

# THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

## Official Report

---

Volume IV, 1943

*(8th to 19th November, 1943)*

---

### NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1943



*DY 2107.*  
PUBLISHED BY THE MANAGER OF PUBLICATIONS, DELHI  
PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS, NEW DELHI  
1944.

Price Rs. 1 As. 2 or 1s. 9d.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

---

*President:*

The Honourable Sir ABDUR RAHIM, K.C.S.I.

*Deputy President:*

Mr. AKHIL CHANDRA DATTA, M.L.A.

*Panel of Chairmen:*

Syed GHULAM BHIK NAIRANG, M.L.A.

Mr. K. C. NEOGY, M.L.A.

Mr. HOOSEINBHOY A. LALLJEE, M.L.A.

Sir HENRY RICHARDSON, M.L.A.

*Secretary:*

Mian MUHAMMAD RAFI, Barrister-at-Law.

*Assistants of the Secretary.*

Mr. M. N. KAUL, Barrister-at-Law.

Khan Bahadur S. G. HASNAIN.

*Marshal:*

Captain Haji Sardar NUR AHMAD KHAN, M.C., I.O.M., I.A.

*Committee on Petitions:*

Mr. AKHIL CHANDRA DATTA, M.L.A., *Chairman.*

Syed GHULAM BHIK NAIRANG, M.L.A.

Mr. GOVIND V. DESHMUKH, M.L.A.

Sardar SANT SINGH, M.L.A.

Mr. N. M. JOSHI, M.L.A.

# CONTENTS

## Volume IV—8th to 19th November, 1943.

	PAGES.		PAGES.
<b>MONDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		<b>lection of Members to the Standing Committee for the Food Department</b>	
Members Sworn	1		190—95
Starred Questions and Answers	1—22	<b>Election of a Member to the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore</b>	195—96
Unstarred Question and Answer	22	<b>Motion re the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded</b>	196—224
Statements laid on the Table	22—26	<b>SATURDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
Message from His Excellency the Governor General	26	Starred Questions and Answers	225—48
Statement re method of taking votes by division	26—27	Unstarred Questions and Answers	248—49
Motion for Adjournment re Non-official Delegation to Great Britain and United States of America to speak on India's War Effort—Adopted	27—28	Motions for Adjournment re—	
H. E. the Governor General's Assent to Bills	28	Arrest of Mr. Pardiwalla, Barrister of Lahore—Ruled out of Order	250
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succession)—Petitions laid on the Table	29	Alleged inhuman Treatment to Mr. Jalprakash Narain—Ruled out of Order	250—51
Amendments to the British Baluchistan Motor Vehicles Rules	29	The Victoria Memorial (Amendment) Bill—Passed	251—52
The Hindu Code Part I, (Intestate Succession)—Presentation of the Report of the Joint Committee	30	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Second Amendment) Bill—Passed	252
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee	30	The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill—Circulated	252—78
The Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill—Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee	30	The Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Passed as amended	278
The Indian Tea Control (Second Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill (Amendment of section 503, etc.)—Passed as amended	278—79
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Second Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	<b>MONDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER 1943—</b>	
The Victoria Memorial (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	Member sworn	281
The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	Starred Questions and Answers	281—96
The Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	31	Unstarred Question and Answer	297
Election of Members to the Delhi University Court	31	Declarations of Exemption and Notification under the Registration of Foreigners Act	297—99
<b>TUESDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		Motion re The Food Situation—not concluded	299—343
Member Sworn	47	<b>TUESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
Starred Questions and Answers	47—80	Member sworn	345
Unstarred Questions and Answers	80—82	Starred Questions and Answers	345—58
Motions for Adjournment re—		Unstarred Questions and Answers	358—59
Banning Publication of Bengal Governor's Order against the <i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> —Ruled out of Order	83—84	Motion for Adjournment re Failure to implement their Guarantee of Independence to Lebanon by the British Government—Ruled out of Order	359
Failure to give Publicity to Mortality due to Starvation in Bengal—Not moved	84	Reconstitution of the House Committee	359
Failure to take Timely Action for preventing Acute Food Crisis in Bengal—Disallowed	84	Motion re the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded	359—401
Failure to consult the Legislature re Agreement for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration—Ruled out of Order	84—85	Statement of Business	401
Hunger-strike of Political Prisoners in Bhopalpur Camp Jail—Ruled out of Order	86	<b>WEDNESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
Continuance of Central Government's Subsidy to Sind—Ruled out of Order	86	Member Sworn	403
Nomination of the Panel of Chairmen	86—87	Starred Questions and Answers	403—38
Resolution re Stabilization of Prices—Adopted as amended	87—105	Unstarred Questions and Answers	438—40
Statement of Business	105—06	Point of Order re Motion proposing communication of formal address to H. E. the Governor General	440—41
<b>WEDNESDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		Election of Members to the Delhi University Court	441
Starred Questions and Answers	107—37	Statements laid on the Table	441—42
Unstarred Questions and Answers	138—39	The Indian Tea Control (Second Amendment) Bill—Passed	442—43
Committee on Petitions	139	The Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—Passed	443—44
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succession)—Petitions laid on the Table	139	The Central Excise Bill—Referred to Select Committee	444—45
The Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill—(Amendment of section 100)—Motion to continue adopted	140	The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succession)—Circulated	445—46
The Disolution of Muslim Marriages (Amendment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140	Motion re the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded	446—73
The Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment) Bill—(Insertion of section 12B)—Motion to continue adopted	140	<b>THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
The Muslim Kazis Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140	Starred Questions and Answers	475—93
The Indian Evidence (Amendment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140	Unstarred Questions and Answers	493—94
The Indian Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill—Referred to Select Committee	140—43	Motions for Adjournment re—	
The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Bill—Motion to refer to Select Committee—Withdrawn	143—65	Conviction of Mr. P. E. Pathur under the 'Pegging Act in Durban—Ruled out of Order	494
<b>FRIDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		Ill-treatment meted out to Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni and other Muslim Security Prisoners—Ruled out of Order	495
Starred Questions and Answers	167—83	Election of Members to the Standing Committee for the Food Department	495
Unstarred Questions and Answers	183—89	Election of a Member to the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	495
Election of Members to the Delhi University Court	189	Motion re Food Situation—Discussion concluded	495—541
The Central Excise Bill—Introduced	190	<b>FRIDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
		Member Sworn	543
		Starred Questions and Answers	543—58
		Unstarred Questions and Answers	554—55
		Statements laid on the Table	555—63
		Short Notice Question and Answer	563—64
		Resolution re Recruitment of Scheduled Castes to the Key Service of the Army—Adopted	564—79
		Resolution re Reform of the Cantonment Service—Withdrawn	579—88

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 18th November, 1943.

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

## STARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

### (a) ORAL ANSWERS.

#### POLITICAL DETENUS AND CONVICTS IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY.

**272. \*Mr. G. Rangiah Naidu:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state the number of political detenus and political convicts who were arrested in the Madras Presidency and are now in various jails of the Presidency and also in jails of other Provinces?

(b) Are all the political detenus given family allowances, and if so, at what rate?

(c) Is there any discrimination made in fixing the family allowances to detenus, and, if so what are the reasons for such discrimination?

(d) Is any increase made in the family allowances to the detenus owing to the present abnormally enhanced prices of foodstuffs? If so, what is the rate of increase? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) The terms "political detenus" and "political convicts" used by the Honourable Member have no precise meaning. If by these terms, he is referring to persons detained and undergoing imprisonment in connection with the Congress movement, then the totals for the Madras Presidency, as on 1st October, 1943—the latest date for which figures are available—were 584 and 1,851, respectively. These totals doubtless include any Madras prisoners detained in jails in other Provinces, but I have no separate information as to their numbers.

(b) Family allowances are granted by the Provincial Government only in cases in which they are considered necessary, and their rates vary according to the circumstances of each case. I have no information of the allowances actually granted in Madras.

(c) I am not clear what the Honourable Member has in mind; I am aware of no discrimination.

(d) It is open to the Provincial Government to increase the allowance in any case in which they consider it inadequate.

#### DISCRIMINATION IN RELEASING POLITICAL DETENUS AND CONVICTS.

**273. \*Mr. G. Rangiah Naidu.** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member please state if it is a fact that discrimination is made in releasing detenus and convicts on parole? If so, why?

(b) Are the detenus and convicts who are released on parole paid by Government railway fares from the places of detention to their homes? If not, why not?

(c) Is it a fact that family allowances of detenus are stopped for the period the detenus are on parole? If so, why?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I have no detailed information regarding the practice in Provinces. As far as Chief Commissioners' Provinces are concerned, however, the answers to the Honourable Member's question are as follows:

(a) Convicts are not released on parole. Security prisoners may be temporarily released when in the opinion of the Chief Commissioner considerations of humanity render this desirable such as, for instance, critical illnesses of near relatives. The release is, however, subject to such conditions as security may require.

(b) Each case would be considered on its merits. So far no such application has been made in Chief Commissioners' Provinces.

(c) No.

## DAILY RATIONS FOR POLITICAL DETENUS AND CONVICTS.

**274. \*Mr. G. Rangiah Naidu:** Will the Honourable the Home Member please state if there is any increase in the daily rations for detenus and convicts owing to the present abnormal prices of foodstuffs? If so, what is the rate of increase? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The fact that the price of foodstuffs has risen is not, of course, any ground for increasing the scale of prisoners rations. In Ajmer, Coorg and Baluchistan, a scale of rations is prescribed for convicts. In the case of both convicts and security prisoners in the Delhi Province, in respect of whom diet is based on a daily cash allowance and not on a ration scale, the allowance has been increased and is now more than double the former rate. There appears to have been no corresponding increase in the diet allowance of security prisoners in Ajmer, but the increase in the cost of foodstuffs there has doubtless been far less than in Delhi. There are no security prisoners detained in the other Chief Commissioners' Provinces. As regards the practice in Provinces, this is a matter for Provincial Governments and I have no information.

## DEVASTATION DUE TO FLOODS IN MADRAS.

**275. \*Mr. G. Rangiah Naidu:** Is the Honourable the Home Member aware of the devastation and distress in the city of Madras due to the recent heavy floods caused by the heavy rains? If so, what help do Government propose to afford to relieve the distress?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** Yes. The matter is primarily the concern of the Provincial Government who have not, so far as I am aware, asked the Central Government for help in relieving distress.

## CONTINUANCE OF EXPENDITURE ON A. R. P. IN SIND.

**276. \*Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban:** (a) Will the Honourable the Defence Member be pleased to state whether, in view of the favourable turn for the Allies in the war in Russia and the Middle East, the expenditure on A. R. P. measures in Sind will be continued as in the last two years or curtailed progressively to vanishing point within a limited period?

(b) If an enemy air attack on Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur or Jacobabad is considered too remote, what steps have been taken or are under contemplation to disband the A. R. P. organisation there?

(c) How are the A. R. P. personnel and material being disposed of, considering the negligible nature of the danger of an enemy air attack on any part of Sind?

**Mr. L. J. D. Wakely:** (a), (b) and (c). The whole question of reducing expenditure on A. R. P. in areas where it can be safely reduced is under consideration and the Government of India are in close touch with Provincial Governments in this regard.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Is there any danger in Sind for continuing this?

**Mr. L. J. D. Wakely:** It would not be in the public interest to answer that question.

## EVAQUEES AND REFUGEES IN INDIA.

**277. \*Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban:** (a) Will the Honourable the Defence Member be pleased to state whether it is a fact that a census of the evacuees and refugees in India is being undertaken? What is the total number of such evacuees and refugees from Burma, Malay and other enemy occupied countries? How many of them are Europeans, Indians, Burmans, Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians?

(b) Is anything being paid to them by way of maintenance? If so, what is the total expenditure? Is there any difference in the scales of allowances given to the nationals mentioned above? Is this expenditure met by His Majesty's Government or the Government of India? If by the Government of India, what are the reasons for doing so?

(c) How many Indian evacuees and non-Indian evacuees, both official and non-official, from Burma, Malay and other enemy occupied countries are at

present employed as Gazetted Officers under the Government of India and the Provincial Governments?

(d) What measures have hitherto been adopted to utilise the services of the evacuees of all classes? Do those measures apply equally to Indians and non-Indians? If so, what are the reasons for the disparity between Indians and non-Indians receiving employment under the Government of India? Are any measures being proposed to remove this disparity?

**Mr. L. J. D. Wakely:** (a) A census of evacuees is being taken during the current month. The information asked by the Honourable Member with regard to the number of evacuees of various nationalities from each enemy occupied country will not be available until the tabulated results of the census are ready. As at present estimated the total number of evacuees is approximately five lakhs. The number of European British and Foreign evacuees in India is 10,464.

(b) Government have sanctioned a scheme of financial assistance to evacuees of all nationalities and the total expenditure on Indian evacuees is estimated to be between Rs. 7 and 8 lakhs every month. The scales of allowances prescribed by the Government are based on the pre-evacuation income of evacuees and are applicable to evacuees of all nationalities alike. As regards incidence of cost, Indian and Anglo-Indian evacuees are paid for from Indian revenues; European British subjects from all countries except Burma are paid for by His Majesty's Government, and Burman and Anglo-Burman evacuees from Burma and Europeans ordinarily resident in Burma are paid for by the Burma Government. The cost incurred for foreign allied nationals is ultimately debited to Governments of the countries whose subjects they are.

(c) and (d). The information asked for in part (c) is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House. In the meantime Government have no information whether any disparity exists. All measures designed to assist refugees to find employment apply to Indian and non-Indian alike.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Have any evacuees been employed in Sind in any official jobs?

**Mr. L. J. D. Wakely:** I have no information on that point.

RATION ALLOWANCES FOR INDIAN EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF INDIAN ENGINEERS (DEFENCE OF INDIA) UNIT.

278. \***Mr. Ananga Mohan Darn:** Will the War Secretary be pleased to state:

(a) whether he proposes to request the Army authorities to grant equal ration allowances to the Indian and European Members of the Indian Engineers (Defence of India) Unit;

(b) whether it is a fact that King's Commissioned Officers in the Indian Engineers (Defence of India) Unit get various stores like clothings and drinks at concessional rates; and.

(c) if Government propose to afford similar facilities to the Viceroy's Commissioned Officers, if not, why not?

**Mr. C. M. Trivedi:** (a) Ration allowance in lieu of rations is only granted to Other Ranks of the Defence of India Units when employed on Railways. It is based on the value of the rations to which the individual is entitled. Domiciled Europeans and Anglo-Indians are entitled to the British scale of rations which is more expensive, since more of the articles composing it have to be imported.

(b) and (c). As far as clothing is concerned King's Commissioned Officers do not get free issues but are permitted to purchase at Officers Shops at the current vocabulary price plus departmental charges. There is no question of concessional rates. Viceroy's Commissioned Officers are not so permitted because they are clothed free by the State and all replacements are free. As regards other stores and drinks the position is that up to now no personnel of these units have been eligible to draw canteen stores from Canteen Services (India) installations but arrangements have now been made for them to do so at the same scale as the equivalent ranks in the Army.

## SALE OF GOLD BY RESERVE BANK TO THE PUBLIC.

**279. \*Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** Will the Honourable the Finance Member please state:

(a) whether Government had been consulted by the Reserve Bank prior to its offering gold for sale to the public;

(b) the policy of the Government in regard to such gold sales;

(c) whether such gold sales are intended to bring down speculative activity in the bullion market or to act as a check on inflation;

(d) whether the Government of India or the Reserve Bank have imported this gold from abroad; if so, from what country; or whether they are selling gold out of the stocks of gold held in this country by the British Government or by any other foreign Government;

(e) if the gold that is offered is purchased by the Government of India or by the Reserve Bank, at what price the purchase is made;

(f) if it is a fact that the gold that is offered is from the stocks held by the United Kingdom Exchange Utilisation Account; if so, what price the Account gets for this gold, and to whom the margin, if any, goes; and

(g) if it is a policy of the Government of India to acquire gold from other sources and sell it in the country, whether Government have examined the possibility of buying gold in the United Kingdom at the London market rate of sh. 148 per ounce and selling the same to the Indian public?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** Government do not consider that it would be in the public interest to give the information asked for.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** On the whole question? Are not the public interested?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** The public may be extremely interested, but I have said it would not be to the general advantage to answer these questions.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** Why do Government say that?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** For reasons which I think are not very difficult to understand.

**Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** May I ask if the public are not interested in knowing whether the Indian Government is benefitting by this sale or some other government is benefitting by this sale?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** There are many points which the public would be very interested to know, which cannot be revealed currently without damage to the public interest.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** Does the Honourable Member hold out any hope that he will be able to make a statement on these points when he makes his budget statement?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** I would not like to be specific about the time at which I should be able to give information on this matter, but I do hope that I shall be able at some to do so.

**Mr. Hoogseinhoy A. Laljee:** Will it affect your budget in any way?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** That would be giving information; but I may say that it does not.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** May I ask whether Government does not realise that if they gave information, speculators will be really frightened and the public reassured?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** That consideration always arises, but one has to decide what on the balance will really be in the interests of the country.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** And the balance is against giving information?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** That is Government's conclusion at this moment.

## MUTUAL AID PLAN OF THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT.

**280. \*Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to an article appearing in the *Economist*, dated the 26th June, 1948 (page 828), in which, in regard to the

Mutual Aid Plan of the Canadian Government approved by the Canadian Parliament, it is stated that "Speaking of Canadian goods provided through Britain, to other British Dominions, India, the British Colonial Empire, certain Middle-Eastern areas and Russia, Mr. Ilsley made two points, (1) that Canada now proposed to deal directly with these countries, and (2) that Canada felt that the Canadian source of this assistance should be clear to the countries receiving it";

(b) whether the Government of India have examined the implications of this statement as well as of the various clauses of the Mutual Aid Act relating to the repayment of obligations as well as trade policy and fiscal freedom of the country entering into agreement with Canada under this Act;

(c) whether the Canadian Government have approached the Government of India for the establishment of a direct relation between India and Canada for the supply of Canadian goods to this country; and

(d) whether he proposes to place on the table figures for:—

(i) the Canadian goods provided to India through Great Britain for the years 1939-40, 1940-41, 1941-42 and 1942-43; and

(ii) the Canadian goods, if any, directly provided to India for the same years?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** (a) Yes.

(b) We are awaiting further information on the subject.

(c) No.

(d) These statistics are not available and could not now be compiled.

#### LEASE-LEND OBLIGATIONS INCURRED BY INDIA.

**281. \*Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state whether it is a fact that negotiations between India and the United States of America in respect of the Master and Reciprocal Agreements under Lease-Lend have been suspended for the time being? If so, does he propose to clarify the position in regard to Lease-Lend obligations incurred by India, and the position of the reciprocal aid given by this country in terms of provisions and equipment and other services to the forces of the United States of America stationed in the country?

(b) What is the exact nature and the amount of obligations incurred by India in respect of Lease-Lend goods received in the country since November, 1942, that is, since India was declared eligible for Lease-Lend aid?

(c) What is the liability of the Government of India in respect of Lease-Lend supplies received in the country, how is liability allocated as between United Kingdom, China and India, and on whose behalf the Lease-Lend goods have been received in the country?

(d) Are the Government of India, while keeping accounts, showing under a distinct head in their books, the amount of aid received on Lease-Lend account from the United States of America through the United Kingdom, and that received from the United States of America directly?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** (a), (b) and (c). Negotiations for a direct Mutual Aid agreement between India and the United States of America are in suspension. The remaining points were covered in the last budget speech and in my statement in the House on 17th March, 1943. I hope to make a more up to date statement in my next budget speech.

(d) No. This is unnecessary since the comparatively few Lease-Lend stores that are received through the United Kingdom are such as would be provided free by His Majesty's Government to India under the Financial Settlement and no liability is assumed by India.

**Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** May I ask whether the Honourable Member will confirm that the expenditure incurred by the Government of India with regard to reverse Lease-Lend exceeds what the Government of India may have received from the United Kingdom or the United States?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** Confirm that it exceeds? I certainly deny that the cost of reciprocal aid debitable to India has exceeded the estimated value of Lease-Lend aid received by India.



**Sardar Mangal Singh:** When are negotiations likely to be resumed—these talks about Lease-Lend?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** I cannot say.

PARTICIPATION OF INDIA IN THE ALLIED MONETARY CONFERENCE.

**282. \*Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of India have been invited to participate in the Allied Monetary Conference which is to be held to discuss the American, British and Canadian Monetary proposals, and to arrive at a Post-war Monetary Agreement or Scheme;

(b) whether the Government of India have taken cognizance of the various opinions expressed on the American, British and the Canadian Monetary proposals by economists and other public men;

(c) whether the Government of India have given their full consideration to the views expressed on these proposals by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry; and

(d) whether he proposes to state the names of the personnel which the Government of India have selected to represent India at the forthcoming Monetary Conference?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** (a) I would refer the Honourable Member to the reply I gave to his question No. 238 on the 6th August last. No arrangements have yet been made for the holding of an Allied Monetary Conference.

(b) Yes.

(c) The views expressed on the proposals by all the interests which have been consulted will receive due consideration.

(d) No selections have yet been made.

REVISION OF THE FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT OF 1939 BETWEEN INDIA AND GREAT BRITAIN.

**283. \*Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether the reports that are current in the country that discussions for the revision of the Financial Settlement of 1939 between India and Great Britain have taken place between the two Governments are correct; and

(b) whether any correspondence has taken place between the Government of India and His Majesty's Government on this subject?

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

(b) No.

ARREST OF MR. RAGHUNANDAN SARAN.

**284. \*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Mr. Raghunandan Saran, former President of the Provincial Congress Committee, Delhi, was arrested in September, 1942, at Dalhousie where he had been lying seriously ill for several weeks;

(b) whether it is a fact that he has been ever since in detention;

(c) whether it is a fact that he was sent to the Mayo Hospital, Lahore, in May, 1943, for diagnosis by specialists;

(d) whether it is a fact that massage formed the integral part of the treatment prescribed for him by Khan Bahadur Dr. Mohammad Yusuf, Mayo Hospital Specialist;

(e) whether it is a fact that Government refused to bear the expenses for this treatment upon which he gave it up as a protest; and

(f) whether it is a fact that his neurotic condition has progressively deteriorated and is causing anxiety to his relatives and friends; if so, what action the Delhi Government have taken or propose to take in the matter?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) The person named was arrested in Dalhousie early in September, 1942. His health at the time was not good but he was not seriously ill.

(b) Yes.

(c) He was transferred from the jail in which he had been detained to the Mayo Hospital in Lahore in May last and for most if not all of the subsequent period has been in that hospital.

(d) Yes.

(e) Full information in regard to this part of the question is not available here, but it is known that in August last the Punjab Government gave him permission, as a special case, to employ at his own expense a specialist in Yogic massage.

(f) In view of the fact that his condition did not appear to be improving in hospital, orders for his release were issued by the Chief Commissioner of Delhi on the 3rd November.

#### TREATMENT METED OUT TO DELHI DETENUS IN PUNJAB JAILS.

**285. \*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that all Delhi detenus now kept in the Punjab Jails are made to live in the General Ward of the Mayo Hospital when sent there as indoor patients, like 'C' Class Prisoners; if so, why; and

(b) whether it is a fact that while as indoor patients they are not allowed to meet even their fellow detenus; if so, the reasons for the same?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) and (b). Information has been called for from the Punjab Government and will be laid on the table in due course.

#### MEDICAL TREATMENT OF PROFESSOR N. K. NIGAM.

**286. \*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Professor N. K. Nigam, M.A., who was detained under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules from Delhi is suffering from intestinal tuberculosis and is lying seriously ill in the Mayo Hospital, Lahore;

(b) whether it is a fact that an application was sent by him to the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, for permission to be privately treated by Dr. N. C. Joshi of Delhi; and

(c) if the answers to (a) and (b) be in the affirmative, what action Government have taken or propose to take in the matter?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) The person named is believed to be suffering from a tubercular complaint and was recently transferred under the orders of the proper authorities in the Punjab from the jail in that Province where he was detained to the Mayo Hospital, Lahore. It is understood, however, that the treatment prescribed for him in hospital can be just as well given in jail and that the hospital authorities have recommended that he should be returned to jail. It is clear that he is not seriously ill.

(b) He applied to the Chief Commissioner in January last to be retransferred to the Delhi jail with a view to his treatment by a private medical practitioner of his own choice, but the application was not granted.

(c) His health will continue to be carefully watched.

#### RELEASE OF CONGRESS DETENUS OF DELHI.

**287. \*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the cases of the Congress Detenus of Delhi have been scrutinised by Government with a view to releasing such of them whose detention was no longer justified; if so, the action taken as a result of scrutiny;

(b) whether it is a fact that, barring a few, almost on all persons released as a result of scrutiny various conditions have been imposed restricting their movements as well as asking them to report themselves to the Police stations in their wards thrice a week;

(c) whether it is a fact that the persons asked to report to the police stations thrice weekly include Shrimati Brij Ranj, a lady; and

(d) whether it is a fact that this order is adverse and is widely resented by the public and has been strongly criticised by the local Press; if so, if Government propose to withdraw the same?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) Yes. As a result of this scrutiny 41 security prisoners have been released from detention by the Chief Commissioner since August 9th, 1948.

(b) Restrictive orders of various kinds have been served on the majority of the prisoners so released. Most of these orders contain provisions prohibiting the prisoner from taking part in political meetings and processions and requiring him to report at intervals to the local police station.

(c) Yes.

(d) The order has been relaxed and she is no longer required to report to the police station.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** May I ask what was the machinery which was used in reviewing the cases of these detenus?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** They were reviewed by the Chief Commissioner himself.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** Will the Honourable Member explain the utility of asking these people to report themselves at the police station—the principle on which this condition is based?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** That is quite an ordinary precaution to take in cases of this kind; at any rate, it allows the person more liberty than he would have enjoyed had he continued to be detained. A similar provision, for instance, exists in the corresponding Defence Regulation in Great Britain, that a person may be required to report his movements periodically. There is nothing unusual in such a requirement.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** May I ask the Honourable Member to substitute surveillance by the police instead of asking these men to go and make a report at the police station? Will it not conduce to better results?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I doubt very much whether persons themselves would prefer the police coming and prying into their houses.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** Are people being detained merely for investigation, against whom there is nothing definite?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I do not quite understand the Honourable Member's question. Does he refer to the Delhi prisoners?

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** In Delhi as well as outside. People are detained simply for investigation?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** They are not detained merely for investigation. They are detained only in cases where there is reason to suppose that their liberty may have to be restricted.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** But for investigation alone I am asking?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** It does not appear to arise out of this question, but I have already answered that question. They are not detained for investigation alone, but it is only in cases where the individual person is suspected.

**Sardar Mangal Singh:** May I know whether the cases of persons on whom restraint orders are served are reviewed from time to time?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** Yes.

**Sardar Mangal Singh:** When was my case reviewed last?

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

#### ADVISABILITY OF TRANSFERRING DELHI DETENUS FROM PUNJAB JAILS TO DELHI JAIL.

288. **\*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state whether Government propose to consider the advisability of transferring all Delhi Detenus to the District Jail, Delhi, to enable them to get the treatment of Security Prisoners to which they are entitled according to their classification and which has been denied to them hitherto in the Punjab Jails, or alternatively, to ask the Punjab Government to give these detenus the same treatment as was allowed to Security Prisoners in 1940 in the Punjab Jails in all respects? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** No. The Government of India have laid down certain principles regarding the treatment of security prisoners and I am satisfied that, as a result of recent correspondence with Provincial Governments, these principles are now generally accepted in all Provinces including the Punjab. In matters of detailed treatment, Central Government prisoners accommodated in Provincial Government jails must continue to be treated in accordance with the provincial rules.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** May I ask whether the jail in Delhi is still very overcrowded so that it is necessary for the prisoners in Delhi to be sent to the Punjab?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** No, Sir. That is not the reason for distributing prisoners. But Delhi has the advantage of the whole Punjab jail system and that gives an opportunity of grouping prisoners in different jails according to the kind of reasons for their detention or imprisonment.

#### RESTRICTIONS ON INTERVIEWS WITH DETENUS.

**289. \*Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state which Provincial Government, if any, has yet been withholding permission for interviews to detenus?

(b) What are the existing restrictions regarding interviews for detenus detained under the orders of the Central Government and do Government intend to relax them?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) Interviews are forbidden to Congress security prisoners in the Punjab; in the United Provinces, interviews were, except in special cases, refused to all classes of security prisoners, but I understand that the question is at present under further examination by the Provincial Government. In the remaining Provinces interviews are ordinarily allowed to all classes of security prisoners.

(b) Central Government security prisoners are ordinarily permitted one interview per fortnight if in Class I and one interview per month if in Class II. In the case of prisoners detained in connection with the Congress movement, however, interviews are restricted to one per month with members of the prisoner's family on personal and domestic matters only. Government have no present intention of relaxing these restrictions.

**Sardar Mangal Singh:** Will the Honourable Member write to the Punjab Government that they should allow interviews to the Congress security prisoners?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** We have already corresponded with the Provincial Governments on these matters and the Punjab Government must be allowed to make their own arrangements.

**Sardar Mangal Singh:** Has the Government of India particularly asked the Provincial Governments to permit interviews to the Congress security prisoners, or have they simply written to them?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The Government of India have suggested the matter for the consideration of the Provincial Governments and intimated that there was no objection to it if it suited the provincial system of administration.

**Sardar Mangal Singh:** May I know if the Punjab Government have given any reply to that letter? Have they refused to accede to that suggestion, or they are still considering?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I have said in answer to a question the other day that they are not yet in a position to see their way to do it.

#### RE-ARREST OF MR. JAIPRAKASH NARAIN.

**290. \*Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) the circumstances which made it possible for Mr. Jaiprakash Narain to escape from prison several times in the course of the last two years;

(b) whether the newspaper report about his rearrest is true;

(c) what special arrangement, if any, has been made for his detention; whether he is detained under strong military guard;

(d) whether he is now kept in the underground cells of the Red Fort in Delhi;

(e) whether he is allowed all the facilities that are usually allowed to political prisoners; and

(f) the present condition of his health?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** Most of this question relates to matters that are the concern of the Provincial Government, but I will give such information as I can.

(a) Mr. Jaiprakash Narain's only escape from prison in recent years was from the Hazaribagh Jail in Bihar in November, 1942. The escape was effected with the aid of accomplices.

(b) Yes.

(c) I am not prepared to disclose the arrangements which have been made for his detention.

(d) It would not be in the public interest to disclose his present place of confinement.

(e) Yes, subject to the necessity for securing his absolute seclusion.

(f) He is reported to have some kind of skin disease, but is otherwise in good health.

**Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** May I ask whether the reward that was offered by the Government of India for the apprehension of Mr. Jaiprakash Narain has been paid?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I am unable to answer that question.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** May I know if Mr. Jaiprakash Narain is being given medical treatment for the skin disease?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** Yes. He has been looked after like any other security prisoner.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** May I know if it is a fact that third degree methods are being employed against such a prominent personality as Mr. Jaiprakash Narain and allegations have been made in the Punjab Assembly to that effect? Will the Honourable Member either affirm or deny that statement?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I have already denied those allegations in this House.

**Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta:** Has any inquiry been made into the allegations?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The Punjab Government have already denied them.

#### DETENTION OF CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

291. **\*Mr. K. C. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state the reasons for keeping secret the place or places of detention of the Members of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, and why their relations are not allowed to interview them?

(b) Is it a fact that at the outset, the Home Department of the Government of Bombay assured the relatives of the aforesaid Members of the Working Committee now in detention that they would be allowed interviews and other facilities as soon as things quietened down? If this be a fact, why has this assurance not been implemented?

(c) Is it a fact that some, if not most, of these Members of the Working Committee in detention are in a bad state of health? If so, what may be the reason for withholding all information regarding them?

(d) Is it a fact that Mahatma Gandhi has been in correspondence with the Government of India since August last? If so, what are the subject-matters of such correspondence?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) Because the Government of India have no desire to advertise the place or places of detention and consider that the persons in question should be effectively secluded.

(b) No.

(c)-No. The Government of India receive regular weekly reports regarding the health of the Members of the Working Committee in detention and it is generally satisfactory.

(d) I would invite the Honourable Member's attention to the reply given by me to Mr. Gupta's question No. 311 during the previous session; I have nothing to add to this.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** May I know whether it is not a fact that the health of Sardar Vallabhai Patel has not been good for some time?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** How does the Honourable Member know that?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Sardar Vallabhai Patel is permitted to write to the members of his family and the subject of his health is one on which he is not prohibited from writing. May I ask the Honourable Member to reply to my question?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The Honourable Member seems to possess information on the subject.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** What does the Honourable Member mean by stating that the condition of their health is generally satisfactory?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** In generality, they are enjoying good health.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** In specific cases, they are not. Is that the implication?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** They have their ups and downs like all human beings. They are generally in good health.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** In individual cases, they are not enjoying good health?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I have already said that there are minor ailments in individual cases but there has been no serious illness among them and they have very good hospital facilities where they are.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** With regard to my Honourable friend's answer to part (d) of the question, is it a fact that one of the subjects on which Mahatma Gandhi has addressed the Government or the Governor-General is in connection with the food situation in which he has made certain suggestions.

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I would refer the Honourable Member to my answer to part (d) of this question.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** I want a specific answer as to whether this is not one of the topics on which Mahatma Gandhi has addressed the authorities.

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I have already said in answer to part (d) that I have nothing to add.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** The Honourable Member said nothing and therefore he has nothing to add. I want a reply on the specific point whether Mahatma Gandhi has addressed the authorities in regard to the question of dealing with the food situation.

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The Honourable Member should understand my attitude from my reply to his present question and the reply to the previous question to which I have referred him.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** The Honourable Member's attitude is not a mystery to us.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Why don't you give a straight reply?

(No answer.)

#### RULES FOR PURCHASE OF FOODSTUFFS FOR FIGHTING FORCES.

292. **Mr. K. O. Neogy:** (a) Will the War Secretary be pleased to state the substance of any rules that may be in operation relating to purchases of foodstuffs for the fighting forces in India with the object of securing economy in price and preventing procurement of foodstuffs, including foodgrains, meat, vegetables, fruits and dairy products at unreasonable prices?

(b) What is the nature of the organisation of the machinery that has been operating in Bengal during recent months for the purchase of the various articles of food mentioned above for the fighting forces, and what checks and controls have been operating thereon for the purpose of securing economy in expenditure and preventing fancy prices being paid for food articles?

(c) Is the Honourable Member aware of the general impression prevailing throughout Bengal that the present famine conditions have been accentuated partly by the recklessness that characterised the purchase policy of the fighting forces, and that apart from the case of foodgrains, a comparative scarcity prevails almost throughout the Province in the matter of supplies of vegetables, common fruits and dairy products, and that their prices have risen abnormally due to purchases made by agents on behalf of the fighting forces (including non-combatant personnel) at high prices?

(d) Is the Honourable Member in a position to place on the table any statement made by any audit authority, or other responsible officials, indicating the nature of control exercised in this matter in recent months in Bengal?

**Mr. C. M. Trivedi:** (a) Foodgrains for the Defence Services are obtained from the Food Department and the question of the rules governing their purchase should have been addressed to the Honourable Member in charge of the Food Department. Fresh meat, vegetables, fruits and dairy products are purchased by the army direct on a contract basis, and the guiding principle is that the lowest tender is accepted after comparing this with the current market rates.

(b) As regards the organisation for the purchase of foodgrains, the question should have been addressed to the Honourable Member in charge of the Food Department. As regards the organisation for the purchase of vegetables and dairy products, special local purchase officers have been appointed to ascertain local resources of fresh articles and to consult freely the civil authorities in regard to such stocks and the prices to be paid.

(c) I am not aware of the impression referred to by the Honourable Member, nor is that impression, if it does exist, founded on facts. No rice for the fighting services was purchased in Bengal during the current year, while the policy adopted by the military authorities for the purchase of vegetables and dairy products is aimed at controlling a rise in prices by checks such as those mentioned above, though a certain rise is, in the circumstances, inevitable. Apart from this control, some portion of the demand for potatoes for the army in Bengal is met by importing dehydrated potatoes from outside Bengal. Moreover, the military authorities have undertaken cultivation of extensive areas throughout Eastern India for the production of potatoes and fresh vegetables. The seed in each case has been specially imported by the military authorities and the gardens have been cultivated either by military personnel or through contractors at certain fixed, but normal rates. Thus the Army to a large extent is self-supporting as regards potatoes and fresh vegetables, leaving the normal produce largely untouched for the civil population. Instructions have also been issued that when utilising local resources the effect of excessive consumption on future supplies, particularly poultry and eggs, must be carefully considered.

(d) I am making enquiries from the audit authorities and will lay the result on the table of the House in due course.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** With reference to the answer to part (a) of the question, will the Honourable Member care to explain what he exactly means by 'contract basis'. Do I take it that there is a contract for the supply of the stuffs that he has mentioned operating throughout the province of Bengal or are there individual contracts that operate in each local area and in respect of which there is a separate contract and supply agency.

**Mr. C. M. Trivedi:** The military local purchase organisation in Bengal consists of six local purchase officers with a Chief Local Purchase Officer of the rank of Colonel at Army Headquarters. Local purchase is done not by means of one contract but by means of a series of agreements made for varying periods with the suppliers.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** Is the Honourable Member in a position to indicate approximately the profits which such contracts allow to the contractors?

**Mr. C. M. Trivedi:** I am afraid I have not got the details with me.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Will the Honourable Member kindly indicate the local areas where this vegetable production is being carried by the Eastern Command?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** I think the areas are throughout Bengal, I can obtain detailed information for the Honourable Member if he so desires.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** How did the Military acquire the land required for this purpose. Was it land in occupation of private parties before the military authorities began to utilise this land?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** Some lands existed in unit lines and in some cases seed was supplied to private individuals for growing vegetables in their gardens.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** I want to know how the land was supplied?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** There are some unit lands in Bengal and certain spare land was available there belonging to the army.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** What crops used to be raised in these lands before the Military took them over?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** I am afraid I cannot say.

#### APPOINTMENTS OF ASSISTANT ENTOMOLOGISTS.

**293. \*Maulana Zafar Ali Khan:** Will the Honourable the Home Member please state:

(a) whether the Federal Public Service Commission had advertised in August last and called for applications for the appointments of first and second Assistant Entomologists; if so, the particulars of the recruitment;

(b) the contents of advertisements of the Federal Public Service Commission for the said posts;

(c) whether it is a fact that the said advertisements had been prepared by the Department of Education, Health and Lands and published in the Gazette without any change;

(d) the total number of applications received, and the number of applications from Muslims for either of the posts;

(e) the number of candidates called for interview with their nationalities and creed;

(f) the number of candidates who were M.Sc. in Entomology and also secured diploma or degree of A.I.A.R. after two years continued practical course at Pusa College, and the number of such Muslim candidates;

(g) the total number of candidates as well as the number of Muslims of the qualifications in part (f) above, not called for or refused interview;

(h) the names with qualifications of candidates granted interview for either of the posts;

(i) the names of the candidates or candidates selected for either of the posts by the Federal Public Service Commission; and

(j) the names of the candidates appointed to either of the posts?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The question should have been addressed to the Department of Education, Health and Lands.

#### DELAYED ENFORCEMENT OF THE DELHI MUSLIM WAKF ACT.

**294. \*Maulana Zafar Ali Khan:** Will the Honourable the Home Member please state:

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to the editorial of the Urdu Weekly *Payam* of Delhi, dated the 23rd October, 1948; if so, the reason for not enforcing the Delhi Muslim Wakf Act by the 9th October, 1948, the last date for its enforcement as stated by him in reply to a starred question put by Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani in the last session;

(b) whether the versions in the said editorial are correct; if not; what the true version is;

(c) whether the Provincial Government have given any indication that they propose to nominate any of the sitting members of the Fatehpuri Masjid, Juma Masjid or Anjuman Moidul Islam, Delhi;

(d) whether the Provincial Government have made any rule prescribing disqualifications for members for election, appointment, co-option or nomination under sub-sections (f) and (g) of Section 9 of the Act; if so, what; if not, why not; how the Returning Officers will be guided; and



(e) whether it is a fact that one Mr. Shafi Badi has served a notice or sent a note or resolution on his behalf as well as on behalf of Muslims of Delhi asking the Chief Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Secretaries of Municipal Committees to refrain from allowing any person disqualified under sub-sections (f) and (g) of Section 9 to stand as a candidate for election or appointment, drawing particular attention to the disqualification of the sitting members of the three Committees (Fatehpuri Masjid, Juma Masjid, and Anjuman Moidul Islam) superseded under Section 25 of the Act for their mismanagement, as well as of the members of the Fatehpuri Masjid who have been removed by the order of the Subordinate Judge, Delhi, which was confirmed by the High Court, Lahore;

(f) what action the said officers have taken on receipt of the said requisition or notice; and

(g) whether it is a fact that the whole Muslim public of Delhi is perturbed at the news that some of the sitting members of the said superseded bodies, as referred to in the said editorial, are going to be appointed as members of the Waki Majlis?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) I have seen the editorial. The Act came into force on the 5th October, 1948.

(b) Government are not in a position to confirm or deny the activities which the article attributes to certain persons but as far as the Chief Commissioner is concerned, it is unlikely that he will make up his mind about the persons whom he will nominate until after the elections are complete.

(c) No.

(d) Section 9 of the Act is self-contained. The question of framing rules supplementing it does not therefore arise. In the event of any objection being made against any candidate, the Chairman of the meeting or the Returning Officer, as the case may be, has to follow the procedure laid down in Rules 5(n) and 21, respectively, of the Delhi Shia Majlis-i-Aukaf and Delhi Sunni Majlis-i-Aukaf Election Rules of 1948 published in Part II-A of the *Government of India Gazette*, dated the 9th October, 1948.

(e) A letter was received by the Chief Commissioner from Mr. Bari, but there was no indication that it was sent in representative capacity.

(f) None.

(g) Government are not aware of any such general feeling.

#### RESTRICTIONS ON RELEASED DELHI SECURITY PRISONERS.

295. **\*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to say if it is a fact that the security prisoners of the Delhi Province who were released recently, are required to report their attendance at the police station? If so, are the restrictions imposed enforced only in the Delhi Province or any where else also?

(b) What restrictions are imposed after the release of a security prisoner?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The Honourable Member is referred to my answer to Mr. Joshi's starred question No. 287. Restrictive orders applicable to persons residing in Delhi are not, of course, enforced elsewhere.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Is it a fact that Government have imposed conditions of restrictions upon those persons against whom nothing has been found and who did not take part in the movement?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** No, Sir.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** May I know if it is not a fact that Ram Charan Aggarwal of Delhi, who was detained and who has now been released, is asked to report thrice a week to the police station?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I must ask for notice of that.

#### BIHAR DETENUS UNDER DEFENCE OF INDIA RULES.

296. **\*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** (a) Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to say how many persons have been detained under Rule 26(b) and Rule 129 of the Defence of India Rules in the Province of Bihar?

(b) How many of them have been released up till now?

(c) How many of the persons wanted to be detained under Rule 26(b) of the Defence of India Rules are still absconding?

(d) Is it a fact that different policy is being followed by different Provincial Governments with regard to the release of detenus?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) The number of persons of all types detained under Defence Rule 26 in Bihar from the beginning of the war up to September 30th, the latest date for which figures are available, was 501. I have no information as to the numbers detained under Defence Rule 129.

(b) The Provincial Press Adviser announced at a Press Conference on November 5th that 88 persons had been released.

(c) I have no information.

(d) No. The matter is not one of general policy but of the merits of each case. As I have stated before, Provinces have cases of detention under constant review. No person is detained longer than in the judgment of the Province concerned is necessary.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** May I ask whether it is not a fact that in Bihar detenus are released very meagrely?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I am unable to answer that question. That is a matter for the Provincial Government.

#### VICEROY'S RELIEF FUND COLLECTIONS FOR BIHAR EARTHQUAKE SUFFERERS,

**297. \*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state the total amount collected in the Viceroy's Relief Fund in aid of the Bihar Earthquake sufferers?

(b) How much was distributed as free gift, and how much as loans to be paid back to the Fund?

(c) How many loans have been repaid?

(d) What is the amount of the balance of the Viceroy's Relief Fund at present, and how is it administered?

(e) Do Government propose to apply the balance of the Fund for the relief of the food distress in the country?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) to (e). The Governor General in Council is not concerned with the administration of the fund.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** May I know who is responsible for the administration of this Fund?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I understand that it is administered by a Central Committee appointed by His Excellency the Viceroy and a Provincial Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor of Bihar.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Are these Committees still in existence?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I have no exact information on the point.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Will Government obtain the necessary information with regard to this?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** No, Sir. As I have already said, the Government of India are not really concerned in this matter.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** May I ask who can say as to what has become of the amount at the disposal of this Fund?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** The Honourable Member can address himself to those who are responsible for the administration of the Fund.

**Mr. Hoosainbhoj A. Laljee:** May I know, Sir, how this question has been replied by the Home Member when it was addressed to the Finance Member?

(No answer.)

#### PRINCIPLES FOR CLASSIFICATION OF PRISONERS.

**298. \*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) the principle for classifying prisoners in three divisions; and

(b) if it is a fact that persons of high social status and lawyers who had been detained under the Defence of India Rules have been placed as prisoners in the III division?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) The classification of convicted prisoners, to whom I presume the Honourable Member is referring in this

part of his question, is based partly on differences in the standard of living and partly on the nature of the offence. Thus prisoners accustomed by social status, education and habit of life to a superior mode of life are classified either as Class A or Class B. The distinction between these two classes usually depends on the nature of the offence, prisoners convicted of offences involving violence or moral turpitude not being admitted to class A. Other prisoners fall into Class C.

(b) There is no Division III for security prisoners detained under the Defence of India Rules, except in certain special cases for *goondas* and persons of that type. So far as I am aware no lawyers or persons of high social status have been placed in this class of detention.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** I could not follow the latter part of the answer. Is it a fact that the lawyers are placed in Third Division?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** I said not so far as I am aware.

**Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Will the Honourable Member find out that actually there are several lawyers and big zamindars in Third Division?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** Not unless they have been classified as *goondas*.

#### PERSONS DETAINED AND CONVICTED IN BIHAR DURING THE LAST POLITICAL MOVEMENT.

299. **\*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Will the Honourable the Home Member be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of persons detained and convicted in Bihar in connection with the last political movement in the country;

(b) if it is a fact that the number of such detained and convicted persons in Bihar has not decreased ever since the movement was at the highest pitch;

(c) if it is a fact that in provinces other than Bihar large numbers of persons detained and convicted have been released;

(d) if it is a fact that there has been no report recently of any act of sabotage or any instance of subversive activity in Bihar; and

(e) if Government propose to follow the same policy in Bihar in the matter of release of political prisoners as in other provinces?

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell:** (a) Up to September 30th, which is the latest date for which official figures are available, the total number of such persons detained under Defence Rule 26 was 453 and the total number of such persons convicted was 10,801.

(b) The number of persons convicted has not decreased nor, of course, could it decrease except by successful appeals, which do not appear to have been numerous. On the other hand, the number of convicted persons still undergoing imprisonment on the 1st of October was only 5,322, as regards persons detained the number had fallen by July, 1948, but there was some increase owing to apprehended trouble in August. I expect there will again be some decline in future figures.

(c) and (e). As explained in my reply to the Honourable Member's question No. 296 the practice is the same in all Provinces but the number of persons released varies from Province to Province. I have no reason to believe that convicted persons have been released in any Province except as a result of appeals or on expiry of their sentences.

(d) No. The latest information from Bihar shows that the atmosphere is not yet normal and that the volume of unlawful activities is still considerable.

#### UNIFORMS OF THE INDIAN PERSONNEL OF W. A. C. (I.).

300. **\*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** Will the War Secretary please state:

(a) whether any steps have been taken to remedy the defects in the uniform to be worn by the Indian personnel of the W. A. C. (I.).

(b) whether the department have considered the feasibility of adopting for the Indian personnel of the W. A. C. (I.) dress similar to what is prescribed for women officers of the I. M. S.; and

(c) why there is such a great disparity in the uniform allowance between women officers of the I. M. S. who are given Rs. 600 and the W. A. C. (I), who are given an initial allowance of Rs. 240 with a recurring allowance of Rs. 80 per annum?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** (a) The question of changes in the uniform of the W. A. C. (I) has been considered and opinion among officers and auxiliaries has been sounded. The general feeling is that no change is necessary, but standard sandals are being approved as an optional article of dress in lieu of shoes.

(b) The dress prescribed for Indian personnel of the W. A. C. (I) is similar to that prescribed for women officers of the Indian Medical Service. The only difference is that the Indian Medical Service may wear shirt blouses with *saris* in lieu of jackets, whereas the W. A. C. (I) wear bush shirts with *saris* in similar circumstances.

(c) The initial uniform allowance of Rs. 600 authorised to women officers of the Indian Medical Service is required to last for the whole of their service and approximates to the allowance given to male officers. The uniform allowance for W. A. C. (I) is arranged on a more economical basis initially, but will become more favourable after 5 years' service.

#### INADEQUATE SIKH REPRESENTATION ON CANTONMENT BOARD, KASAULI.

**301. \*Sardar Sant Singh:** Will the Honourable the Defence Member please state if it is a fact that the representation of the Sikh Community in the Cantonment Board, Kasauli (Simla Hills), is most inadequate? Has any representation been received from Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Kasauli, on the subject? If so, what action has been taken in this connection?

**Mr. L. J. D. Wakely:** The information is being collected and a statement will be laid on the table in due course.

#### LOCATION OF W. A. C. (I.) HOSTELS.

**†302. \*Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall:** (a) Will the War Secretary please state whether W. A. C. (I) hostels are located near the camps of British Other Ranks?

(b) Have complaints been received of the B.O.Rs. trespassing into the premises of W. A. C. (I)?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** (a) As far as is known, the only case is that of the Irwin Stadium where the W. A. C. (I) hostel is situated about a quarter of a mile from British Troops quarters.

(b) No, Sir.

#### MANUFACTURE OF OPIUM ALKALOIDS FOR MEDICINAL PREPARATIONS IN INDIA.

**303. \*Mr. K. O. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state if he is aware of any difficulty experienced by pharmaceutical manufacturers in India, in getting opium alkaloids like Codeine, Morphene, Heroin, etc., which are essential ingredients for the manufacture of several medicinal preparations?

(b) Do Government propose to allow the manufacture of opium alkaloids in the country by private agencies, as is being done in Great Britain and America the Governments of which countries are also, like that of India, signatories to the International Opium Conventions? If not, why not?

(c) What is the total requirement of opium alkaloids of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries in India, and how much of these requirements is met by the Ghazipore Factory? What have been the supplies of this factory during the first three months of the current year, 1943, and during the months thereafter, separately?

(d) How and when do Government propose to overcome the shortage of opium alkaloids in this country?

(e) What have Government done so far in releasing opium alkaloids to Indian manufacturers for the manufacture of essential drugs? Have suggestions to this end been received from organisations of manufacturers such as the Indian Chemical Manufacturers' Association?

---

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

(f) Are Government aware that there are several manufacturers, possessing necessary plants and technical staff who are prepared to undertake the manufacture of opium alkaloids under Government control? If so, are they going to be allowed to manufacture the same?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** (a), (b), (d), (e) and (f). I would refer the Honourable Member to my reply to question No. 186 on 15th November, 1943.

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

QUESTIONNAIRE ISSUED BY INCOME-TAX DEPARTMENT TO INDIAN FIRMS OF AUDITORS.

**304. \*Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state if it is a fact that the Income-Tax Department have issued a questionnaire to Indian firms of auditors through an assessee requiring them to furnish an exhaustive list of all the books of accounts maintained by the assessee?

(b) Has such a questionnaire been also issued to European firms? If not, why not?

(c) Are Government aware—

(i) that for replying to such a questionnaire a staff of not less than half a dozen persons will have to be maintained by the auditors; and

(ii) that such a procedure would not only put the Indian auditors to extra expense but might also at the same time encourage commercial firms to employ non-Indian auditors?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** I have called for a report from the Commissioner of Income-tax, Bengal, and a reply will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF INDIA IN RESPECT OF OPERATIONS OF THE EAST ASIA COMMAND.

**305. \*Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state whether there is any basis for the recent Press Reports to the effect that as a result of the creation of the new East Asia Command efforts may be made to impose additional financial burdens on India by the revision of the existing financial settlement between India and the United Kingdom or otherwise?

(b) What would be India's share, if any, in the cost of reconquering Burma?

(c) Do Government propose to press the case of India on His Majesty's Government in order that an inequitable agreement may not be imposed on India?

(d) Have Government received any representation in this connection from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta? If so, what are the replies of the Government to the objections raised by the Chamber in this regard?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** (a) The Government of India have received no proposals from His Majesty's Government for a revision of the Financial Settlement.

(b) The Honourable Member's attention is invited to the reply which I gave to Mr. Neogy's question No. 48 on the 21st September, 1942.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Yes, but in view of the answer I have just given to part (a) of the Honourable Member's question, most of the points represented do not arise.

APPOINTING OF SEPARATE EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS OF INCOME-TAX.

**306. \*Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state if the Government of India recognise that in the interests of justice, the executive and the judiciary should function independently of each other?

(b) If the answer to (a) be in the affirmative, why has not this policy been maintained by Government in the case of Appellate Assistant Commissioners of Income-tax?

(c) Do Government propose to take steps to arrange for the transfer of such officers to either the Law Department or the Federal Court, as has already been suggested by representative commercial bodies including the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** I would invite the Honourable Member's attention to the reply given by me on the 19th February, 1942, to a Resolution moved by him on the 12th February (pages 340-341 of the Assembly Debates) as also to the reply given by me on the 12th February, 1943, to a similar question asked by Mr. Lalchand Navalrai.

#### MUSLIMS AS METALLURGICAL INSPECTORS.

**307. \*Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** Will the War Secretary please state the total number of Metallurgical Inspectors, and the number of Muslims therein.

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** The total number in employment under the War Department is 24, of whom one is a Muslim.

#### LIABILITY FOR COST OF DOUBLING THE BENGAL AND ASSAM RAILWAY METRE GAUGE LINES FOR MILITARY REASONS.

**308. \*Mr. K. O. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable the Finance Member be pleased to state whether the cost of doubling the existing Bengal and Assam Railway Metre Gauge Lines in certain Zones, for which tenders have been recently invited by the Engineer-in-Chief, War Works, Saidpur, is to be borne by the Government of India or by His Majesty's Government?

(b) In how many other instances, in the case of each Railway, have additional lines been or are to be provided primarily for military reasons?

(c) Have the Government of India taken any steps to see that the cost of such expansions is debited to His Majesty's Government and not to the Indian Railways, in view of the fact that they are primarily dictated by requirements of the Allied Military strategy against Japan?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman:** (a) The matter is still under consideration.

(b) It is inadvisable for security reasons to state separately for each Railway the number of instances in which additional lines have been or are to be provided primarily for military reasons. There are, however, a number of such instances.

(c) As indicated in the answer to part (a) the incidence of the cost of these measures is under consideration. Such expenditure as is debitable to His Majesty's Government in accordance with the principles of the Financial Settlement will be recovered from that Government.

### UNSTARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

#### RECOGNISED FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS AND NEWS AGENCIES.

**36. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Information and Broadcasting please state the names of Foreign Correspondents and News Agencies recognised by the Government of India for publicity?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** A statement giving the required information is laid on the table.

#### STATEMENT SHOWING NAMES OF BRITISH AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS AND NEWS AGENCIES RECOGNISED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOR PUBLICITY.

##### *Correspondents.*

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Miss C. K. Cumming.   | 16. Mr. Preston Crover.  |
| 2. Mr. W. E. Fisher.     | 17. Mr. T. H. Wiant.     |
| 3. Mr. Jack Shepley.     | 18. Mr. F. L. Martin.    |
| 4. Mr. Milliard Sheets.  | 19. Mr. John Morris.     |
| 5. Mr. W. W. Vandivert.  | 20. Mr. W. L. Briggs.    |
| 6. Mr. J. Holburn.       | 21. Mr. A. T. Steele.    |
| 7. Mr. R. W. Cooper.     | 22. Mr. Martin Herlihy.  |
| 8. Mr. W. G. Burchett.   | 23. Mr. A. R. Humphreys. |
| 9. Mr. Ian G. Fitchett.  | 24. Mr. Stanley Wills.   |
| 10. Mr. P. N. Ball.      | 25. Mr. Victor Thompson. |
| 11. Mr. S. W. Emeny.     | 26. Mr. Graham Stanford. |
| 12. Mr. Martin Moore.    | 27. Mr. I. Lang.         |
| 13. Mr. E. A. Kennard.   | 28. Mr. Jevons Yu.       |
| 14. Mr. Petr Gladyshev.  | 29. Mr. P. J. Wynter.    |
| 15. Mr. Jacques Marcuse. |                          |

30. Mr. E. D. Cardner.  
 31. Mr. J. E. Brown.  
 32. Mr. F. Tillman Durdin.  
 33. Mr. Alex Small.

34. Mr. John G. Dowling.  
 35. Mr. Ernest Hauser.  
 36. Mr. D. V. Tahmankar.  
 37. Mr. V. J. Jurgens.

*News Agencies.*

1. Tass Agency of Moscow.  
 2. Agence Française Ind.  
 3. Associated Press of America.  
 4. United Press of America.  
 5. Reuters.  
 6. Central News Agency of China.  
 7. International News Service of U. S. A.

CREATION OF POST OF AN ADDITIONAL DEPUTY PRINCIPAL INFORMATION OFFICER.

**37. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Information and Broadcasting please state the justification for creating the post of an Additional Deputy Principal Information Officer, and how the present incumbent was appointed to it?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** The post of additional Deputy Principal Information Officer was created to cope with the increase of work in the Bureau of Public Information, due to the war.

The present incumbent of the post was appointed by promotion.

QUALIFICATIONS, ETC., OF THE ADDITIONAL DEPUTY PRINCIPAL INFORMATION OFFICER.

**38. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Information and Broadcasting please state the qualifications both academic and journalistic of the Additional Deputy Principal Information Officer and the pay on his first appointment to the Department?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** (a) Academic qualification—B.A. (Hons.).

(b) Journalistic qualifications—Assistant Editor, *Indian News Service*; London, Sub-Editor, *Hindustan Times*; Correspondent; *British United Press*, *Statesman*, *Times of India*, *Civil and Military Gazette*, *Pioneer*, *Sunday Standard* and *National Herald*.

(c) Pay on first appointment in the Bureau of Public Information—Rs. 400 p.m. in the time scale of Rs. 400—20—500—25—600 as Assistant Information Officer.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT.

CONVICTION OF MR. P. R. PATHUR UNDER THE PEGGING ACT IN DURBAN.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have received notice from Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh of two motions for the adjournment of the business of the House. I would like to know which of them does he wish to move?

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh** (Nagpur Division: Non-Muhammedan): I wish to move the second one.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): By this motion for the adjournment of the business of the House he wishes to discuss the grave situation that faces Indians in Durban on account of the enforcement of the Pegging Act as evidenced by the recent conviction of Mr. P. R. Pathur, Secretary, Natal Indian Congress.

I think this Pegging Act was passed some time ago, even before the last Session.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** That is true.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Besides, there have been two discussions on this Pegging Act. The first discussion took place during the last Session and then we had another discussion in connection with the Reciprocity Bill. I should like to know from the Honourable Member whether he expected that this Act which has been passed would not be enforced?

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** It was not enforced till now.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I hold that the motion is not in order.

ILL-TREATMENT METED OUT TO MAULANA HUSSAIN AHMAD MADNI AND OTHER MUSLIM SECURITY PRISONERS.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next motion is in the name of Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury. He wants to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the assault and rude treatment meted out to four Muslim security prisoners, including Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni, who were dragged out from the *Janamaz* and belaboured by jail warders under the orders of Mr. Gordon, Superintendent of the Naini Central Jail, which act interferes with the right of worship and prayer of Muslims and which is contrary to the generally accepted rules concerning treatment of security prisoners.

I want to know if the Honourable the Home Member can give any information on this.

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell** (Home Member): This matter has nothing to do with the Government of India. Treatment of prisoners in jail is entirely a provincial subject.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I know that. But is the Honourable Member in a position to enlighten the House as regards the allegation.

**The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell**: I have heard nothing about it.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The administration of jails is the concern of the Provincial Government and it cannot be called into question here. The motion is not in order.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury** (Assam: Muhammadan): One word, Sir.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): No, you cannot argue.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE FOOD DEPARTMENT.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have to inform the Assembly that the following non-official Members have been elected to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Department of Food:

- (1) Mr. Jannadas M. Mehta,
- (2) Choudhury Muhammad Hussain,
- (3) Pandit Nilakantha Das,
- (4) Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt,
- (5) Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait,
- (6) Mr. Hoosainbhoj A. Lalljee,
- (7) Mr. Anarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya,
- (8) Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban,
- (9) Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi,
- (10) Mr. C. P. Lawson.

ELECTION OF A MEMBER TO THE COUNCIL OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BANGALORE.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have to inform the Assembly that Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad has been elected to represent the Assembly on the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

MOTION RE THE FOOD SITUATION—*concl'd.*

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Before the House deals with the motion relating to the food situation in India, I should like to know whether any agreement has been arrived at regarding the time-limit for speeches, whether there is to be any time limit.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan** (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): It has been agreed amongst the various Parties that the time-limit today should be thirty-five minutes.

**Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam** (Surma Valley *cum* Shillong: Non-Muhammadan): I am opposed to this arrangement. We have not been given any chance to speak at all.



**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Order, order. The House will now resume discussion of the motion relating to the food situation.

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque** (Commerce Member): Sir, I would not have thought of participating in this debate for reasons quite obvious, but for the fact that certain references have been made to the administration of the Food Department during the period I was in charge. Sir, I would like the House to understand the facts that were before us at that time. I am not underrating the importance of death from any causes, but the answer which the Honourable the Food Member gave the other day disclosed that in January, February, March, April May and June, 1943, the monthly average mortality in Calcutta was less than the average of the preceding five years. In the month of January it was less by 958, in February it was less by about 689, in March by 820, in April by 933 in May by 358 and in June by 234. In other words if there was to be an attitude of complacency there would be at least a plea in these facts for the Department of Food. There was an apparent calm in the Province except through the reactions of the political discussions on the ministerial issue. At that time, and may I say for a long time to come, many would hardly believe that Bengal was almost facing a great disaster. It was difficult for me at least to make many believe that there was going to be an impending crisis in Bengal. But so far as the administration of the Food Department is concerned, there was absolutely no complacency. In spite of the fact that the mortality figures were low, we realised that there was going to be a crisis. We had found that free trade had failed, that the basic plan did not function, that nothing else could be devised within the time we had and for the time being except a general agreement amongst all the Provinces to take all means available for the greater supply of grains from surplus to deficit areas. We took every step with a view to take available grains from surplus to deficit areas in circumstances which I fully described in my last speech. We called the Food conference on 5th, 6th, and 7th July. The Government of India came to an immediate decision. There was for the time being an agreement on the part of surplus Provinces to supply as much as they agreed to supply to deficit areas. Sir, that was no time for argument on my part as to whether they could or could not supply more. I would have been happy to get as much as I could get in the circumstances, and that was the attitude that I took. But, no, something more had to be done. We had to face the future. With a view that there might be a concerted co-ordinated plan in evolving a future policy, we took steps to appoint a long range plan committee and steps were taken immediately after the Food Conference was over for the Gregory Committee to meet from day to day till its deliberations and its report are before the country. Sir, I had realised at that stage, on going into the entire mechanism of purchase, supply and distribution that the purchase and transport of supply to the Provinces have been rather ill-related. It was no wonder that it was so: grains had to be purchased in a distant *mandi* in the Punjab and had to be supplied to the distant part of Travancore and Bengal. We therefore immediately took steps to get all co-ordinating authorities, purchasing, distributing and transport and other organisations to meet at Lahore. On the 5th, 6th and 7th July the Food Conference was held and on the 8th July, the Gregory Committee had its first sitting and on the 10th we rushed to Lahore to expedite the best possible arrangement for the transport organisation and to see to the quickening of supply. We took steps to make arrangements for storage in the different parts of India. There were other circumstances and limiting factors which I will not repeat today because I have given a full description of all these in my last speech and thereafter. As I gave indication, we tried our level best to arrange the import of food grains from abroad and took steps to bring it to the notice of His Majesty's Government the urgency and the need for greater food supply from outside. All this took us up to about the end of July. From the 26th July till about the 10th August the Legislative Assembly was sitting and then on the 10th August, the Food debate took place when I placed the circumstances then known to

me before this House. Without attempting to shield any of the facts. I tried to show that the Government of India, ever since the war, tried its level best to forestall and forewarn everybody. I tried my level best but in spite of the best efforts some of the things did not function. Miscalculation, if you wish to call it, you may. But the fact was that the Government of India from the very beginning tried their level best with a view to have a concerted and co-ordinated policy for India as a whole. In this connection I am reminded of a certain speech of mine at Krishnagar, which Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi has referred to. I am not usually accustomed to mislead the public in my public speeches. I am alleged to have said that Bengal has no deficit. I could never have said that. As a matter of fact I gave a warning in 1937 to every one, Government and the public, that Bengal is a perpetually deficit province and any one who has studied my little book will find out that I quoted facts and figures, which I have in my memory even today, to show that Bengal is a perpetually deficit province and will probably be so for many years to come, unless adequate steps are taken.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy** (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Has not the Honourable Member disowned some of the conclusions that he himself drew from those figures in his book?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** No. All I say is that in certain cases my figures were an overestimate but the over-all picture, namely, that it is a deficit province, stands and I still stand by it. And I knew exactly the 1942 crop. Sir, I should like to know what steps were taken by those in power in Bengal in 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942,—whose acts some Honourable Members have tried to defend here—to see that Bengal has greater production. It is no use saying today that there have been mistakes. There have been mistakes by each and every one of us but there is no doubt also of the fact that the persons in authority there did not take adequate steps.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra** (Presidency Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): You were also a Minister; what did you do in 1937?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** I was not a Minister in 1937.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** What did you do in 1935 and 1936?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** Then again, Sir, reference has been made to the export of foodgrains, and my Honourable friend Mr. Ismail Choudhury seriously suggested, expecting that as a Member of the Central Legislature a voice like that would go all over India and abroad, that the U. K. C. C. has denuded India of all foodgrains by exports. I should have expected a more serious statement.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi** (Dacca cum Mymensingh: Muhammadan Rural): To a certain extent it is correct.

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** It is not correct to any extent. I have got figures of the last 17 months with me and I can say that the U. K. C. C. did not take a single grain except probably a 100 tons for Persia and Iraq.

**Sardar Sant Singh** (West Punjab: Sikh): Sir, when the Honourable Member was speaking on the last occasion

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

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** Sir, I have no time before me. I am an optimist and also a fighter and I am prepared to argue my case. As a lawyer I have never been trained to argue without facts and I have never made a public speech without facts.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** Has the Honourable Member read Sir Purshotandas Thakurdas's minute appended to the Gregory Committee's Report on this point?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** I am not saying anything on that point. I should say that the complacency was not with those who were in the Government of India but with those who were engaged in violent contentions on political issues while provinces were facing economic disaster. On

[**Mr. M. Azizul Huque.**]

many of the issues at least so long as I was in charge I had to take decisions almost at a moment's notice without even having had the advantage of a five days' debate in the Central Legislature on the food question. The fact is that we were all living in a climate of much political opinion but little of economic opinion in the country. Much was made by those who would take anything to beat the Government for the mistakes of the past. Sometimes, as I have said, whether you call these mistakes or miscalculations, we might remember that these have not been deliberately done. They are ordinary incidents of human life, incidents which occur in spite of ourselves, and we might remember the well known saying of Mr. Churchill that we are often helped by our mistakes and injured by our most sagacious decisions.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai** (Sind: Non-Muhammadan Rural): You are quoting a very bad authority.

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** I am at least happy that I will not take the help of my Honourable friend to quote my authority.

Sir, there have been various references made to the cloth control scheme, particularly by my friend Mr. Jamnadas Mehta. As you have ruled that a detailed discussion of that is not within the subject-matter of this debate, I will refrain from speaking on it. But Mr. Mehta can come into my room and examine the samples of standard cloth now available all over India, and I have before me a list which has been promulgated with effect from June and July last of the prices of standard cloth and grey shirting . . . . .

**Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta** (Chittagong and Rajshahi Divisions: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir on a point of order, is the Honourable Member entitled to speak on standard cloth?

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): No, I think that subject should not be discussed.

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** I was only replying to the point raised here but will not say much except to point out to Mr. Jamnadas Mehta that the price per yard is not Rs. 3-8-0 but 6 to 12 annas.

Sir, reference has been made to the necessary steps that ought to be taken with a view, to ease the food situation by various other control measures. I have on occasions more than once referred to the several control schemes that are functioning in the department of Industries and Civil Supplies. Honourable Members have now before them the Drug Control scheme, the Anti-Hoarding and Anti-Profiteering scheme, and I am glad to say that already there is a visible tendency towards lowering down of prices.

**An Honourable Member:** It is no use.

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** It is only people who speak in a vacuum who say that it is no use. But if you know facts it will be possible to find out instances, and I say categorically without fear of contradiction, that here in this very city of Delhi the price of a number of articles has come down in the last few weeks.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah** (Bombay City: Muhammadan Urban): Sir, may I interrupt the Honourable Member? I seemed to hear the Honourable Member say that the amount of grain exported by the U. K. C. C. was something like 100 tons. May I know the total amount of foodgrains that was exported?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** I referred to that in my last speech. The Honourable the Food Member will be able to say what has been the actual export.

**Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** Is it the case that only 100 tons were exported through the U. K. C. C.?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** Yes, for the last 13 months so far as rice and wheat are concerned.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** Does the Honourable Member's total figure include exports on Government accounts, figures which were refused to be given to this House by his predecessor?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque:** I have not said anything about Government account; that is for the Honourable the Food Member to deal with. It is only with reference to the U. K. C. C. with which I am concerned.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi** (Nominated Non-official): Sir, may I ask one question with regard to the Anti-Hoarding Ordinance? In that Ordinance the Government of India leave it to the courts to decide what a reasonable price is. Why should not the Government of India themselves fix prices for these articles?

**The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Haque:** I should have expected Mr. Joshi with his long experience to speak on facts. If he will read the anti-hoarding law he will find that Government laid down 20 p. c. as the profit for every commodity except with reference to such commodities where the Controller General fixes a higher price.

Sir, I do not like to take more time of the House except to claim that we have been taking all possible measures to introduce control in various articles and I do hope that some time later we will be able to show on facts and figures the results of the various steps that have been taken in the Industries Department.

**Sir Henry Richardson** (Nominated Non-official): Sir, in the first place I think I should make clear the attitude of this Group towards the various amendments which are before this House. As my colleague, Mr. Lawson, said  
12 Noon. previously in this debate we consider it inconceivable that the terrible food shortage which is now being experienced in certain parts of this country should be permitted to fade from our memories with no more permanent record than the report of the Food Grains Policy Committee to guide us in the future and to supply us with data for protective measures. We are particularly anxious that there should be no interruption in the measures which are being taken to remedy the situation. We do not wish that the executives either at the Centre or in provinces should be engaged in defending themselves or in supplying a mass of evidence, which a proper enquiry will necessarily entail at a time when they must be fully employed in feeding the people. Also there is no doubt whatever in my mind that any procedure which will introduce a political trend to the problems before us would be a grave mistake. There are no politics in starvation and I feel quite certain that there is no political party or faction which has any other wish than that the present distress should be dealt with with the least possible delay. There is no political party that would profit by the distress of the people, nor would any political faction gain prestige by failing to employ every effort in the alleviation of suffering. It is a common characteristic of all the amendments that are before the House that parties require such an inquiry to be made. There is variation as to the type of inquiry, but I sincerely hope and believe that the main intention is to protect the people in the future rather than dilate upon the past or pillory those who have been confronted with what was clearly a most difficult and unprecedented situation. For this reason, an inquiry of the nature of a Royal Commission seems to us to be the most applicable and while we see difficulty in making specific suggestions as to the composition of such a Commission, there seems to be no reason why at a suitable time in the future such a Commission should not be appointed and after making full inquiries, submit a report which would point to deficiencies in the present system and make suggestions for future guidance.

If we had been consulted in an endeavour to frame an agreed amendment, we would have suggested one on these lines.

"That this House is of opinion that at a suitable date an enquiry should take place to examine the whole question of the food shortage in India and in particular in Bengal. The enquiry should be conducted by a suitable body of the type of a Royal Commission and its personnel should be completely outside the field of Indian politics. Its terms of reference should cover a full examination of the present food shortage and the making of recommendations to prevent the recurrence of the existing distress."

It must not be thought, however, that because I have spoken first on the question of inquiry we in this Group feel that nothing is to be done in the meantime. There is much which must be done here and now, by the Central Government, by the Provincial Governments and by the public and I think the main task of this Assembly in the present debate is to indicate to Government exactly what they think is to be done. Fortunately we are not without a blue

[Sir Henry Richardson.]

print; the Gregory Report which has already been characterised by this Group as a remarkable production sets forth certain lines of action. A considerable measure of support has been obtained from all quarters to the proposals in that Report and the important thing is to stick to these proposals and implement them without further hesitation or chopping and changing. Let us briefly consider two or three of the most important of those recommendations.

The most important of all is the proposal that while procurement should be left to the provinces, the Centre should make itself responsible for the allocation of surpluses and for indicating to surplus provinces how much they can be expected to make available. In this connection I would draw particular attention to the statement in the summary of the proposals that "public opinion will not tolerate a 'hands off' attitude by the Centre and in consequence the Centre cannot accept any situation which will involve its having responsibility without power". When this subject was last debated in this House we in this Group brought this question forcibly to the notice of the Central Government and we want to ask today whether they are satisfied with the measure of co-operation which they are receiving from provinces and, if not, what steps they propose to take in the matter. We cannot accept a situation in which the Central Government of this great country has to say—we cannot feed the people of India because this or that province will not co-operate. Nor do we believe indeed that any province will maintain an attitude of non-co-operation provided it is made clear that control of supply and prices of food is not being treated in isolation, but as part and parcel of an all-India system of general price and supply control. It is not surprising that a great agricultural province should hesitate to make grain 'available' for other provinces at reasonable prices when its own cultivators have to pay unreasonable prices for other necessities of life. You cannot effectively control the price of grain—and have the cultivator behind you in doing so—unless at the same time you control the prices of all the main necessities of life. Let me instance in this connection the excellent start which has been made in this direction in the control of price of cloth. There too, in the early stages, several Provincial Governments were not so helpful, but their objections were overcome and a system is now working which has in fact considerably lowered the price of cloth and improved its distribution in many areas. What has been done in the case of cloth can be done, and must be done in the case of other necessities of life; whatever difficulties may be raised either by Provincial Governments or by the trade, those must be overcome in exactly the same way that the Industries and Civil Supplies Department has overcome the difficulties in the case of cloth.

It may be said that in the case of cloth, control was comparatively easy because production is highly centralised. It was wise for the Government to gain their experience first in a commodity where control was comparatively easy. But having gained that experience, they are bound to go on to deal with other commodities where control presents more complex problems. Because one control is easy and another is difficult, that does not mean that any Government worthy of the name can neglect the difficult ones. When these controls have become general and the cost of commodities other than grains has been brought within reasonable bounds no province which cares for the good opinion of the world will have any further excuse for not making grain available to the rest of India plentifully and at prices according with the general level.

Procurement is essentially a provincial problem and indeed to be more accurate, it is essentially a village problem. Whatever may have been the mistakes in the past, if Government is to gain control over the grain harvest that control must start from the field. Experience has shown that if the crop is allowed to pass without check into the hands of dealers or middlemen it becomes virtually impossible to trace it. We find ourselves today in the position where Government had no accurate knowledge of what stocks exist or where they exist, nor do we even know what is coming forward. At no time

in this country have crop or stock statistics ever existed in any very satisfactory form, but what is most perturbing is that in many parts of the country these statistics are in a worse state now than they were some years ago. We have seen how in the past year different figures have been put forward by the various agencies of the different Governments and none of those figures has had any solid foundation.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall** (Member for Railways and War Transport): Question.

**Sir Henry Richardson:** In the absence of figures and records of any real value the only thing is to start at the beginning with the commodity itself. Procurement must begin when the crop is harvested or even whilst it is still standing. Unfortunately, in some of the Provinces most concerned, for example the province of Bengal, there is no revenue machinery comparable to that which exists in areas such as the Punjab and the difficulty of starting with the crop in the field is, therefore, enormous.

It is perhaps hardly too much to say that the administration in the province of Bengal has no mechanism adequate to cope with this task and it is for this reason that we greatly welcome the assistance of the military in this matter.

If, however, procurement is to be successful, the most important thing is to allay panic and remove from the mind of the agriculturist the fear that even he will go hungry. It is also important that he should be made to realise that high prices will not last for ever. This can best be achieved, as far as Bengal is concerned, if Government will announce that Calcutta would be fed by imports from outside the province so that the food stuffs in the mofussil will be available for mofussil needs. I do believe that the solution of the problem of free flow is mainly psychological and clear information regarding the danger of loss to the food hoarder in view of the greatly increased production is important. I would also emphasise the great danger of exaggerating the dangers and extent of the present trouble. The effect of a commonly held belief upon the actions of the agricultural population needs to be experienced to be understood. The press have rendered good service in drawing attention to the present troubles in Bengal and in urging Government to take action, but there is danger in exaggeration both in speech and in writing. I even heard an Honourable Member of this House indicate the other day that one quarter of the population of Bengal had been eliminated by famine. The magnitude of the present catastrophe must not blind us to the absurdity of such an estimate: indeed if it were even approximately true, there would be no food problem in Bengal this year. What is needed for the agriculturist is the confidence that he can safely dispose of his produce and the certainty that he will be able to purchase with the proceeds of such sales more of his normal needs. He must be in a position, moreover, to invest his money and to provide for his future and here an enormous field of advance is open to enterprise and energy. For generations, cultivators in many parts of India have been burdened with debt; here at last is a chance, if they are wise, to make a new start, to become creditors rather than debtors and to learn those habits of thrift which in other agricultural countries of the world are the most stable foundations of the State. I would like to see a future established whereby the agriculturist will have easy access to farm implements, improved seeds, good housing, good education, medical benefits and the many other vital needs which have hitherto remained unsatisfied.

I have spoken of the cultivator as the person whose psychology must be carefully considered if the problem of procurement is to be solved, but there is another way in which we need the help of the cultivator. We not only want him to sell his produce, but we also want him to produce the maximum possible. It has been argued in some quarters that the cultivator is a shrewd business man and will, without any instigation from Government, produce as much as he can at a time of high prices. That may be true, but the capacity of the cultivator to grow is limited by many factors some of which are not within his control; seed supply, marketing facilities, roads good enough for the transport of his goods, irrigation—all these are factors vitally affecting production. If they

[Sir Henry Richardson.]

are to be brought into play, the governments concerned have two tasks before them; firstly they have to provide all these facilities as far as possible and secondly they have to make the cultivator realise that they have been provided and are available. In many parts of India the "grow more food" campaign last year was seriously hampered by the inadequate arrangements made for the provision of seed, while in other cases the seed arrived too late to be of any use. It may be that the Provincial Governments' normal agricultural staffs are not adequate to this task—if so, they must at all costs be strengthened. But the "grow more food" campaign is not only a matter for the cultivator. It is a matter in which those who live in towns—or at any rate those who are well to do and have spacious compounds—can play their part. For myself I shall not be satisfied until I see that in every compound and in every garden flowers have been replaced by vegetables. It is within the knowledge of many of us how greatly the allotment movement in Britain assisted the process of feeding the people both during the last war and in the past 4 years. That method is equally applicable to many parts of this country. Do not let us think that this is a matter for Government alone. It is a matter for every individual Member of this Assembly and I suggest that each one of us should regard it as his bounden duty to set on foot in his own town the movement for growing vegetables or other forms of food in every available plot of land. The result achieved by the "grow more food" campaign last year was something of which Government has every right to be proud, but what was good enough for 1942 is not good enough for 1948.

So far I have spoken of procurement and production. But when all is said and done the fundamental problem in the food situation today is that of distribution. If the food of India were distributed equitably there would be no shortage of any consequence, but under present conditions when the power of the purse is the controlling factor, distribution is in fact inequitable. This is likely to happen in any country which is without great reserves of food which can be transported from place to place as local shortages develop. After the lucid and detailed account given by my honourable friend Mr. Kirby, it is unnecessary for me to emphasise the fact that there can be no remedy for the present state of affairs without the adoption of rationing on the widest possible scale. If rationing could be applied to every inhabitant of this country there would be no problem, but that, of course, in the rural areas is a physical impossibility. There is however nothing impossible about putting into effect rationing schemes in the towns throughout India. I understand that the general intention is in the first place to ration towns with a population of more than 100,000 people. This is all to the good, but the process must not stop there. Many of the smaller towns stand in need of a system of rationing just as much as the larger towns. I should like also to emphasise the point already made that a particular province cannot dispense with rationing merely on the ground that it is a surplus province. No town anywhere in the world is a surplus area and the mere fact that a town is situated, say, in the Punjab rather than in Bengal cannot constitute a logical reason for excluding it from the rationing system. Our view is that Government has already hesitated far too long in applying rationing to towns in this country. Let us hope that the period of hesitation is at an end and that the intentions which have now been announced will be carried into effect as quickly as possible. I do not under-estimate the magnitude of the task involved and I realise fully that at any rate in some provinces the present administrative machinery is hardly adequate to cope with the work involved. That, however, cannot be accepted as a reason for not embarking on rationing; on the contrary it is a reason for strengthening and where necessary, expanding the administrative machinery. I wish to put the utmost possible emphasis on this point for in my view rationing is not just an expedient to carry us for the next few months; we are not dealing with a purely temporary emergency which will be at an end when the *Aman* harvest has been

gathered in. We are dealing with a problem which is likely to continue for some years to come. As my Honourable friend, Mr. Gwilt, pointed out there is a world shortage of food and the demands from the devastated areas after the war will require the utmost human endeavour to meet them. India, which is more nearly self-sufficient in food than many countries in the world, will have to make every effort to live on her own resources and this can only be done, if a sound system of rationing is introduced now and maintained until the period of world shortage is over. Even if as a result of great exertions in the "grow more food" campaign India found herself abundantly supplied with foodstuffs in the years to come, she too would have a duty to the rest of the world; and if by a proper system of rationing she could in due course contribute to relieving the misery of other starving nations, it would be in keeping with that high place which she should occupy amongst the nations of the world. Here again there may be a tendency to feel that rationing is Government's job. It is the job of Government, but Government can never do it satisfactorily if public opinion is not behind them. Even in advanced countries introduction of rationing presents many difficult and bewildering questions to the ordinary householder. Those questions will arise with double force for the illiterate inhabitants of the towns of India and it is here that we as protectors of the public interest can play our part. There is no question of party politics here. It is a matter of life and death to every one in this country. Success depends upon the combined efforts of all and a special responsibility devolves on the representatives of the people to inform public opinion and to assist in removing those doubts and perplexities which will arise from time to time in the mind of the ordinary man. If the public as a whole is not prepared to submit to rationing or some inconvenience for the sake of the whole community then no Government can save a country of this size.

I turn now to hoarding. In time of war the first problem of an army is to know its enemies and we too, on the home front, have to know who is for and who is against the best interests of the country; and foremost amongst the enemies of India today are the speculators, the profiteers and the hoarders. There are many varieties of hoarders. There is the householder who, without any anti-social motive, but fearful for the future of himself and his family, lays by larger stocks than usual. When such are numbered in millions the danger must not be forgotten. I am at the moment far more concerned with that arch enemy of India, the man who hoards for profit, the man who will not sell because he hopes that the necessity of the multitude will bring him greater profits in the months to come. It is no use pretending that this class of man does not exist, nor do I think any Honourable Member of this House will be disposed to take that view. One of our first tasks then must be to root out the hoarder, to let him know that he is an object of hatred to his fellowmen. This is a matter in which the Government and the public both have a responsibility and it may be that each will have to stimulate the other to greater activity. Mr. Gwilt in his speech asked the Honourable the Food Member if he could relate any instance where a stringent sentence had been imposed for a food offence since the beginning of the war. The hopeless inadequacy of the sentences inflicted by courts for such offences has reduced the law almost to a farce. Let us not however think that we can put the blame for this entirely on Government. Why is it that magistrates do not impose heavy sentences for these offences. Is it not a fact that, throughout the world, sentences imposed by magistrates for particular types of crime reflect the state of public opinion with regard to those crimes, and is it not true that magistrates impose lenient sentences for food offences because the public conscience has not yet been sufficiently roused against those offences. Every member of this House must make it his business to stir up strong public feeling against those who seek to profiteer at a time like this. Do we not all know that for every case in which a food offence leads to prosecution there are a dozen or more cases in which nobody bothers to lay information or in which the local authorities for reasons of their own do not bother to take action? Let us fan public indignation to such a



[Sir Henry Richardson.]

flame—that magistrates will not dare to impose lenient sentences and that local authorities will not dare to fail to prosecute. The condemnable action taken the other day by the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court in enhancing the fines imposed by lower courts in the city in a dozen profiteering cases will, I hope, provide the stimulus required by the other courts concerned. It is to be considered whether in cases of this kind it should not be obligatory on the court to impose a sentence of imprisonment. In Britain where rationing is worked with incredible smoothness and efficiency, the slightest offence has led to prosecution and indeed there have been many cases where innocent and unintentional contravention of rationing laws have led to prosecution and severe sentences.

I have spoken of hoarding and before I leave this subject I must refer to a complaint of an unusual kind made by my Honourable friend, Mr. Neogy. It is not often that a capitalist is accused by a politician of taking too much care of his employees, but Mr. Neogy blames many employers because they saw the difficulties which were coming and made up their minds that those employees for whose welfare they were responsible should be provided even at great expense to the employers.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea** (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): And it is at the cost of the lives of others.

**Sir Henry Richardson:** Mr. Neogy is disturbed because many employers have thought it their bounden duty to purchase rice at the market prices with the full knowledge of the authorities in order to be able to provide their labourers with food at a fraction of the cost.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** That is my complaint—“with the full knowledge of the authorities.”

**Sir Henry Richardson:** I listened for 4½ days to my Honourable friends and to my Honourable friend, Mr. Neogy, without interruption. I have no time to go into argument with him. I hope he will listen to me.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** I should not like to interrupt a written speech.

**Sir Henry Richardson:** I was saying, many employers have thought it their bounden duty to purchase rice at the market prices with the full knowledge of the authorities in order to be able to provide their labourers with food at a fraction of the cost. Could capitalist oppression go further! I suspect Mr. Neogy is particularly anxious to force us into condemnation of some administration or other and to suggest that because we had no confidence in this Government or that Government we adopted what he apparently regards as a form of hoarding. Let me tell Mr. Neogy that when an intelligent employer is concerned with the food supply of his labour force he is not thinking in terms of politics. What would Mr. Neogy say if on the other hand an employer were to say: this is the responsibility of Government; let me draw my profits and not be bothered with this question of rice and *atta*. (Interruption by Mr. Neogy.) The plain fact is that the last year has been a period of uncertainty; that the policies of the Central Government and Provincial Governments have changed from time to time and that the employer did not feel certain that his labour force would be fed unless he himself undertook that responsibility. Sir, if the worst charge that can ever be levelled against capitalists in this country is that they have made certain that their labour force would be fed, I for my part shall not blush. May I put this matter in another way? The great industrial concerns whose foresight has so much disturbed Mr. Neogy have built up sound scientific rationing systems and have acquired great experience in that process. It may well be that the organisation so built up and the experience so acquired will be of value to the provincial authorities who now have to extend the same principle and carry out rationing on a wider scale. I need hardly say on behalf of those whom I represent that this organisation and experience will be fully at the disposal of those on whom the responsibility for general rationing will fall. It is far from their intention to maintain inequality of supply between those for whom they are responsible and the general public.

A charge was also levelled from another quarter against European owners of flour mills to the effect that profiteering was occurring between the supply of the raw material and the milled product. Inasmuch as certain European controlled industrial concerns may be interested in the production of *atta* I may point out that the price of the raw material, the milling cost and the price of the finished product are all officially controlled.

Mr. President, it has become almost customary of late to say that the eyes of the world are upon India. But if ever there was an occasion or a subject in respect of which that could be truly said it is this occasion and the subject that we are now discussing. The civilised world stands horrified at the tragedy which is now being enacted in this country and at the same time finds itself bewildered by the spectacle of widespread death from starvation in a land which has not so far suffered the devastation of war. I feel, Sir, that we in this country, whether we be Indian or European, are on trial and that we shall be judged at the bar of history largely by our success or failure in coping with the food situation in India today. If we could maintain that India depended for her food supply mainly on imports then failure would not necessarily condemn us. But when we have to admit that if every person in this country could take his fair share and only his fair share of the shortage there would be no serious trouble, then we in fact admit that the problem is one which we and we alone can solve. In time of war it is futile to hope that we can escape some degree of suffering and hardship; the question is, have we amongst us enough civic sense, enough feeling of mutual inter-dependence and enough determination to share the common burden, to ensure that the food supply of India shall be equitably distributed. During this debate and the discussions in the country we have heard much of constitutional difficulties, of the division of power and responsibility, of transport problems of the failure of this Government or that Government and of a dozen other contributory causes of our present difficulties. But underlying all these factors there is something more fundamental. Our food problem can be solved if and only if we are prepared to put aside all dissensions, all doubts, all sectarian interests and to say that India shall be fed. This consummation cannot be achieved unless each one of us in this House is prepared to use his influence in the country, to mobilise public opinion in support of every action required by Government, to set his face against profiteering and speculation, and to say that he will bend his strength and his energies from now onwards to the task of seeing the people of this country do not go hungry. Sir, we in this Group are prepared to dedicate ourselves to this task and I have no doubt that however much different members or parties may disagree as to this amendment or that amendment, on this single main issue there can be no controversy. The people of India must be fed; in the face of death there can be no disunity.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar** (Supply Member): I have listened to as much of the debate as I could spare the time for and I have listened with very mixed feelings indeed. At times of crisis, when feelings run high, when we are faced with tragedies occurring, such as we have never dreamt would occur in our country, it is only natural that Members reflecting the opinions of their constituencies in any Parliamentary Assembly should express themselves in terms of indignation and should try to throw the blame on the Government of the day. But even making allowance for this natural phenomenon, even making allowance for this natural trend I have wondered whether some Honourable Members at least have not exhausted all the vocabulary of vituperation that they are capable of so far as this or that Government or this or that individual is concerned. I say I am wondering whether they have exhausted it, because there are depths which I possibly could not plumb and it is too hazardous for me, with some speeches awaiting this House, to say that all the vituperative epithets they are capable of have been exhausted.

I do not wish, in connection with a question like this, to merely put forward justifications on behalf of the Government of India. It is not right with

[Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar.]

a calamity of this kind facing us that any Member on the Treasury Bench should stand up in self-righteousness and say that this thing has been done and that thing has been done and therefore we have done the best we can. Even if it were true, we have to take a broader view of the things and see what defects have been found and how we can remedy these defects. It is the future, the constructive side of the work and the remedial portion of our endeavours that one should concentrate one's attention on but having said that, let me also, in view of the tone of the debate and the trend of the discussions review very briefly what has been done by the Government in the past, partly because it would give a completely incorrect picture of the position of the Government, if challenges that have been made during the last four days were to go unanswered and more especially because I for my part feel that certain conclusions can be drawn from our own experiences of the past which may be a guide for our attitude and conduct in the future.

Some Honourable Members have suggested that there was no policy on the part of the Government of India ever since the war broke out, that they have been callous, that they have been inconsiderate, that they have been inefficient, that they never foresaw these difficulties would arise and that at the 5th year of this war, Government stands condemned with no policy of any kind towards so serious and critical a question as the food problem of the country. I venture to state that nothing can be farther from the truth, that Honourable Members, at least those who have spoken in this strain, have either got a short memory or have not cared to follow the proceedings of Governments and Governmental bodies, of conferences and committees, of decisions that have been arrived at, of ordinances that have been issued, of measures that have been promulgated and steps that have been taken from time to time. An impression is sought to be created that for the first time the food question was reviewed when the first Food Conference was held and the matter was thought of only when the Food Department was opened. Let me say that the food question was considered from the date when the war broke out.

On the 3rd September, 1939 hostilities broke out. On the 9th September 1939, a delegation of authority was made to Provincial Governments, giving them power to control the prices of various foodstuffs and necessaries of life, foremost among which was the foodgrains. On the 18th and 19th October 1939, within six weeks after the outbreak of the war, the first Price Control Conference was called. That Price Control Conference dealt primarily with foodgrains, the present name of the *avatar* of that conference being the Food Conference.

It will be an entirely erroneous impression that is created in the country or will be created in the country if, as I said before, it was considered that the food question was dealt with only by the Food Conferences properly so called, that have been summoned from time to time this year. At that time, let me point out to Honourable Members that we were going through a period of depression; agricultural prices particularly were in a depressed state and when this Price Control Conference was summoned, Honourable Members in this Assembly, gentlemen, who have now come forward with advice, outside this Assembly, commercial bodies, Federations and so on were all unanimous that there should be no control of prices so far as foodstuffs were concerned, that the agriculturist was going through a very bad time, that the depression he had to pass through was critical so far as his finances and his position was concerned and that Government should not lay its unhallowed hand on the agriculturist, so long as he had not retrieved the position which he has a right to expect by the gradual rise in prices. It was my duty and privilege to go through all the commercial papers of the day and taking the resolutions of all the commercial bodies, I venture to say without fear of contradiction that there was not a single exception to the theory that was put forward that agricultural prices must advance and must advance very considerably and that Government should not control these prices. Sir, the echoes of that controversy have been heard even during this food debate and some Honourable

Members have got up and said that the agriculturist should not be touched even now, that the prices that are ruling now should not be touched. There have been whispered voices sometimes, unabashed voices on other occasions which have said that the control of prices should not be made on agricultural products even at the present time.

Well, Sir, I will proceed to state briefly what happened later. The Government of India was not satisfied that at that time any price control was essential for foodstuffs, though they had delegated the power to the Local Governments to control any sudden and sharp rise of prices which was unjustified in any particular urban area, which meant profiteering by the middlemen. The Bombay Government was one of the first Governments to take advantage of that delegation and within a few days after the outbreak of the war, the Congress Ministry, which was then in power, enforced those orders. But Congress Ministry or no Congress Ministry, the policy of the Bombay Government has all through been one, on the one hand, of trying as far as possible to help the agriculturist to realise a fair price for his products and on the other hand to take into account the interests of the consumer and see to it that bloated prices and profiteering prices do not prevail in the market.

I should like to single out the Bombay Government for this far-sighted policy throughout and whether the Government of India stands in the dock rightly or not, let us at least say that one Provincial Government, if not more, has throughout this four years' period had the foresight to see that these things were prevented as far as possible. (*An Honourable Member*: "Not during the first year".) During the second year, 1940, there was a sudden relapse in price. The advance that took place since the war broke out did not sustain itself and prices came down to some extent. In this connection I should like to say that the prices of these two cash crops, jute and cotton, have had an inordinate effect on the prices of other agricultural commodities from time to time and we have had to control the price of jute and cotton from time to time so as to see that agricultural crops are maintained at a proper and fair level of prices. Other Price Control Conferences were held from time to time and in the year 1941, the second year of the war or at the beginning of the third year of the war, it became apparent that some of these foodgrains were reaching a level of prices which was disturbing and unfair to the consumer. Wheat in particular had gone up by over a hundred per cent. The index of prices in September and October 1941 showed that over the price on the 3rd September 1939, wheat had reached a level of 207 per cent., that is, 107 per cent. more than what was prevailing at the outbreak of the war. The Government of India considered that this was a level at which there must be an arrest to further progress or further elevation in prices. They issued a warning—that if the prices were to rise still further, they would impose a price control and they would take the necessary measures to see that that price control was carried out throughout the country.

On the 5th of December 1941—I want the House to mark the date, because it had nothing to do with the Japanese invasion—the price control order on wheat was fixed, fixing the price of wheat at Rs. 4/8 per maund at Lyallpur as against the pre-war price of Rs. 2/2 per maund.

Now, Sir, it was easy to fix the price of wheat on an All-India basis by the Central Government for this reason that wheat is produced only in three provinces, namely, the Punjab, the United Provinces and Sind. The parity of prices of wheat in these three provinces was more or less the same. There was a difference of 2 to 4 annas in the Lyallpur and Hapur wheat and between Lyallpur wheat and the price prevailing in the main market centres of Sind. It was, therefore, possible, having taken this fact into consideration, for the Government of India to prescribe controlled price for the wholesale markets in these three areas for wheat and to advise the Provincial Governments to follow up the retail markets with prices of this wholesale market, giving allowance for the normal trade commissions and for the freight rates that would have to be provided for in the distribution of this wheat to various other provinces. Then,

[Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar.]

Sir, on the 8th December came the Japanese entry into the war. In January we realised that this would be a serious disturbing factor. In February 1942 the next Price Control Conference was called in.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** What is the present prevailing price at Lyallpur and Hapur? Is there any difference?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Yes, Sir, there is a great deal of difference. The difference is about Rs. 2. At any rate, the Food Member will correct me later if I am wrong. The parity is gone. There is no parity between the Sind wheat and the Lyallpur wheat and between the Lyallpur wheat and the United Provinces wheat. That is one of the reasons why I am stating briefly the history of the case. In February 1942 the next Price Control Conference was called. If you prefer, you may call it the Food Conference because in these Conferences food was the essential subject that was discussed. It was pointed out then that Burma was in danger of invasion and that the Burma rice may not come in on which we were dependent to a large extent in certain parts of India, particularly in Travancore and Cochin and on the West Coast of Malabar where cheap rice was required by the people living there; who, in their turn, had exported to their more fortunate brethren abroad the paddy and rice that was grown in those areas.

So, the question whether rice should also be controlled was taken into consideration. All the provinces that were rice growing pressed at that time that the time had not yet come for controlling the price of rice. The index of price of rice at that time was 150 to 160, that is to say, it was 60 per cent. more than what it was at the beginning of the outbreak of the war in September 1939. We had taken action with reference to wheat when the index price had gone beyond 100 per cent. more than what it was at the beginning of the war. The rice producing provinces, those who were safeguarding the interests of the agriculturist, the representatives of the Governments because those Conferences were attended by the representatives of both States and the Provincial Governments, said that the time had not yet come for price control being established on rice. The Government of India pointed out that though it may not have been necessary at the time, they foresaw that the time would soon come when, due to the conditions of scarcity owing to the stoppage of imports from Burma, there will be a sharp rise in the price of rice and they advised the Provincial Governments to look-out and to report as soon as possible what the conditions were in each of their provinces so that steps may be taken to control the price of rice also.

In the meanwhile, the Government of India realised that the deficiency which would arise on account of this stoppage of imports from Burma must be taken note of. Rangoon had not yet been occupied and therefore up to the very last moment when it was possible to do this steamers from Rangoon were got over to Calcutta without going long distances to Madras and they were laden with as much rice as we could have in them. Thus we tried to get as much Burma rice as we could. Then, Rangoon fell in February. Other parts of Burma were not yet taken by the enemy and this Government, which has neither the wit nor the wisdom to foresee things and which is callous to the interests of the people, according to some Honourable Members, immediately thought of . . .

**Mr. Jinnadas M. Mehta** (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): According to all Honourable Members.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** I give some credit to some Honourable Members and I still give that credit to some Honourable Members in spite of the assertion of my friend.

Now, Sir, the Government of India felt that whatever rice could be lifted from Burma before it was fully occupied should be lifted in the interests of the country. We arranged in March and April a shuttle steamers service between Akyab and Chittagong, steamers which would go to Akyab and get back

to Chittagong at the shortest possible time and remove all the rice that was available. It did not matter whether it was paddy or rice and whether it was milled or unmilled. We decided to lift all the rice that we could, before ever anybody thought that there would be this serious shortage of rice either in Bengal or in any other area. The Government of India did everything possible to get this rice or paddy from Burma.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** How much did you get?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** I have not got the figures.

**Some Honourable Members:** You got absolutely nothing.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** What is the good of Honourable Members saying 'nothing' when they know nothing.

**Some Honourable Members:** Then, give us the figures.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** The fact that I am unable to give the figures does not disprove the truth of my statement. I am speaking here as a responsible Member of the Government of India having been in charge of the subject and knowing what was being done.

**Some Honourable Members:** Whose representative are you?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** It is in keeping with my friends' usual talk. Other Honourable Members can also talk in the same strain as the Honourable Members opposite, but it would lead us nowhere.

In April 1942 the next Price Control Conference was arranged. The position of rice was reviewed. Though the index figure had not changed, it was clear to the Government of India that a sharp rise was inevitable and scarcity conditions would soon prevail. Now, rice is not a grain or a foodstuff which can be treated in the same way as wheat. As I said, there are only three provinces which produce wheat and the parity of price was more or less the same and the same ceiling price for wheat can be fixed. That could not be done with reference to rice. Rice was of local circulation, of regional circulation. The varieties of rice are far too many and the price in one region varied very widely from the price in other regions. These considerations were put before the Price Control Conference and it was agreed that the price of rice should be controlled regionally by Regional Boards which were composed of representatives of Governments in that region. The Eastern Region is composed of Bengal, Assam, Bihar and parts of Orissa. It was decided that the Regional Board that was constituted in that region should recommend to the Government the price of rice which should be fixed and the Government of India should approve of that price. Similarly, Madras, Travancore, Cochin and Mysore should form the Southern Region where one price should prevail. Other Regional Boards were similarly constituted and powers were given to these Boards to specify the price at which rice and other foodgrains should be sold. Further for the purpose of co-ordinating these prices as between one regional border and another, making it possible to prevent wide fluctuation of prices between one regional border and another, the assistance of the Central Government should be invoked to ratify these prices and to even off any wide divergencies that may arise by purely Regional Board fixations. Having done that, in May 1942, the very next month the Food Grains Control order was issued by the Government of India against hoarding and against profiteering.

**1 P. M.** requiring wholesale dealers and retail dealers to take out licenses. The plan was this. Every wholesale dealer must have a licence from the Provincial Governments concerned. He should disclose stocks that he had received from the agriculturists, he should disclose the persons to whom he has distributed on retail basis to retail shopkeepers and in that way, the Provincial Governments will be able to trace from the stage when the crop comes out of the agriculturist to the town to the retail stage the movement of these food products and so keep control of these food products. Under the Ordinance which was issued, powers were necessarily given to the Provincial Governments and the State Governments concerned. Some Provincial Governments adopted this Regulation, others did not adopt. One Honourable Member suggested

[Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar.]

that only in December (or January) 1943, this sort of power was given to the Provincial Governments. It is not so. Long before any crisis was thought of, this Ordinance was issued on 5th May 1942. It is referred to in the Appendix to the report of the Food Grains Policy Committee and under this Ordinance power was given completely to the Provincial Governments to license wholesale dealers in various other kinds of foodstuffs and to follow up the movement of these commodities from market to market, from merchant to merchant, which is one of the best ways of dealing with any hoarding that may take place so far as the commercial community is concerned.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir** (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): How many Provincial Governments were under section 93 administration at that time?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** That is a matter which is well known to my Honourable friend. If my Honourable friend means to suggest that some section 93 Provinces also did not carry out this Ordinance, then he is perfectly right.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** What were you doing?

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** He was doing his best.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** I do not want to give the obvious reply to that question. My Honourable friend knows from his experience that sometimes he is as powerless as I have been with reference to matters of that kind and with reference to matters that do not lie in my hand.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** My question was not with regard to the Honourable Member himself personally. What was the Government of India doing?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** The Government of India was asking the Provincial Governments to enforce these things. The Government of India was drawing the attention of the Provincial Governments to it. But the Provincial Governments sometimes came forward with the plea that they were arranging for the staff, that it would take some time before it can be enforced, that they have not yet recruited the staff. Even now some Provincial Governments come forward by saying that rationing cannot be introduced from the 15th of this month, that rationing should be postponed to the 15th of the next month, some other Provincial Governments say, we are still making arrangements and that the rationing should be further postponed to the 15th of the third month and so on and so forth.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** My question was this. The Provincial Governments were shilly-shallying and dilly-dallying, what action did the Government of India take?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Now, Sir, let me follow the course of events which I was narrating.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** If it is secret or confidential I do not want you to disclose it.

**Dr. G. V. Deshmukh** (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): In his great knowledge, he does not know it.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** I accept this impeachment of my Honourable friend if he feels quite sure that he knows anything of the facts.

**Dr. G. V. Deshmukh:** I am.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Now, Sir, what happened. I have stated these facts to show the policy that was being pursued. Later, in December of last year owing to the great agitation from some of the Provinces, the price control on wheat was lifted. The prices shot up, the price control on other commodities could not be uniformly levied in all the Provinces. Some Provinces like Madras and Bombay felt the real need of this price control and went ahead with price control in their own areas, but the first single price control which was issued on an all-India uniform basis was lifted and the prices shot up sky high.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** Under pressure from whom?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** From the Provinces.

**Sir Oowasjee Jehangir:** Which Provinces?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Now, Sir, let me say my own experience of the greater tragedy that is happening in Bengal today. There has been too much of concentration on the fact that there is not enough grain going into Bengal and much of the debate on this and on the last occasion has concentrated on how much grain, or how much foodstuffs went to Bengal. I feel, Sir, that even a more vital question is the price at which it was available to the consumers in Bengal or in any other area. If there is starvation, if there is death, it may happen that starvation and death are taking place in the midst of plenty, that the purchasing power of the man in the street is not equal to the occasion and cannot rise to the levels at which foodstuffs are being sold.

**Mr. Sami Vencatachalam Chetty (Madras: Indian Commerce):** Who is responsible?

**Some Honourable Members:** Inflation, inflation.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** There is no use of the Honourable Member talking of who is responsible. I will tell you who is responsible. The Government of India may be responsible, the Provincial Governments may be responsible, the profiteer may be responsible, the hoarder may be responsible, but I know definitely of one set of persons who are responsible that is, those persons who went about in the Provinces to the agriculturists telling them not to sell their foodstuffs, telling them that the Japanese may invade their homes at any time, telling them that their houses will be in danger, that their property will be taken away.

**Mr. Abdul Qaiyum (North-West Frontier Province: General):** In view of your present inability to supply food, was it wrong on the part of the Congress to tell the people not to sell grains?

**Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim):** Order, order. The Honourable Member cannot interrupt.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Telling them that they would be starved, going to people from door to door and telling them that currency was of no use to them whatsoever, telling them to stick to their foodgrains and their food products and asking them to hoard. I say many people may be responsible, but I know definitely one set of persons who are responsible and who brought about this calamity, and if there has been a preconcerted famine in this country as has been alleged, if there has been a pre-determined famine in this country as has been stated by some Honourable Members, if there has been a plot and a plan to bring about this ruination of the peasants in Bengal and these disastrous conditions in Bengal, I know of one group of persons who obviously had a preconceived, preconcerted and pre-determined plan and brought about this deplorable state of affairs.

**Dr. G. V. Deshmukh:** I protest against this insinuation. He is quite unjustified in making these unfounded charges.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** My Honourable friend does not even know whom I am referring to and I do not know why he is assuming that his group is being referred to.

**Dr. G. V. Deshmukh:** I know that the Honourable Member is referring to some of my countrymen.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** They are also my countrymen.

I do not want to be dragged into all these criminations and recriminations.

**Dr. G. V. Deshmukh:** Who started it?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Let me come to the constructive side of the proposal in the very short time at my disposal. I want to get back to this proposition which I was alluding to. On the basis of all the facts that I have stated, we must get back to the position of statutory price control all over India for all kinds of foodstuffs. Nothing will save



\* [Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar.]

the situation unless that is done. The Government of India, the Provincial Governments, the representatives of the people, Members of the Legislative Assembly, everybody who is interested in the stable position of food supply in this country, rich and poor, must all unite in this one policy that there must be price control for all food grains. Let us not hear of any objections from any source whatsoever, however important it may be, however weighty it may be. Let us not listen to the siren voice of those who plead in the name of the agriculturist. I am all out for the agriculturist to get a fair deal, I am all out in the fixation of price to see that the agriculturist is fairly treated, but we must come to the decision that the price control on all the food grains, statutory price control all over the country is the first essential.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** But Government till now failed to control effectively. You must make it more effective.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** We should try to retrieve the position that we had in August 1942 when prices were more or less balanced, when there was no scarcity and when there were not these losses. And I should like to take this opportunity of thanking two of my friends at least who have referred to the work that I did. I claim nothing for myself; that was the work of experts in the Government of India, it was the work of the Government of India. And if in August 1942 we were able to keep up the prices strictly under control there is no reason why with an equal determination we should not be able to keep that up. The second essential on which I should like to speak is an essential which was referred to by my Honourable friend the Leader of the European Group; he referred to the need for rationing. Let me tell you that I am quite convinced that rationing in the rural areas is not possible in this country; but I am equally convinced that rationing in all urban areas, in all municipalities whether the population is 100 thousand,—you may start with 100 thousand if you like,—or whether the population is 20 thousand, in all municipal areas it is not only possible but an absolute essentiality to any scheme of proper procurement and proper level of prices for foodstuffs. That is my personal opinion and I shall to the best of my ability put forward that opinion wherever I can and with whatever force and emphasis I can do it.

Now, Sir, this question of rationing has been construed in a very peculiar way by surplus provinces and by deficit provinces. Some surplus provinces say that in their areas where they have plenty they are prepared to send whatever is surplus to other areas outside; and why should they ration themselves in either the urban parts of their areas or in any other part of it? I venture to say very respectfully to these surplus provinces that it is an entire misconception of the food position. We talk of equal sacrifices, of equality of sacrifices. To send your surplus product at a price which you can command is no sacrifice at all in my opinion; and surplus provinces which try to take credit for having sent so much are not entitled to any credit at all. After all every merchant, every commercial man, tries to keep up his mercantile contacts and tries to keep up the best customers he is accustomed to deal with; and what are you doing but trying to keep up your commercial contacts if as a surplus province you are sending out your surplus to other provinces? The question of sacrifice, the question of equality of sacrifice arises when you are willing to tighten your belt. I agree that my Honourable friend over there (Mr. Abdul Qaiyum) cannot tighten the belt to the same extent that I can; but if you are willing to tighten your belt let us tighten it proportionately at least, and surplus provinces also should introduce rationing, only perhaps on a more liberal scale than other provinces and other areas.

Let me say one last word. There has been a great deal of talk about inflation. It is a matter on which the Finance Member can speak with authority. But I shall speak only of my experiences in the United Kingdom. Inflation has gone on in the United Kingdom just as it has gone on in this country.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta:** No, no.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** If by inflation is meant the extent of note issue it is as much in the United Kingdom as in this country; because at the present day the Bank of England has issued £1,000,000,000, of currency notes against a backing in its issue department of less than a million pounds of gold. The Fiduciary Act has been thrown overboard and completely abandoned for the period of the war. There is no backing even of external sterling,—such backing as we have in our rupee issue,—for the note issue in the United Kingdom. All this issue is there; but there is strict rationing, strict price control. However much money you may get you cannot spend more than this limited amount. The goods that you can get are rationed; the prices at which you can get the goods are also rationed. It is not merely foodstuffs: you cannot get furniture. You can only get utility furniture either if your house is bombed or if you are going to marry another wife. That is the position in the United Kingdom; and under those conditions the purchasing power of the people is limited though they have got plenty of cash and currency notes in their hands. What do they do there? After having purchased to the limit that they are allowed under the law they have necessarily to put it in savings bank accounts or invest in war bonds. The Navy Week is started and 200 million pounds are forthcoming in war loans, the Army Week is started and 165 million pounds are coming in loans. People are trying to invest in Government bonds; and therefore I say that apart from all other methods by which inflation can be countered, one effective method of countering it and the one method by which it has been countered in England is the fixing of prices and rationing of goods for all people, wealthy or poor. These are the lines on which I believe that we should now try to get back to the position that we were in last year and try to supplement our efforts to improve the food situation.

Sir, one last word I should like to say. During the discussions both inside the House and outside I felt that there were occasionally unnecessary political issues imported into the consideration of this question; even economic issues are complicated by the fear on the one side that some high political issue is going to be indirectly admitted by agreeing to a certain economic truth or that some political lesson is to be drawn from the economic considerations that prevail at the present time. Let me say frankly that some have gone about saying that this economic situation has proved that the geographical unity of India is unbreakable. We shall not enter into any of these issues; you will be hiding your heads in sand like an ostrich if you think that by these subtle arguments you will solve all such grave issues; they have still to be faced by the country and have still to be solved by mutual discussion and mutual agreement. And, I shall be hiding my head in the sands of prejudice like an ostrich if I feel that these issues can be solved by these subtle methods. They are not going to be; therefore let us cast aside all ideas of trying to make political theories out of what are economic facts today, economic facts that arise and have to be solved under the present constitution. Nobody is going to be bound by what is done today so far as the future is concerned. There are a hundred ways of solving these problems.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** I hope you will take some measure or step by which you can at least impress it upon Lord Hailey and that great journal the *Times* of London.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** I hope, Sir, that what I am saying in this House, specially if this debate is to be transmitted elsewhere, will have that effect, and I know that Lord Hailey is a very careful student of Indian debates. But I am saying that these things should be kept aside. Let us try to solve this critical situation without trying to overreach each other on political issues which have to be settled later. And by so doing we shall probably save the lives of millions of people in Bengal and we will be doing justice to ourselves and to our country.

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

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

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** The heart-rending scenes which I have witnessed with my own eyes in Bengal and the terrible tales of woe which have reached my ears from various parts of that province beggar all description. Even the feeble attempts which were made by conscientious and honest observers have been characterised by Government officers as over-dramatization. Now, Sir, it appears to me that the tragedy is so gruesome and grim that no over-dramatization of it is possible. The truth is that Bengal is passing at the present moment through a very severe crisis, the severest that has occurred in living memory and the severest that has occurred since 1771. But in spite of this the Government have not used the word 'famine' with regard to this great crisis. They have deliberately avoided that term. From the Secretary of State down to the village chowkidar every officer has attempted to avoid the use of that term, and why? The object evidently was and has been to minimise the extent and severity of this disaster. Besides, in order to minimise the gravity of the situation, the Government have manipulated statistics to suit their own purpose. *The Statesman*, a newspaper owned and edited, not by Indian agitators, but by respectable European gentlemen, wrote on the 20th of October thus:

"A time has come when the Indian and British publics should receive from the authorities a clearer statement about famine mortality in Bengal . . ."

**Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta):** There is none representing the Food Department here.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** I resume my seat and I will remain seated until the Food Member comes. It is no use continuing my speech in the absence of the Food Member.

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed (Leader of the House):** He ought to have been here. I apologize to the House for his absence. I have sent for him, and in the meantime I will take note of the points.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** I had to resume my seat for two minutes and I will get extra two minutes.

*The Statesman* in its editorial article writes further:

"Efforts thereto have not been aided by Government's occasional bouts of agoraphobia during which attempts were made to keep statistics hidden from popular view."

So there has been a deliberate attempt to conceal the facts, and *The Statesman* further remarks:

"That the figures given by Mr. Amery in the British Parliament were inaccurate and were nearly 11 times less than the truth."

Sir, I am afraid *The Statesman* in regard to this part of its article has erred on the side of moderation and circumspection. The fact is that Mr. Amery's statement was hundred times less than the truth. My own estimate of the death-roll in Bengal is that several lakhs of persons have already died of starvation and diseases consequent thereon and that at least 50,000 persons are dying every week.

Now what can be the object of manipulating the statistics in order to minimise the gravity of the food problem in Bengal. Evidently, it was to hoodwink others. But whom could the Government hoodwink? They could not hoodwink the people of Bengal or other parts of India because they had visible demonstration of the distress and of death. Whom else could the Government hoodwink? Could they hoodwink the enemies of Britain? No. Japan and Germany have more accurate information than Britain herself. Could they hoodwink the United States of America? No. The Senators of that country came to this country and they gave on their return a very dismal picture of the situation prevailing here. Could they hoodwink the British public and the British Parliament? Not even that. An important debate took place in the British House of Commons the other day and it was pointed out there that the situation in India was very bad. So in spite of all their efforts, the Government of India have failed to deceive other people. They have only deceived themselves, and it is their own ostrich-like policy which has greatly aggravated the

situation. The situation would not have gone completely out of hand if they had not deliberately tried to minimise its gravity.

What else did the Government do? The Government did not merely minimise the gravity of the situation, but they gagged the press. They did not allow the press to publish statistics with regard to the death-roll or to write articles which might give some picture of the great tragedy that was being enacted. Sir, one of the notable instances in this regard was the order which was served on the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* asking him not to write anything about the Bengal famine. This order went further and said that nothing was to be written on the fact that such an order had been issued.

Sir, I have carefully read the article which is regarded as the offending article in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated the 28th September and headed "A Note of Warning". There is nothing in this article that deserved this treatment and the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, being a self-respecting man, has since refused to publish editorial articles. So that is how the press has been gagged in regard to publication of news relating to this great famine.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan:** Is it news or views?

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Both news and views.

Now, Sir, when the debate took place in the British Parliament, Mr. Amery quoted certain figures with regard to starvation and he dealt with the causes which led to this famine. Many of the British newspapers wrote articles saying that Mr. Amery had come very badly out of the business. But Mr. Amery did not care for this censure which was passed on him. Twenty-five years ago, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who was then the Secretary of State for India and in whose time the Mesopotamian muddle took place, thought it honourable on his part to resign his post: but Mr. Amery has done nothing of this kind and sticks to his office like a leech under the protection of another Tory Diehard. Evidently, the traditions of British public life have greatly deteriorated during the last quarter of a century.

Sir, what has been the general effect of this policy of concealing facts? The general effect has been, so far as the Government of India is concerned, their slackness in taking any active steps to cope with the famine; and so far as Britain and the Allied Nations are concerned, if the truth had been told more vigorous help might have come from them. Thus the ostrich-like policy of the Government of India has been the main cause of the gravity of the present situation.

Now what is the character of the present famine? Some Members of this House have described it as a man-made famine and in the British House of Commons also the same thing was said. But I go further and say that it is not only a man-made famine but it is a Government-made famine. I am supported in this view by the contents of the White Paper which has been . . . . .

(At this stage Dr. Sir Ratanji Dinshaw Dalal endeavoured to interrupt but Members exclaimed, "Order, Order.")

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Order, order. He does not give way.

(Dr. Sir Ratanji Dinshaw Dalal resumed his seat.)

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** This White Paper says that there was actually no shortage in the production of foodgrains in this country and the little shortage of rice which was in Bengal could have been supplemented by imports from the other provinces and from countries abroad. Therefore, Sir, this famine is nothing but a Government-made famine. The responsibility belongs entirely to the Government.

The question may be asked: Which part of the Government is to blame? The Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, has tried to throw the whole blame on the Government of Bengal. I am no defender of the Government of Bengal. I know that a great deal of favouritism, incompetence and dishonesty prevails in that province, but it would be going too far to say that the Government of Bengal alone is responsible for the debacle. The Government of India and the Secretary of State are equally responsible for having brought about the present

[Dr. P. N. Banerjee.]

situation. I find as evidence of this view that in May 1943 the provisions of shipping for food supplies to India was stopped by the Secretary of State with the concurrence of the Government of India. My Honourable friend, Sir Azizul Huque, made a very vehement and fighting speech a few minutes ago, in the course of which he said that he did not know, nor did the Government of India know, what the situation was at that time. He tried to show that as there was no rise in the death figures before May, the situation was normal. But is death the only criterion with regard to a famine? Is not death from starvation the last stage of suffering? He did not know that prices were soaring high and that prices had already reached 400 per cent. above the normal.

Now with regard to the statistics regarding the death-roll, questions were put to Sir Azizul in August and even at that time he said that if the Government of Bengal thought it desirable to collect the statistics they would do it; it was no business of the Government of India. Further we find that the Honourable Sir Azizul Huque made a speech at Krishnagar in the month of May in the course of which he said that the prices were sure to fall considerably within a week. Now how many weeks and how many months have elapsed since then? And have prices come down?

Sir, another defender of Government's inaction is Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, who spoke only about price control but said nothing about supply. Every person who has a little knowledge of economics knows that price control can never be made effective unless you have control of supply. Did he not know that supplies were insufficient at that time and even at the present time supplies are insufficient, and that on this account price control has proved ineffective? Only a few weeks ago, Sir Thomas Rutherford, the Governor of Bengal, said that one of the reasons why the Famine Code could not be applied in Bengal was that there was not a sufficient supply of food-stuffs. As a matter of fact as there is no sufficient supply of foodstuffs, the relief that is given in Bengal amounts to less than half of what is provided in the Famine Code. All these factors should have been taken into account by the members of the Government of India. They say they were not sitting in an attitude of complacency. But if there was no complacency, why did they not take adequate steps to meet the situation before it became too late?

Now, as for the exact share of the blame which should belong to the three parts of the Government, that is a matter for expert inquiry. My own view is that there is only one Government in this country, and that is the British Government in India. Provincial autonomy is a sham. You can override the Provincial Governments at any moment you like, and the Central Government is subordinate to the Secretary of State for India. Therefore, whatever the blame, it attaches to the British—Indian Government. As regards the details they have to be found out by an expert body of persons, and several amendments have been moved in this House suggesting the manner of appointment of such a body. A Royal Commission has been suggested in one of the amendments; a committee of inquiry has been suggested, consisting of an accountant general and experienced judges and administrators, in an amendment moved by a member of my Party: In fact, all of us are agreed that an inquiry must be held and that it must be independent and impartial, otherwise it would be useless.

What have been the chief characteristics of the Government policy in the past? It seems to me that extreme thoughtlessness and lack of foresight were the chief causes, when the famine was already on the horizon; criminal negligence when the famine had already begun; bungling and mishandling in the later stages of famine; and corruption and inefficiency throughout. These have been the characteristics of Government action or inaction with regard to this famine. If it had not been for the sins of omission and commission on the part of the Government, the famine would either not have occurred at all, or if it had occurred it would not have assumed such serious proportions as it has now assumed.

Sir, how has the present situation been brought about? It has been brought about by various devices: the first was the stage of the denial policy when foodgrains were removed from certain districts of Bengal in order that they might not fall into the hands of Japan; and along with this, all boats were destroyed which might have conveyed the food from one part of the country to another. Then, large purchases were made, by Government or on Government account by contractors who bought things not at the market prices, but at enormously enhanced prices. And what was the result? The result of that was that the prices went on soaring. There was an incentive to the contractors to buy at high prices because their commission was fixed not on the basis of quantity but on the basis of the prices at which those commodities were purchased.

Sir, on top of all this, the Government themselves made profits. Our thanks are due to the Governments of the Punjab and Orissa which came to our rescue, but did not make any profits. The United Provinces Government has said that it has also made no profits. The Sind Government has frankly admitted that it made some profit for the welfare of its own people. But what about the profits made by the Government of Bengal and by the Central Government? Sometimes ago, some Members of this House compared the attitude of the Government of India to that of Nero of unhallowed memory. They said that the position of the Government of India was the same with regard to the famine as that of Nero in regard to the burning of Rome. But there is a difference. Fiddling is an innocent pastime; whereas making profits on the prices of foodgrains among a population which was starving, is no pastime; it has much graver consequences. Therefore, the offence of which the Government of India and the Government of Bengal were guilty was far graver than that of Nero of Rome.

When the famine was in full blast, what did the Government do? No adequate measures were taken for relief for a long time, and when relief measures were adopted, they were adopted in a very inadequate and insufficient manner. Our best thanks are due to the charitable organisations which did their best to help the people in distress; but their work was hampered in a variety of ways. The Government has recently taken another step. That step is the forcible removal of destitutes from Calcutta: What was the manner in which this policy was carried out? The most inhuman and cruel. I have personal knowledge of the fact that wives were separated from their husbands, that babies were separated from their mothers; and all this has led to disruption of thousands of families. And what has been the object of this forcible removal from Calcutta? The Government view is that this policy has been undertaken in order to prevent deterioration of the health of the people of that city.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** What was the object of separating wives and babies?

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** All that was done in a haphazard manner. There was no plan, there was no definite programme, and things were done in the most careless and autocratic manner. What was the object of this removal policy? The ostensible object was that the health of Calcutta should not deteriorate. But there are people who suspect that the real object was again to minimise the gravity of the situation. If only the mortality figures that were published in the papers for Calcutta were reduced, then Government would be able to say that the famine had been brought under control. If that be the real object, I cannot but say that that is the greatest disgrace on the Government of Bengal and on the Government of India.

I do not deny that during the last few weeks strenuous efforts have been made by the new Food Member and the Transport Member. But I am not satisfied with their comparative figures. They must take a vow unto themselves that they are determined to kill the demon of famine which has devoured so many persons in the past and is threatening to devour many more in future. Unless they do that, a mere improvement in the situation will not be of much help. As a matter of fact, there has been no real improvement in

[Dr. P. N. Banerjea.]  
the situation. The death-roll is still mounting and the distress is growing worse every day.

What about remedies? When the debate took place in last August, I made some definite suggestions both with regard to long-range policy and with regard to short-range policy. If these suggestions had been carried out there would have been a great improvement in the situation. But that was not done. Even now, if these suggestions are given effect to there will be a considerable improvement in the situation before long.

I should like to emphasise a few points on which the Government should concentrate their attention at the present moment. They should vigorously import foodgrains, not only from other parts of the British Empire, but from abroad, because it has been recognised in America that the allied nations also are responsible to some extent for this famine in this country. Larger imports should also be made from the other provinces. Then, there should be an equitable distribution as between all the districts of Bengal, and for that purpose I suggested in August that a provincial food council should be appointed. I again urge the adoption of this measure. I further urge that adequate transport facilities should be provided and if necessary the war needs of the Government should be subordinated to the needs of the food situation, for unless the food situation is properly handled the war efforts of the Government will be greatly impeded. Lastly, I suggest that the Government of India must undertake full responsibility for the procurement and distribution of food supply in Bengal.

Before I conclude, I should like to say a few words about the *Aman* crop, which is the principal crop in Bengal and which is due to be harvested in December.

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Honourable Member's time is up.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea:** Only two minutes more, Sir. If the Government adopts its old policy of trial and error, if the Government tries again to experiment with the lives of the people, then a greater disaster awaits Bengal. I would therefore suggest to the Government that the *Aman* crop which is expected to be a bumper crop should not be handled by the Government. The needs of Calcutta and the industrial areas should be supplied by imports from the other provinces and from abroad, while the bumper crop of the province should be left with the cultivators and the local people. If, on the other hand, the Government tries to handle the situation it is bound to fail. As has been pointed out by several speakers, the machinery of Government is very defective and there are many practical difficulties in the way of avoiding corruption and inefficiency.

Sir, the food of the people is too sacred a thing to be touched by the impious hands of an inefficient and corrupt Government. Therefore, I suggest . . .

**Mr. Deputy President** (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Honourable Member must conclude now.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea:** I therefore suggest that this should be left alone—the bumper crop which is expected and which is not due to any effort on the part of the Government. It is a gift of God. Let not God's gift be snatched away from the mouths of the starving people. The Government of India have been guilty of many sins and crimes in the past in its behaviour towards the people of India. If the Government now stands between a kindly Providence and the hungry millions of the country, then there will be a great disaster. Millions of people will die and the sin and crime of the Government will be the greatest ever recorded in history.

**Mr. Abdul Qaiyum:** Sir, we are meeting and discussing the food problem of this country under the shadow of a great calamity, a calamity which is responsible for the loss of a very large number of lives in the fair and fertile province of Bengal, a calamity which is likely to cast its shadows, not only in the immediate future but for a long long time to come, a calamity which has to be combated and

effectively brought under control. Here, I have to speak for the Congress Party, a party which consists of the elected representatives of a very large number of people in this country. In the absence of very valued and esteemed representatives of the people in my Party, trusted colleagues who have been put in prison without any trial and are rotting behind prison bars for a number of months—as a result of the action of this irremovable and irresponsible executive, it has fallen to my lot to put the peoples' point of view before the House and the country.

Sir, we are told that we are in the midst of a great crisis, let us not indulge in a search for scapegoats, let us forget all that has happened in the past. Let us concentrate on the future. We have even had suggestions from the Leader of the European Group that it would not be politic or advisable to have an inquiry immediately but at some time in the future, because at present our energies should all be concentrated on combating the famine which is playing havoc with the people of Bengal. Sir, there may be something in all these suggestions but the fact remains that we have to state the truth and to bluntly state the truth. The question before the House is who is responsible for this appalling state of affairs in this country. I am not a believer in Royal Commissions or commissions consisting of commoners or lords coming from a distant country. I believe in the people's commission. I know the feelings of the people of this country. I can read their hearts. I can see the glow in their eyes and I can say without fear of contradiction, in spite of Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar and all his group of colleagues, that in the eyes of the people of this country, the Government of Great Britain which is primarily responsible for the government of this country and their henchmen and agents in India sitting right opposite are responsible for this great calamity which has resulted in an enormous loss of life, a loss of life in comparison with which the loss of lives in all the battlefields of the world in the present war pale into insignificance. It is quite clear to us that it would be futile and it would be hardly proper for us to ask these very people who are guilty to appoint a Royal Commission at some distant time to come and whitewash their acts or apportion blame between the various agencies of this octopus which is responsible for depriving us of our liberties.

Now, Sir, it has been stated by my Honourable friend, Sir Azizul Huque, in his speech that there were miscalculations and that there was bad judgment but there was no deliberate design on the part of the Government—and that this was more or less an act of God and that we should forget and forgive and concentrate on the future. Now, I have a quotation from the speech of Mr. Amery who is responsible for the government of this country, if not to the people of this country, at least to the British Parliament and speaking as early as January last year, Mr. Amery said this. I will first give a quotation from the recent debate in which Mr. Amery made a confession which, if true, means that the Government, of which Mr. Amery was a member, was fully conscious that India was in the grip of a famine and that they refused to take adequate and proper measures to combat that famine in good time. Here are some of the extracts from the speech and with your permission, I will read them to the House. These are published in the *Hindustan Times* of the 6th November. Mr. Amery says:

"If we are to judge the situation as a whole and in its proper perspective we must remember that what threatened India a year ago was a widespread, possibly universal famine. If members will look at the notes in section 5 of the White Paper on the position of areas other than Bengal, they will realise the extent to which that menace was averted or brought within narrow limits. For that credit is duly given in the notes to the administrative action taken by the provinces and States concerned."

Now there was an interruption in the course of the debate from one Mr. Cove, a Labour Member, who said:

"I am not trying to score any debating point but I have a quotation from Mr. Amery in January this year in which he said there was no fear of any famine of any kind whatever, that everything was all right as far as India was concerned and that there was no cause for a great alarm of any kind."



[Mr. Abdul Qaiyum.]

Now, Sir, that the situation was clearly foreseen cannot be denied and there can be no two opinions about it. Even in the course of the debate which recently took place on the Indian food situation in the House of Lords, Lord Huntingdon stated:

"Why in a situation which was foreseen a long time ago and was developing for months, did not the Central Government of India take the profoundest measures before the famine reached this disastrous extent and the situation became completely out of hand."

Referring to Mr. Amery's remark at Birmingham last week that the dangerous possibilities of the situation were fully realised soon after the fall of Burma and Singapore, Lord Huntingdon said that this happened some time ago, why were none of the measures advocated in the Gregory report put into operation. If the dangerous implications of the situation were realised, then there can be absolutely no reason and justification for this callous negligence, this criminal neglect on the part of the British Government and their agents in India to take timely and adequate measures to protect the lives of the people of this country, I say that they have not been able to protect the honour, the self respect and the freedom of the men and women inhabiting this country; but at least it was their duty to protect their lives, to enable them to eke out a wretched and miserable existence, as the bondmen of the British nation.

Now, Sir, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar got very excited and he tried to whitewash the Government. There may be some parts of that Government which it may not be possible to whitewash at all. He had a fling at the Congress. But he did not have the courage to say that it was the Congress who advised the small landholders in India not to part with the grains on which they depended for their very existence, for the existence of their women and children. He did not have the courage to say so, in the manner of all those who are associated with this Government, people who do not represent anybody, people who cannot face even ten of their countrymen in an open meeting, people who have no constituency and who have been selected for their past record of services to the cause of Imperialism for their betrayal of their country and for holding opinions which are distasteful to the majority of the people of this country. That such a man should rise and have a dig at the Congress is a thing which cannot be tolerated. What was wrong with the opinion which the Congress gave to the people of this country. The Congress leaders were in touch with the pulse of the people. They know how the people live their lives in their humble homes scattered in seven lakhs of villages in India. They know the real condition of the villages. They knew that the Government machinery was likely to break down. They knew that there would be maladministration and maldistribution and inflation, that there would be rise in prices. As has been stated by the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, this is a case of starvation in the midst of plenty. The Congress leaders knew that such a thing was going to happen and that it would be beyond the reach of an average agriculturist to pay for and buy the grains which were hoarded or were available in the bazars in India. Therefore, they gave that advice to those people not to part with their grain on which they depended for the necessaries of their life. What was wrong with that advice? If the Congress leaders had not given that timely warning to the poorer sections of our countrymen, the conditions in Bengal and in other parts of India would have been much more appalling. It was that timely advice which has prevented these people from being overtaken by a more serious catastrophe than has befallen them as a result of the maladministration of this Government.

Now, Sir, what have the Government of India been doing here. They say that they have a plan. It is news to me that they have a plan. What is that plan? They did not set up their Department of Food till December 1942. They even frequently changed the Members in charge of Food. Sometimes they have a basic plan. Sometimes they have a revised basic plan, sometimes price control and then at the instance of a panicky Provincial Government which lost its nerve they removed the price control and then the

famine spreads to areas nearer Bengal, like Orissa, Bihar and Assam. Was this the plan which you had? I submit this was the only Government among the United Nations which had absolutely no plan and which kept on experimenting and bungling from time to time with the lives of the people who had been entrusted to their charge. Therefore, it is clear that the responsibility is primarily that of the British Government and of the Government of India who are their agents in this country.

Then, Sir, an attempt has been made from what I have read about the White Paper—I have not seen it—and from what I have read of it as appears from the debates in the House of Commons that it must have been obviously based on the information supplied by the Government of India. They have tried to throw all the blame on the Provincial Government to prove that provincial autonomy or whatever shreds and remnants that were left of it is a farce and to make out a case in favour of the continuance of the present system which is very much to their liking.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Against self-government for India.

**Mr. Abdul Qaiyum:** Now, Sir, how can the unfortunate Provincial Government be blamed? I am not holding any brief for the Provincial Government nor do I hold any brief for the individual Ministers. There can be corruption here and there among the higher officials and mostly among the lower officials and probably amongst some Ministers. That is a matter of inquiry, but as far as the primary responsibility is concerned, that was of the Central Government. Now, who is responsible for the monetary and financial policy of this country? Who is responsible for regulating exports and imports of this country? Who is responsible for controlling the means of communication in this country? Who is responsible for enunciating and ruthlessly enforcing a denial policy on the unfortunate and luckless people of Bengal? The answer to all these questions can be one and one only, and that is that the Central Government is responsible for all these things. You are responsible for inflation. You knew very well that as a result of war, as a result of the submarine action and as a result of the absence of shipping the imports into this country were fast dwindling. You knew very well that India was not self-sufficient in the matter of food. You had statistics also to that effect. Even before the war India had been importing something like 2½ per cent. of what was needed to feed her own population. You knew very well that ships were not available and that the imports were dwindling. But you have been harping on the fact that you had stopped the exports. Why did you not stop the exports much earlier? You knew when the war had started that the imports would practically disappear. Why did you not stop the exports when the war started? It is no use now trying to get credit for something which you should have done three or four years earlier. The stopping of exports does not mean so much now when the imports have practically disappeared. On the other hand, you have to offset the fact that the imports into this country have disappeared.

Now, Sir, when I say that the Provincial Government is responsible only to a minor extent, I wish to state that the Central Government interferes with the provinces only when it suits it but when things go wrong, it takes shelter under the Government of India Act. It was the Central Government which discouraged the Provincial Governments from building food stocks in 1942. And after having allowed unco-ordinated control in the Provinces, they suddenly lifted up the control and the effect was disastrous for the eastern regions. Then, may I know whether it is or it is not a fact that it was the agents of the Central Government, the Munitions Department, the Military Department, the labour forces connected with the Military Department, the evacuees, the U. K. C. C. who were buying right and left in Bengal? What could the poor Provincial Government do? It was the activities of these agents of the Central Government which practically reduced what was left of provincial autonomy to a farce. The Provincial Government could not help it. It could just look on.

[Mr. Abdul Qaiyum.]

Now, you did not have any comprehensive plan. In all other countries, when the war started, their National Governments sat down, deliberated and consulted their experts and they had some sort of a comprehensive plan for the duration of the war in order to see that troubles like the shortage of food with which you are afflicted in this country did not affect the people inhabiting those lands. Now, is it or is it not a fact that practically 97 million acres of uncultivated land are lying useless in India? What efforts or attempts were made by the Central Government to bring into cultivation these 97 million acres as against the 200 million acres which are actually under cultivation?

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** Grow vegetables in your gardens!

**Mr. Abdul Qaiyum:** As if the Indian peasants eat vegetables! When I heard the speech of the Leader of the European Group, I was reminded of a story and I do not mean any disrespect to him. When he stated, why not grow beetroot, cucumber, cauliflower and such other vegetables, it reminded me of a story which I had heard as a child. When there was a famine in the good old days, the King's daughter said: "Why don't they eat *Pulao*, *Kababs* and things of that kind?" Therefore, these gentlemen have no idea that as far as the poor Indian's food menu is concerned, such a thing is not even heard of by the majority of people living in this country. So, the growing of cucumber and other vegetables is not going to end the famine.

Now, Sir, the next point which I wish to make out is that the measures which have been taken, after the disastrous consequences of famine have become apparent, by the Government of India are hardly sufficient to meet the situation. They are only temporary palliatives. What is required is a long-term, well-planned out, policy, a policy which is planned out in advance. Here I would like to say that you cannot have a long-term policy in this country based on the opinions expressed by economic and other experts, rationing experts, etc., who are being imported in ever increasing numbers into this country. I have been a student of economics and I know that you cannot divorce economics from politics and that there is such a thing as nationalism in economics. If you are going to have economists to give advice as to how to plan and to look ahead, why don't you have a number of Indian economists who ought to know something about their country and who can be depended upon and whose advice will be in the best interests of this country, instead of getting all sorts of so-called foreign experts. If they are such very good experts, I am surprised why their own country should spare them at a time when their own country was involved in a terrible crisis. I won't say much about Dr. Gregory because I have been his student.

Sir, it is a well-known fact that India has been deficient and has been an importing country in the matter of food. We have our industrial population which is rapidly growing. If the Government had any sense of responsibility, they would have at the outbreak of the war started a plan for self-sufficiency, cent. per cent. self-sufficiency in the matter of food for this country. That self-sufficiency is a thing which can be achieved in practice by bringing all these 97 million acres of land, which is lying fallow, under cultivation. It is really a pity that while millions of people in Bengal should be starving for want of food, only next door in Assam, two million acres of land and perhaps much more, which can be brought under cultivation, have not yet been brought under cultivation so far, in spite of the fact that it is a well-known fact that Government knew long before that India was not a self-supporting country in the matter of food. We have that vicious line system and other systems operating in this country and it is really a pity that while there should be millions and millions of acres in Assam and other parts of the country lying uncultivated the people in Bengal should be starving next door. The fact that the Government had absolutely no plan to cope with the situation can also be made clear from one other fact, namely, their method of procurement. In the matter of procurement they allow all these middlemen, profiteers, hoarders, people who are responsible for black markets, to

go and buy from the cultivators without any effective control. In fact, they hand over the food which is the main stay of the people to thieves, robbers and exploiters and then they set about catching them, which is an impossible thing. Why not buy direct from the producers in the field? Why not bring about a law that any man who owns land and who produces crops beyond what is needed for his own family should be compelled to sell the crops to the State at a certain reasonable price? Why not have your own shops, Government controlled shops, Government granaries where such grain could be stored which is taken direct from the producer. I can tell you that in the State of Kashmir long before the war started and when there was no fear of shortage of foodstuffs—and Kashmir State depends entirely on rice and once the crops fail, then there is considerable trouble in the country and it is impossible to run the administration—long before the war started they had their granaries full in Srinagar. Every agriculturist is bound to sell compulsorily one-fourth of his produce to the State which stores it in the Government granaries. The Government have got a list of people who do not own lands, they know how many people live in each particular house who do not own lands and if any person who owns lands applies for a ticket to purchase rice from the Government granary, he is not allowed to do so. The State knows how much each householder consumes every month and any person who does not own land can get a ticket, it is called *chandi*, and take it to a Government shop and buy rice. Even now,—when there is so much starvation in other parts of the country, even now in Kashmir rice sells at eight seers to a rupee. Why can't you have some such mechanism in this country and buy the produce from the producers in their fields and store them in Government granaries and then sell them direct to people who do not own lands. While you have such a system, you should also see to it that these big landlords who have grains much more than are needed for their own use and for the use of their tenants or for the members of their own family, they should not be allowed to retain the surplus. They should be rationed out and the rice should be compulsorily purchased by the State and sold to the people.

Now, Sir, the time at my disposal is limited. I am not going to say anything about the causes of this famine nor have I been able in the limited time at my disposal to make many constructive suggestions which can be very usefully put into practice for avoiding famines, the like of which has taken place in Bengal and playing havoc with the people. There was some talk on the part of Government Members, especially the Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque, about mobilising public opinion in this country. I think other Honourable Members also talked of mobilising public opinion in this country. Now, Sir, how can you mobilise public opinion where the Government of the country does not reflect the will of the people. Here you have a Government which acts in a manner which is to the utter distaste of the vast majority of the people in this country, a Government which cannot be removed by the elected representatives of the people, a Government which is not responsible to the people from whom it is recruited, a Government which is at once irresponsible and irremovable. Sir, it is really a pity that a country which boasts of democracy and is fighting for freedom of all nations, a country, the spokesmen of which are never tired of talking against Fascism or Nazism and other 'isms' which have reared their ugly heads in modern times, we are told that in these countries an individual has absolutely no voice in the administration, there is no freedom of speech, no freedom of association, it is really strange that Great Britain, while professing all these high sounding principles, should set up a Government in India, a country inhabited by 400 millions of people which is not only irresponsible but irremovable, a Government which is really a cross between Nazism and Fascism and which is utterly disliked by the people in this country—how can you have co-operation with such a Government, do you deserve co-operation? How have you treated the people in this country? You say that you have no public co-operation for your war effort. You have been responsible for repression, a repression before which the repression alleged to have been practised by the Nazis and the Fascists pales into insignificance. Now, Sir, I see

[Mr. Abdul Qaiyum.]

that the Honourable Member who is responsible for immobilising public opinion is fast asleep in this House, I will not wake him up. But who is responsible in this year, 1943, for keeping thousands of Indians, patriotic Indians, whom the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar had the effrontery to abuse, people who represent the masses of this country, people from whom the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar may have the right to differ, but the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar cannot forget that they are patriots who are liked by their countrymen and whatever may be our difference of opinion, after all they are suffering for a great cause, the cause of freedom of India and freedom of the Indian people. Therefore it does not lie in the mouth of the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar to ridicule these patriots. If you want co-operation, if you want to mobilise public opinion, if you are true to the principles for which you allege you are fighting this war, then it is the duty of the Government of this country and the Government in England immediately to set free Mahatma Gandhi and all those people who are rotting without trial behind the prison bars to enable the people of this country to come to some sort of understanding to set up a Government which is liked and is acceptable to the large parties and peoples inhabiting this country. Will you do it? You do not even allow them even to come together. Perhaps you feel that the ground will slip under your feet if only these people are allowed to negotiate and meet each other. How long are you going to prevent people from coming to a settlement amongst themselves? How long are you going to play this game of setting the Muslim League against the Congress and the Congress against the Muslim League. I warn you how long are you going to play this game? I warn you that the time is not far off when like the people in Lebanon, where the people—the Muslims and the Christians—have combined to fight the De Gaulite brigands whom you have set up to put down the national aspirations of the Lebanese, similarly the people in this country, the Muslims and the Hindus and all other people, will rise against you and turn you out. You ask Mahatma Gandhi to withdraw the August Resolution! What is wrong with the August Resolution. That resolution stands. It expresses the will of the people of this country. It will never be withdrawn. If you think that you will suppress revolution in this country, you are entirely mistaken. There will be revolutions and more revolutions and there will be even greater revolutions until the time comes when the British people are forced to withdraw from this country and a truly national and responsible Government is set up in this country. With these words, I close my speech.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** Sir, this is one of the most painful occasions when I have had to participate in a debate under the shadow of thousands dying. The motion before the House is that the food situation be taken into consideration and there are various amendments which are tabled before the House. Now, Sir, in order to take the food situation into consideration, I think the House will agree with me that it will be failing in its duty, if we have only to examine with such materials as one can get or as will be made available, because as non-official Members we have not got all the secrets of the Government in our possession. With such materials as we have and we can get we have to form our judgment as to the responsibility of Government in this matter. I was rather surprised to hear from Sir Henry Richardson who ought to know the traditions of Parliamentary Government better than anyone else that it is no use indulging in recriminations. Do you call this recrimination when the Government in charge of the country is responsible? Who is the real thief has to be found out but the Government of the country is responsible for the safety of the lives of the people, and that is a fact which nobody can deny. You may say that five thousands are dying per day or ten thousands are dying per day; that is a matter of mathematics. But can anybody deny that fact that thousands have died and even today they are dying of starvation? That fact remains, and the further fact also remains that thousands that have not actually died have suffered. Do not forget that category of people; they have suffered

to such an extent that it will take a long time before they can ever get to the normal condition of life.

Now do you expect us to say that nothing very much has happened? Let us see what we can do in order to put right this appalling state of things which we have been witnessing every day. Sir, in any other country where you have a Government that can only exist with the will and sanction and the approval of the people there will be no need for any commissions or any inquiry. I ask you this question, and I particularly ask the Leader of the European Group, supposing in England a few hundred people had died or were dying every week of starvation,—let alone a few thousands,—would Churchill's Government be able to stand on the Treasury Benches for 24 hours? And here we are calmly and coolly told about recrimination and so on. It is our misfortune that we are living under a system of Government which is irremovable and irresponsible and, I would add, thoroughly incompetent to handle any big issue. And further they are tied down and fettered by their master, the Secretary of State and the India Office. What can you expect these people to do? This country of 400 million souls is governed virtually by two men; one is the Viceroy and Governor General and the other is the Secretary of State for India. I asked the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar what he did. He pleaded, as if that was a personal remark against him as an individual, that he had many difficulties and so on and so forth. Yes, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, I fully realise and you know it,—I am not disrespectful but am only criticising your status and the constitution of this Government,—your status is that of a person in charge of a department with a glorified title which entitles you to sit on those Treasury Benches. You are not a Cabinet Minister and you do not know what is happening. You are not consulted; it is only when it pleases the Governor General to take you into his confidence that you come to know and then you offer your humble advice and after that you are dismissed. I realise that position. This is a constitution and a form of Government which has no sanction and will of the people or their approval of any kind behind it and in every sense of the word completely bureaucratic, and having behind it the strength of penal laws and Ordinances and ultimately the machine gun. How can a Government so constituted ever function efficiently when there is a grave crisis? It is all right in normal times when files are passed and red-tapism goes on; but let me tell you that this Government will never be able to stand any great crisis. What is the use of your blaming others? I have not the slightest intention of making any political capital out of this and I want to avoid it completely. But you say that the Provincial Government of Bengal did not do this, that and the other thing; you say that the Governments of the other provinces were not helpful and willing to co-operate with each other. And you say of course that the Government of India were simply the acme of perfection; everybody else may be responsible but not the Government of India nor the Secretary of State for India. I want to know what the Government of India did, and let us examine it. Sir Azizul Huque in his speech today and also in his previous speech which I have read with great care and attention gave us the information that they appointed a Food Conference in 1939. There was a Food Conference in 1940, there was a Food Conference in 1941, there was a Food Conference in 1942, and there was a Food Conference in 1943. I was very pleased to hear that. With your Food Conference in 1939, with your Food Conference in 1940, with your Food Conference in 1941, and with your Food Conference in 1942 and your Food Conferences every year, what is the result? The net result is that thousands are dying.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Hundreds of thousands.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** It is no use blaming the Provincial Government, or Governments. I am not here to defend them. May be that they were negligent, may be that they did not do their duty, but, Sir, how can any Provincial Government possibly deal with the situation? You look at every other civilized country in the world: Can the Provincial Government deal with inflation and the financial difficulties, can the Provincial Government deal with the question

[Mr. M. A. Jinnah.]

of exports and imports, can the Provincial Government deal with the transport inside this country, can the Provincial Government deal with the shipping, can the Provincial Government, or Governments, stop or deal with the operations of the Government of India for military purposes? I am giving you these few instances; there may be others. How can the Provincial Governments deal with these various things? Have they got the power and control all over India, have the Provincial Governments got the control and the power of fixing the prices, have the Provincial Governments got the power or authority of procurement, have the Provincial Governments got the power to ration all over? True, Bombay did it. And let me tell you about Bombay. Bombay is not out of danger. Let me tell you. A man in the street knew this in December last. Before that of course it was very difficult for the ordinary man to realize although some knew before that that there was danger. The Government itself knew that this was a very serious thing. But before I deal with Bombay, may I, in between, point out what did the Government of India do, for at present I am dealing with the Government of India.

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

Till December 1942, there was no Food Department. It was only in December 1942 that Mr. N. R. Sarker, who was also the Commerce Member, was given this portfolio, and the Department of Food was set up. Mr. Sarker resigned and from February to May there was no Member; no Member at all. Who was doing the business? The Secretary and the all-powerful apostle of a system of Government much worse than Fascism and Nazism, the all-powerful single dictator—the Governor General. What did he do? Nothing from February to May. In May we were able to find out a suitable man. Sir, it took us from February to May to find out a suitable man whom this Department could be given, and I congratulate my Honourable friend, Sir Azizul Huque, that he was the choice.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** They made their choice very soon!

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** But he was also holding the Commerce portfolio.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Industries and Civil Supplies also.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** I do not know exactly what were the reasons but all that I know was that all these departments that he was holding were beyond his human capacity and if something was not done then we might lose him altogether. So in August 1943 it was transferred to Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava—the fairy godmother. And this fairy godmother says 'take the food situation into consideration'; and this fairy godmother says 'I shall not be satisfied so long as famine and distress exists'. I hope not. What wonderful statement the Honourable Member has made. I will deal later with what he is doing now.

Sir, I was dealing with Bombay. It was known to the man in the street as far back as December that the food situation was very serious in this country; it came home to us in Bombay. And, Sir, it was very fortunate that the Governor of Bombay himself was fully alive to and fully in touch with the situation.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** It was different in my province.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** I say, it was our good fortune that the Governor was fully alive to the situation, and naturally so. At that time I had the honour to point out certain things to him, because the situation was very serious in Bombay. I can give you one instance: When I went back from Delhi in December 1942 and when I reached my house immediately three of my servants came to me and said that they had nothing to eat for three days; they could not get any food. All that I could do was to immediately attend to them. So it was known to the man in the street—that was my point. The Governor then came post-haste to Delhi and made whatever battle or fight that he had to go through. I do not know what happened, but one thing that I do know is

that he came fully fortified and somehow or other he secured the co-operation of the Central Government. Now, you will say "How is it that the Governor of Bombay did it; we were prepared to help him. Why didn't other provinces do it". This is exactly the charge against you. Unless somebody comes and goads you, and unless somebody comes and tells you that you are living in a fool's paradise, and unless somebody comes and tells you that this is your responsibility, you will not see or wake up to your sense of responsibility and you will not go away from your musty files in which you are absorbed. Perfectly true, I am not defending any Provincial Government at all. They have got their responsibilities. But I say what could they have done except to come to you and tell you "Look here, if you don't move—and you have not moved—if you don't move, the results will be terrible, dreadful". But what were you doing? Therefore, Sir, it seems to me that you cannot possibly get away from

this charge against you and that you have been guilty of gross negligence: that you have failed to discharge your duties and your responsibility as you ought to have. That is not my view, but Mr. Pethick Lawrence who opened the debate in the House of Commons said in conclusion "that the Secretary of State has failed to discharge his responsibility" and as I do say this is due mainly to inflation: his concrete suggestion was "that you should now take measures and meet this danger of inflation by means of taxation and loans". He represents the Labour Party, a responsible speaker, not a back-bencher.

Another prominent figure in the political life of England, speaking on behalf of the National Liberal Party, Sir George Schuster said:

"They should all keep before them one purpose—to strengthen the arm of Lord Wavell. This soldier had achieved his most brilliant successes when all odds were against him and difficulties he always turned into opportunities. If these were the conditions under which he worked best, he could not have been sent to a more suitable place than India."

Sir George Schuster said there was a failure to take adequate and comprehensive action. It was a story of half measures and vacillation.

Sir George Schuster could not find in the White Paper that rice was ever seriously mentioned or discussed at any food conference until December 1942.

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** That is not correct. Sir George Schuster is the same old George Schuster who was Finance Member here.

**Mr. M. A. Jinnah:** Excuse me you are wrong. He said it is not mentioned in the White Paper: not what is your correct information. He said in the White Paper it appears. Referring to the question of inflation and the various financial problems, he asked whether the India Office had thought that the financial problems were going to be all important all throughout the war. He felt the situation had not been faced up to and that the responsibility that rested in London had not been fully discharged—I would add that the responsibility that rested in India was not fully discharged, or far from that—if Mr. Amery and the India Office were to be purely passive and merely to say yes to any demand that came from India, what was the object of that great office and of money that was spent on the staff? He thought that the House was entitled to an answer. He felt Mr. Amery had a heavy responsibility to the House in this matter which he had not fully discharged.

Therefore the two speakers on behalf of the two recognised parties have condemned the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery in the language in which I have put before you.

How much more is your guilt? And what do we find, Sir? As late as last January Mr. Amery says that everything is O. K. Practically it came to this. Everything is all right. There is no fear of any famine of any kind. Don't bother. The Secretary of State for India, making this statement on the floor of the House before Parliament! May I know on whose authority did he make it? Who supplied him with the information in January 1942 which enabled him to make that solemn statement before Parliament? I cannot imagine that a man in the position of the Secretary of State for India would ever have made



[Mr. M. A. Jinnah.]

such a statement unless he was very sure or so informed by the Government of India.

Well, Sir, I do not want to go into the various details, as I cannot do it within the time. Now we come to the question of facing this situation, but before I deal with it let me say one thing. As far as—shall I use the word—the guilt, or crime, or the gross negligence of the Government as it is constituted today is concerned, we are powerless and under the constitution we can do nothing. But I want to tell the Honourable Members here that helpless as we are under the constitution, as a forlorn hope and in despair we say, and this House ought to say—let me tell you I am not supporting the amendment of the Muslim League because it is a League amendment, though it is a most comprehensive amendment—to those who want to understand that we think and we hold this Government *prima facie* guilty of gross negligence and that they have failed and they have shown no grip or foresight and they are guilty of the colossal failure to discharge a responsibility that is imposed upon them. Instead of defending yourself as advocates, instead of the Secretary of State for India defending himself and this—what shall I say—Government which is incompetent, a Government which is incapable of meeting any crisis, of facing any big issues, a Government essentially bureaucratic in its mentality, in its character and in its own blood, now instead of defending themselves, you should throw down your arms; do not try to throw blame on this and that and the other; you know it; and if you do not know this much, then God help you! You know it, that the main responsibility was yours and you are paid to discharge it and amongst the other scapegoats that you want to find out, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar\* has added one more. This is the first time that it has been suggested even indirectly: the insinuation was clear—he did not name it, but he did mean that there was a party which acted in a manner which made it more difficult for you to formulate a policy which would have prevented this appalling disaster. Are you really serious about it? If it is true that there is a party—mind you here is no question of politics—if the Government of India thought that here is a party that is playing this game—may be out of bitterness, may be out of ill-will, may be on political grounds—but if you came to that conclusion that there was an appreciable number of people here who were doing this, may I know what action you took? Why did you not openly say that, in this matter this is happening? One thing is certain now. I can tell you now on the floor of this House, so far as the Muslim League is concerned, so far as the Mussalmans are concerned, we do not wish to introduce any political issue or make capital—political, financial or any other capital, out of this: we know one thing: our countrymen are dying. We know there is danger. Remember that you have not got over it. And let me tell you that if the monsoon fails, I do not know what will happen. It is no use saying that this is God's act. God has not yet intervened, but He may, and therefore be prepared even to meet the intervention of God. It is no use saying "It is our enemy's action." Yes; the enemy has done his worst: the Burma market has gone; but what did you do? I want to know. There is nothing of any substantial kind of scheme or result or even prospects of any big results. Nothing. For four years you have been pottering about; for four years you have been trifling with this question. Can you point out to me and say "This is what we did"? What is this, but like arguments for the defence which is false. Mr. Amery in the House of Commons says "Oh, the British Government has built up a magnificent canal system which has now even made India monsoon-proof". He is not content with that past history and the glory of the great work of Britain, but he says that one of the causes of this famine is the increase of population from 50 to 60 millions. I want to know—I do not know what has happened to Mr. Amery—either it is done merely to fool the people, for propaganda; that is the only interpretation I can put upon it: how can any sane man stand before another intelligent man and say that this famine or this starvation and death is due to the increase

in population in ten years of fifty millions? Surely these 50 millions have not descended upon this earth, this blessed country, in a day or in forty-eight hours. What is this argument? If the population was increasing, I suppose it increased gradually; it did not happen in one day. Surely this benign Government, these guardians and trustees of our life and property should have made some arrangement as they went on increasing. No, Sir. This is to my mind adding insult to injury. I have done with this part of the question.

I now come to this other part. What are we to do? We cannot allow ourselves to be side-tracked and diverted from the main issue; and here, speaking on behalf of the Muslim League, I can assure you that we are prepared to give you every possible assistance, notwithstanding the fact that we condemn you, that you are not only guilty of failure in the discharge of your duties, that you have treated every party with contempt and you kept every party at arm's length and somehow or other deliberately designed that no party should be allowed to co-operate with you—and you want to run your own show—notwithstanding all that, notwithstanding the differences that we have, believe me they will not stand in our way of giving you the fullest co-operation for the purpose of saving those who are dying, for the purpose of giving nourishment to those who are on the point of death, and that we should see for the future in the name of humanity, that this does not recur. Today you stand—say what you like and do what you like—before the bar not only of the public opinion in India, but of the whole world, condemned because the foreign propaganda is going on and because you have failed. Now, let us redeem at least your character which is almost lost; and above all, let us save those who are dying and those who may die in the future: do something definite, something clear, something concrete, effectively and quickly.

I am afraid I have taken more time—I do not want to take up any more of the time of the House. Now, see what you have done between the months of August, September and October, these three months? You have done a great bit with success. May I know how you were able to do it when you were pottering for four years before? Could you not have done this before what you have done in three months or four months? What is the answer to that? Why did you not do it? Perhaps I can only surmise that it is not this fairy god-mother that has come to our rescue. What can he do after all? Perhaps it is the hand, the military hand, which believes in action and not red-tapism, that may have helped this, wooden, ante-diluvian and incompetent Government to action.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava** (Food Member): For the first time in the history of this House has one subject been debated upon for five days, and, Sir, no less than 51 Members have taken part in it. The average attendance, I believe, has been in the region of 100, so that more than fifty per cent. of those present have participated in the debate. Sir, the importance of the subject warrants this, and I am very glad indeed that the House has taken so much interest in this all important subject of food.

I wish to congratulate the House on the very useful suggestions which many Members have made, and to assure them that these suggestions will receive the earnest consideration of the Government. I have listened myself to the debate with the utmost interest, care and sympathy as I have been most anxious to ascertain the views of my colleagues, the Members of this Legislature. Sir, that is the reason why I have not wanted to impose any restrictions of time. I have given them five days and I take it that the House is satisfied that every opinion has now been placed before the Government.

Let me also assure the House that I fully share the feelings about the tragic sufferings prevailing in Bengal. I have seen with my own eyes heart-rending scenes in Calcutta and its environments, and I do not wish to minimise the gravity of the situation. I can well understand why Members who represent the people of Bengal should be so perturbed over the entire situation, and I fully sympathise with them. Sir, I beg Honourable Members to

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

believe me when I say that I feel the same as they do; I am really distressed over the entire tragedy.

Having said that, it is not my intention to answer to the charges that have been levelled against the Government. We could probably produce a defence, and a good one at that, but I think it would be out of place here. What we are concerned with now is the present, and the future. I am very glad that every section of this House is agreed on this view. The voice of the suffering humanity in Bengal and elsewhere bids us that we should cease to pursue arguments which can bring no relief to the afflicted and the hungry. There is no food in them, and my main concern at the moment is to feed the hungry.

— In moving my motion for consideration I gave a businesslike account. It was not couched in exaggerated language at all. I did not indulge in platitudes, but I gave a businesslike account of what had been done by the Government of India to relieve the situation since the House last met. When in August last my Honourable friend, Sir Azizul Huque approached me with the request that I should take over the food portfolio I confess that I hesitated to do so. I was only too conscious of my own limitations and of the gravity of the then prevailing situation in the country, and particularly in Bengal. I think the bravest man might have been appalled by the task and it was only out of a most compelling sense of duty to my country that I ultimately acceded to the request.

What did I do after assuming this grave responsibility? The first task before me was to give the Bengal Government the supplies with which they could administer relief, namely, food and medical requirements. These supplies had of necessity to consist of foodgrains obtained from outside.

I will ask the House to remember that the months of August, September and October are months when even in normal times the flow of grains coming to the market is at its lowest ebb. I paid a personal visit to Calcutta and to the Punjab. Thanks to the co-operation of the railways and of the Punjab Government, we have succeeded in sending to Calcutta very substantial quantities of foodgrains. When I took over the food portfolio Calcutta was reported to have only a few days' stock of food. I want Honourable Members to consider what would have been the position to-day if these foodgrains had not been supplied.

**Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta:** The Honourable Member ought to reply and not make a fresh speech.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I am replying. I quite realise that I am replying. I am replying to some of the charges made.

Today, Sir, besides the daily arrivals of foodgrains for meeting the current requirements, Calcutta has more than a month's reserve on its hand. As a result of unremitting efforts during the last three months, the supply position has materially changed, so much so that now I think grain is reaching every nook and corner of Bengal. I make bold to say that the balance has changed and the question of public medical aid, clothing and so on have assumed even greater significance. (*An Honourable Member:* "Since when?") During the last three months, I have invited the most urgent attention of my Honourable colleagues, the Members for Public Health and Civil Supplies to this aspect of the question. In this connection I would make a most earnest appeal to this House and to the wider public to give as many old clothes as they can spare for the use and relief of the poor destitutes in Bengal in the coming winter.

As to Bengal, I may give the House certain figures of the amount of foodgrains which we have sent. The figures of the port of Calcutta show that from January to October, 1943, the total exports amounted only to 12 thousand tons, out of which 8 thousand tons were pulses which were not presumably of Bengal origin. As against this, the Central Government have put into Bengal nearly six lakhs of tons of foodgrains of different kinds. Since July 15th, she has

received 8 lakhs of tons. Sir, I claim that this is no mean achievement. (An Honourable Member: "Have the prices come down?") Yes. They have come down very appreciably and very satisfactorily. The original basic quota was 798 thousand tons up to March 1944. Between now and the end of December, we intend to put in another one lakh and 20 thousand tons at least. Railway statistics show that 100 thousand tons entered Bengal during the period of free trade, an expedient which was adopted to save Calcutta and it did save Calcutta.

Now, Sir, it is believed that the Central Government has been callous to the needs of Bengal. In this connection I would like to say that the Government of India have given large sums of money to Bengal in the form of loans and advances totalling I believe, 12 crores of rupees, not to speak of 63 lakhs for the "Grow more food" campaign. I wish to assure the House that we have given assistance and we will continue to give assistance but the salvation of Bengal lies in that Government putting its own purchase and enforcement arrangements in order in which task it will receive every possible assistance from the Centre.

Now, I would like to say a word or two on malnutrition. I am only too keenly aware of the dire effect of malnutrition and starvation on the general health of the population. As a temporary and immediate step I have been able to secure through generous releases of stock from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and South Africa and from the Defence forces considerable quantities of milk powder and condensed milk for mothers and children. The quantity which we expect to get is some 8 million tins. In consultation with my Honourable colleague in the Department of Education, Health and Lands and with the public health authorities, I am making special inquiries into the steps that are necessary and possible to minimise the effects of famine. In this connection I must refer to the fact that it is not possible for me to replace deficits in rice with equivalent surpluses of rice from other areas. Some adjustment in diet by the utilisation of foodstuffs which may at first be strange to the people is essential and I must urge the medical profession and rationing authorities throughout the distressed areas to study carefully and demonstrate to the people how best to use the alternative foodstuffs. At the Centre here, we shall study the same problem and circulate all the information and advice which we can lay hands upon. I believe that the result may well be a change of habit which will in the end prove beneficial to many classes and to the introduction of better balanced diet in many areas where the reform has long been needed. In this process, with care and ingenuity, rationing schemes, as they become developed and stabilised, can be made to play an important part. I would request that all who take an interest in and have a knowledge of dietary and nutritional matters will study this aspect and send us their advice and suggestions.

Sir, I now turn to medical aid and what has been done in that direction. A reference was made by Sir Frederick James to the great need for medical relief in Bengal. I entirely agree with him. I understand from my colleague, the Education Member, that all possible steps are being taken to assist the Bengal Government in the provision of medical relief. The military authorities are also doing a great deal. They have made available one 1,200-bedded hospital, one casualty clearing station and 2 field ambulances and they have also made available the services of a large number of army doctors. I think the number is about 100 including 10 experienced hygienists for medical relief and epidemic work. The services of 29 doctors and 10 Public Health Inspectors have been obtained from the Government of Burma. The military authorities have also supplied for the medical treatment of starvation cases one million vitamin capsules and a consignment of one million vitamin capsules has also been received from His Majesty's Government by air. An expert clinical research unit appointed by the Nutritive Advisory Committee of the Indian Research Fund Association has considered the clinical problems arising in the treatment of starvation cases and has made recommendations in regard to diet treatment.

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

'Sir, reference has been made in the course of the debate to the export of grains. I have already given the assurance elsewhere that the export of grains has been practically stopped. The question of exports outside India has been under the constant examination of the Government of India who have tried to progressively reduce these exports so as to permit only the bare minimum requirements of the neighbouring countries like Ceylon, the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia who have a large Indian population. The total exports of all foodgrains from India have been progressively reduced from over 9 lakhs of tons in 1937-38 to 379,000 in 1942-43. During the first seven months of the current financial year, April to October, the total exports have amounted to about 80,000 tons, the bulk of which were in the earlier months of the year in fulfilment of the past commitments in respect of Ceylon. Exports of all foodgrains have completely stopped since last July. No export is now allowed. I repeat that emphatically. There is no truth whatsoever in the reports which have been given wide publicity that a large consignment was exported from Calcutta to South Africa.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** That was three months ago.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I am not aware of any exports within recent months. The total exports of rice from Calcutta since January to date have amounted to only 2,737 tons, of which 2,000 tons were for the Persian Gulf in January and 737 tons for the requirements of Indian crew on ships.

Sir, I find a reference has been made to the alleged large scale exports of foodgrains by the U. K. C. C. The Government of India are fully informed of all exports by the U. K. C. C. which are subject to a licence. The only export of foodgrains made by the U. K. C. C. were small quantities of wheat for the Persian Gulf and that was early in 1942. I can categorically assure the House that no exports of foodgrains have been made by the U. K. C. C. since July 1942.

Now, Sir, I turn to imports. So far as imports are concerned, we have as our target the amount specified by the Foodgrains Policy Committee and I shall neglect no efforts or opportunity of any kind and description to press upon His Majesty's Government the implementation of that programme. The problem, as has already been stated, is mainly, if not entirely, one of finding shipping. The whole of the available shipping in the hands of the United Nations is regulated and moved according to carefully concerted plans which must of necessity be formulated long in advance. When a new demand is made on the shipping allotted to a particular area, it means the re-allotment of tonnage and the movement of vessels to the area where the new demand arises. That movement takes time. Such adjustments have already been made by His Majesty's Government and the results are now seen in the steady arrival of grain ships in Indian ports. Those that have arrived are but a small beginning of a movement which, I am assured, will continue for several months to come. I am not prepared to jeopardise the safe arrival of these ships by disclosing details of their ports of loading or of their destinations, nor can I disclose the volume of tonnage allotted to this purpose. I think the House will agree that this would be information which our enemies would very much like to know. But I repeat that what has arrived to date represents but a small beginning of movements about which I am already assured.

Sir, some Members from Bengal have referred to the question of the procurement of the *aman* crop. I wish to assure them that we have been in closest consultation with the Government of Bengal about the purchase of *aman* crop.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** We suggested non-purchase of *aman* crops.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I am coming to that. Our conclusion is that we should, if possible support the confidence of the public and assist the Provincial Government by going to the utmost extent possible to take the needs of Calcutta out of the Bengal market. In other words, the Centre might undertake the obligation of meeting the needs of Calcutta and

isolate Calcutta from the rest of Bengal. Figures are being worked out and I have every hope that we shall be able to announce a decision to this effect in the very near future. Our ability to do so must necessarily depend on the willingness of every administration to make the necessary foodstuffs available.

As regards the *aman* crop procurement or non-procurement, as my Honourable friend would call it, it follows that if full effect of these additional supplies to Bengal is to be realised, confidence restored and prices lowered and normal movement resumed, the offtake from the rural markets should be and must be reduced to the barest minimum. I am working out a scheme on these lines.

Sir, something has been said in the course of the debate with regard to the denial policy which is alleged to have led to the present famine in Bengal. Sir, it is true that there were certain measures dictated by military necessity in 1942 when there was real danger of invasion and this contributed to the present difficulties of Bengal. I admit that. But the facts are as follows. Though in April 1942, it was decided to purchase surplus stocks of paddy and rice in vulnerable coastal districts and remove them to the interior of the Province, the Government of India advanced money to the Government of Bengal, after allowing for 12 months consumption and requirements of seed. Actually only 50 per cent. of the estimated surplus was purchased. That amounted to about 17,500 tons of rice and 20,000 tons of paddy. That is to say, in terms of rice, the total was 30,719 tons and of this quantity 2,437 tons were released for Ceylon and the entire balance was consumed in Bengal. Judged even against the deficient rice crop of last year in Bengal of 7 million tons, the quantity involved was negligible.

As regards the boats, a large number, about 25,000 were removed on payment of compensation by the Government of India from Bengal coastal areas in April and May 1942 to reception centres further inland. Undoubtedly this action must have caused hardship and a sense of insecurity in the limited area to which the order applied. But the greatest care was taken to limit the effect to the absolute minimum required by the emergency. Extensive use of country crafts for essential agricultural purposes or communications has always been allowed on temporary permits, especially for moving the *aman* crops of 1942-43 and the return of all these boats is now being freely permitted.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** The boats which were removed?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** Yes. They are being permitted to be returned.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Were any boats destroyed?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I am unable to give any reply. In fact no boats are now being held by the military authorities under the denial policy. Every effort was also made to find alternative employment for the fishermen affected by these orders.

May I now say a word about the military consumption about which a good deal of misunderstanding seems to prevail. I noted that my Honourable friend Sir Frederick James pointed out waste in the rations of army personnel and dependents and also what my Honourable friend Mr. Frank Anthony said about the proportionate consumption by the army in comparison to the general population. A cut of 4 oz. was made in the rice rations of the army out of a total rationing of 1 lb. 8 oz. The War Department, as I believe, my Honourable friend Sir Frederick James is aware, have already under enquiry the matters to which he drew attention at Bangalore. Moreover, instructions have been given that where the various scales of rations are found to be more than is needed, the troops are to underdraw their rations and on no account should waste food. An example of such an order is Army Instruction No. 209 of 1943. It reads: "Commanding officers will ensure that no waste of foodstuffs is allowed and any item of scale now sanctioned which cannot be consumed will be underdrawn to the extent necessary". The present scale of rationing is considered no more than adequate by the military medical authorities. Officers commanding units are however fully aware of food shortage and I am sure will keep their eyes open for instances of waste. The need for

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

doing so has been stressed in a pamphlet and instructions on food wastage have already been issued by the local military authorities. I am confident, Sir, that if any specific instance of waste is brought to the notice of the G. H. Q. action will be taken at once.

Something has been said in the course of the debate as regards the profits alleged to have been made by the Government of India and I would like to answer the charge. The reference I take it was to the pool price charged by the

Government of India. There was never any intention to make any profit from this pool price as I will explain. The pool price charged by the Government of India for wheat supplied from the Punjab was fixed in May, 1943, when the actual average cost f. o. r. station of despatch was intimated to the Food Department in respect of the first 81,500 tons of wheat purchased by the agents of the Punjab Government for export to the deficit areas worked out to Rs. 11-6-1 per maund. To this was added an element to cover the commission paid to the purchasing agents, the cost of administration of the Central Government and the supplying province and a margin to cover small fluctuations. Taking all the factors into consideration the pool price was fixed at Rs. 11-10-0 per maund. An assurance was however given that it was not the intention of the Government of India to make any profit out of the grain purchasing schemes, and if at the end of the operations the accounts showed a profit after adjustments had been made in respect of the cost of administration and losses, etc., the Government of India would be willing to pass the profit on to all consuming units in proportion to their respective offtake for the whole period. In pursuance of the undertakings given by the Central Government to all administrations the accounts of the wheat transactions have been examined already. Although all the final bills of the agents have not been received yet and the final figures are not available, it appears likely that the pool price of Rs. 11-10-0 would leave with the Central Government a substantial profit. From the accounts available the actual average cost of the wheat supplied under the old arrangement works out at Rs. 10-13-4 per maund on gross weight. Adding commission charges payable to agents, the bank charges and the cost of administration and a small amount for losses the pool price was recently fixed at Rs. 10-15-0, per maund on gross weight of bag weight f. o. r. station of despatch. This price has been given retrospective effect and the Controller of Food Accounts has already been asked to pass on credits to the receiving administrations at 11 annas a maund on quantities received by them. When the accounts have been completed they will be reviewed as a whole and further credits will be passed to the receiving administrations if it is found that the Central Government are still left with a profit. The preliminary figures, however, do not indicate that any substantial sums will be available for distribution in the way.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** What was the profit made by the Bengal Government?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I will come to that.

Reference has been made to profiteering or alleged profiteering by the Provincial Governments as well as trade interests. I do not desire to be drawn into recriminations. I have answered the charge that has been made against the Government of India, and I have already exercised and shall continue to exercise strict control on the imposition of unjustified surcharges. Government's policy has been clearly stated to the Provinces in this matter and will be enforced.

As regards the alleged profits by the millers in Bengal I have appointed already,—and publicly announced the appointment,—a special commission containing an expert accounts officer to go into the existing charges, to report upon them and make recommendations regarding the retail prices which should be fixed by the Government of Bengal.

**Sardar Mangal Singh (East Punjab: Sikh):** What is the present milling difference?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I cannot give way just now because my time is limited.

**Sardar Mangal Singh:** It is Rs. 5 per maund at present.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I will now say a word about the mortality figures. The difficulty in obtaining accurate mortality figures has been commented upon and has itself caused the Government of India grave concern. The duty of collecting the figures in normal times rests with the village chaukidars and *panchayats* in Bengal. Their returns are collected by the Assistant Director of Public Health in the districts who in turn compile them and make them over to the Bengal Government's Director of Public Health. The process is slow and far from accurate. In times of emergency such as the present its inherent defects are obvious, but I have heard so far no suggestions as to how all at once a new and accurate system can be created and set to work. To expect the agency which exists to make accurate reports distinguishing deaths from starvation from other deaths is clearly not possible. But the Government of Bengal have made a survey from all the districts in October, and the result showed roughly 58,000 deaths due to starvation and disease combined with under-nourishment. I hold no brief for these figures; the statistics are admitted by the district officers to be very approximate estimates; but I must say that the figure of 16 million given by my Honourable friend Mr. Abdur Rasheed Chaudhury is clearly a gross over-estimate which bears no relation at all to the facts and can itself be based on no statistics worth the name.

Sir, I made a careful note of the speech made by Mrs. Renuka Ray regarding voluntary organisations and the difficulties which they have experienced. I acknowledge the work done by these organisations and I am very grateful to women particularly who have been doing such useful work, and I will give them every possible help.

Sir, I now turn to the demand for enquiry. The course of the debate makes it clear that there is a widespread desire for some form of authoritative enquiry into the famine in Bengal: its origin, causes and its remedy. I fully recognize the depth and sincerity of the feelings which have given rise to that desire. I am prepared to accept that an enquiry of full authoritative character may be desirable but I must make it perfectly clear that I am absolutely opposed to any enquiry at the present time . . . . .

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan:** What do you mean by 'present time'?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** . . . . . or in the immediate future for many reasons. I doubt indeed whether it would be practicable to constitute at the present time a committee or a commission of adequate weight and status to deal with a question of this importance without calling away from urgent duties men who can ill be spared.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** You mean you will do it after the war is over.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** Even if that consideration be not correct, the mere statement that an enquiry is about to be held, and even more the holding of that enquiry, cannot fail to distract Ministers and other officers from their present duties and engage all energies which ought to be and must be, for sometime to come, directed solely towards the relief of the famine conditions . . . . .

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan:** Not the Executive Councillors.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** . . . . . the rehabilitation of the people, and the effective administration of food control. I fear also, Sir, that it would at the present time increase bitterness of feelings or at least revive and keep alive recriminations and militate against that concentration in common effort which is so essential to the solution of the food problem. (Interruption.) We are still in the middle of the battle and we cannot tell what its outcome will be. Our position is not that there cannot and must not be any enquiry. Far from it. But while we are still in the midst of the emergency and the crisis is upon us and is still continuing, it is clearly not



[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

possible to determine when is the most appropriate or the earliest practicable time for the enquiry to begin.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** After all the evidence has been destroyed.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** We cannot decide to what exact points that enquiry must be directed, nor, in consequence, can it be said what form the enquiry should take, or who should conduct it. These points cannot be decided now.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Before you do that all people must die.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** We are still in the critical stage of our struggle and we do not know what will be the result. The amendments which have been moved reveal by their own diversity the force and logic of what I have just stated. They have advocated more than one type of enquiry, including that of a Royal Commission.

**Sir Syed Raza Ali** (Cities of the United Provinces: Muhammadan Urban): You accept any one of them.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** As to the proposal of a Royal Commission, I cannot say what will be the views of His Majesty's Government, because it rests with them to nominate the commission.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan:** We know that.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** So far as the Government of India is concerned we are convinced that no form of enquiry would be appropriate to the end in view unless it was so constituted and conducted as to be above and outside politics, constructive in its approach to the problem and directed to secure administrative improvement and practical measures to prevent a recurrence of famine, and to minimize its effects. I have no desire, as I have said before and I repeat it now, to baulk or avoid enquiry. Indeed I am prepared to state that had an amendment in the terms described by my Honourable friend, Sir Henry Richardson, been before the House I should have been prepared to accept it. His amendment, so far as I can recall, would have provided for an enquiry at a suitable date into the food shortage in India and in particular in Bengal. It was to have been conducted by a suitable body of the type of a Royal Commission of which the personnel was to be completely outside the field of Indian politics. Its terms of reference would have covered full examination of the present food shortage and it would have made recommendations to prevent a recurrence of existing distress. Such an amendment, Sir, I repeat, would have been acceptable to me.

**Mr. Jammadas M. Mehta:** Food shortage only?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** But I regret that I cannot accept any proposal which demands that an enquiry be held now, which specifies the precise constitution of the committee, or its terms of reference, or binds me to institute an enquiry within a specified time. Government will, therefore, vote against the amendments which would lead to that effect.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** All the amendments?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I hope, Sir, that I have made my position clear.

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan** (Agra Division: Muhammadan Rural): You say that only non-moved amendments will be accepted.

**Sir Henry Richardson:** Why did you not agree before?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** The time has not come when it is in the larger interests of the country to commence an enquiry. The time has not come when either its constitution or its terms of reference can properly be determined. I hope, Sir, that on this statement of the Government's position, the movers of the amendments will see fit to withdraw them.

One word more, Sir, and I have done. I would like to stress to the House that we have a definite policy and we are working to that policy.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman** (Patna and Chota Nagpur cum Orissa: Muhammadan): That policy has failed.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** We are trying our level best to save the country from disasters of the kind which have overtaken it. I would like to make it perfectly plain that the Government of India are committed to an All-India policy which they have every intention of enforcing. Sir, we hope we shall have the co-operation of all concerned in that policy, but if that co-operation is not forthcoming, we shall carry out that policy by the over-riding powers which we possess. Sir, in this policy there are seven cardinal points, and I would like to enumerate them for the information of the House:

(i) Prohibition of exports—we are committed to that; . . . . .

**An Honourable Member:** To that we agree.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** . . . . .

(ii) Procurement of imports;

(iii) The association of the public with our work, and I can assure my Honourable friends that the Members of this House will have the first preference in all such matters;

(iv) The extension of urban rationing;

(v) The rigid enforcement of the Foodgrains Control Order;

(vi) Improvement of the procurement machinery; and, lastly.

(vii) Price control.

Sir, I look to this House today and henceforward to give me their unqualified support in the execution of this policy without fear or favour. I rely on my friends here to give me what support they are capable of.

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** When shall we express our opinions on this? Had he spoken before we could have said something.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I have only recapitulated what I said in my first speech. I wish to assure the House that in the charge which I hold, so far as I am concerned I am working in a missionary spirit. I do not spare myself. I know that the country is in dire distress at the moment and I hope before soon the clouds will lift. So far as I am concerned, I say to myself, "Thou hast the right to work but never to demand the fruit of it as thy reward".

**Sir Gowasjee Jehangir:** Will the Honourable Member give us an assurance about the control over distribution. What about his Central control of distribution in all provinces?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** That is covered by the All-India policy. We shall control everything.

**Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta:** He has spoken about rehabilitation. Have you got any policy or are you considering it?

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan:** The Honourable Member stated that the Government of India had given 12 crores to the Government of Bengal in the form of advances and loans. May I know how much of this amount was spent to give effect to the denial policy of the Government?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** I cannot give the information off-hand.

**Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta:** You answer my question about rehabilitation.

**Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim):** Order, order.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** We have the matter under consideration.

**Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim):** There are a number of amendments. I wish to put the amendment moved by Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan, which is second on the list, to the vote first. The amendment is:

"That to the motion the following be added at the end:

and having taken into consideration this Assembly views with grave concern the tragic situation prevailing in Bengal and recommends to the Governor General in Council to adopt immediately more vigorous and effective measures to cope with the famine in Bengal and to afford adequate relief to the other distressed parts of the country.

[Mr. President.]

This Assembly further recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps for the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into and report *inter alia* on the following points relating to the continued prevalence of famine conditions in Bengal and the unprecedented death-rate resulting therefrom:—

- (a) the cause of the present distress;
- (b) the degree of effectiveness of the steps taken to prevent or remedy the situation from time to time;
- (c) the suitability of the administrative organization in charge of famine operations;
- (d) the adequacy or otherwise of the relief measures adopted by Government;
- (e) the accuracy or otherwise of mortality statistics and effect of the present famine on mortality rates;
- (f) the steps to be taken to counteract or mitigate the effects of starvation and malnutrition upon the younger generation; and
- (g) the measures to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the present trouble in any part of India."

With this amendment is the amendment moved by Mr. Essak Sait, which reads:

"That in the amendment moved by Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan after the words 'Royal Commission' the following be inserted:  
'composed of independent and impartial persons, majority of whom shall be Indians commanding the confidence of the peoples of India'."

Mr. Deshmukh has an amendment to the amendment of Mr. Essak Sait, which reads:

"That in the proposed amendment by Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait and others to Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan's amendment for all the words beginning with the words 'composed of' and ending with the words 'peoples of India' the following be substituted:  
'composed of elected members of the Assembly and the Council of State with a Judge of the Federal Court as Chairman'."

I do not think the House will find any difficulty in following the amendments;

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** I accept Mr. Essak Sait's amendment.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I do not know what the Honourable Member means by accepting. It is for the House to accept or reject.

I shall now put to the vote Mr. Deshmukh's amendment first, the question is:

"That in the proposed amendment by Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait and others to Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan's amendment for all the words beginning with the words 'composed of' and ending with the words 'peoples of India' the following be substituted:  
'composed of elected members of the Assembly and the Council of State with a Judge of the Federal Court as Chairman'."

The motion was negatived.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I shall now put Mr. Essak Sait's amendment to the vote; the question is:

"That in the amendment moved by Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan after the words 'Royal Commission' the following be inserted:  
'composed of independent and impartial persons, majority of whom shall be Indians commanding the confidence of the peoples of India'."

The motion was adopted.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Now I put the main amendment of Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan to the vote as amended; the question is:

"That to the motion the following be added at the end:

'and having taken into consideration this Assembly views with grave concern the tragic situation prevailing in Bengal and recommends to the Governor General in Council to adopt immediately more vigorous and effective measures to cope with the famine in Bengal and to afford adequate relief to the other distress parts of the country.'

This Assembly further recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps for the appointment of a Royal Commission composed of independent and impartial persons, majority of whom shall be Indians commanding the confidence of the peoples of India to enquire into and report *inter alia* on the following points relating to the continued prevalence of famine conditions in Bengal and the unprecedented death-rate resulting therefrom:

- (a) the cause of the present distress;
- (b) the degree of effectiveness of the steps taken to prevent or remedy the situation from time to time;

- (c) the suitability of the administrative organization in charge of famine operations;
- (d) the adequacy or otherwise of the relief measures adopted by Government;
- (e) the accuracy or otherwise of mortality statistics and effect of the present famine on mortality rates;
- (f) the steps to be taken to counteract or mitigate the effects of starvation and malnutrition upon the younger generation; and
- (g) the measures to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the present trouble in any part of India."

The Assembly divided:

AYES—26.

Abdul Ghani, Maulvi Muhammad.  
 Abdullau, Mr. H. M.  
 Ahsan, Mr. Muhammad.  
 Azhar Ali, Mr. Muhammad.  
 Choudhury, Mr. Abdur Rasheed.  
 Choudhury, Mr. Muhammad Hussain.  
 Essak Sait, Mr. H. A. Sathar H.  
 Fazli-Haq Piracha, Khan Bahadur Shaikh.  
 Habibar Rahman, Dr.  
 Ismail Khan, Hajee Chowdhury Muhammad.  
 Jinnah, Mr. M. A.  
 Joshi, Mr. N. M.

Laljee, Mr. Hooseinbhoj A.  
 Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawabzada Muhammad.  
 Murtuza Sahib Bahadur, Maulvi Syed.  
 Nairang, Syed Ghulam Bhik.  
 Nauman, Mr. Muhammad.  
 Pjare Lal Kureel, Mr.  
 Raza Ali, Sir Syed.  
 Siddique Ali Khan, Nawab.  
 Siddiquee, Shaikh Rafiuddin Ahmad.  
 Siva Raj, Rao Bahadur N.  
 Umar Aly Shah, Mr.  
 Yamin Khan, Sir Muhammad.  
 Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana.  
 Zia Uddin Ahmad, Dr. Sir.

NOES—41.

Abhyankar, Mr. N. G.  
 Ahmad Nawaz Khan, Major Nawab Sir.  
 Ambedkar, The Honourable Dr. B. R.  
 Anthony, Mr. Frank R.  
 Azizul Huque, The Honourable Sir M.  
 Benthall, The Honourable Sir Edward.  
 Bewoor, Sir Gurunath.  
 Chapman-Mortimer, Mr. T.  
 Daga, Seth Sunder Lall.  
 Dalal, Dr. Sir Ratanji Dinshaw.  
 Dalpat Singh, Sardar Bahadur Captain.  
 Greenfield, Mr. H.  
 Griffiths, Mr. P. J.  
 Gwilt, Mr. E. L. C.  
 Habibur-Rahman, Khan Bahadur Sheikh.  
 Haider, Khan Bahadur Shamsuddin.  
 Hutchings, Mr. R. H.  
 Imam, Mr. Saiyid Haider.  
 Jsmatel Alikhan, Kunwer Hajee.  
 James, Sir F. E.  
 Jawahar Singh, Sardar Bahadur Sardar Sir.

Kamaluddin Ahmad, Shams-ul-Ulema.  
 Khare, The Honourable Dr. N. B.  
 Lawson, Mr. C. P.  
 Maxwell, The Honourable Sir Reginald.  
 Miller, Mr. C. C.  
 Muazzam Sahib Bahadur, Mr. Muhammad.  
 Mudaliar, The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami.  
 Raisman, The Honourable Sir Jeremy.  
 Richardson, Sir Henry.  
 Roy, The Honourable Sir Asoka.  
 Spear, Dr. T. G. P.  
 Spence, Sir George.  
 Srivastava, The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad.  
 Stokes, Mr. H. G.  
 Sukthankar, Mr. Y. N.  
 Sultan Ahmed, The Honourable Sir.  
 Thakur Singh, Major.  
 Trivedi, Mr. C. M.  
 Tyson, Mr. J. D.  
 Wakely, Mr. L. J. D.

The motion was negatived

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next amendment is that of Mr. Neogy; the question is:

"That to the motion the following be added at the end:

and having taken it into consideration this Assembly views with grave concern the tragic situation prevailing in Bengal and recommends to the Governor General in Council to adopt immediately more vigorous and effective measures to cope with the famine in Bengal and so afford adequate relief to the other distressed parts of the country; and this Assembly further recommends to the Governor General in Council that steps be taken for the appointment of a Committee, consisting of eminent economists and experienced judges and administrators and an Accountant General, under the chairmanship of a lawyer who has held high judicial office in India, to enquire into and report on the following points relating to the continued prevalence of famine conditions in Bengal and the unprecedented death rate resulting therefrom:

- (a) the causes of the present distress;
- (b) the degree of effectiveness of the steps taken to prevent or remedy the situation with particular reference to the systems of procurement, transport and distribution of foodgrains, as well as price control, that have been in operation from time to time;
- (c) the suitability of the administrative organisation in charge of famine operations;
- (d) the adequacy or otherwise of the relief measures adopted by Government, specially in the light of experience of the management of previous famines in India and the actual results achieved so far in Bengal;
- (e) the accuracy or otherwise of mortality statistics and the effect of the present famine on mortality rates;

☞ [Mr. President.]

(f) the steps to be taken to counteract or mitigate the effects of starvation and malnutrition upon the younger generation; and

(g) the measures to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the present trouble in any part of India."

(While the Division Bells were ringing)

**Mr. Abdul Qaiyum:** May I say something, Sir? I ask your permission.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I cannot allow any statement now. The debate has been closed; the division is going on.

(The Division was not pressed.)

The motion was negatived.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next amendment is that of Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta; namely:

"That to the motion the following be added at the end:

'and having done so this Assembly views with grave concern the tragic situation prevailing in Bengal and other parts of India and recommends to the Governor General in Council to adopt immediately more vigorous and effective measures to cope with the situation including the stoppage of further inflation of currency. This Assembly further recommends to the Governor General in Council that a Committee consisting of fourteen with eight elected members of the Assembly, four elected members of the Council of State and one Accountant General with the Chief Justice of the Federal Court as Chairman be appointed to enquire into and report on the following points relating to the economic distress prevailing in the country—

(a) the causes of the present distress;

(b) the degree of effectiveness of the steps taken to prevent or remedy the situation with particular reference to the systems of procurement, transport and distribution of foodgrains, as well as price control, that have been in operation from time to time;

(c) the suitability of the administrative organisation in charge of famine operations;

(d) the adequacy or otherwise of the relief measures adopted by Government, specially in the light of experience of the management of previous famines in India and the actual results achieved so far in Bengal;

(e) the accuracy or otherwise of mortality statistics and the effect of the present distress on mortality rates;

(f) the steps to be taken to counteract or mitigate the effects of starvation and malnutrition upon the younger generation; and

(g) the measures to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the present trouble in any part of India."

There is an amendment to that by Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh; the question is:

"That in the amendment by Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta for the words 'younger generation' occurring in clause (f) the word 'people' be substituted."

The motion was adopted.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I now put Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta's amendment as amended. The question is:

"That to the motion the following be added at the end:

'and having done so this Assembly views with grave concern the tragic situation prevailing in Bengal and other parts of India and recommends to the Governor General in Council to adopt immediately more vigorous and effective measures to cope with the situation including the stoppage of further inflation of currency. This Assembly further recommends to the Governor General in Council that a Committee consisting of fourteen with eight elected members of the Assembly, four elected members of the Council of State and one Accountant General with the Chief Justice of the Federal Court as Chairman be appointed to enquire into and report on the following points relating to the economic distress prevailing in the country—

(a) the causes of the present distress;

(b) the degree of effectiveness of the steps taken to prevent or remedy the situation with particular reference to the systems of procurement, transport and distribution of foodgrains, as well as price control, that have been in operation from time to time;

(c) the suitability of the administrative organisation in charge of famine operations;

(d) the adequacy or otherwise of the relief measures adopted by Government, specially in the light of experience of the management of previous famines in India and the actual results achieved so far in Bengal;

(e) the accuracy or otherwise of mortality statistics and the effect of the present distress on mortality rates;

(f) the steps to be taken to counteract or mitigate the effects of starvation and malnutrition upon the people; and

(g) the measures to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the present trouble in any part of India."

The Assembly divided:

AYES—5.

Das, Mr. Ananga Mohan.  
Das, Pandit Nilakantha.  
Joshi, Mr. N. M.

Mehta, Mr. Jamnadas M.  
Sant Singh, Sardar.

## NOES—41.

Abhyankar, Mr. N. G.  
 Ahmad Nawad Khan, Major Nawab Sir.  
 Ambedkar, The Honourable Dr. B. R.  
 Anthony, Mr. Frank R.  
 Azizul Huque, The Honourable Sir M.  
 Benthall, The Honourable Sir Edward.  
 Bewoor, Sir Gurunath.  
 Chapman-Mortimer, Mr. T.  
 Daga, Seth Sunder Lall.  
 Dalal, Dr. Sir Ratanji Dinshaw.  
 Dalpat Singh, Sardar Bahadur Captain.  
 Greenfield, Mr. H.  
 Griffiths, Mr. P. J.  
 Gwilt, Mr. E. L. C.  
 Habibur-Rahman, Khan Bahadur Sheikh.  
 Haider, Khan Bahadur Shamsuddin.  
 Hutchings, Mr. R. H.  
 Imam, Mr. Saiyid Haider.  
 Ismaiel Alikhan, Kunwer Hajee.  
 James, Sir F. E.  
 Jawahar Singh, Sardar Bahadur Sardar Sir.

Kamaluddin Ahmad, Shams-ul-Ulama.  
 Khare, The Honourable Dr. N. B.  
 Lawson, Mr. C. P.  
 Maxwell, The Honourable Sir Reginald.  
 Miller, Mr. C. C.  
 Muazzam Sahib Bahadur, Mr. Muhammad.  
 Mudaliar, The Honourable Dewan Bahadur  
 Sir A. Ramaswami.  
 Raiqman, The Honourable Sir Jeremy.  
 Richardson, Sir Henry.  
 Roy, The Honourable Sir Asoka.  
 Spear, Dr. T. G. P.  
 Spence, Sir George.  
 Srivastava, The Honourable Sir Jwala  
 Prasad.  
 Stokes, Mr. H. G.  
 Sukthakar, Mr. Y. N.  
 Sultan Ahmed, The Honourable Sir.  
 Thakur Singh, Major.  
 Trivedi, Mr. C. M.  
 Tyson, Mr. J. D.  
 Wakely, Mr. L. J. D.

The motion was negatived.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next amendment is that of Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall. The question is:

"That to the motion the following be added at the end:  
 'and having considered the appalling condition prevailing all over the country this Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a Committee consisting of the officials and non-officials to enquire into the matter with a view to suggest measures for guarding against the recurrence of such catastrophe in future and also with a view to the possibility of affording immediate and effective relief to the suffering people by adopting the following remedial measures:

- (a) opening of free gruel kitchens in the worst affected parts;
- (b) opening of public orphanages;
- (c) opening of poor houses and industrial factories attached thereto in important towns and stopping beggary;
- (d) assuming of control over the public hotels meant for the proletariat class and regulating and fixing reasonable rates thereof;
- (e) centralising the control of poor houses and industrial factories attached thereto and financing them from government money and funds from public charity; and
- (f) controlling all public and charitable funds and authorising only responsible bodies to collect funds for the purpose."

The motion was negatived.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next amendment is that of Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury** (Assam: Muhammadan): Sir, I do not want to press my amendment\*.

The amendment was, by leave of the Assembly, withdrawn.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, the 19th November, 1943.

---

\*"That to the motion the following be added at the end:  
 'with a view to set up a Committee of Enquiry of Central Legislature with elected majority to enquire and report on the breakdown of His Majesty's Government in India inasmuch as the Government of India and the Provincial Governments lost their foresight, sense of responsibility and sense of primary duty to protect human life and failed to handle food situation properly with the result that thousands have already perished for want of food and thousands are still dying for want of food in different parts of the country and specially in Bengal'."