I think myself that it is not unreasonable, if you can get to them, to ask them to postpone their journeys on account of these *melas* until services are less congested. We have carried out a campaign encouraging people to travel only when they must, but it has not been very effective. Not long ago we took out some statistics of passengers on one of the big railways. We questioned nearly 18 lakhs of passengers. Of these, about 8 per cent. were travelling on Government account, and 24 per cent. on business. About 10 per cent. admitted to be travelling for pleasure—sight-seeing, excursions, entertainments, and so on.



[Sir Edward Benthall.]

So, 10 per cent. of the travellers admit to being unnecessary travellers. About 18½ per cent. were travelling to *melas*; that is to say, out of 13 lakhs, some 2½ lakhs were travelling to *melas*. You will thus see that our efforts to stop people travelling to *melas* have not been very successful. Despite the fact that there are no special trains, travel they will, the reason being, once again, that they have got money in the pockets, and this impelling force also makes them travel. Of other classes—marriages accounted for one per cent. and only half per cent. of the people were travelling for funeral; on medical grounds about 4½ per cent. and lawyers will be glad to hear that not less than 12 per cent. of this 13 lakhs, i.e., something like 1½ lakhs of the people were travelling on litigation.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: Who furnished these statistics? On what authority have you been asking every passenger on what grounds he is travelling and collecting these statistics?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Well, Sir, a great many members have said that people travel only when they must. I was not convinced. We went into the question and questioned second, intermediate and third class passengers. There were, so far as I know, no unpleasant incidents. It was very nicely done and this is the information spread over 13 lakhs of people.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: On which Railway, Sir?

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: This was for the E. I. R. I do not attach too great accuracy to these figures but they do give a very good indication of the sort of reasons why people are travelling today and unquestionably the main reason is that people have more money, and even though it is uncomfortable, nevertheless they will travel.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: They are presenting it to the Government of India.

THE HONOURABLE SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: I maintain, Sir, that travelling, in spite of its discomfort, is still cheap. Otherwise, goodness knows why some of our people travel. I know of some people who travel even from Bombay or Madras to Kashmir to spend their holidays.

There is just one question which I should perhaps answer. I think it was the Honourable Sir A. P. Patro who raised it. He asked what I meant by "so long as present conditions existed" this increase will be maintained. In other words, what is meant by "present conditions"? That is a general phrase. It is not intended to be too precise. But the sort of conditions that I had in mind were so long as over-crowding exists, so long as inflationary tendency in this country exists and until we see how much money does accrue in the Fund. Those are the sort of considerations which will have to be borne in mind when the time comes to take off this increase.

Sir, time is getting on and I think I had better not deal with certain of the aspects that I had intended originally to deal with. But I do maintain that apart from the reasons for trying to check the number of passengers who are travelling—and every speaker in the House has stressed the appalling conditions of travel today and Government to consider that it is essential to take this and other steps to deal with it, we cannot let it go on—apart from those reasons, the deflationary effect and the building up of an adequate Fund are also very valid reasons for going ahead with this measure. You should really look at the two—the deflationary effect and post-war fund—together in order to get them in their proper perspective. What we are in fact doing is taking 10 crores off the market, which would otherwise be spent in inflating the prices of goods which are scarce, and we are going to spend that money in the country on a later date for the benefit of those people from whom it is being taken today. We cannot restore it to the individual passenger. But the money will be taken largely from the lower class passengers and will be spent entirely on the lower class passengers. It is argued from time to time that the people from whom it is taken will be dead by the time the money comes to be spent. I maintain that that sort of argument is an argument against any sort of progress. If you are

going to plan ahead at all, you must look ahead. You cannot consider whether the individual who pays the extra fare now will get it back later on or not. The young will, the very old will not. You have got to look at the general progress. If we are going to raise the general standard of living in the country, we have got to make sacrifices now and put aside this money while we can do so. Looking at it from the broader aspect, this money will be set aside now and will be spent again at a time probably when the general activity in the country is decreasing and people are beginning to suffer from unemployment and hardships. I would ask this House to remember the 1930's. In the 1930's we met with a slump after a period of prosperity. We had no reserves, no money to spend on third class passengers or on anything else. The little reserves we had were eaten up in paying interest and so on. We had to try and raise funds by increasing rates in order to scrape money together to pay our interest. Any progress became impossible and for years we were cheese-paring. If we will only set our minds to it and take courage to adopt such measures as we are proposing now, we shall avoid that in the future, because this money will be set aside in the Fund for the purpose of spending when materials which are now being consumed in the war become released for consumption later on or become once again available for spending on nation-building objects. I think that, on the whole, I have in this House and elsewhere answered all the arguments that have been put up against the Government proposals and though many members expressed their continued opposition, I do feel that the weight of the arguments which have been put forward has convinced in their own minds a number of people that this measure is justifiable and in fact that it is a right one at the present moment. We have done our best to mitigate the severity of this increase to the poorer classes of the people and in that way we have made it a fair proposal. I cannot but think that when members think it over quietly those who are not yet prepared to say that they are convinced, will be convinced in their own hearts that this measure is both right and fair.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** This concludes the debate on the Budget (Part I). The Council will now adjourn.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, the 24th February, 1944.