

12th November 1943

# THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

## Official Report

---

Volume IV, 1943

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

---

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



*DY 2007.*  
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>			
Members Sworn	1	lection of Members to the Standing Committee for the Food Department	190—95
Starred Questions and Answers	1—22	Election of a Member to the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	195—96
Unstarred Question and Answer	22	Motion <i>re</i> the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded	196—224
Statements laid on the Table	22—26		
Message from His Excellency the Governor General	26	<b>SATURDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
Statement <i>re</i> method of taking votes by division	26—27	Starred Questions and Answers	225—48
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> Non-official Delegation to Great Britain and United States of America to speak on India's War Effort—Adopted	27—28	Unstarred Questions and Answers	248—49
H. E. the Governor General's Assent to Bills	28	Motions for Adjournment <i>re</i> —	
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succession)—Petitions laid on the Table	29	Arrest of Mr. Pardiwalla, Barrister of Lahore—Ruled out of Order	250
Amendments to the British Baluchistan Motor Vehicles Rules	29	Alleged inhuman Treatment to Mr. Jalprakash Narain—Ruled out of Order	250—51
The Hindu Code Part I, (Intestate Succession)—Presentation of the Report of the Joint Committee	30	The Victoria Memorial (Amendment) Bill—Passed	251—52
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee	30	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Second Amendment) Bill—Passed	252
The Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill—Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee	30	The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill—Circulated	252—78
The Indian Tea Control (Second Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	The Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Passed as amended	278
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Second Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill (Amendment of section 503, etc.)—Passed as amended	278—79
The Victoria Memorial (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	<b>MONDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER 1943—</b>	
The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	Member sworn	281
The Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	31	Starred Questions and Answers	281—96
Election of Members to the Delhi University Court	31	Unstarred Question and Answer	297
<b>TUESDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		Declarations of Exemption and Notification under the Registration of Foreigners Act	297—99
Member Sworn	47	Motion <i>re</i> The Food Situation—not concluded	299—343
Starred Questions and Answers	47—80		
Unstarred Questions and Answers	80—82	<b>TUESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
Motions for Adjournment <i>re</i> —		Member sworn	345
Banning Publication of Bengal Governor's Order against the <i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> —Ruled out of Order	83—84	Starred Questions and Answers	345—58
Failure to give Publicity to Mortality due to Starvation in Bengal—Not moved	84	Unstarred Questions and Answers	358—59
Failure to take Timely Action for preventing Acute Food Crisis in Bengal—Disallowed	84	Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> Failure to implement their Guarantee of Independence to Lebanon by the British Government—Ruled out of Order	359
Failure to consult the Legislature <i>re</i> Agreement for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration—Ruled out of Order	84—85	Reconstitution of the House Committee	359
Hunger-strike of Political Prisoners in Bhopalpoore Camp Jail—Ruled out of Order	86	Motion <i>re</i> the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded	359—401
Continuance of Central Government's Subsidy to Sind—Ruled out of Order	86	Statement of Business	401
Nomination of the Panel of Chairmen	86—87	<b>WEDNESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
Resolution <i>re</i> Stabilization of Prices—Adopted as amended	87—105	Member Sworn	403
Statement of Business	105—06	Starred Questions and Answers	403—38
<b>WEDNESDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		Unstarred Questions and Answers	438—40
Starred Questions and Answers	107—37	Point of Order <i>re</i> Motion proposing communication of formal address to H. E. the Governor General	440—41
Unstarred Questions and Answers	138—39	Election of Members to the Delhi University Court	441
Committee on Petitions	139	Statements laid on the Table	441—42
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succession)—Petitions laid on the Table	139	The Indian Tea Control (Second Amendment) Bill—Passed	442—43
The Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill—(Amendment of section 100)—Motion to continue adopted	140	The Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—Passed	443—44
The Disolution of Muslim Marriages (Amendment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140	The Central Excise Bill—Referred to Select Committee	444—45
The Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment) Bill—(Insertion of section 12B)—Motion to continue adopted	140	The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succession)—Circulated	445—46
The Muslim Kazis Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140	Motion <i>re</i> the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded	446—73
The Indian Evidence (Amendment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140		
The Indian Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill—Referred to Select Committee	140—43	<b>THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>	
The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Bill—Motion to refer to Select Committee—Withdrawn	143—65	Starred Questions and Answers	475—93
		Unstarred Questions and Answers	493—94
<b>THURSDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 1943—</b>		Motions for Adjournment <i>re</i> —	
Starred Questions and Answers	167—83	Conviction of Mr. P. E. Pathur under the 'Pegging Act in Durban—Ruled out of Order	494
Unstarred Questions and Answers	183—89	Ill-treatment meted out to Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni and other Muslim Security Prisoners—Ruled out of Order	495
Election of Members to the Delhi University Court	189	Election of Members to the Standing Committee for the Food Department	495
The Central Excise Bill—Introduced	190	Election of a Member to the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	495
		Motion <i>re</i> Food Situation—Discussion concluded	495—541
		<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 <i>re</i> Recruitment of Scheduled Castes to the Key Service of the Army—Adopted	564—79
		Resolution <i>re</i> Reform of the Cantonment Service—Withdrawn	579—88

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday, 12th 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.

**MISBEHAVIOUR OF MILITARY TROOPS TOWARDS RAILWAY STAFF AND VENDORS:**  
**98. \*Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:-

(a) whether any instances of misbehaviour by the military troops towards the Railway staff and vendors, while travelling in special or ordinary trains, have been brought to the notice of Government;

(b) if the Honourable Member proposes to lay on the table a statement of incidents referred to in part (a) above which occurred on the various Class I Railways in India from the 1st January to the 31st August, 1943;

(c) if the Honourable Member is aware that on the 12th August last some military people severely beat a vendor at Pad Idan Station on the North Western Railway and threw away the foodstuffs at the stalls and with the hawkers on the platform;

(d) what action was taken by the Railway police or the Railway staff against the military personnel concerned; if none, why;

(e) if Government have imposed any restriction on the arrest of the military personnel for misbehaviour in the Railway premises and for offending the law of the land; if not, why the police and the Railway staff did not take action against the military personnel on the spot; and

(f) if the reply to part (c) be in the affirmative, what steps Government propose to take to prevent the misbehaviour by the military personnel while travelling by rail; if none, why?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Yes.

(b) A statement of incidents brought to notice is laid on the table.

(c) I understand no such incident occurred at the station on the date mentioned.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative. In view of the reply to part (c), the second portion does not arise.

(f) Does not arise.

### *Statement of incidents reported to G. H. Q. regarding the misbehaviour of troops at Railway stations.*

1. An incident occurred on 23rd June 1943 at Manmad where the train was detained for 43 minutes due to a B. O. R. removing a case of liquor from the platform into his compartment. Efforts to apprehend him led to the Assistant Station Master being assaulted by another B. O. R. The culprits were detained and sent under escort to Deolali and then on to their unit at Ahmednagar. Necessary disciplinary action in the matter has been taken by the O. C. Unit.

2. An incident on 21st July, 1943 near Sealdah Station where 30 I. O. Rs. of an Auxiliary Pioneer Coy. were involved in a disturbance with civilians resulting in one I. O. R. being admitted to hospital. The situation was, however, brought under control in a very short time. The matter was reported direct to the O. C. unit for suitable disciplinary action to be taken against the offenders.

3. A report was received from the Divisional Traffic Manager, G. I. P. Railway, Sholapur to the effect that 16 B. O. Rs. holding a third class soldiers ticket issued on 27th February 1943 ex-Madras to Bombay were detected at Wadi travelling in a 1st class compartment. It is alleged that they refused to travel III class stating that the Station Master, Raichur accommodated them in the 1st class compartment. The Station Master, however, denies having made this statement. Accordingly, a claim for excess charges of fares from Raichur to Wadi were submitted by the Manager.

On receipt of this complaint, enquiries were instituted regarding the whereabouts of these B. O. Rs. and it was ascertained that they have, with one exception, all embarked for the U. K. A copy of the correspondence was therefore, forwarded to the War Office for such action as they consider desirable. All efforts to locate the one remaining B. O. R. have failed and the case has reluctantly had to be considered as closed.



4. A report received from the O. C. 70 Ordnance Mobile Workshop Company, Colombo stated that on 17th March 1943, at Dhanushkodi, an I. O. R. created a disturbance by pulling the alarm signal chain, assaulting passengers, railway staff and the Railway police. The matter was investigated and the accused was found guilty but was said to be of unsound mind at the time he committed these offences. He was transferred to the Indian General Hospital at Bangalore and it was certified that he was temporarily insane at the time of the incident. The question of taking disciplinary action did not, therefore arise.

5. It was reported by the military authorities at Bombay that on 2nd June 1943 a V. C. O. Cadet was involved in a fracas with Railway officials on Dadar Station and that he sustained slight injuries. The matter was fully investigated and was established as trivial. No disciplinary action was considered necessary.

6. A petition was received from a Mr. P. A. Reddi, Book Stall Agent, Vizianagram stating that on 30th March, 1943 some soldiers rushed his bookstall and stole a number of books costing Rs. 21-2-0 and requesting that this amount be refunded. The petition was passed to the appropriate military authority. (H. Q. Southern Army) for direct disposal and the petitioner informed that all correspondence on the subject be addressed direct to that authority.

7. It was reported by the military authorities at Poona that on 1st May 1943 a B. O. R. assaulted the station master and an I. O. R. and threatened them with a dagger. It transpired that this B. O. R. was under observation as a mental case and was being sent to the Mental Hospital, Poona. It was later reported that the case had been explained to the Station Master and the I. O. R. and that they were both satisfied.

8. It was reported that on 7th April 1943 on arrival of the Peshawar Express at Khandwa trouble occurred between I. O. Rs. on the train and the Indian Refreshment Room staff from whom the soldiers were alleged to have obtained food without payment. This resulted in a fracas in which about 30 I. O. Rs. the Railway police and civilians were involved and one I. O. R. was injured and another arrested by the civil police. The personnel concerned are being tried by court-martial.

9. It was reported by the Government of Madras that on 19th March, 1943 a clash occurred at Mailpatti Railway station, North Arcot District between personnel of the 28th Travancore Labour Unit and certain vendors. The labourers are alleged to have bought bottles of aerated water and neither paid for the drinks nor returned the empty bottles. This led to a quarrel which spread to the vendors shops outside the station and also to a nearby village. The case was investigated by the local District Magistrate on whose recommendations the matter was settled by the payment of Rs. 260 as compensation for the damage done.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** The Honourable Member says that the incident did not take place on that date. Has the Honourable Member enquired whether it took place at all at about that time?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The Honourable Member has asked a specific question. I made enquiries from the Railway and the reply of the Railway was that the incident did not take place on the date mentioned by the Honourable Member.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** If it did not occur on that particular date he might have made enquiries about that time?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** No such incident has been reported.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** May I know from the Honourable Member, if the military people do not observe the ordinary rules, and do not obey the station masters? Whether is there any authority which can compel them to obey the station masters?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** That question has to be addressed to the appropriate department.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** May I know if the Honourable Member has enquired if there is a sufficient number of military police present at the time when the train arrives at the station, to see that no such incidents occur?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** That question should also be addressed to the War Department.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Will the Honourable Member now make enquiries if any such incident took place in July and August?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I will make further enquiries, Sir.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** May I know if the railway police is present at the time when the train arrives at the station carrying army people, and whether the railway police is present in sufficient numbers on the railway platform?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** That, Sir, is rather a wide question in its application to the circumstances which exist in India.

**Mr. G. Banglah Naidu:** Will the Honourable Member be pleased to state whether he has received any complaints either from the general public or from the railway authorities against the military people who hold third class warrants and travel in higher classes causing inconvenience and giving trouble to the ordinary passengers?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** From time to time complaints have arisen and they are taken up with the War Department. I have observed that instructions have frequently been issued by the military authorities in connection with these difficult questions.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** Is the Honourable Member aware that Government contributes towards the expenses of the police which are maintained at the railway stations, and if he is, will he state whether he takes precautions to see that the requisite number of railway police are present at stations when the trains arrive?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The answer to that question is the same as to the Honourable Member's previous question. There are a very large number of stations but there are a limited number of police, and when a single policeman has to deal with a large number of passengers including military passengers, it is sometimes beyond his capacity to deal with the situation.

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

#### INTERVIEW OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT CONTROLLER OF PURCHASE.

**99. \*Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya:** (a) Will the Honourable the Supply Member be pleased to state if applicants or candidates for the post of the Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase were interviewed last June and some of them were declared to have been accepted for appointments? If so, is it a fact that they have not been called to join even now after four months?

(b) Who arranged the interview in June, and who were responsible for creating this position? How many Assistant Controllers of Purchase and Deputy Assistant Controllers of Purchase have been appointed during the intervening months, i.e., between the 30th June and the 30th October? If there was no necessity for Deputy Assistant Controllers of Purchase, why were such interviews held?

**Sir Gurunath Bewoor:** Sir, the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar has been called to an urgent meeting and he has asked me to answer his question.

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

**Sir Gurunath Bewoor:** (a) The Selection Committee attached to the Main Secretariat of the Department of Supply interviewed some candidates for the posts of Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase and Apprentice Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase on the 26th June, 1943. Certain candidates had been tentatively selected some time earlier. The qualifications of these candidates along with those interviewed on the 26th June, 1943, were reviewed together and 5 candidates for Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase and 9 candidates for the post of Apprentice Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase were placed on the approved list on the 28th July, 1943. Of the candidates interviewed on the 26th June, 1943, two have since been appointed as Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase and one Muslim Apprentice candidate has been offered the post out of turn to make up a communal deficiency.

(b) The interview held on the 26th June, 1943, was arranged by the Officer on Special Duty (Recruitment), Delhi, in the usual way. No candidate for the post of Assistant Controller of Purchase was selected at the June meeting. Between the 30th June and 30th October, 6 approved candidates for the post of Assistant Controller of Purchase and 12 approved candidates for the post of Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase were appointed to vacant posts. Apart from these 12 Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase candidates, 2 Superintendents were promoted to fill up local temporary vacancies.

Candidates for various posts are selected and placed on the approved list from time to time to meet expected requirements. In a temporary War Organization like the Purchase Branch of the Department of Supply, vacancies

do not occur at regular intervals. At present the number of candidates on the approved list is as follows:—

Assistant Controller of Purchase—3.

Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase—4.

Apprentice Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase—17.

Superintendents—17.

Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase candidates are appointed direct to long term vacancies. Apprentice candidates are to be put under training for six months against reserve posts, and their appointment to long term vacancies will depend on their record during the period of training. Superintendents are to be promoted, without regard for seniority, against purely temporary local vacancies. If after officiating on two or three occasions for a total period of about six months, certain Superintendents are found fit for substantive promotion to Deputy Assistant Controller of Purchase their claims will be considered along with those of Apprentice candidates who have completed their period of training. The number of candidates on the approved list is not excessive.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Long answers like this ought to be laid on the table.

#### RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN PROMOTIONS TO SELECTION GRADE ON EAST INDIAN RAILWAY.

**100. \*Qari Muhammad Ahmad Karmi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state if it is or it is not a fact that racial discrimination is still maintained by the East Indian Railway in the matter of promotion of staff to the selection grade, and that Europeans and Anglo-Indians are being promoted to the selection grades in contravention of the policies laid down by the General Manager in his Minute Sheet No. AE 2460/3, dated the 30th August, 1940, and by the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Minute Sheet No. ME 86/37, dated the 1st November, 1937, thereby blocking the promotion of Indians?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that according to the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Minute Sheet No. ME 86/37, of the 1st November, 1937, the Shops have been divided into distinct groups and the normal avenue of promotions will be in the groups in which the staff are shown in the Combined Seniority List?

(c) Is it or is it not a fact that a selection was held in April last to fill the post of Progress and Planning Superintendent in the Production Group in the Alambagh Shops of the East Indian Railway?

(d) Is it or is it not a fact that two Chargemen in the grades of Rs. 270—20—330 (old) and Rs. 200 (new) and one Chargeman in the grade of Rs. 110/150—20—250 (old) and Rs. 100/120—10—180 (new) from the Production Group and one Anglo-Indian from the Draftsman Group who was holding Rs. 250—12—310 (old) and Rs. 200 (new) were called for interview?

(e) Is it or is it not a fact that in the selection mentioned in (c) above, none of the candidates was considered suitable? If so, was any endeavour made to select any other candidate from the Production Group? If not, why not?

(f) Is it or is it not a fact that the Chief Mechanical Engineer, East Indian Railway, selected one Assistant Foreman from the Blacksmith Shop Group for the post of Progress and Planning Superintendent, East Indian Railway Workshop, Alambagh, on his visit to Lucknow in April last? If so, what are the reasons for selecting him for the post of Progress and Planning Superintendent in preference to others of the Production Group?

(g) Is it or is it not a fact that as per General Manager, East Indian Railway circular number M.S. AE2460/3 of the 1st August, 1940, every individual of a particular class should be called for interview for selection posts provided there is nothing against him in his service record?

(h) Is it or is it not a fact that one Anglo Indian who was in the Jig and Tool Drawing Office Group in the Combined Seniority List of the Subordinate Supervising staff and draftsmen of the Mechanical Department since the compilation of the same, has now been placed in the Production Group as Planning Supervisor? If so, was any endeavour made to select any one from the Production Group? If so, how? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) No.

(b), (c) and (d). Yes.

(e) The answer to the first part is in the affirmative. The Selection Board considered the claims of other men in the Production Group but found itself unable to recommend any of them.

(f) The answer to the first part is in the negative. The selection of the person referred to was made by the Selection Board. The second part does not arise.

(g) I cannot trace any circular bearing the number quoted issued on 1st August, 1940, but one was issued on 30th August, 1940, in which it was specifically provided that it was not necessary to call everyone in the group for interview if the Selection Board were satisfied from the records that the persons not so called did not possess the qualifications required for the posts in question.

(h) The reply to the first part is in the negative; the other parts do not arise.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** With reference to the answer to part (h) of the question may I know if this gentleman who was promoted belonged to the production group or to the Jig and Tool Drawing Office?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I think he belonged to the Jig and Tool Drawing Office group and was promoted to the post on three months probation, after which he asked to be relieved and another officer was appointed, also on trial.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** The other officer who was appointed, does he belong to the production group or some other group?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I think, Sir, that he belonged to the production group, but I should require notice of that question.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** So far as part (d) of the question is concerned, will the Honourable Member state how many other persons from the production group were called for interview?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I am afraid I shall require notice of that question.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** In reply to part (e) the Honourable Member said that this is not correct that only two persons were invited. Has he collected any information regarding persons who were asked to have interviews in respect of this post—other persons than those who are mentioned here?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** My information is that all the possible choices were considered, but the other possible choices were considered to be too junior and inexperienced for selection.

#### SCALES OF PAY APPLIED TO PERSONS ENTERING RAILWAY SERVICE AS A RESULT OF COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION.

101. **\*Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state if a clause has been provided in the new scales of pay for granting an exemption from its imposition to the persons, who entered service as a result of competitive examination or a selection board or committee held before the 16th July, 1931, provided they were not informed before or at the time of the examination that the rates of pay of the services or posts for which they were candidates were under revision?

(b) Has it also been provided by the Government of India that the period of apprenticeship served by their employees is to be counted for reckoning the scale of pay (old or new) on which such apprentice is to be employed on completion of apprenticeship?

(c) If the answers to (a) and (b) are in the affirmative, is the provision for the exemption of persons in the new scales of pay referred to in (a) above, also applicable to persons who:—

(i) merited the appointment as an apprentice on the result of the competitive examination or selection board held prior to the 16th July, 1931, but were called upon to join on a date shortly after the 16th July, 1931; and

(ii) appeared in the competitive examination or selection board held prior to the 16th July, 1931, and were subsequently called upon to join on a date shortly after the 16th July, 1931, to fill in the vacancy caused for the reason

that persons who were originally selected either did not join or had resigned, or were removed from service, or for any other reason?

(d) If the answer to (c) above is in the negative, what are the reasons for formulating such a decision?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Yes.

(b) The orders in this connection state that a person who was employed as a paid apprentice on 15th July, 1931, should be considered as having been in Government service on that date for the purposes of the Finance Department Resolution No. D/4523-Ex. 1/31, dated the 9th July, 1931.

(c), (i) and (ii). Government have not considered the question of the application of their orders to persons in the position described by the Honourable Member as no such case has been referred to them.

(d) Does not arise.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** If I may send some cases of the type I have referred to in this question, will the Honourable Member be pleased to take action?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Certainly, Sir. I will make enquiries.  
**PROMOTION TO SELECTION GRADE OF NON-TECHNICAL HANDS ON EAST INDIAN RAILWAY (MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT).**

102. \***Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state if it is or it is not a fact that in the Mechanical Department, East Indian Railway, Alambagh, promotions to the selection grade of the non-technical hands has not been made in accordance with the procedure laid down by the General Manager, and that junior hands were promoted to higher grades, ignoring the claims of many seniors?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that a junior hand has been promoted on the 23rd September 1943 as Yard Master in the grade of Rs. 90—20—250, in the Mechanical Department, East Indian Railway, Alambagh, ignoring the claims of many seniors and without holding any selection board? If so, why?

(c) Is it or is it not a fact that one junior mistry of the Millwright Shop (who has been recently confirmed as mistry) has been promoted in succession vacancy of the employee referred to in (b) above, in the Production Section, ignoring the claims of many seniors and without holding any selection board? If so, why?

(d) Are Government aware that the Chief Mechanical Engineer, East Indian Railway, in his Minute Sheet No. ME967/20A of the 7th May, 1936, informed the Works Manager (Carriage and Wagons), Alambagh, Lucknow, that all the posts in the Production Section were to be filled by the technically trained hands? If so, what are the reasons for promoting the non-technical hand in the Production Section, and ignoring the claims of the seniors of the person referred to in the Production Section as mentioned in (c) above?

(e) Are Government prepared to take action in the matter? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I have called for information and a reply will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

**LACK OF UNIFORMITY IN GRANTING OVERTIME AND NIGHT SHIFT ALLOWANCES ON EAST INDIAN RAILWAY (MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT).**

103. \***Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state if it is or is it not a fact that some supervisors of the Mechanical Department, East Indian Railway, Lillooah, are allowed one day's overtime if they work for five hours on Sundays and holidays, but this privilege is not given in other workshops, such as Charbagh and Alambagh, although all the Workshops are under the one and the same Head?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that the Night Shift Allowance is given to the staff employed in the Mechanical Department, East Indian Railway, Jamalpore, whereas this privilege is not allowed in other Workshops of the same Railway, such as Charbagh and Alambagh, which are under the one and the same Head?

(c) If the answers to parts (a) and (b) above, be in the affirmative, what are the reasons for such differential treatment? Are Government prepared to extend the same privileges to Charbagh and Alambagh Workshops,

and to issue orders to the General Manager, East Indian Railway, to this effect? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) and (b). Yes.

(c) The practice in each workshop has grown up with the shop and is of long standing. To examine all the conditions of service in these workshops would require a considerable investigation which is not practicable under existing circumstances.

**Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi:** May I know the exact reasons for these differences in the various places?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The principal reason is that originally the O. and R. Railway was a different institution from the E. I. Railway, and these differences to a large extent continue once from times prior to the amalgamation of the railways.

#### SINDHIS AS ASSISTANT DIRECTORS, ETC. IN THE SIND AND BALUCHISTAN POSTAL CIRCLES.

**104. \*Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** With reference to the reply to part (a) of my unstarred question No. 83, asked on the 29th March, 1943, regarding the residential province particulars of the six Superintendents employed in the Sind and Baluchistan Circle, will the Secretary for Posts and Air please name the persons who are said to be the residents of Sind? Are they originally Sindhis, or have they migrated to Sind? If so, since when?

**Sir Gurunath Bewoor:** The officers referred to are Messrs. Ibrahim Ali Khan and Brij Lal Mehra. They were not originally Sindhis but have acquired right of Sind domicile under the Provincial Government's rules. The exact dates of their migration to Sind are not known but they have been continuously in service in the Sind and Baluchistan Postal Circle since its formation in 1924.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** May I know from the Honourable Member if these are only temporary superintendents? These two are only acting?

**Sir Gurunath Bewoor:** Yes, Sir, they are acting.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** May I know if there are six permanent Superintendents and all belong to the Punjab or the U. P. or the other provinces?

**Sir Gurunath Bewoor:** The Honourable Member has referred to an answer given to him last time by me and at that time, I stated that there are in Sind six Superintendents of Post Offices including Assistant Directors and that one of them is a European, one is a resident of the Delhi Province, two are residents of the Punjab and two are residents of Sind.

#### PAUCITY OF MUSLIM HEAD CLERKS OR OFFICE SUPERINTENDENTS IN THE OFFICES OF BENGAL NAGPUR RAILWAY.

**105. \*Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state if it is a fact that there is not a single Muslim Head Clerk or Office Superintendent in the offices of the Bengal Nagpur Railway?

(b) Is it a fact that Muslims are rarely promoted to the higher grades, and whenever a Muslim candidate approaches he is refused on the ground of "inefficiency" though there is nothing to prove inefficiency in the service record?

(c) Is it a fact that in the different grades of the Upper Subordinates and clerical staff working under the Deputy Controller of Stores, Bengal Nagpur Railway, Kharagpur, there are only 20 Muslims, whereas there are 340 Hindus, 21 Indian Christians, 5 Anglo-Indians and 16 Europeans?

(d) Why are not Muslim candidates promoted or recruited in the above category of posts in due proportion of percentages given to other communities?

(e) Is it a fact that 99 per cent. of the Muslim employees volunteered their services for the Defence of India Units, and in spite of that claims of the Muslim candidates were ignored for promotion?

(f) Does the Honourable Member propose to look into the matter of the promotion of candidates of the Muslim community in future?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) to (e). I regret I have no information on these matters of detail concerning a Company-managed Railway.

(f) Government do not interfere in such matters in respect of Company-managed Railways but I shall send the question and answer to the Railway Administration.

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** May I know whether the percentage of Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans taken together is greater than the percentage of Mussalmans in this country?

**Maulvi Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** May I know what is the reason why the Muslims are not promoted in proportion to their number?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** So far as I am aware, the railway in question has gone a very long way to fulfil the Government's request in this respect.

**DISCHARGE OF MR. HALDER, OFFICIATING CHIEF CHEMIST AT KANCHRAPARA RAILWAY WORKSHOP.**

**106. \*Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) why the officiating Chief Chemist, Mr. Halder of the Kanchrapara Railway Workshop, was discharged on 24 hours' notice;

(b) whether it is a fact that Mr. Halder was refused an interview by the Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer when he wanted to know the reason for his discharge;

(c) whether it is a fact that Mr. Halder was denied even the facility of handing over charge of the laboratory;

(d) whether Mr. Halder, who was an Assistant Chemist, discharged his duties faithfully and his name was recommended for the post of the Chief Chemist;

(e) whether it is a fact that the service of Mr. Halder was not spared when he secured a better chance elsewhere;

(f) whether Government propose to effect further retrenchment; and

(g) if the answer to (f) is in the affirmative, whether the authorities will allow the temporary staff to apply for jobs elsewhere?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) to (g). I have called for information and a reply will be laid on the table of the house in due course.

**TECHNICAL SCHOOLS MAINTAINED BY RAILWAYS FOR APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING.**

**107. \*Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) how many technical schools are maintained by Railways for apprenticeship training;

(b) whether there is an uniform standard of education obtaining in all these institutes; if not, why not; and

(c) whether Government have considered the importance of having an uniform syllabus of studies in all these Railway technical schools, recognised by representative bodies like the Institution of Engineers, India?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) It is presumed that the Honourable Member is referring to apprentices in the various branches of Engineering. There are two schools which train such apprentices—one on the E. I. Railway and the other on the N. W. Railway—although all State Railways make arrangements for the training of Apprentice Mechanics in their workshops.

(b) Government have no details but the standards adopted cannot differ very much.

(c) These schools and other arrangements made are for the purpose of training apprentices to standards required on the Railways and not for coaching pupils so as to obtain outside qualifications. The training given would, however, enable apprentices to sit for certain examinations conducted by outside institutions like the City and Guilds Institute, if they so wish.

**AMALGAMATION OF THE DIBRU SADIYA AND THE JORHAT PROVINCIAL RAILWAYS WITH THE BENGAL AND ASSAM RAILWAY.**

**108. \*Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Dibru Sadiya Railway and the Jorhat Provincial Railway have been amalgamated with the Bengal and Assam Railway;

(b) if the answer to (a) be in the affirmative, whether the arrangement is a permanent one; if so, the amount paid to the owners; and

(c) whether the Standing Finance Committee for Railways was consulted before taking over the Railways; if not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) The Jorhat Provincial Railway is the property of the State. It was formerly worked by a company. Its management has now been taken over by the State and it has been amalgamated with the Bengal and Assam Railway.

The working of the Dibru Sadiya Railway has been entrusted temporarily to the Bengal and Assam Railway to secure unified control over Railway transport in North East India to meet the present emergency. It remains the property of the Assam Trading Company.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

**PUNJABI OFFICERS ON BENGAL AND ASSAM RAILWAY AND ASSAMESE AND BENGALI OFFICERS ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.**

**109. \*Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state the number of Punjabi officers in the Bengal and Assam Railway and that of the Assamese and Bengali officers in the North Western Railway?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The information is not readily available and I regret that I cannot undertake to collect it.

**EXPENDITURE ON ANGLO-INDIAN AND INDIAN RAILWAY APPRENTICES.**

**110. \*Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state:

(a) whether he has been able to secure full information regarding the expenses borne by the Government for an Anglo-Indian and an Indian apprentice;

(b) whether he has taken steps to equalise the expenses for all nationalities; if not, why not?

(c) what the policy of Government in this matter is;

(d) whether Government propose to reopen the question of equalising the minimum pay of Indians and Anglo-Indians for Railway posts and telegraph and military services, etc.; if not, why not; and

(e) whether Government realise that the consequences of such invidious racial discrimination will undermine the efficiency of the services in general?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) I am not aware that I promised to secure such information, but in reply to the Honourable Member's starred question No. 82 asked on the 15th February, 1943, I furnished information as far as the Bengal and Assam Railway was concerned.

(b) The stipends paid to apprentices are the same for members of all communities. Hostel expenses differ; no action has been taken generally to equalise these, but I shall consider whether anything can be done in this direction.

(c) Government's policy is to treat all its servants alike in the absence of special circumstances necessitating a departure in respect of particular communities or persons.

(d) No.

(e) I am not aware that the fixation of a minimum wage for Anglo-Indians has resulted in loss of efficiency.

**PRICE PAID FOR IMPORTED LOCOMOTIVES.**

**111. \*Mr. K. O. Neogy:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) what price is being paid by the Government of India for locomotives which have been imported since June 1943;

(b) what the difference is in the said price and the pre-war price of the same type of locomotives;

(c) whether the prices of locomotives in the countries from which they have been imported are controlled in those countries; if so, whether the Government



of India have been able to purchase these locomotives at controlled rates in the same manner in which His Majesty's Government and the Allied Governments are purchasing Indian goods in the country at controlled rates;

(d) what programme the Government of India have planned for the manufacture of locomotives in India during the post-war period; and

(e) what practical steps, if any, have already been taken for the early establishment of a locomotive manufacturing industry in this country?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) and (b). The Honourable Member is referred to the information contained in Vol. XX, No. 2 of Proceedings of the Meeting of the Standing Finance Committee for Railways, under which at the meeting of 17th July 1943, detailed information was furnished in regard to pre-war contracts and the prices likely to be paid for locomotives ordered from U. S. A. and Canada since the outbreak of the War. The XE type locomotives referred to in para. 2(c) of that Memorandum will, however, be supplied on Lease-Lend.

(c) The locomotives under supply from Canada are against contracts placed by the India Supply Mission on behalf of the Government of India; it is felt that the effect of any controls operating will have been reflected in the contract price which the India Supply Mission has been able to arrange and this is being verified.

(d) and (e). Detailed plans for the conversion of the Kanchrapara Workshops of the B. and A. Railway to make them suitable for locomotive and boiler construction are under preparation; the necessity for a second plant at another site is also under investigation. The programme for the manufacture of locomotives depends upon the receipt and installation of certain special plant which must be imported. The Government are in correspondence with His Majesty's Government in regard to the supply of this plant.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** With regard to clause (a) may I know how many locomotives have been actually imported into India since that date?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Since the 17th July?

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Since June 1943.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I should require notice of that question but a very considerable number of metre gauge locomotives have been imported, a number have been erected and are in use. As regards broad gauge locomotives, the first deliveries have just been received and the locomotives are being erected. From now onwards, we hope to get a steady flow of both.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** If I understood the Honourable Member aright, he said in answer to (e) that some sites had already been purchased or earmarked for factories for the manufacture of locomotives. If that is so, may I ask whether any calculations have been made as to the post-war cost of these locomotives as compared with imported locomotives?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** As regards the first part of the Honourable Member's question, the construction of locomotives at Kanchrapara has, as the Honourable Member, I think, knows, been under consideration for some time and we are now working out the details necessary for modifying the works to make them suitable for locomotive and boiler construction. Plans have been received from the Consulting Engineers and these are under investigation. As regards the second part of his question, I understand what he really wants to know is whether the locomotives to be manufactured in India will cost more than the locomotives now being imported into India.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** I mean post-war locomotives.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Does the Honourable Member want to know whether the locomotives to be manufactured in India will cost more than the locomotives to be imported into India in the future after the war?

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** Yes.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I do not think I can give a categorical answer to that because nobody knows what the price of locomotives

after the war is going to be. But the result of our examination is that, generally speaking, we ought to be able to manufacture locomotives in this country sufficiently cheaply to justify proceeding with the scheme.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** The Honourable Member will perhaps recollect that in discussions in this House about the manufacture of locomotives in this country we were always told on behalf of Government that one of the reasons why locomotives were not made in this country in pre-war times was that the cost would be prohibitive as compared to the cost of the imported article?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** That, Sir, was the case, I believe; for a number of years, but the recommendation of the last report—I am speaking from memory—was that locomotives, after a period of trial during which no doubt we should have to pay for our experience, could be manufactured at a reasonably economic price.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Are there any specific conditions laid down for the establishment of locomotives industry in different provinces or they can be manufactured in one or two provinces of India only?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** No specific conditions have been laid down.

#### DISABILITIES AND RESTRICTIONS AFFECTING INDIANS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

112. \***Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** Will the Honourable the Leader of the House please state:

(a) if he is aware—

(i) of the disabilities and restrictions from which Indians suffer in the United States of America as regards trade and franchise, etc;

(ii) of the American Exclusion Act and the restrictions it imposes on Indians; and

(iii) that recently the House of Representatives passed and sent to the Senate the Chinese Exclusion Act Repeal Bill; and

(b) if any representations were made through proper channels to have a similar Bill passed or to secure the same rights for Indians as are mentioned in this Bill by some other means?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** (a) (i) and (ii). The Honourable Member no doubt refers to the disabilities which Indians suffer from the application of the Immigration Act of the American Legislature of 1924. The attention of the Honourable Member is invited to my reply to his question No. 39 in the last session of this House.

(iii) The Government of India understand this is so.

(b) The matter is under correspondence with the Agent General for India and his final report is awaited.

#### THE AMERICAN EXCLUSION ACT AND ITS EFFECT ON INDIANS.

113. \***Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** With reference to my question No. 39 of the 27th July, 1943, regarding the operation of the American Exclusion Act on Indians and his answers to part (c) and (d) of my question, will the Honourable the Leader of the House please state:

(a) the names of the Bills before Congress to lighten restrictions against the Chinese in connection with which the Agent General had made enquiries about Indians receiving parity of treatment with the Chinese, the nature of such restrictions and the result of the efforts made by the Agent General; and

(b) whether the Chinese Exclusion Act Repeal Bill was one of such Bills; if so, what the basis and nature was of representations made, and what the nature was of the reply given to the Agent General?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** (a) and (b). The Government of India are not in possession of the names or exact details of the Bills referred to, but they understand that the common object of this legislation is to lift existing restrictions on Chinese immigration and the acquisition of American citizenship by resident Chinese. The Agent General for India lost no time in

approaching the State Department as to the possibility of parity of treatment for Indian nationals and his final report is awaited.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** With reference to the first part of my question in which I have referred to my question No. 39, the answer was given that the Agent General had made representations in the case of certain Bills. I am now told that the Government is not in a position to name the Bills. May I take it, then, that the last statement was made without any specific information as regards the Bills?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** We did not have the exact names of the Bills nor their details but we knew their purport. We then inquired from the Agent General and he has reported to us that he approached the State Department as to the feasibility of parity of treatment but have not received his final report.

**Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh:** Will the Honourable Member now make inquiries regarding these Bills, in which the Agent General is said to have made representations as regards the rights of the Indians?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** Certainly.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Is it not a fact that under the Exclusion Act restrictions are being removed from the Chinese but not from Indians?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** I do not know the exact position of the Chinese at present because we have not received the final report from the Agent General.

#### REPEAL OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

**114. \*Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi:** Will the Honourable the Leader of the House be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Honourable Member has been drawn to the repealing by the Congress of the United States of America of the Chinese Exclusion Act, whereby the Chinese residents in the United States of America will be allowed to become American citizens; and

(b) whether the Government of India have taken any steps to impress upon His Majesty's Government to take up with the Government of the United States of America, the question of extending similar status to the Indian residents in the United States of America, in view of the fact that India is also participating in the cause of winning the war, and to secure particularly the repeal of the Immigration Act of 1917 whereby the Indians were excluded from the United States of America?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** (a) and (b). The Honourable Member is referred to my replies to questions Nos. 112 and 113 just asked by Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh.

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

**115. \*Mr. K. C. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways 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 Edward Benthall:** This question should have been addressed to the Honourable the Finance Member.

INTERVIEWS AND TRAINING OF PUNJABEE CANDIDATES IN PUNJABI LANGUAGE AT WALTON SCHOOL, LAHORE.

**116. \*Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether it is a fact that candidates from Punjab presenting themselves before the North Western Railway Subordinate Service Commission for recruitment are interrogated in the Punjabi language?

(b) Is it a fact that their training at the Walton School at Lahore is also carried on in the Punjabi language?

(c) Is it a fact that such recruits on being posted to stations are unable to follow rules and procedure, converse and correspond in English as observed by me at Ruk and other stations?

(d) Do Government propose to have a better standard of efficiency? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) and (b). The answer is in the negative.

(c) I am informed that Matriculates trained in the Walton Training School are in a position to understand rules and converse and correspond in English.

(d) Government are satisfied that the recruits, although perhaps not so good as those available during peace time, do not fall below the minimum standard prescribed.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** May I inform the Honourable Member that personally I have seen at the Ruk station recruits who have been appointed and who cannot speak either English or Sindhi and I could not make myself intelligible to them. Will the Honourable Member enquire about this and find it out for himself?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I can understand what the Honourable Member says but how did the Honourable Member know that the gentlemen could not correspond in English?

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** They came to me personally. Will the Honourable Member at least make an inquiry and give instructions to see that only such people are sent to Sind who can speak either English or Sindhi?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** They may have been over-awed by the Honourable Member's presence.

FIXING OF PAY OF THE RETRENCHED STAFF RE-APPOINTED IN THE COMPILATION SECTION, NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

**117. \*Bhai Parma Nand:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to refer to the reply to part (a) and (c) of my starred question No. 207, dated the 18th November, 1941, regarding the fixing of the pay of retrenched staff reappointed in the Compilation Section, North Western Railway, and say why the Railway Board's intention, *vide* paragraph 3 of their original letter No. 1635-E.G., dated the 30th December, 1932, was not made clear in the first instance;

(b) Is the Honourable Member aware that the retrenched staff of the Compilation Section after the amalgamation of their Section with the Accounts Department ever since 1932, is a part and parcel of the Accounts Branch, and whatever decision for the grant of old scales of pay was taken in the case of the Accounts reappointed staff, is naturally applicable to their case also? If not, why?

(c) How do they fall under the category of "other cases" mentioned by the Honourable the Railway Member in the concluding part of his reply to my question referred to in part (a)?

(d) Do Government propose to reopen this case also, specially after their confirmation in the old scales of pay following the same broader principle of hardship which had moved the Railway Board to adopt in the case of the same category of men of the same office?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The papers relating to this case have been called for from the railway concerned and when they are examined, a statement will be laid on the table of the House.

**NON-RESERVATION OF POSTS FOR SIKHS IN TELEGRAPHS DEPARTMENT.**

†118. \*Sardar Sant Singh: (a) Will the Secretary for Posts and Air please state whether special reservations have been made for the appointment of Muslims and Anglo-Indians to posts which are to be filled up by the Telegraph Department as a result of the competitive examination to be held in November 1943? If so, why has no reservation been made for Sikhs?

(b) Have any Sikhs been recruited so far through such competitive examinations? If so, what are their numbers?

(c) Is he prepared to take any steps to safeguard the interests of Sikhs? If so, what? If not, why not?

Sir Gurnath Bewoor: (a) It is presumed that the Honourable Member is referring to the examination for recruitment to the Telegraph Engineering Service, Class I. Reservation has been provided for Muslims for recruitment to this service, but not for Anglo-Indians. No separate reservation has been prescribed for Sikhs, because Sikhs with Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and Parsis have been included in 'Other Minorities' for whom there is a reservation of 8½ per cent. Government have not prescribed any reservation separately for Sikhs as such.

(b) Yes. One Mr. D. N. Ramchandani.

(c) As Sikhs have already been included among 'Other Minorities', for whom there is a specific reservation, it is not considered necessary to introduce a separate reservation for Sikhs only.

**NON-RESERVATION OF POSTS FOR SIKHS BY THE RAILWAY BOARD.**

†119. \*Sardar Sant Singh: (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state whether he is aware that as a result of the competitive examination to be held by the Federal Public Service Commission in November, 1943, about 26 appointments will be filled up by the Railway Board under their different Branches and cadres?

(b) Is he further aware that for filling up these vacancies, Government announced that a total of five vacancies were reserved for Muslims, and one for an Anglo-Indian or Domiciled European?

(c) Is it a fact that no posts were reserved either for Sikhs or other minority community men? If so, why?

(d) What safeguards does the Honourable Member propose for looking after the interests of Sikhs who are said to be the back-bone of the Indian Army and are doing so much for the war effort?

(e) Is the Honourable Member prepared to announce now the reservation of a requisite number of vacancies for Sikhs? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) Yes.

(b) Six of the vacancies are reserved for Muslims and one for Anglo-Indians.

(c) There is no separate reservation for Sikhs in the Superior Railway Services whereas there is a special reservation for Anglo-Indians of 2.5 per cent. of vacancies filled by direct recruitment. This is in accordance with the terms of the Home Department Resolution dated the 1st May 1939.

(d) The interests of Sikhs are protected by the present orders under which 6 per cent. of all vacancies in the Superior Railway Services filled by direct recruitment are reserved for the other minorities, including Sikhs.

(e) No, because it would not be in accordance with existing orders of Government on the subject.

**PROMOTIONS MADE IN THE STATISTICAL SECTION OF THE SUPPLY DEPARTMENT.**

†120. \*Sardar Sant Singh: (a) Will the Honourable the Supply Member please state the number of promotions made in the Statistical Section of the Supply Department from among each of the Punchers, Coders and Operators, to the third division and other grades since September, 1942?

(b) Is it a fact that several men who were junior in the list were promoted, and the cases of senior men were overlooked? If so, why?

(c) Have the Home Department issued orders that promotions should be made according to seniority?

(d) Is it a fact that the Honourable Member for Posts and Air speaking in the Council of State, reiterated the policy laid down by the Home Department for promotions to be made according to seniority?

(e) Is the Honourable Member prepared to look into the cases of persons who have suffered in this case? If not, why not?

(f) Is the Honourable Member also prepared to see that in future the orders of the Home Department are not overlooked?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** (a) 21, 9 and 2 respectively. Promotions to the 3rd Division only have been made.

(b) No.

(c) Yes. Presumably the Honourable Member refers to the orders issued by the Home Department in their Office Memorandum No. 23/1/39-Ests.(S), dated the 4th of September, 1942, which lays down the principles for promotion.

(d) Yes.

(e) Does not arise in view of the reply to (b) above.

(f) The principles for promotion laid down by the Home Department, are already being observed.

#### ORDERS ISSUED BY THE OFFICIATING DIRECTOR OF RAILWAY CLEARING ACCOUNTS OFFICE.

†121. \***Sardar Sant Singh:** (a) Is the Honourable the Railway Member aware that the Deputy Chief Accounts Officer, North Western Railway, was deputed to officiate as Director of the Railway Clearing Accounts Office, Delhi?

(b) Is he aware that on his arrival in the Railway Clearing Accounts Office he has issued numerous orders which involve the compilation of unnecessary information by the already overworked staff and thereby a great discontentment has already started?

(c) Is it a fact that in one of the orders issued he used the words 'the supervisory staff can be discontinued'? If so, is he authorised to issue such an order?

(d) Is he aware:

(i) that soon after his arrival he openly rebuked at the top of his voice one of the Superintendents of the office in the presence of about 600 men and used the words 'I want to talk to human beings only. . . .'?

(ii) that since his arrival he has been writing letters to the Railway Board with a view to casting reflections on his predecessors; and

(iii) that wherever he has been, his staff has always been disheartened by his treatment and behaviour?

(e) Does he propose to have the matter investigated and see how far such an officer is capable of holding independent charge of an office in preference to a Mohammedan officer who should have been ordinarily promoted in this purely officiating vacancy?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Yes, the Deputy Chief Accounts Officer (Traffic), N. W. Railway, officiated as Director, Railway Clearing Accounts Office, from 18th June, 1943 to 17th August, 1943.

(b) Office orders were issued from time to time by the officer mentioned against (a) in the ordinary course of his duties. These orders were carried out and the permanent Director has no knowledge of any complaints having been raised. It is considered that these orders did not involve the preparation of unnecessary information.

† Answer to this question laid on the table, the questioner being absent.

(c) The quotation is part of a note written by the Director, which reads as follows:

It seems to me that the supervisory staff have no adequate conception of what their duty in this matter and allied matters is. If the blame for mistakes is only of the clerks, then the supervisory staff can as well be discontinued. I wish it to be clearly understood that the Subhead, the Accountant and the Superintendent should see that the work done under their immediate supervision, directions and control is done satisfactorily and that they cannot escape responsibility therefor.

These remarks were based on an actual case in which a member of the supervisory staff tried to pass on the whole responsibility to clerks.

(d) (i). Inquiries have been made but no incident of the kind suggested in the question has come to notice.

(d) (ii) and (d) (iii). No.

(e) No. The officiating Director was considered to be the most suitable officer to take charge of the Railway Clearing Accounts Office during the absence of the permanent Director.

#### PILGRIMAGE TO ARABIA BY LAND ROUTES.

122. \*Nawab Siddique Ali Khan: (a) Will the Honourable the Leader of the House please state the number of persons who have applied for permission to perform pilgrimage to Arabia by land routes?

(b) Do Government propose to make satisfactory arrangements for their journey? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** (a) As far as can be ascertained only 31 persons from all parts of India applied for pilgrim passes by the land routes.

(b) The attention of the Honourable Member is invited to the Press Communiqué issued by Government on the 9th September, 1948, a copy of which is laid on the table.

#### *Press Communiqué.*

The Government of India announced on August the 11th that owing to the danger to which pilgrim ships and their passengers would be exposed by enemy action, no arrangements could be made for the Haj pilgrimage this year by sea. Government have consequently been investigating the possibility of pilgrims proceeding by land routes. These may be described as follows:

(i) *Via Iraq.*

(ii) *Via Kuwait and Bahrain.*

(iii) *Via Iran.*

2. The first two routes involve a lengthy sea journey from India up to the Persian Gulf, and are, therefore, open to the same objection as the route *via Jeddah*. Moreover the Government of India have learned from His Majesty's Representatives in Iraq and the Persian Gulf that neither at Baghdad and Zubair nor at Bahrain and Kuwait is there any motor transport available for pilgrims. Thus even if pilgrims reached these places where they would not be welcome unless they brought their own food, it is certain that they would not be able to proceed further by car. Nor can the third route *via Iran* be recommended. Public motor transport services are no longer available in that country; and food is expensive and not always easily obtainable.

3. Any who contemplate travelling in their own cars *via Iran* are reminded that they must obtain an export licence from the Directorate General of Supply, New Delhi and that it is impossible to purchase either spare parts or tyres in any country on the route to the Holy Places. It follows that the smallest breakdown may result in their being unable to complete their journey. The roads are reported to be very rough and the likelihood of breakdowns occurring is very great.

4. The Saudi Arabian Government, who have been consulted in the matter, decline all responsibility with regard to transport for pilgrims travelling overland and will not be able to spare any cars to assist overland pilgrims in case of breakdowns on the long and difficult journey across Arabia.

5. In publishing this information the Government of India are actuated only by a desire to enable intending pilgrims to avoid fruitless expenditure and unnecessary disappointment.

P. GONSALVES,

*Assistant Secretary to the Govt. of India, External Affairs Department.*

**Manvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** May I know the number of pilgrims who have arrived at Bombay and Karachi ports?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** I have no information.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** May I know if the land routes are safe?

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** I have answered that question in part (b).

## UNSTARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### SUPPLY OF STANDARD CLOTH TO RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

**12. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) With reference to the reply to my starred question No. 11 asked on the 27th July last, regarding supply of standard cloth to the Railway employees, will the Honourable the Railway Member please state whether the supply of standard cloth to the Railway employees has since been made? If so, does the Honourable Member propose to make a short statement giving particulars of how the supply was made?

(b) Is it a fact that the Railway employees are about a million of people and the cloth to be supplied comes to a yard only for each employee?

(c) Is it proposed to place any restrictions on the supply of 'standard cloth' to the Railway employees? If so, what are those restrictions and why are they being placed?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) All railways have received supplies of Standard Cloth and on some sales have already commenced. As regards the second part, it is not clear what details the Honourable Member requires. The cloth is being sold to railway employees through the grainshop organization.

(b) The latest published figures show that there are about 700,000 employees in State-owned Class I Railways. The million yards of Standard Cloth was only the first instalment; a further ten million yards are being obtained.

(c) The reply to the first part is in the affirmative. As regards the second part, Standard Cloth can be sold only to employees drawing not more than Rs. 60 p.m. This restriction is placed in conformity with the main idea underlying the scheme of manufacture of Standard Cloth which is to restrict its sale to the poorest class of the community. Railways have also been asked so to regulate sales as to benefit the largest possible number of employees. The cloth will be sold at the retail prices fixed by the Textile Commissioner.

### EMPLOYEES DISCHARGED FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

**13. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state the number of employees discharged from service as a disciplinary measure, in each Division of the North Western Railway, separately, during the financial years 1940-41, 1941-42, 1942-43 and for the half year ending the 30th September 1943?

(b) If there is an increase in 1940-41 figures, is it because of the curtailment of power of Railway officers to inflict temporary reductions on the Railway employees? If so, do Government propose to take any steps to ensure that discharges from service do not substitute reduction declared illegal under the Payment of Wages Act? If not, why not?

(c) If the reply to the first portion of (b) above be in the negative, what then are the causes for increase in discharges of employees from service?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Government regret they cannot undertake to collect this information under present circumstances.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.



**SECTIONS OF MUNITIONS PRODUCTION SECRETARIAT RUN BY SUPERINTENDENTS AND ASSISTANTS-IN-CHARGE.**

**14. Hajee Chowdhury Muhammad Ismail Khan:** (a) Will the Honourable the Supply Member please state whether some Sections of the Munitions Production Secretariat are being run by Superintendents, while the rest by Assistants-in-Charge? What is the reason for this arrangement? On what basis was the selection of Superintendents made?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** Yes. This arrangement has been made with due regard to the volume and nature of the work handled by each section. Assistants-in-charge have been posted to the less responsible charges. The selection of Superintendents was made on merit.

**SUPPLY OF FOODGRAINS TO EMPLOYEES OF THE POSTS AND AIR DEPARTMENT IN BENGAL AT CONCESSION RATES.**

**15. Mr. K. O. Neogy:** (a) Will the Secretary for Posts and Air be pleased to state the different classes of employees under the control of his Department and employed in Bengal that are in the enjoyment of a concession under which foodgrains are supplied to them at controlled or reduced prices?

(b) What is the total number of such employees, and what quantities of rice, wheat and other foodgrains have been supplied to them at controlled or reduced prices, month by month, since January last?

(c) Who are charged in Bengal with the duty of furnishing the supplies for the benefit of these employees, and what is the approximate extent of the stocks that they have maintained from time to time to enable them to discharge their obligation, and through what agencies in Bengal have these stocks been acquired, and at what prices on an average, month by month?

**Sir Gurunath Bewoor:** (a), (b) and (c). I would invite the attention of the Honourable Member to the replies given by the Honourable the Food Member to starred question No. 55 and to unstarred question No. 6 on 9th November, 1948.

**SUPPLY OF FOODGRAINS TO EMPLOYEES OF THE SUPPLY DEPARTMENT IN BENGAL AT CONCESSION RATES.**

**16. Mr. K. O. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable the Supply Member be pleased to state the different classes of employees under the control of his Department and employed in Bengal that are in the enjoyment of a concession under which foodgrains are supplied to them at controlled or reduced prices?

(b) What is the total number of such employees, and what quantities of rice, wheat and other foodgrains have been supplied to them at controlled or reduced prices, month by month, since January last?

(c) Who are charged in Bengal with the duty of furnishing the supplies for the benefit of these employees and what is the approximate extent of the stocks that they have maintained from time to time to enable them to discharge their obligation, and through what agencies in Bengal have these stocks been acquired, and at what prices on an average, month by month?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar:** The Honourable Member's attention is invited to the reply given by my Honourable colleague, the Food Member, to starred question No. 55 on the 9th November 1948.

**SUPPLY OF FOODGRAINS TO EMPLOYEES OF THE RAILWAY AND WAR TRANSPORT DEPARTMENTS IN BENGAL AT CONCESSION RATES.**

**17. Mr. K. O. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railway and War Transport Departments be pleased to state the different classes of employees under the control of his Departments and employed in Bengal that

are in the enjoyment of a concession under which foodgrains are supplied to them at controlled or reduced prices?

(b) What is the total number of such employees, and what quantities of rice, wheat and other foodgrains have been supplied to them at controlled or reduced prices, month by month, since January last?

(c) Who are charged in Bengal with the duty of furnishing the supplies for the benefit of these employees and what is the approximate extent of the stocks that they have maintained from time to time to enable them to discharge their obligation, and through what agencies in Bengal have these stocks been acquired, and at what prices on an average, month by month?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) All Railway servants are at present entitled to obtain foodgrains for themselves and their families from Railway grainshops at concessional rates. Similarly all employees of the Calcutta and Chittagong Port Commissioners and their families are entitled to purchase foodgrains from the Port grainshops at concessional rates and those in the joint office of the Regional Controllers of Priorities, Calcutta, from the E. I. Railway head office grainshop. The ministerial and the inferior staff in the office of the Controller of Coal Distribution also obtain foodgrains at concessional rates for themselves and their families. Railway servants and port employees who have joined the Defence of India units draw free rations from military sources.

(b) The total number of Railway employees in Bengal is estimated at about 1,40,000; port employees number about 17,800 and other civil employees under War Transport Department about 180.

As regards the second part, Government regret they cannot undertake to collect and compile such information under existing circumstances.

(c) The responsibility of ensuring adequate supplies rests with the Provincial Government although, under the existing arrangements, the Railway and Port Administrations have in the first place to secure supplies to the best of their ability. As regards arrangements for supply to employees in the office of the C. C. D., the Honourable Member is referred to the answer under (b) and (c) to his unstarred question No. 6. In regard to the remaining parts of the question, Government regret that they cannot undertake to collect and compile such information under existing circumstances.

#### RICE, PADDY, ETC., CARRIED TO BENGAL BY DIFFERENT RAILWAYS.

**18. Mr. K. C. Neogy:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to make a statement showing, month by month since January last, the quantities of rice, paddy, wheat, wheat flour and other foodgrains, separately, that were carried into Bengal by different Railways, indicating the names of the principal consignees thereof and the places of consignment?

(b) To what extent were the Metre Gauge section of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway and the Bengal and North Western Railway utilised in conjunction with the Metre Gauge section of the Bengal and Assam Railway for the purpose of transporting the aforesaid foodstuffs direct to the internal centres of consumption in Bengal? Has the aforesaid route been utilised for this purpose to the maximum possible extent?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) I place a statement on the table of the information which is readily available. This shows the imports of foodgrains into Bengal (including Calcutta) from the principal trade blocks during the months of April to July 1943 as compared with the corresponding period of the previous year. The names of the principal consignees and places of consignment are not known and could not be collected without an amount of labour and trouble which would be unjustified.

(b) To the maximum feasible extent.

Receipts of foreign exchange in Bengal (including Calcutta) from specified Trade Blocks during April to July 1943 compared with corresponding months in 1942.

(Figures in tons.)  
4 months total.  
1943. 1942.

Commodity. Trade block source.

April. May. June. July.  
1943. 1943. 1943. 1943.

Commodity.	Trade block source.	April.		May.		June.		July.		4 months total. 1943.	1942.
		1943.	1942.	1943.	1942.	1943.	1942.	1943.	1942.		
1. Rice	N.-W. F. P.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Sind and Baluchistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Punjab and Punjab States	1,445	45	2,915	69	5,945	48	...	2,451	92	...
	United Provinces	13	...	43	2	19	...	...	213	247	...
	Behar	370	490	2,697	109	15,758	471	...	17,398	157	...
O. P. and Berar	1,825	20	4,267	...	5,731	9	...	3,408	3	...	
Totals		3,653	498	9,735	200	30,481	532	...	24,371	499	69,120
2. Paddy	N.-W. F. P.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Sind and Baluchistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Punjab and Punjab States	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	United Provinces	10	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Behar	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
O. P. and Berar	71	100	341	42	2,561	91	...	1,872	15	...	
Totals		81	100	241	42	2,598	125	...	1,895	15	4,815
3. Wheat	N.-W. F. P.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Sind and Baluchistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Punjab and Punjab States	10,082	406	1,048	1,449	7,056	11,300	...	17,532	7,527	...
	United Provinces	39	14,385	4,819	4,083	132	313	...	327	...	...
	Behar	42	583	134	244	919	103	...	1,836	160	...
O. P. and Berar	187	144	140	82	...	20	...	...	...	...	
Totals		10,324	15,398	6,138	5,858	8,224	11,745	...	19,855	7,677	45,141
4. Wheat flour	N.-W. F. P.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Sind and Baluchistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Punjab and Punjab States	1,553	80	2,005	601	669	927	...	490	454	...
	United Provinces	43	1,300	34	375	4	199	...	1	48	...
	Behar	112	2,972	81	1,493	688	688	...	1,132	766	...
O. P. and Berar	...	31	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Totals		1,708	3,563	2,120	2,469	1,361	1,814	...	1,543	1,266	6,732
5. Other grains	N.-W. F. P.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Sind and Baluchistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Punjab and Punjab States	9,009	194	5,377	61	561	...	...	18	...	...
	United Provinces	11,772	2,455	13,106	2,176	11,757	60	...	7,488	106	...
	Behar	1,343	5,747	5,140	5,754	15,758	2,467	...	11,649	2,148	...
O. P. and Berar	396	294	141	120	286	494	...	103	399	...	
Totals		23,529	8,920	24,295	8,187	35,795	9,070	...	24,786	15,002	107,386
GRAND TOTALS		28,686	38,199	43,819	16,756	78,539	23,286	...	72,450	21,461	232,194
								...			89,702

**COMMUNAL REPRESENTATION IN CERTAIN POSTAL OFFICES AT LUCKNOW.**

**19. Mr. Piare Lal Kureel:** Will the Secretary for Posts and Air be pleased to state:

(a) the communal representation, including that of the scheduled castes, in the superior, subordinate and menial grades in the following offices in Lucknow:

- (i) the General Post Office;
- (ii) the General Telegraph Office;
- (iii) the Post Master General's Office;
- (iv) the Office of the Accountant General, Posts and Telegraphs; and
- (v) various Post and Telegraph Offices;

(b) what steps, if any, Government have taken so far to recruit representatives of the scheduled castes in these offices; and

(c) if Government propose to take immediate steps to give the scheduled castes their due share of representation in these offices?

**Sir Guranath Bewoor:** The information is being collected and a reply will be placed on the table of the House in due course.

**RECRUITMENT OF STATION MASTERS, GUARDS, ETC., ON EAST INDIAN RAILWAY AND COMMUNAL REPRESENTATION THEREIN.**

**20. Mr. Piare Lal Kureel:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of persons recruited as Station Masters, Guards, Ticket Collectors, Clerks, Drivers, Foremen, Loco Inspectors on the East Indian Railway during the years 1939-1943;

(b) how many of them were Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Christians and members of the Scheduled Castes; and

(c) if the Railway authorities have been duly instructed to entertain men of the Scheduled Castes for all services (Superior, Subordinate and Menial) in the Railway Departments; if not, if Government propose to issue such instructions now?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) and (b). Government regret that they cannot undertake to collect these details under present circumstances.

(c) Railways have been furnished with a copy of Home Department Resolution No. 23/5/42-Ests.(S), dated the 11th August, 1943, and further instructions which may be necessary are under consideration.

**COMMUNAL REPRESENTATION AMONG LEATHER GOODS CONTRACTORS OF THE SUPPLY DEPARTMENT.**

**21. Mr. Piare Lal Kureel:** Will the Honourable the Supply Member be pleased to state:

(a) the number of contracts awarded by the Supply Department for the supply of leather goods of all kinds since the outbreak of the war;

(b) how many of these contracts were awarded to Hindus, Muslims, members of the Scheduled Castes and others;

(c) if Government are aware of the fact that the making of boots, shoes and other leather goods is the traditional calling of the Scheduled Castes; and

(d) if Government propose to award such contracts to the members of the scheduled castes as far as possible?

**The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudallar:** (a) Approximately 4,700.

(b) It is not possible to furnish this information, as contractors are not classified community-wise in the Books of this Department.

(c) Yes, in so far as Cottage and Small Scale Industries are concerned.

(d) The execution of the large Government orders to definite delivery schedules postulates established capacity and existence of necessary plant and machinery which is generally not available in Cottage and Small Scale Industries. Whenever such capacity is available with firms owned by members of Scheduled Castes or employing workers belonging to Scheduled Castes every effort is made to utilise such capacity, e.g., orders for Army footwear have been placed from time to time with the Harijan Boot Factory, Agra.

PROMOTIONS TO TICKET CHECKING STAFF ON EAST INDIAN RAILWAY.

**22. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please refer to the reply to part (iii) of starred question No. 450 of the 18th March, 1934, published at page 276 of the Legislative Assembly Debates for the 18th July, 1934, regarding promotions to the Ticket Checking Staff on the East Indian Railway, and lay on the table of this House a statement of the promotions made up to date from a lower grade to a higher grade or to a next grade on occurrence of vacancies and in order of seniority of the old Travelling Ticket Inspectors (now designated as Travelling Ticket Examiners) in conformity with the said reply? If no promotions were made, what are the reasons therefor?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Government regret that they cannot undertake to collect such information under present circumstances.

ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

**23. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please refer to the Railway Board letter No. E37ED37, dated the 5th October, 1937, regarding assistance to Railway employees towards the education of their children, and lay on the table of this House the letter of the Railway Board under which the employees in service prior to the 1st February, 1929, were asked to make a definite election of the revised rules by a date later than the 31st December, 1937?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Government regret they are unable to lay on the table of the House a copy of the document referred to.

INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, EAST INDIAN RAILWAY, re THE STAFF REPORTING SICK.

**24. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state if it is or it is not a fact that the Chief Medical Officer, East Indian Railway, has instructed his subordinates not to take on the sick list the staff actually suffering unless and until the staff are bedridden?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that the said instructions have led the staff to have recourse to private Registered Medical Practitioners?

(c) Is it or is it not a fact that certificates for sickness and recommendations for leave by these Medical Attendants are accepted subject to the counter-signatures by the Railway Medical Authority? If so, how far is this practice consistent with the practice on the North Western Railway as indicated in the reply given to unstarred question No. 21 asked on the 30th July, 1943?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) The reply is in the negative.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Medical certificates from outside practitioners are submitted through the railway doctors who forward them to the competent authority, with their recommendation for their acceptance or rejection, the final decision resting with the competent authority. As regards the second part, Government will consider if any action is necessary to make the practice on the E. I. Railway similar to that on the N. W. Railway.

CENSUS TAKEN BY STATE-MANAGED RAILWAYS OF THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC.

**25. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state the result of the census taken by the State-managed Railways of the travelling public between the 22nd August, 1943 and the 11th September, 1943?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** No complete census was taken by the State-managed railways of the travelling public between 22nd August, 1943, and 11th September, 1943. For the information of the Railway Board certain railways from time to time made limited enquiries from passengers into the reasons which make their journeys necessary.

ACTION TAKEN AGAINST RAILWAY SERVANTS FOR CAUSING OVERCROWDING OF TRAINS ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

**26. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please lay a statement of the actions taken against the Railway Servants under

Section 102 of the Indian Railways Act, 1890, for causing the overcrowding of Trains on the North Western Railway since August, 1942, and against the travelling public under Sections 109 and 118 of the Railway Act, IX of 1890, for causing the overcrowding and travelling on unauthorised places; if no action has been taken, especially against the Station Superintendent, Delhi, and travelling public between Ghaziabad and Delhi and *vice versa*, what are the reasons therefor?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Government do not propose to collect the information asked for in present conditions. Government are, however, greatly concerned at the prevalence of overcrowding and the dangers attached to it and the matter is being discussed in the Central Advisory Council for Railways. As regards action against railway servants under section 102 of the Indian Railways Act, this would only arise if they compel passengers to enter compartments which are already full and this they do not do.

**CONFISCATION OF RATIONS OF CERTAIN GORAKHPUR WORKSHOP STAFF ENJOYING WEEKLY REST.**

**27. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state:

(a) if it is a fact that the Workshop Staff of the Oudh and Tihut Railway at Gorakhpur are allowed to enjoy their weekly rest at their villages;

(b) if it is a fact that they are allowed to carry their rations distributed on the Ration Card by the Railway to their villages for consumption by their family;

(c) if it is a fact that while the staff was travelling with the rations in 2 Down train on Saturday the 18th September, 1943, they were arrested under the Defence of India Act Rules by the Police at the Bhatiani Junction Station and their rations were confiscated and they were badly handled and molested by the local and Railway Police because they had not allowed a Police Constable and his friend to travel with them in the Loco-Special Workmen Carriage; if so, what security and protection the railway has provided for their staff against the recurrence of such incidents; if none, why?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) to (c). Information has been called for and a reply will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

**RULES FOR OCCUPATION OF RAILWAY QUARTERS AND BUNGALOWS BY SUBORDINATE STAFF ON OUDH AND TIRHUT RAILWAY.**

**28. Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state the rules in force on the Oudh and Tihut Railway governing the occupation of the Railway Quarters and Bungalows by the Subordinate Staff?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Information has been called for from the Railway Administration and will be laid on the table of the House when received.

**ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE DELHI UNIVERSITY COURT.**

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have to inform the Assembly that up to 12 Noon on Wednesday, the 10th November, 1943, the time fixed for receiving nominations for the Court of the University of Delhi, five candidates were nominated. One candidate has since withdrawn his candidature, but of the remaining four candidates one candidate is a nominated member of this House and is, therefore, ineligible for election according to the terms of the motion adopted by the Assembly on the 8th November. As the number of remaining candidates is less than the number of vacancies I appoint a further period up to 12 Noon on Saturday, the 13th November, 1943, within which nominations will be received. The election, if necessary, will take place on Tuesday, the 16th and will be held between the hours of 10-30 A.M. and 1 P.M. in the Assistant Secretary's room in the Council House, New Delhi, and will be conducted in accordance with the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

## THE CENTRAL EXCISE BILL.

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman** (Finance Member): Sir, I move for leave to introduce a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to central duties\* of excise.

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

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to central duties of excise."

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir** (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): May I ask the Honourable Member whether he intends to bring the first reading of this Bill before the House during this Session?

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman**: My intention is to move for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee which will report for the next Session.

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

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to central duties of excise."

The motion was adopted.

**The Honourable Sir Jeremy Raisman**: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

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

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava** (Food Member): Sir, I move:

"That this Assembly do proceed to elect in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct 3 non-official Members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Department of Food during the remainder of the financial year 1943-44."

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

"That this Assembly do proceed to elect in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct 3 non-official Members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Department of Food during the remainder of the financial year 1943-44."

**Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait** (West Coast and Nilgiris: Muhammadan): Sir, I move:

"That for the figure '3' in line two, the figure '15' be substituted."

Sir, in moving this amendment, I have first to call the attention of this House to what happened last Session. In the last Budget Session a demand was made for a Food Advisory Committee. The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed, the Leader of the House, announced that because there was then very little time for the formation of a Committee, the Committee that was formed as Advisory Committee for the Commerce Department should work as the Advisory Committee for the Food Department as well. What I mean to say is that the Food Committee had already come into existence, but the difficulty with regard to that Food Committee was that in spite of all the critical situation that arose in the country, that Food Committee was never consulted, except once, that is three days ago. The Food Department held numerous Conferences, a number of Departmental Committees, such as Policy Committee and so on were held, but still this Food Committee was never called, was never asked for its opinion and advice. The Assembly and its representatives were completely ignored in the matter of this big crisis that faced the country. That is the first thing that I have to say.

Now, the Honourable the Food Member comes to this House and wants to constitute a Committee of three Members from this House; probably he wants two from the other House. Just imagine, Sir, a Committee of three to advise this Government on this question which has become the biggest question in the country. I certainly disagree. I suggest that this Committee should have at least one representative from each Province, and that is why I have suggested the figure '15'. Of course some people say that this figure '15' is ridiculous, that it is too big a number and so on. But my complaint is that Government have not yet realised the seriousness of the food position in the country and that is why they have brought forward the motion suggesting an equally ridiculous number of '3'. As a counterblast, I am suggesting '15'. I also request that this Committee should be effective and its advice should be sought, whenever other conferences or committees are convened. The Members of this Food Advisory Committee should be invited often and consulted. Sir, I move.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): What about the other amendment? The Honourable Member has got to move it now. He cannot do so later on.

**Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait:** I do not move the other one.

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

"That for the figure '3' in line two, the figure '15' be substituted."

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea** (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, I have much sympathy with the amendment which has been moved by my Honourable friend, Mr. Essak Sait. Sir, last year, after a good deal of agitation, the Government agreed to have a Food Advisory Committee attached to the Department of Food, but this Committee, as has just been pointed out, never met. The Assembly demanded again and again that this Committee should be consulted very frequently at least once every month. But that was not done. Then, as regards the number of persons to be appointed to this Committee, I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of the view that all the Provinces of India should be represented. Of course, Bengal's troubles are the greatest at the present moment. But there are some other Provinces also which are beginning to feel the pinch and it may be that in future, Madras and Bombay also may be affected.

**Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang** (East Punjab: Muhammadan): Even the Punjab.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjea:** That is a possibility, although not an immediate possibility. God forbid that. Therefore, Sir, the different Provinces should be fully represented on this Committee and it would not be very wrong if a Committee of 15 persons is appointed, ten from this House and five from the Council of State. Then full representation can be secured. I would therefore request my Honourable friend, Mr. Essak Sait, to modify his demand to some extent. I also request the Government to go a little further and agree to ten Members from this House and five from the Council of State instead of three Members from this House and two from the Council of State. I think 15 Members for both Houses should not be an unwieldy number. I think that would be a reasonable distribution. Sir, three Members only from this House is a ridiculously small number and it will never do justice to the great problem that is before us.

**Sir F. E. James** (Madras: European): Sir, everybody, I think, would agree that the problem is a very great one. But I am at a loss to know precisely what part this Committee will play in the hierarchy of Committees which are attached or which will be attached to the Food Department. And I would like the Honourable Member, who must have some clear ideas in his own mind on this subject, to enlighten the House as to what he proposes to do, first, with regard to the existing committees and, secondly, with regard to the committees that have been recommended by the Gregory Report. I find that that report recommended that there should be, in addition to the advisory committee on prices, an expert panel of not more than six drawn from the trade. That would make two committees. Then there is already in existence a central advisory committee concerned with food production. That was originally attached to the Department of Education, Health and Lands. It was then hastily handed over to the new Department of Food, and that Department has, since receiving it, kicked it into the void and it has never been called. Is that committee going to continue to exist?

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** It has been called.

**Sir F. E. James:** I am glad to hear that. But there we have already three committees. What is this new committee going to do? Committees of this House which are attached to departments have not had altogether a happy history. Some of them have not been called at all; in regard to one committee which was recently appointed and is now attached to the Department of Information and Broadcasting, it was found by the Member in charge that the members were not adequate for the advice that they were required to give, and so he has made it into an enormous committee of forty. Therefore the individual character of this advisory committee as a committee of this



[Sir F. E. James.]

House is gone and the three members who are elected by this House find themselves surrounded by gentlemen with various degrees of interest, and therefore are not able to give the advice that this House elected them to give. So I should like to know, before proceeding to decide whether we should support the original motion or the amendment that has been moved, what my Honourable friend expects from this committee and what he is going to do with regard to the recommendations now before him for the appointment of other committees drawn from non-official sources but more directly connected with an expert knowledge of the subjects which they have in hand. Then perhaps we shall be able to decide exactly what attitude to take on the motion now before the House.

**Mr. Hoosainbhoj A. Lalljee** (Bombay Central Division: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I entirely agree with the remarks that have come from my Honourable friend, Mr. Essak Sait. This committee was appointed at a time when this House felt the need for it, and it was only last week on a Sunday that we were invited to go through voluminous papers. I think that was very unfair to this House. This is a very important question because I find that Government have constituted committees comprising no less than 25 persons from different provinces to discuss this matter which is as important as any other war matters. And when this House is required to be consulted we are told that they want only three members. Government have one excuse, namely, that they have got representatives from the provinces. Of course so long as they get those official representatives from provinces we have nothing to say; but I think Government have no right to ask the provincial Governments to send non-officials or appoint them themselves when the elected representatives from the provinces are in this House. It is not right and I want to know from Government why they are treating the non-official representatives of the peoples of the provinces in this House in such an unconstitutional manner. If they do not want them why not dissolve this House? Do they honestly prefer non-officials from outside to the elected representatives of the people? I think it fair that in the interest of the provinces they should have their representatives whom they have returned to this House and, therefore, the number of fifteen is quite right considering the importance of the question.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi** (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, I rise to put in a plea that the Government of India should treat the committees of the Legislature with proper respect. Judging from the tendency of the various departments of the Government of India I feel they are not treating the committees of this House with sufficient respect. I had to make that remark during the last Session with regard to a committee attached to another department. The food situation in India has become very bad for some time. Not only in this country has there been agitation and discussion on this subject but it has been discussed in Great Britain and in other countries also. But the Government of India did not think it proper to consult the committee of this Legislature established to give them advice on this subject. I should like the Government of India to consider the committees of this Legislature as of supreme advisory status. They may appoint other expert committees—I am not against that—but the committee of the Legislature should be treated as a committee of supreme importance and position. The Government of India have not done that; they were not right in calling a meeting of the advisory committee so late. They treat the committees of the Legislature as only of formal importance. The committee was called only two or three days back and the work of Government was carried on in the meanwhile. Not only that; the Government of India formulated their policy before consulting the advisory committee. I feel that it is not even in the interest of Government to show scant courtesy to the Legislature and its committees.

**Mr. E. L. O. Gwilt** (Bombay: European): Sir, I have very little to say but I should like to put a point of view which is perhaps opposed to that of my Honourable friend, Mr. Joshi. It is a matter of some surprise that the existing advisory committee on Food was not called until Sunday last, the 7th instant,

but I think I am correct in saying, and the Honourable Member will correct me if I am wrong, that there were six non-official members invited, who represent both Houses of the Legislature but I think only four turned up. I think ten days' notice by telegram was given; why were they not present? I am not opposing this motion but I would ask that if an advisory committee of the House is appointed, and it be of the number of people stated in his motion, as many as possible should turn up to discuss on a matter so important as food.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir** (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, it is on more than one occasion that we have heard criticisms of the committees appointed by this House attached to different departments. I am afraid the responsibility for the work carried on by these committees has to be shared both by Government and the House, and if we have had cause of complaint it has been against both Government and this Honourable House. When a committee is appointed on a question of this importance one would expect that this Honourable House, which was given the right of electing members to such a committee, would use their discretion as to the personnel of that committee with some wisdom. My complaint has been that the personnel elected on many committees is not of a character which will satisfy either the general public or even this Honourable House.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee**: I do not agree with this.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is casting a reflection on the members of such committees.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: I am not, Sir.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is casting a reflection.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: I cast no reflection on anybody.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is casting a reflection on the entire House.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: If I have done that, I apologize to the entire House. Sir, we must also remember that an important section of this House has chosen to non-cooperate. That must not altogether be forgotten. That also weakens these committees. There are many clever men elected to this House belong to a party that has not been present for a long time . . . . .

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee**: Many of them are present here now.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: I welcome them. I honestly welcome them, and I do trust that they will lend their services to such committees. The fault of Government is that they also do not attach that importance to these committees that they ought to.

**An Honourable Member**: Is that in order?

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: Reflection on Government in this House is in order. Reflection on anybody else is not.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Order, order. The Honourable Member was making a reflection on the entire House.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: I have already apologized, Sir.

Now, Sir, I have had occasions to criticize some of these committees. The responsibilities thrown upon their shoulders have been vast . . . . .

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan** (Agra Division: Muhammadan Rural): What is your suggestion now?

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir**: My suggestion is that we should take great care in future in our choice of personnel at the time of electing these committees. We should see that those nominated by the Government on these committees—when they have a right to nominate—are men who will really serve the purpose for which they are nominated. And I would suggest that no nominated member should be allowed to stand for election, because they are not elected to the House.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi**: We are as good Members of this House as others.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I think the nominated Members are as much eligible for election as others.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** Just now we had a committee on which a nominated Member offered himself for election and it was found that he was not allowed to stand.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That was in the terms of the motion.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** The terms of the motion should be such that nominated Members should not be allowed to be elected.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member is at liberty to move an amendment.

**Sir Cowasjee Jehangir:** I am only expressing an opinion; I have also expressed it before. And then, I say, the committees will function and the Government will attach that importance to these committees which they ought to.

**Mr. Muhammad Ashtar Ali** (Lucknow and Fyzabad Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I wish to speak just now on a relevant matter which is connected with the amendment of my friend, Mr. Essak Sait.

We received a pamphlet last night, 11th November 1948. It relates to the food situation in India and recommendation of Food Committees. Somehow we devoted some of our time to studying it because of the fact that many of us were to speak in this House today.

What I find is this: On page 6, paragraph 54, it is said by way of recommendation:

"It is essential that the Provincial and State authorities should set up Advisory Bureaux."

My Honourable friend, Sir F. E. James, in his speech also referred to a non-official committee as recommended in the pamphlets as follows:

"... Advisory Bureaux to which the public can turn for detailed guidance and advice, and, that the Rationing Authorities should seek the positive assistance of public-spirited citizens by setting up non-official Advisory Committees."

Sir, this paragraph is a very important one, but I am sorry that the Government did not follow the recommendation of this committee.

At the same time on page 8, paragraph 72, it is stated: "A small standing prices committee . . .", etc.. Government seems to be very much enamoured of the word 'small'. I submit, Sir, that the Government seems to be obsessed with the idea of having small committees only from this House to advise them. These recommendations themselves are a proof of that fact. Therefore, I support the amendment of my Honourable friend.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** Sir, I wish only to assure the House that I was most anxious to consult the Legislature on every matter concerning food, and if there was delay in calling a meeting of the Standing Committee in the past it was only because we were busy formulating a new policy. And I must confess that I was not quite sure of the existence of a committee specially for food.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** What a confession!

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** There has been no committee for food; there is no committee today for food, and that is why I took up the matter at once that the Food Department should have a special committee. That is why I move the motion today.

I wish to assure the House that there is no intention on my part to ignore the committee of the Legislature. I consider them 'supreme advisers', as some one has said. In my speech at the opening of the Fourth All-India Food Conference, I made public my intention to associate public opinion with our work. That intention I still hold. But I feel that it is of the highest

12 Noon. importance that whatever other bodies may be set up for the purpose, the Legislature should have its own standing committee for my department, as is the case with other departments. I do not wish to amalgamate this committee with other bodies. I may tell the House that apart from a committee of the Legislature, which I hope will be set up as the result of this motion, I have under active consideration the constitution of a non-official body to act in an advisory capacity of a more general character and representing all important elements of the public opinion. I have also in accordance with the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee-

under urgent examination at the moment the constitution of a committee on prices. The Committee also recommended an expert panel of not more than six drawn from the trade whose advice should be taken on appropriate occasions. We are examining whether or not this expert panel should be something separate from the bodies which I have already mentioned or should be formed from the expert members of those bodies. We have on the one hand to keep in touch with public opinion and obtain the necessary expert advice, and on the other to avoid the undue multiplication of committees and bodies of that kind, or the formation of bodies which are unwieldy or in other words unfitted to consider what are technical problems. This is a matter involving very careful planning and thinking out and as we have not yet come to a decision I shall press on with their examination as rapidly as I can. I hope I have explained what my friend, Sir F. E. James, wanted—he is not in the House, I see, now. As regards the amendment moved by Mr. Essak Sait; I regret that Government is unable to accept it; but I would accept Dr. Banerjee's modification of it, if that would be acceptable to the Mover of the amendment.

**Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait:** Yes; if, as I understand, it is ten from this House and five from the Council of State, I accept the modification.

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

"That for the figure '3' in line two, the figure, '10' be substituted."

The motion was adopted.

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

"That this Assembly do proceed to elect in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct 10 non-official Members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Department of Food during the remainder of the financial year 1943-44."

The motion was adopted.

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

**Mr. J. D. Tyson (Secretary, Department of Education, Health and Lands):** Sir, I move:

"That this Assembly do proceed to elect, in such manner as may be approved by the Honourable the the President, a member to represent this House on the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, for the period 1944-46 (both years inclusive) in pursuance of the provisions of clause 11 (Secondly) of the scheme for the Administration and Management of the Properties and Funds of the Institute, which was published in the *Gazette of India* with the notification of the Department of Education, Health and Lands No. F. 53-1/37, dated the 2nd December, 1937, as subsequently amended."

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

"That this Assembly do proceed to elect, in such manner as may be approved by the Honourable the President, a member to represent this House on the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, for the period 1944-46 (both years inclusive) in pursuance of the provisions of clause 11 (Secondly) of the scheme for the Administration and Management of the Properties and Funds of the Institute, which was published in the *Gazette of India* with the notification of the Department of Education, Health and Lands No. F. 53-1/37, dated the 2nd December, 1937, as subsequently amended."

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani (Tirhut Division: Muhammadan):** May I know from the Honourable the Mover of this motion how many sittings of this Council there have been during the period of last two years?

**Mr. J. D. Tyson:** This is not exactly a Committee; this is the Council of the Institute; it is not a committee.

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** I knew that, and I said so.

**Mr. J. D. Tyson:** I am afraid I do not know how many times they sat.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban):** May I say a word about it, with your permission? The governing body of the Indian Institute of Science consists of 14 persons, of whom one is elected from this House; and this House has from the beginning sent a member to that body. As a rule, three meetings of the governing body are held every year, and our learned friend, Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad, is at the present moment our representative on this governing body.

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** I wanted information as to how many meetings were held.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Three ordinarily.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member cannot make two speeches. The question is:

"That this Assembly do proceed to elect, in such manner as may be approved by the Honourable the President, a member to represent this House on the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, for the period 1944—46 (both years inclusive) in pursuance of the provisions of clause 11 (Secondly) of the scheme for the Administration and Management of the Properties and Funds of the Institute, which was published in the *Gazette of India* with the notification of the Department of Education, Health and Lands No. F. 53-1/37, dated the 2nd December, 1937, as subsequently amended."

The motion was adopted.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I may inform Honourable Members that for the purposes of elections of members to the Standing Committee of the Food Department and on the Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, the Notice Office will be open to receive nominations up to 12 Noon on Monday, the 15th November and that the elections, if necessary, will take place on Wednesday, the 17th November, 1943. The elections which will be held between the hours of 10-30 A.M. and 1 P.M. in the Assistant Secretary's room in the Council House, New Delhi, will be conducted in accordance with the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

#### MOTION RE THE FOOD SITUATION.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava** (Food Member): Sir, I beg to move:

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

I move this motion with a heavy sense of responsibility because I am keenly conscious of the fact that we are to-day in the presence of a tragic calamity affecting a large number of our countrymen. Let me assure the House that the Government of India fully share their anxiety and that nothing which is capable of bringing speedy relief to the distressed people will be left undone.

Sir, I propose to lay before the House as shortly and simply as possible the practical steps which the Government of India have taken in co-operation with the provinces and States to deal with the situation since the House met last.

Our first task was to mobilise the surpluses available within the country and to ensure their speedy despatch to the deficit areas. The revised basic plan which came into operation from the first August aimed at a distribution of 14 lakhs tons of foodgrains to deficit areas within the period of eight months ending in March 1944. During the first three months of its operation, over 6½ lakhs tons of foodgrains have been sent to the deficit areas. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance which we have received from the Department of War Transport and Transport Services in achieving this result. The principal recipients of the quantities have been Bengal with 219,000 tons, Bombay 76,000 tons, Madras 77,000 tons, Travancore and Cochin 46,000 tons, and the Deccan States 8,500 tons. I also acknowledge with gratitude the additional surpluses voluntarily declared by the provinces and States subsequent to the formulation of the revised basic plan, which have amounted to 2,22,000 tons. I mentioned these figures with no sense of complacency; so long as there is anywhere in India a surplus which might have been procured and used for a deficit area but has not been procured I cannot rest content. But I think, Sir, that acknowledgment is due to those who have made, what has been achieved, possible.

On the question of exports I have already announced that exports from India have been stopped with the exception of small quantities required mainly for Indian seamen sailing through the Indian Ocean area and for *bona fide* stores for ships which sail from the Indian ports. In the matter of imports we have continuously pressed upon His Majesty's Government the supreme necessity of importing large quantities of foodgrains from abroad to make up the gaps in our own supply. His Majesty's Government have acceded to this request

and have allocated shipping sufficient to import substantial quantities before the end of the current calendar year. This involved a considerable redistribution of tonnage, a process which takes time, but my latest information is that 41,000 tons of foodgrains have already arrived and far greater quantities are on the way. I would like to acknowledge here the generous offers of assistance which we have received from the Commonwealth—from Australia, from Canada, from South Africa and from New Zealand.

During this time we have continued our efforts to control the rise of prices and secure their return to that reasonable level which is of such fundamental significance to the average consumer. Since the free trade experiment terminated, the power to control both prices and movements of grains which was taken away from the provinces in the eastern region was given back to them. In most cases provinces have re-imposed price control, whether by statutory price or by ceiling price, and have taken steps to regulate movements of grains. These measures have in certain instances resulted in the temporary disappearance of stocks, but there is no doubt that the measures taken have on the whole, operated as a wholesome check on rising prices, and in many cases a fall in the prices has been secured. In Bihar and Assam the market prices are being quoted to-day below the maximum control prices fixed by the Provincial Governments. In the United Provinces also the market prices have registered a continuous decline, and in the Punjab the wheat markets have recently shown a downward tendency.

Sir, I would now pass on to the other aspects of the situation which have been claiming our urgent attention. While the situation in all the deficit areas, and more particularly in Bombay, parts of Madras, Travancore, Cochin and the Deccan States, and the cyclone-affected areas of Orissa, has been a source of anxiety to us throughout the period, the situation in Bengal has naturally claimed our first attention. I have visited the province myself and seen with my own eyes the extent of the calamity which has fallen upon the unfortunate people of Bengal. They have my fullest sympathy. My most urgent task has been, I felt, to speed up deliveries of foodgrains to that province and to ensure by all the means in my power that the material is in the hands of the Provincial Government to carry out their schemes of relief. We have succeeded to this extent, namely, that the daily average rate of arrival of foodgrains and pulses into Calcutta, as shown by the railway statistics during the period June to October, was over 8,300 tons, as against a daily average of 1,600 tons for the corresponding period of the previous year. I am glad to be able to say to-day that in addition to the amounts which the Provincial Government are now sending out to the districts they have a month's reserve of foodgrains for Calcutta itself. As regards distribution into districts, despatches have during the last month risen from a few hundred tons to a thousand tons a day, in addition to the arrangements which have been made to send from the Punjab direct to the districts a large quantity of wheat products. Arrangements which I shall describe in a moment are now in progress to double this figure, in addition to the arrangements which have been made to send wheat products from the Punjab in substantial quantities direct to the districts without passing through Calcutta.

In this connection, Sir, I must offer my thanks to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief for the help which he has given us and is giving in assisting the Provincial Government with officers, staff and troops, to assist them in the difficult task of distribution. A Major General has been lent to organise the bulk movement of food grains from Calcutta to the main depots in the districts and a large number of troops, including a number of motorised units, have been drafted into the area for the sole purpose of co-operating with the authorities in the district in securing onward movement from the depots to the distributing centres at which the hungry people are being fed. In all this work, the army is not only helping to guard the precious foodstuffs, to prevent looting and pilferage, to build necessary temporary storage capacity and guard it during storage but is acting as a very useful source of intelligence and information regarding the needs of the entire area. In addition, Sir, the

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

Army authorities are doing all in their power to assist in the onerous task of providing doctors, hospitals and medical relief. The Bengal Government themselves were handicapped first of all by shortage of stocks and then by difficulties of movement and it is hoped, now that these difficulties have so largely been removed, their efforts to open a large number of free kitchens and group feeding centres together with the schemes of rationing which are being developed, for instance, at Dacca and Faridpur, will be able to afford the necessary relief. The House will, I am sure, desire me to acknowledge the encouragement and inspiration which we have received from the visit to Bengal which was paid by His Excellency the Viceroy within a few days of his taking up of his office.

To revert for a moment to the question of supply. The House will recall that H. E. the Governor of Bengal estimated the minimum quantity of food grains necessary for Bengal from outside during the three months October to December at the figure of 250 thousand tons. We immediately planned the despatch of this quantity to Bengal and 82 thousand tons were sent during October. We hope that our arrangements will secure that the figure given by the Governor will be substantially exceeded. We attach the greatest importance to two points in Bengal, namely, the rationing of Calcutta and the procurement of the *aman* crop. Our Rationing Adviser has been down to Bengal on more than one occasion and remained for considerable periods working in close co-operation with the provincial authorities on the gigantic task of preparing a rationing scheme for Calcutta which I hope will very shortly be seen in operation. We have also sent another officer of the Department to collaborate with the Provincial Government in the preparation of their *aman* procurement scheme, the final details of which are now under urgent consideration. Although we have to some extent been unavoidably pre-occupied with the situation in Bengal, we have constantly kept before us the needs of Travancore, Cochin, Bombay, the Deccan States and Madras. I should like to refer particularly to the success of the rationing scheme in Bombay and to the fact that there, as also in the case of Madras, my information is that the population, so far from finding rationing to be some sort of penalty or nuisance, have found it a welcome boon.

Simultaneously with the execution of these short term remedies, we have been concerned with the heavy task of formulating a long term policy on the basis of the recommendations of the Food Grains Policy Committee. I need not here traverse the extensive recommendations which have been made by that Committee. They are well known to the House, as also the fact that we have accepted the report as the basis of our future policy. I trust that this House will agree that we have lost no time in securing the views of the different administrations concerned and in coming to decisions on major points. I feel that the patient and continuous labours of the Committee and the consideration of their recommendations by all concerned has led, for the first time, to the evolution of an All-India policy. The views expressed at the Fourth Food Conference indicated very wide and substantial agreement and I am confident of securing the whole hearted co-operation and support which alone can enable the Centre to secure that the resources of the country are brought to account and are distributed on an equitable basis. I have made it clear, Sir, that I intend to exercise the degree of superintendence and control at every stage which is necessary to secure success and I claim the support of this Legislature in carrying out that intention into effect. Under the revised basic plan, we have to secure as accurate an account as possible of the surpluses and deficits and move the surpluses to the deficit areas. At the Fourth Food Conference the Provinces agreed that the final determination of the surpluses and deficits and the allocation of stocks was to rest with the Centre. For procurement, we decided to rely on the Provincial Government agencies for the simple reason that in the state of emergency in which we find ourselves procurement must be a continuous process and not wait while any country-wide alternative machinery was being devised and put into action.

Sir, as to the prices, we have determined that a statutory price control for all foodgrains all over India is the goal to which we must work, although conditions are such that progress towards it has to be by stages. In our prices policy we have no intention of pushing down prices below a level where they give a fair return to the producer and we intend by every means in our power to protect the producer against undue rise of prices in the commodities which he requires. We intend to remove progressively those price divergencies in different areas which give rise to so much controversy. But we are convinced that control of the prices of foodgrains is an essential factor not only in the feeding of the poor but in the whole economic structure of the country.

I now turn to rationing. Rationing in urban areas, we are persuaded, is an essential factor in the general scheme and the more its benefits become known the more irresistible will be the demand for its expansion.

Lastly, I shall not fail to press continually for the importation of foodgrains in quantities which will ensure the restoration of public confidence and the establishment of reserves which will enable us to deal with emergencies and facilitate effective price control. Our policy on all these points was fully stated at the Food Conference and widely published and I would like to ask this House to endorse that policy. Sir, I am deeply conscious of the necessity of associating non-official public opinion with the work of the food administration throughout the country. The Government of India has impressed upon the Provincial Governments the importance of this and I have given my active consideration in setting up a body at the Centre in an advisory capacity fully representative of non-official public opinion. While we have been concentrating our attention on the question of efficient procurement and distribution of food resources throughout the country, we are fully aware of the paramount importance of increasing those resources by an intensification of the "Grow more food" campaign. My Honourable Colleague, the Member for Education, Health and Lands, has given his personal and constant attention to this matter and the provinces and States are fully alive to the necessity for taking active measures to realise the increased production targets set for them in respect of the coming crops. I will not attempt to prophesy regarding the prospects of the coming *Kharif* crops, but the House will be interested to know that, according to the first All-India rice forecast, the acreage under rice alone has gone up by about four million acres. So far, the condition of the rice and other *Kharif* crops, millets and maize, has been reported good almost without exception throughout the country.

Sir, I have attempted to give the House some picture of the activities of the Department under my charge during the last three months. I cannot be satisfied and shall never be satisfied so long as hunger and distress exist, but I claim that we have been successful in maintaining a steady flow of grains from the surplus to the deficit areas according to pre-arranged programmes. The delivery of grain to most of the deficit areas has enabled them with the assistance of their own efforts to keep the situation under control and in Bengal we are able to show a considerable improvement in the supply position. The export of foodgrains from the country has been stopped and we have secured the definite assurance of substantial quantities of imports from abroad. The provinces and states are constantly improving their procurement machinery and mobilising their food-grain resources for the purpose of domestic consumption and export. Rationing is being widely and increasingly adopted and, above all, we have hammered out and secured agreement to a policy on a common All-India basis. It now remains for India to show that she can be united in carrying out that policy to a success. In the task which lies ahead of me I need all the support and guidance which my colleagues, the Members of this House, can give me. I wish to assure them that their behests will have my first and foremost consideration. A matter of this gravity admits of no party or political considerations. I am sure we are all actuated and inspired by one and the only one consideration, namely, to bring relief to our starving countrymen. To that aim I am devoting myself night and day in all humility and sincerity.



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

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

Before the House proceeds further, I should like to know from the Honourable Members whether they desire to have any time-limit for the speeches that are going to be made.

**Honourable Members:** Yes, Yes.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): On the last occasion, the Leaders of Parties were allowed 30 minutes and the other Members 20 minutes each and the Government Member was allowed one hour or more. Will that suit the convenience of the House on this occasion also?

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan** (Agra Division: Muhammadan Rural): No, Sir. I would like to propose that the Leaders of Parties should have one hour each and the Movers of amendments half an hour each and the other Members 20 minutes each.

**Honourable Members:** No, No.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): As there is a difference of opinion, I cannot decide. Honourable Members must decide this matter amongst themselves and let me know what is their decision.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi** (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, we accept your suggestion.

**Some Honourable Members:** No, No.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Very well; then, so far, there will be no time-limit.

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** Is there any time limit for Movers of Amendments?

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): There will be no time limit for Movers of Amendments, either. Perhaps the amendments be moved first.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee** (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, before the amendments are moved, may I make a suggestion in this regard? If you kindly permit, the amendments may be moved on Monday. The different Parties are trying to arrive at a settlement with regard to amendments, and if some time is given, we shall be ready with our amendments. In the meantime, the debate may proceed.

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** Then there will be no speeches on any of the amendments.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If that will suit the convenience of Honourable Members generally, I will not stand in the way. But it must be clearly understood that if the amendments are not moved today and if they are moved on Monday, then any Honourable Member who has spoken today will not be able to speak on the amendment again.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Quite right.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I do not know if that would suit Honourable Members generally.

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** We want to move our amendment today, and if possible we will arrive at an agreement between the Parties by next Monday. If we arrive at an agreement, then it will be easy to move another amendment to this amendment.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If notice of that amendment is given in time, that will be taken up. Does any one wish to move his amendment now?

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury** (Assam: Muhammadan): Yes, Sir, I wish to move my amendment.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Yes, the Honourable Member may move.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** Sir, I move.

"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."

Sir, we meet today under very different circumstances. Last time when we debated the food situation in the country, we were only threatened with starvation, but now starvation and death are facing us all over the country. Now, the circumstances have changed. We are losing thousands of our brethren every day. The worst of it is, had these deaths been due to natural causes, one would not have felt so much. This is man-made famine and it has been admitted to be so by all that under the cruel hand of the oppressors many unfortunate people are perishing. It is the duty of the House to pray for the departed souls and I pray that God, in His Infinite Mercy, may grant succour to the departed souls. In the last Food Debate, we brought to the notice of the Government; on the platform and in the Press and in every possible way that death *en bloc* was staring us in the face. We failed to move the Government at that time. The Government were very apathetic. People with human heart felt for these poor people and many went to enquire about the condition in Bengal. Sir Jagadish Prasad, an ex-Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council felt for the people of Bengal and paid a visit to some of the places where people were dying in hundreds. He brought out a memorandum putting forward the results of his investigations during his tour and he invited all the Government officials to go and look at the pitiable condition in which the people of Bengal were dying. Practically no heed was given to his memorandum by the Government. I do not remember to have seen any Government Member going there.

**The Honourable Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** We had all been there, and the Viceroy also went there.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** Our brethren in Bengal were dying in thousands. We sought the help of the Government, but we did not get any appreciable help. The Mayor of Calcutta, in his helplessness, appealed to the British Premier and to the President of the United States and requested them to come to the rescue of Bengal. The President of the United States gave a reply saying that shipping was not available and so he could not help. Our British Premier sent a reply, I am told, but I have not yet seen its contents. At least for a month he did not send any reply. Things went from bad to worse and our people began to die in thousands every day. Last of all, the people had no help; they died in misery without any help from outside. I believe most Members here have read the report of the Honourable Pandit Kunzru who said that he had found people dying like cats and dogs and bodies being eaten up by jackals and vultures and corpses lying about in different parts of the country; and he specially referred to the Contai sub-division of the Midnapore district. At that time, impotent and powerless as we are, we felt ashamed that we could not render any help to the people. The destitute people in Bengal felt they had no friend, no Government, no Viceroy, no Parliament, no Secretary of State and even no King. That was the condition in which our brethren in Bengal have died and are dying *en bloc*. Sir, it is difficult to estimate the total number of people who have perished in Bengal on account of these deaths from starvation. According to the estimate of the Secretary of State it is one thousand per week, but the Honourable the Food Member was doubtful about it as appeared from the reply that he gave to questions in this House the other day. The leading paper *Statesman* made a rough calculation and found that it was not less than 11,000 a week; but neither the Secretary of State nor the *Statesman* represents what is happening in the interior of the country. In the last food debate in the Calcutta Corporation the Mayor gave the figure, and as he is a man of the country and is on the spot his version should be given more credence than that of any one else. According to his estimate Bengal has lost 16 million people through deaths by starvation. It has got only one analogy, the famine of 1866 in which one-fourth of the population perished. In this famine one-fourth of the people has already perished and God knows how many more will perish in the next few months.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** That is an entirely wrong estimate.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** It is the Mayor of Calcutta who made that statement.

Mr. Amery is putting all blame on the Provincial Government; he says powers have been delegated to them in connection with the food problems and therefore they themselves are not very much responsible for what is happening. But in 1866 there was no provincial autonomy, no dyarchy; the bureaucracy was then in full power; but even then they could not foresee what was going to happen and could not manage the food problem with the result that a quarter of the population died. Sir, to throw the blame on other shoulders is a very easy thing, but I consider that the blame lies on the bureaucracy and on no one else. It reminds me of what happened in England in 1874 when the report of a suspected death from starvation was reported in a paper known as *Friends of India*. The whole country was in commotion for days and there was an inquiry as to the cause of the suspected death of that one man. Now that a quarter of the people have died, according to the Mayor of Calcutta, there is no move on the part of Britain to ascertain the cause or render any help. It is surprising that the noble race of Britons has stooped so low that they cannot be compared to the people of England in 1874. It seems that they are taking very little interest in Indian affairs now. If the suspected death of one man in 1874 from starvation put the whole country in commotion, is there any reason why the death of so many thousands of people would not move even the Viceroy to pay a visit to the afflicted part of Bengal? Are these the successors of that noble race of Britons? A very low specimen indeed! We heard of a food debate in the House of Commons the other day. There are some 600 members in the House and only 30 or 35 people attended; and the Prime Minister who is always busy in saving the British Empire from liquidation did not have the time to go and attend this food debate. If the Prime Minister were here I would tell him that he has suffered a major defeat in this war on account of what is happening in Bengal and this defeat has shaken the very foundation of the British Empire; I do not know when that foundation will be in order again.

Now, Sir, let us go to the cause of the famine. It must be admitted at the outset that it is not due to nature. In one sentence it may be put like this; Government remained inactive and allowed the prices to rise beyond the purchasing capacity of the people with the result that thousands and lakhs could not procure the money for purchasing food and died accordingly. That is the sum and substance of the whole thing; and I am not alone in this conclusion; even the *Statesman* has come to this conclusion. That is at the root of the whole thing. It is going on even now. As I said in my speech in the last debate, military people go to the market to make purchases. It may be

interesting for the Honourable Members to know that in certain districts a Captain goes to the market with a garland of one hundred-rupee notes put round his neck, and he would pay to rice sellers nothing less than one hundred-rupee notes. Even if the price is 60, or 90 or 10 he would pay a hundred-rupee note for that. The result naturally is that the sellers do not sell at lower rates. That is what the labour in Bengal jute factories and in Assam tea estates had to face. They could not get rice at lower price. Even these people had to purchase rice at almost the same price at which rice was sold to the military people. The price went up to Rs. 40 a maund. The wage-earner could not afford to purchase enough to feed himself and his family. The result has been, and here I speak from my own experience, that the middle-class people and wage-earners have been living on one meal a day practically for the last four or five months.

The Central Government allowed the Local Government to put restrictions on sale of rice and paddy, but after trying it for sometime when the Provincial Government almost managed the whole thing in their own way, they at once introduced free trade. That upset the whole arrangement of the Provincial

Government because the price jumped to the level in Bengal, in Assam, in Bihar and in other places.

Talking of the Assam Government, they put a limit on stocks. Under the orders no factory could stock in excess of 20 maunds in reserve. But we find that that order remained on paper only. In the course of six weeks, free trade was removed again, and this again put the local authorities in a very difficult situation. They did not know what to do.

Let us now take the case of Bengal. Their estimated shortage of foodstuffs for six months—from April to September was:—

Rice . . . . .	4,50,000 tons
Wheat . . . . .	1,20,000 tons
Millets and maize . . . . .	2,000 tons.

From the reply of the Honourable the Food Member the other day, we got the following figures of import of foodstuffs into Bengal during the same period—April to September:

Rice . . . . .	3,90,000 tons.
Wheat and wheat products . . . . .	1,21,000 tons.
Millets and maize . . . . .	48,500 tons.

So the deficit was only in rice, that is to say they got 3,90,000 tons of rice against their total deficit of 4,50,000 tons. In wheat and wheat products Bengal received over and above what it needed. And so is the case with regard to millets and maize. May I know then, what happened to all these imports? Where did it go? Where is this excess gone? I do not see any reason, when Government's estimate of deficit was made up from outside, why a single person should have died in Bengal for want of food. That is a question which should be enquired into if any enquiry committee—call it Royal Commission, or whatever you like—is appointed. Who got the benefit of the excess rice, wheat and millets, and why were these commodities not made available to the starving masses? Sir, many ugly rumours are talked about by the people in this connection, but they need not be mentioned here in this House.

Another factor I should like to mention in this connection, which is responsible for this trouble, is that as soon as Burma operations were started, the Government of Bengal seized all the available boats so that they may not fall into the hands of the Japanese. This is one of the reasons why this excess of rice and wheat was not available to the people. As is known to every body, the internal communication of Bengal depends entirely on boats. But, Sir, these boats were seized for fear of their falling into the hands of the enemy, but they have not yet been released. The result is what is happening today. If this boat communication had not been interfered with, I believe, at least some portion of rice, wheat and millets, which the Government of Bengal got from outside, would have reached the hands of the people. I may be excused for saying that in this matter the Government of India and the Government of Bengal are entirely responsible. They did not stress the importance of boat communication to the military authorities. If they had done that, the military authorities would certainly have released boats for internal communication and transport in Bengal.

I come now to the debate in the House of Lords. One or two points are interesting. I will not trouble the House very much. Mr. Amery in the House of Commons admitted that his Government had failed in handling the food situation, but he exonerated himself by saying that his Government had not failed "dishonourably." His failure is responsible for the death of one quarter of the population of Bengal and still he says his failure is not dishonourable. This man has always been false to the salt of his birth country and the less said about him the better.

Mr. Pethick Lawrence, the financial expert of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, opined that he did not agree with Mr. Amery's statement. According to him the Government of India failed to handle the situation when

[Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury.]  
 the catastrophe occurred. By the Government of India he means the personnel holding appointments at the time both in England and in India. The *Statesman* also said the other day that the outstanding largest factor has been the shameful lack of foresight and planning capacity by India's own Government, Central and Provincial. I repeat it, so that the House may know it themselves—"the outstanding largest factor has been shameful lack of foresight and planning capacity by India's own Government, Central and Provincial." I have some of my best friends on the Treasury Benches: what I have said above is not my own remark. It is the remark of the *Statesman*, a very leading paper; and I think my friends cannot escape the blame thrown on them. The *Statesman* continues further: "A substantial share of the blame for deaths from starvation rests on them."

So my friends on the Treasury Benches must bear a substantial portion of the blame for the starvation deaths in Bengal. That is not only my opinion; but I am quoting the opinion of a very respectable journal, the *Statesman*. It is now established that the Government of India, as defined by Mr. Pethick Lawrence, is responsible for the catastrophe that has happened and is happening in Bengal. The people who are responsible stand very prominent in the Government of India—one is the Secretary of State; another is the Viceroy and the third is the Governor of Bengal. I wish that the spirit of Burke is not dead: I wish that Burkes would spring up in thousands and demand the impeachment of these criminals who are responsible for the death of one-fourth of the population of Bengal . . . . .

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed** (Leader of the House): One fourth of the population of Bengal—you mean 16 millions have died?

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** I now come to my friends on the Treasury Benches here. A verdict of incompetence has been passed, so far as they are concerned. They are incompetent and they have not got the capacity to handle the food situation in India. I think this verdict will be enforced by the will of the people in this country. I do not see any reason why, in these difficult circumstances, if you are incompetent, you should continue in office: if you are incompetent . . . . .

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member must address the Chair.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** I am surprised that when a verdict like that has been pronounced on them, that they are shamefully lacking in the power of planning and devising means of handling the food situation in these difficult times, what right have they to keep on sitting here and witness the death of the remainder of the famine stricken people of Bengal? I hope that good sense will prevail and they will soon take the right decision.

In the House of Commons debate Mr. Pethick Lawrence put the main cause of the distress in Bengal as due to inflation. According to him the main cause was inflation. I do not see my Honourable friend, Sir Jeremy Raisman, in his seat—he is responsible for this inflation . . . . .

**An Honourable Member:** The inflation is here.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** It is not my own words that I am repeating; it is the verdict of a member of the House of Commons; he says that inflation is mainly responsible for what has happened in India, and Mr. Amery admitted it.

Sir John Anderson in winding up the debate made a very funny remark about this: he said that he is a good expert in handling the financial side of the question, but his representative here and the personnel of the Government of India were all gray-haired babies, inexperienced, and so could not handle the situation. They have no experience of handling these things although they have been getting very big salaries. If my friend could have brought to our notice that they have got no experience of handling these matters, we would have doubled their pay and salaries so that they might get accustomed and gain some more experience: we would have even sent them

to a mental hospital to get rid of mental defect and then come back and handle these questions . . . . .

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I think the Honourable Member had better address himself to the Resolution.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** Now, Sir I come to the question of remedies. I have spoken so long about what has happened. According to all food experts in America and Britain, the food situation will be acuter in all countries in 1944 and 1945. And what action are we taking to avoid the danger of this coming difficulty? I must say at the outset that the new Viceroy has begun his work in a practical way, and from the manner in which he is moving I hope that he will see that relief reaches the interior of Bengal so that the people may not die of starvation. That is my hope, I personally believe it, because talkers are never workers.

**The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed:** Hear, hear! Talkers are never workers.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** The Honourable the Food Member has mentioned in his speech that under the instructions of the Government of India some Governments have fixed ceiling prices on rice in the hope that everything will be all right. We have our own experience of ceiling prices. The Government of Assam, the Government of Bengal have been fixing the ceiling prices. I have got many friends and relations in Bengal and I learn from them that rice is selling at Rs. 40 per maund even though the Government have fixed the price at Rs. 20. I come from Assam; from the Sylhet district. There the ceiling price is Rs. 22-8-0, but rice is not available for less than Rs. 30 or 32.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** The market price in Assam is lower than the ceiling price to-day.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** We approached some of the authorities in that connection and one had the courtesy to tell us, "You either eat rice, or eat order paper, we cannot help".

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan** (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions; Muhammadan Rural): Not order paper, but order on paper, because there is no paper, there is paper scarcity.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury:** That is the situation so far as the ceiling prices are concerned. I find, although my friends are doing their utmost to help, they are still undecided as to what they should do. I find from the conclusions of the Food Committee's report which was handed over to us yesterday—I find that the Government are not yet prepared to do the most satisfactory thing. Conclusion No. 33 says:

"From the standpoint of principle the only completely satisfactory solution would be a Central Government Foodgrains Monopoly. But the problems of staffing, organisation and administration involved are so great and the needs of the situation so pressing, that the necessary time is lacking."

They think there is a solution, but they do not like to work on that solution—why? Because there is no staff, there is no money, there is this excuse, there is that excuse! If I had had anything to do with this, I would not have sacrificed a single life, but I would have spent crores of rupees—not this sort of cowardice, this sort of excuse, no staff, no money, to handle the situation. If you think this is the best solution, act according to it, cost what it may in money. Money cannot be any question in preserving human life. Our friends are still indecisive. In conclusion 37, they say:

"The general objective of all procurement machinery must be to eliminate competitive buying to the greatest practicable extent. This can most easily be achieved by either confining a particular buyer to a particular area, or if the unit of purchase is to be the entire Province or State, using a single buying firm or a syndicate of firms, or a single official buyer."

Here again they are undecided. The distress is so great, so uncommon, so unique, that lakhs of our people have perished and, still the gentlemen who are responsible for averting all these disasters are still undecided as to what to do—whether to do it this way, or that way and they have been holding food conferences one after another. Again,—

"In considering the elimination of competitive buying, the possibility of using transport facilities to ensure priority for official procurement as against buyers on their own account.

[Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury.]

and as a means of controlling competition, has not received the general attention which it deserves."

How to check competitive purchases—they have not yet any definite plans in their mind, and one-fourth of the population have already perished. I ask, when will they come to a decision? When the entire population dies? And for whom will they be here if the entire population dies before they can take any steps?

We have passed one year of distress, and another season is coming now.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Does the Honourable Member wish to conclude his speech now? It is half past one now.

**Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury**: I am concluding in a minute. It is a very intricate subject and hence I am taking time. We have paid the penalty of deaths after the last harvest season and this season. The new harvest season is coming, and if my Honourable friends here and those in the provinces cannot control prices, Government measures will have no meaning, Government orders will have no meaning if they cannot check or control the prices when the new harvest is coming, and God alone knows what will happen then. Sir, I move.

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

"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.'"

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan**: Sir, may I just place before you the agreement that has been arrived at between the Party Leaders. It is to the effect that Tuesday should be reserved for Leaders and the Government reply.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I cannot do that. That depends upon the Leaders and the Government. It does not depend upon me.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan**: This is the agreement . . . .

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): It has nothing to do with me.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan**: I wish to place it before you: The agreement is that the question hour on Monday and Tuesday be omitted and the replies be printed as usual in the proceedings, that Movers of amendments be allowed 30 minutes and other speakers be allowed 20 minutes each.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim). As regards questions, I don't know that there is general agreement. There may be many Members who may wish to put questions.

**Some Honourable Members**: There is general agreement.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If that is the agreement arrived at and if Members don't put questions, then the answers will be printed as usual but I cannot omit the question paper. As regards the time-limit, I don't know whether it is desired that the time limit should be imposed from today.

**Honourable Members**: Yes.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan**: Yes, after the luncheon hour.

**Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta** (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadian Rural): Is Tuesday reserved for Leaders alone?

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim). It is not reserved. I did not agree with that suggestion, if the Honourable Member had heard me.

The Assembly then adjourned for Lunch till Three of the Clock.

The Assembly re-assembled after Lunch at Three of the Clock, Mr. Hoosienbhoj A. Lalljee (one of the Panel of Chairmen) in the Chair.

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** Sir, I beg to move:

"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.

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 measure 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."

Sir, as you have seen, the Resolution recommends two things and I will speak on both those two things separately. With regard to the first portion, I will say that after having listened to the Honourable Member in charge of the Food Department, I think I can say that he has told us the same thing which we heard last year. Mr. N. N. Sarkar gave assurances on the floor of the House that the Government would bring in some kind of relief and he also said that the proposals which were brought forward by the Government were so good as to be fully justified. But today we find that the present Government condemns all those actions which were taken by the previous Members who were in charge of this subject. The controlled price of wheat in 1942 was Rs. 5 per maund. Government found afterwards that because of this controlled price, wheat was going underground and the profiteers were making profit. So, they began to think what to do next. Sir, the Government machinery always moves slowly and generally when the calamity is over, they begin to find out the remedy. The result was that by the time they could devise methods that should be adopted in order to meet those people who were violating the laws and who were selling at higher prices, the condition of the people of the country became very bad and there was lot of suffering in the country. Then they brought another remedy which was to a greater extent responsible for the other greater calamity which followed it and which they themselves admit in the paper which has been supplied to us. They removed the control and began to purchase wheat themselves. They themselves say that the result of it was that wheat began to flow into the market and the prices went up from Rs. 5 to Rs. 12 a maund and the Government had great consolation and was quite happy in purchasing 1,80,000 maunds of wheat. The object of removing the control was simply to enable the Government to purchase wheat at whatever price they could get it. There can be no greater condemnation of the Food Department and the advisers of the Government than this that it resulted in such a great calamity in the country. The result was that instead of getting 8 seers of wheat for a rupee we could get only 3 seers and a little more. The cultivator who had sold all his crops at 8 seers to a rupee came to know that he could not buy wheat for less than Rs. 12 a maund for his seed. The result was that the cultivator refused to sell his wheat this year because the Government did not give him any protection. The price of wheat in the Punjab today is Rs. 12 per maund and in Delhi also the price is the same, but in the United Provinces across the Jumna the price of wheat is only 2½ seers to a rupee. How can you expect a poor man whose income is about Rs. 16 or Rs. 20 a month or a clerk who is getting Rs. 60 a month in your Departments to live when wheat is being sold so dearly? You want a B. A. and an M. A. in your Supply Department and yet you pay him only Rs. 60 a month. Even the typist girls are getting Rs. 125 in other Departments. Then, there is a general rise in the prices of



[Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan.]

everything else. Good milk costs 8 annas a seer. If a clerk has a child to be fed on milk because the mother is ill, he cannot feed his child because he cannot afford to spend 8 annas a day on milk alone. Then, the price of fuel has gone up. In fact, the price of everything else has gone up.

Major General Wood tried to justify in this House that he was the only person who knew that everything was right and that those of us who were giving advice were absolutely wrong. But today we find that we are right and he was wrong. We foretold that he was doing something which he did not know. He knew nothing about the country. Why did he come to give advice before this House. He did not understand the mentality of the people of this country. He therefore had no business to give advice to people and thus bring calamity to the whole country. I wish Mr. N. R. Sarkar had been here today to face the music and to justify his action as a Member of the Executive Council. His own speeches would have been quoted against him, and he would have been asked to justify his actions by the results that had happened. He was merely playing into the hands of his officers whose one idea was to make purchases on behalf of Government without caring in the least what would happen to the people of the country if no foodstuffs are left for their consumption. Of course, in the Delhi Province, you can get everything at high prices. In my own Province, there are many places where you can get nothing. Everything is concealed. You cannot get medicines at the price you want. Malaria is raging in an epidemic form and hundreds and thousands of people are dying because people have got no money to buy medicines. This is the state of things to which we have been reduced. There may be some big Government servants with high salaries, there may be big contractors who are able to get anything they want. If you go to villages, there may be some contractors who might give some small work for cottage industries, and thus they may feed themselves. But that is not sufficient. In U. P., Government allowed price to rise. They collected six annas more in the rupee from the tenants by way of land revenue. The Government collect this extra money and pay their servants. What about those persons who are not Government servants? They are all suffering. I do not think the Government of India have taken this into consideration. My Honourable friend, Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava, may have taken charge only now. But I consider the Government as a continuous body and this Food Department has existed for the last year and a half and it has done grave wrong to this country. It is therefore necessary to investigate these wrongs with the aid of independent people. We do not want people appointed by the Government. They should be people of character, integrity and impartiality who will be able to decide who is responsible for this food muddle.

Sometime back, I was referring to milk. Any poor man with an income of Rs. 20 or Rs. 25 cannot be expected to give milk to his children. He cannot get even one meal a day on that meagre income. He cannot get vegetables, he cannot get meat, he cannot get cereals. While the poor people are suffering terribly, the richer classes and the Government are sitting tight because they do not care for the poor. The richer classes purchase things at whatever price in the market. Last time, I said that mere controlling of price will not do. You are not able to control the price effectively. If you control the price, then control the commodity also. Take the entire stock and find out in every village how much stock is there. You have got your *patwaris*, your *kanungos*, your Naib tahsildars, your Tahsildars, your sub-Divisional officers and your District Magistrates and a host of other machinery through whom you can get the entire stock in the villages. In my own Province, U. P., it is said that no one can keep more than five maunds of food grains for one family in urban area. But the rural areas are excluded from this prohibition. The result is that the *baniya* goes to the village, purchases all the stock and keeps it there. He brings to the market only just a few cart loads. In my own town, where formerly hundreds of carts with food grains used to come,

now, barely two or three carts arrive and the result is that there is a great rush for purchasing those carts and the prices go up. The price of wheat was as high as two seers a rupee.

That is the condition. You meet in conferences, you discuss and frame rules and regulations. As the proverb goes, while Rome was burning, Nero was fiddling, so while people are dying in thousands for want of foodgrains, you take very slow measures to ease the situation. You are fiddling away your time. You are expected to take immediate action to stop this rot. You do not seem to understand that even if a man is dead on account of your inaction, you are not only guilty, but you commit a sin. It is entirely your responsibility. You are causing his death and the entire responsibility rests on your action, or inaction or wrong action whatever it may be. What I want Government is they must have proper distribution machinery. Mere rationing will not do. My friend may say there is rationing working well in Bombay. But ask the people from Bombay about rationing. They will say though they get food, yet it is adulterated food. Food is mixed up with lots of other things and then sent to control shops. Government have blundered. The Government look to the District Magistrates to work this. The District Magistrate gives the monopoly only to a few flatterers who hang on to the District Magistrate for favours. These favourites of the District Magistrate make speeches condemning the ordinary people and the result is the District Magistrate is pleased and he gives a monopoly of sale in one commodity to each of these flatterers. Some people get monopoly to sell fuel, some sell coal, some sell salt and so on. Then again as regards opening of shops in particular centres, this privilege is given to favourites of some officials. You see this means that some people make a lot of money and put it into their pockets. They do not care for other people, they only look to their own pockets and they do not fear anybody because they are under the protection of the District Magistrate.

**Rao Bahadur N. Siva Raj** (Nominated Non-Official): Have you got rationing in U. P.?

**Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan:** There was once, but thank God, it has been stopped. Only one *chattak* a day was allowed for an adult; I quoted it last time.

My suggestion is that Government should take immediate steps to fix the prices for the next crop, taking into consideration all relevant factors like rent of land, labour, water rates, prices of seed, wages, etc., and keeping for him a margin of 20 or 30 p. c. If the cultivator knows that all his stock will be requisitioned by Government minus his consumption and seed requirements, and that he cannot make any profit by keeping this wheat for the next year, you will be surprised to find that all this stock will come into the market. But at the same time you should not control the price of foodstuffs alone. The producer makes it a grievance and asks why he should sell his stock at a cheaper rate when he purchases everything else at a high rate. I was glad to hear from the Honourable Member that all the other necessities of life were going to be controlled, but those prices must be related to the prices which you are fixing for his commodities. If he sells his wheat at eight seers to a rupee, all the other prices must be at that level.

Now, Sir, we hear some people saying that the whole trouble in Bengal is due to Government's buying up the whole stock in Eastern Bengal and following the scorched earth policy and burning or sinking boats which are real means of transport; another allegation is that the blame rests on the Governor of Bengal who, after the stock was taken away, did not care to see whether anything was left for the poor people and what would happen to them if Japan did not come with food; others again lay the blame on the Huq ministry for this calamity because they clung to office even when they saw the Governor doing wrong and did not resign as honest people should have done; other people say that the calamity came along with the new ministry and they are responsible; some say that it is the Central Government who are responsible and their Transport Member because means of transport were denied;

[Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan.]

some again blame the Food Department because they say they bungled the whole thing. Now we know that the Commander-in-Chief has taken immediate steps towards transport. When all these different kinds of allegations are made how is the public to know where the real responsibility lay? I say that no committee can properly investigate this matter unless it is beyond the reach and above the influence of any one in this country and is in a position to come to an impartial finding as to the responsibility, whether it is the Government of Bengal or the ministry or the Government of India. The real culprits should be brought out in their report, and for that purpose a Royal Commission is the only competent body. I have given some points to be investigated but that list is not exhaustive and there may be other points to be referred to them, but these should be specially reported upon. Some people asked me why I want immediate steps to be taken about this. My answer is that it is no use appointing a Royal Commission after all the people are dead and no one is left even to give evidence. In that case it will be a post-mortem report, no more of interest than the reports of the Public Accounts Committee. We want to see what relief and redress they can suggest. Of course I know it will take some time and by the time the Commission comes and starts its work the present crisis may be over. The objection from Government will be that if they start that work the attention of the ministry and other people will be diverted from the important work in which they are engaged. But I say it will not be diverted and I hope the crisis will be over by the time the Royal Commission start their work; and people who are now doing important work will be able to place their record before the Commission. I therefore want immediate steps to be taken towards the appointment of this Royal Commission.

Sir, I move.

**Mr. Chairman** (Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee): Amendment moved:

"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.

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 measure 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."

There is one more amendment in the name of Mr. Neogy. He may move it now.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy** (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): If you permit me, I should like to move it formally today and reserve my speech for Monday, or alternatively, I will move it on Monday and speak then.

**Mr. Chairman** (Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee): You may move your amendment now so that those who will speak today will be able to dilate on it. You can make your speech on Monday.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy**: Sir, I move:

"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 to 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 food-grains, 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;
- (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."

**Mr. Chairman** (Mr. Hoosinbhoj A. Lalljee): Amendment moved :

"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 to 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 food-grains, 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;
- (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."

**Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban** (Sind Jagirdars and Zamindars : Landholders): Sir. The food debate has become a hardy sessional, so to say. Every time this Assembly meets—I am talking of recent times—the subject raises its head. Grievances and difficulties are voiced on one side, and assurances given by Government spokesmen, that all possible has been done, is being done and will continue to be done to improve the deplorable situation existing in certain parts of India—notably where there is acute shortage of foodgrains, famine and destitution.

Certain places in India like Bengal, Madras, Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and parts of Bombay Presidency are in the grip of such a serious situation that the conscience of the people all over the world has been stirred to its depths. The tale of woe—hunger, misery, starvation and death—that one reads in the press and hears from persons who have visited the stricken areas is pathetic indeed. This is not the time for charges and counter-charges, rancour or recrimination, but an opportunity for showing active sympathy and extending utmost succour to all those unfortunate victims of a deepening calamity. A keener appreciation of the magnitude of the catastrophe and a better understanding of the measures taken by Government and other agencies to grapple with the menacing conditions, side by side with an inflexible determination to utilize all possible resources in order early to restore normality, are the prime need of the hour.

That the situation particularly in Bengal is bad enough none doubts. Offers of aid, both financial and material, from different quarters in India and abroad are an eloquent testimony alike to the seriousness of the conditions

[Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban.]

prevailing in that unfortunate province and to the spark of humaneness kindled in the breasts of those to whom the suffering is still remote. In the ameliorative measures taken recently, one strikingly prominent feature, which has rightly evoked admiration and praise all round, is the unique part played by H. E. the new Viceroy, Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, soon after his assumption of that exalted office. Like Haroon-al-Rashid of old, His Lordship, setting aside all conventional and positional considerations, visited *incognito* several of the destitutes, heard their condition from their own lips, saw things for himself, and at once took action designed effectively to relieve the misery and reduce the suffering in that land. This humane touch of His Excellency has roused high hopes that he will not rest content until normal conditions are brought about in that much-afflicted land.

It will be sometime before the results of the measures, instituted at the direction of one who is evidently imbued with a lively sense of responsibility for the welfare of millions of Indians committed to his care and whose heart throbs with feelings for the poverty and misery of the poor and the helpless, become manifest. One can only hope and trust that there will be a growing improvement in the situation in the early future, and that an ample measure of public support and co-operation will be forthcoming for successfully tackling the prevailing unhappy position.

The death rate appears to be appalling. Some put it at 1,000 a week; others believe it to be 50,000; even this figure, alarming as it is, is regarded in some quarters as an under-estimate. It is distressing too to hear that, to save the cost of either burying or burning the dead, the corpses are being thrown into rivers or streams. This would further increase diseases which are already taking a heavy toll of human lives. Government will do well, therefore, to see that the dead bodies are disposed of in either of the two common forms, thereby nipping in the bud another monster of epidemics.

It appears from press reports that something like 200,000 tons of cereals have been sent to Calcutta alone during the 3½ months ending 31st October, 1948. A better system of distribution of foodgrains and ready-made food will doubtless assist in affording relief, and it is to be hoped that both the civil and military authorities in Bengal will execute their plans harmoniously with the one object in view, namely, ending early the present lamentable plight in the second city of the British Empire and its mofussil.

Willing and hearty co-operation of the people and their natural leaders is equally necessary in any scheme evolved to deal with a problem of such large proportions as Bengal specially presents today. I do not think it would be too much to expect the Government to enlist the assistance and services of those leaders who, on account of their political activities find themselves unable to participate in the humanitarian task of relieving the immense suffering by making a generous gesture by releasing such detainees, for a specified period or for this definite purpose if need be. The resultant atmosphere may even pave the way for a resolution of the political deadlock, which in turn may lead to an acceleration of the tempo of war effort and whole-souled co-operation of entire India in the fight against the totalitarian powers, in the west as well as in the east. I am sure this aspect of the question has found an important position in the "mental bag" of His Excellency the present Viceroy.

It is recognised on all hands that the loss of Burma has added to the deficit of foodgrains in India, and that even in normal times large numbers of the population are on bare subsistence level. The case for imports of cereals into India from abroad and for the ban of any exports from India even to a neighbouring country is, therefore, unassailable when her own people are dying of starvation or badly under-nourished. It is reassuring to learn that the Government of India have arranged for imports of foodgrains to tide over the present difficulties and that already five shiploads have arrived to ease the situation. An indication of the quantity received and how it is disposed of would have been welcome to us, and I trust that members of this Assembly

will be taken into greater confidence by Government in such matters with supply of details also. The enemy is already making too much propaganda about the famine conditions in Bengal and other parts of India, to derive any fresh material to add to his repertory for poisonous distillations, by hearing such particulars.

That imports of foodgrains on an adequate scale should continue from other countries until India is able to feed her own people fully and nourishingly from the yield of her crops is also one of the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, appointed by the Government of India some months back. The home front and the maintenance of the morale of the civilian population are no less important than military operations or the rushing of arms, ammunition and other war materials to the various theatres in which the enemy is, or has to be, engaged. An increasing recognition of this point is in evidence wherever the Bengal tragedy has leapt into prominence, and it need scarcely to emphasise that a continual flow of imports of foodgrains is necessary until India is able to do without it.

This brings me to the question of the "Grow more food" campaign, which was initiated some months ago. The recent debate in the House of Commons has brought out the fact forcibly that the yield per acre in India is dismally low. Even the Government expert, Dr. Aykroyd, himself recently admitted that the campaign has proved a damp squib. Small holdings, primitive methods of cultivation, lack of modern agricultural implements, want of fertilisers are a handicap that requires to be removed, early if the drive is to produce a substantial expansion in the outturn. With a bold policy both at the centre and in the provinces and States, a larger acreage can be brought under the plough; and better seed, upto-date methods of agriculture and larger inducements to the farmer for growing particular crops will all contribute to more food being made available for the people. As the world situation in the matter of foodstuffs for 1944 and for a few years thereafter does not appear to be at all rosy, it is essential that India must plan fully and act expeditiously and energetically so as to be self-reliant and free from the travails and tribulations such as are being witnessed and experienced today.

The importance of milch and draught cattle in the agricultural economy of India cannot be over-rated. It is imperative therefore that the export or slaughter of these animals who work for and sustain us should be stopped altogether. Not only that, but proper attention needs to be paid to their care and well-being, so that this source of nourishment to humanity is maintained at a high pitch to draw upon freely and fully.

Now let me turn to some of the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee in brief, as to deal with each one of them in detail will take a lot of time, which, I should not expect, out of regard for my other colleagues who wish to speak on the subject before us. The Committee recommend that there should be built up a central reserve of 500,000 tons of foodgrains for emergent purposes to send relief to those areas which suffer a temporary breakdown in their normal arrangements or machinery. This is an eminently sound suggestion, and I trust the Government of India will put it into effect by including the quantity in the imports from abroad.

As regards the plan for procuring foodgrains, I should like to stress the importance of avoiding the creation of a monopoly, which, while eliminating competitive buying, dictates its own terms to the agriculturist having the corn to sell, very often to his detriment. A certain optimum figure must be ensured to the farmer for his produce by the Government agency appointed to procure grain, allowing him to keep, if he wishes to, such quantity as he requires for his and his family's use. I do not think it wise to force him to sell all his produce under threat of penalty.

There is no question but that prices of foodgrains should be controlled as much as prices of other articles of everyday use and need. To control the one and not the other is to place an undue burden upon the cultivator, who alone should not be called upon to make sacrifices. Prices of consumer's goods have gone up so unconscionably high that there is urgent need to bring a comprehensive number of these within the pale of a stringent order. I would

[Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad Shahban.]

urge the Honourable Member for Commerce and Industries to direct his attention to this point early and effectively.

We have heard about rationing in urban areas. It is in force in some places already. There are favourable and unfavourable reports about the scheme and its working. It will mean a hardship to those of the large class of illiterate labourers and such people, who earn and live for one day, to carry the ration cards, present them at the particular shop and get their quota of 1½ lbs. per day per adult. I hear that in one place where rationing is about to be introduced, some of the ignorant and illiterate labouring class have torn the ration cards with the idea of having nothing to do with what they consider to be a cumbersome and inconvenient system. If rationing is to be worked successfully, a far simpler scheme must be adopted.

In order to inspire confidence in, and to get support from, the public it is obvious that their representatives should be enabled to give advice and guidance by Government enlisting their cooperation on such important questions as food supply prices, movement of grain from one deficit area to another. It seems to be very desirable that if public opinion is sought to be invoked in helping towards the success of any Government scheme for food acquisition, distribution and consumption, it should be respected when expressed. I feel Government are alive to the importance of this aspect and will render it possible to get the cooperation of enthusiastic and earnest representatives of the people by putting them on food advisory committees not only in large towns but also in mofussil places also.

Government have already recognised the need to take anti-inflationary measures to check the soaring prices of various commodities. As a step in this direction I would urge the importation of gold and silver from abroad, which are an attraction to any one, the more so to an agriculturist.

I have very little more to say. In order to keep a close watch on prices of articles it is necessary to have a Central Price Control Committee consisting of some members of both the Houses, of producers and of trade and consumers. I feel sure this suggestion will commend itself to the Government and that such a Committee will be set up early. That body could also be utilised to advise and guide the Food Department of the Government of India on all important matters.

I shall refer to one point before I close. It is this. I did not touch on the events, circumstances and causes which have led to the catastrophe in Bengal. When the situation has improved, it will be desirable to have a Commission to investigate the whole matter and report on the measures to prevent such a heart-rending recurrence. The past needs to be gone into only to draw a lesson for the future.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra** (Presidency Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Mr. Chairman, I listened to the speech of the Honourable the Food Member and carefully followed the figures which he was pleased to place before the House. An Honourable Member has characterised the food debate as a hardy annual, a debate which has been going on Session after Session for some time. Lest this debate might take on a purely academic character, I submit that it should be viewed against a realistic background. While we are discussing this question we should have our feet firmly on the ground; we should be able to speak with positive knowledge of how things are shaping at the moment in Bengal.

For over three months now, Bengal has been passing through a famine the like of which is never known in her recorded history. She has been confronted with one of the severest of calamities that could befall a province or a race. When things in Bengal had been heading towards a crisis, public opinion in Bengal was roused and both the Provincial and the Central Governments were implored to take action betimes so that the disaster might be averted. But Governments have their own ways. Instead of allowing the reports of the dangerous food situation developing in Bengal to reach other parts of India, vigorous censorship was imposed and no news could get out of Bengal about



what was happening there and about the acute shortage of food. The Provincial Government never characterised the food scarcity as a famine and the Government of India did no better. For a time, though we carried tales of misery from Bengal to our friends here, we were suspected of exaggeration or of over-drawing the picture. But, Sir, when the *Statesman* of Calcutta took courage in both hands and published pictures of the victims of starvation in Calcutta, then the conscience of this country was roused. It was only then, and not till then, could the outside world know what was happening in Bengal, and the rest of India, and since then, began to take sympathetic interest in the affairs of Bengal. But by that time matters had reached such a stage, that very little could be done. Notwithstanding all that, I must express my deep gratitude to this paper, the *Statesman*, for doing this signal service to my country. After the *Statesman* the Indian press had the courage to follow suit. I do not blame the Indian press because we know how they were rigorously repressed here and in the provinces. They were not at all free, but when the *Statesman* opened the door, things began to come out. Horrible tales of misery, destitution and sufferings of millions of people began to pour in. Here, I hold in my hand a collection of starvation pictures typical of all stages of this terrible process. They vividly represent the harrowing things that have been daily happening in all parts of the Second City of the British Empire. In one picture you find a man, goaded by hunger and in sheer desperation, hanging himself from a tree before the temple of Kalighat. In another you find two shrunken babies in the bosoms of two famished young girls, gasping for food, but all collapsing without having anything to keep them alive. In the third you find a procession of dead men, women and children all departing this world which could not give them the wherewithals, the grains of food for which they had wandered away from their homes. This pageant of dead persons was handed over to the municipality for disposal. After life's fitful fever they all slept well, never to be awakened by anything that the Official Benches might say or the press and the public might clamour about. It is impossible within the short time at my disposal to give an adequate idea of the horrible things that are happening in all parts of the Province. Hundreds of thousands of people have died and many more are through the painful process of death.

I have often asked myself the question, if in the midst of this calamity there is Japanese bombing or an air raid, what is to happen to my country? Sir, Japanese bombing would seem to be a humane deliverance from this prolonged torture of death through which the whole nation is passing. Can you imagine the Second City of the British Empire with her pavements littered with dead bodies, littered with people famished, pining by degrees, not getting a morsel of food? This is the given spectacle that will greet you. Ah! What a shocking sight it is to see—man and dog rummaging the dustbins of the city to find remnants of food on which to live? On many an occasion have man and dog fought for a rejected piece of foodstuff lying on the roadside. Here I have got a press report which says that a boy was carrying on a fight with a dog for a rejected bit of food lying on the wayside. He was so badly mauled in the fight that he had to be removed to a hospital where his condition became precarious. If the dog had finished him, there would not have been any further lingering pain for him to pass through. These are the ways in which famine is stalking the land and levying its toll in all its cruellest forms. Besides, the number of deaths is mounting to such an abnormal height that dead bodies cannot even be disposed of in the usual way.

I have before me a press report where it is stated that dead bodies had to be thrown into the rivers as no arrangements could be made for cremation because of the shortage of fuel and in another press report it is stated that dead bodies in the burning ghats were lying in advanced stages of decomposition and they could not be disposed of for want of fuel. I have in my hands a telegram which I received from the President of the Seva Samity of Faridpur, Dr. Jogendra Nath Maitra, M.Sc., M.B., D.P.H., D.T.M.,



[Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra.]

F.C.S., an eminent physician and a social worker. I shall read one or two sentences from it:

"Condition in Bengal Districts appalling. Faridpur, poorest Bengal District living on charity. Agriculture, Labour, Cattle lost. No rice. No mustard. Rice, wheat, jowar, bajra not available. Arrange medical relief, quinine immediately. Pestilence cholera raging. Dead bodies on roads. Jackals, dogs, vultures, devouring and floating on water. Dr. Mazumdar, Ex-Vice-Chancellor, Dacca University authorized for relief work. Can explain facts with figures if desired." . . . . .

This report is so harrowing that one may be tempted to think that it is a piece of fiction but these are facts which are stranger than fiction and are increasingly in evidence in Bengal every day. These cannot be conjured up even by the wildest imagination. And what is the relief that has been given? The supreme call of humanity has been responded to enthusiastically by the philanthropic sections of the people all over the country. We must gratefully acknowledge all that they have done. To mention only a few, the Itanakraishna Mission, the Marwari Relief Society and the Bengal Relief Committee have been doing excellent work. That is all admitted but they cannot touch more than the fringe of the whole problem. I have before me a statement issued by the Government of Bengal, a press note, in which it is stated that they have been feeding in all about 18 lakhs of people every day in their gruel kitchens. Remember that a province of 63 millions has been laid low. Remember also that the cry for food is not confined to the city of Calcutta which has a population of only 3 millions. Hundreds of thousands of families in the country side have come to the end of their financial tethers and finding no other way to feed themselves, have been driven by sheer desperation to come to Calcutta and the District towns in quest of food. In Calcutta, what little official and non-official organisations could do, was done but that was wholly inadequate. Even to day, I see a press report which says that a man and his wife got release from this world by jumping before a running train. Another report says that jackals have been making feast of human lives, that they had been devouring the bodies of people whose life was still not extinct. If these reports came only through me, it might have been thought that I was indulging in exaggeration but, Sir, we have three or four eminent persons who had toured over the affected country and sent reports which have been published in the *Hindustan Times* in Upper India. My esteemed friend and ex-colleague, Mr. Santhanam has contributed a number of articles depicting the picture. My respected friend, the Honourable Mr. Kunzru, whose ability and integrity cannot be challenged by anybody, has given a gruesome picture of the present situation and Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, the President of the All-India Women's Conference, has issued statements on the subject. I will read only one passage "from her graphic description which will give you an idea of how women and children fare at present. It is indeed true that in this Bengal crisis, the children have been the worst sufferers. Let me read to the House an extract from the statement made by Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit:

"Conditions in Bengal are appalling and defy description. They must be seen to be believed. Men, women and children in the last degree of emaciation pour into the city and district from the villages. Haggard and half-naked women worn out for lack of food carrying rickety babies with dried up limbs and old wrinkled faces are seen. Small children with bloated bellies and ribs, standing out, taunt against their lean and thin legs which can hardly support their weight. There are men in every stage of starvation, walking skeletons most of them. Hour after hour, these poor unfortunates stand patiently holding out their tin mugs for the inadequate dole of 'khichri' or gruel. Many women are unable to come to kitchens as they have lost the few rags they possessed and are entirely naked. The problem of cloth threatens to become almost as acute as the food problem and must be attended to before winter begins."

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

I will not weary the House further with these gruesome details. They have been appearing in the Press from day to day. Now the question is how is this famine situation going to be combated? Let me tell you, Sir, that this is not the kind of famine with which we are familiar. It is entirely different from the ordinary concept of famine. This famine is not due to any natural cause. It

is not really due to any visitation of nature or failure of crop. It is not due to flood, cyclone, drought or excess of rain or to any of those natural causes that bring about famine. This is a purely man-made business. It is an artificial thing and the circumstances which have brought about this disaster have been created by the Provincial Government and the Central Government. I therefore say that the word "famine" has no real application to this case which is nothing but a creation of the Government. When this octopus had been spreading its tentacles over the country, public representatives gave warning of the danger ahead but who was there to take note of it? None. When we talk of this food crisis, we must consider the roles played by the Provincial and the Central Governments in this dire tragedy. How can they absolve themselves of all responsibility in this matter?

What has been the food policy of the Government of India? Well, a policy of masterly inactivity, drift and indecision. In Great Britain, in 1936, three years before the war broke out, they had set up a Ministry of Civil Supplies. They had their food schemes ready. But here, in this country, the British Government did nothing of the kind though they knew that they had to depend on Burma for one and half million tons of rice every year. It was not until Japan came into the war in December 1941 that they thought of creating a Food Department. When was it brought into being? It was perhaps in November 1942 but what happened then? After a short while, the Food Minister resigned about the middle of February and another set of people were taken in. Major General Wood was appointed Director General of Food! After Mr. N. R. Sarker, resigned, no Executive Councillor was appointed to take independent charge of the Food Department. As if it was an ancillary and unimportant subject which did not deserve to form an independent portfolio, it was tacked on to another department. Then came another Food Member. He was given the portfolio with the old staff. The first thing that he thought fit to do as the Food Member to relieve distress was to issue pompous statements and quote figures of production, consumption and stocks of foodstuffs in the country to prove that there was no shortage but surplus. But when there came a counter blast of figures from the economists and public men in the country, he at once called for a truce in the field of statistics. I have before me an Associated Press Report of what the Second Food Member publicly declared in May last.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Honourable Member has one minute more.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** He emphatically declared that the Government figures were absolutely accurate and that there was no shortage of food. But the first Food Member had said that there was shortage of food to the extent of 4 per cent. which is a direct contradiction of the statement of the second Food Member that there was no shortage at all, rather there was surplus. Then, came the third Food Member with a new staff. So, in the course of nine months we had as many as three Food Members with three staffs. Is that the way to tackle the food problem of a country?

My Honourable friend Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava has given today certain figures of exports of Foodgrains to Bengal in recent months, but they can at best be palliatives. They are inadequate to meet the needs of the situation. The main problem now is how to rush for greater supplies there immediately and how to deal with the future crop. If the Government of India handle the *aman* crop properly then alone they can save the situation. I hear from the Honourable the Food Member that the Government is actively considering the question of taking measures for its purchase. If they carry on the policy of reckless purchase in the case of the *aman* crop as well then there may be a mitigation of the situation for the next two or three months, but the famine will again reappear thereafter in a form which will be far more devastating than what we have been passing through now. This is a matter for the most serious consideration of the Government whether they should again embark on a policy of competitive purchase or allow the normal trade channels to adjust themselves and function in accordance with the usual law of demand and supply. We want

[Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra.]

to see that the crop which is going to be harvested towards the end of December is made available through normal trade channels to the people so that their confidence may be restored. But if the Government of Bengal go on tightening up the price control on the one hand and making indefinite and indiscriminate purchases at any price on the other, as I find it to be their policy today, then I am sure the terrible catastrophe will again overwhelm us after some months. The last *Aus* crop was a bumper crop in some parts of Bengal. I can bear personal testimony to it. In my own district of Nadia we had a very good crop. But what happened was that the Government's policy of reckless purchase at any price brought the district to such a position that by 1st of October there was not a grain of rice available in its markets and the Government had decided to purchase 30 lakhs of maunds of rice or paddy from the district which was normally deficit. If that is the kind of policy which is going to be followed in the case of the coming *aman* crop, then I cannot say what is going to happen to us again. For God's sake, let them take their hands off this *Aman* crop.

Then, my Honourable friend gave us figures showing the total quantity of foodstuff so far sent to Bengal. I am grateful to all the provinces for what they have done for Bengal.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Honourable Member must conclude his speech.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra**: I, therefore, appeal to the Honourable Member to see that the foodstuffs which is sent to Bengal reaches the Mufassil and the country-side. Whatever has reached Bengal so far has been swallowed up by the City of Calcutta. It has never reached the Mufassil; it has never reached the country-side. The result is that while the Food Member thinks that he has sent enough food, the districts are famished and hundreds of thousands of people are either dying or awaiting their doom. This is not the way to solve the problem. Unless you have a well devised plan of distribution over the whole of the affected area and an efficient and honest machinery to put it into operation, I do not see how the situation can be effectively relieved.

**Mr. O. P. Lawson** (Bengal: European): Mr. President, Sir, I should explain at the outset that we on this side favour a non-political, fact-finding, inquiry. It seems to me inconceivable that the happenings of the past few months should pass into history without a full and careful inquiry so that the country may learn from experience and guard against the terrible results of a food shortage similar to that which is now being experienced in certain parts of the country. If I do not dwell upon the seriousness of the situation it is because in the short time at my disposal I am anxious rather to consider remedies than to dwell upon catastrophe.

We on this side have more than once drawn attention to the inaccuracy and inadequacy of Indian statistics. Speaking in previous food debates we have emphasised that it is almost impossible for Government to produce a satisfactory policy until they know more or less accurately what stocks of food exist, where they are and what production is likely to be. I have no evidence that matters have improved to any appreciable extent; indeed, the very opening sentences of the conclusions and recommendations of the Food Grains Policy Committee read:

"The present position regarding agricultural statistics relating to production, distribution, export, consumption and stocks is most unsatisfactory. An improvement in the position is not only desirable but essential for the formulation of a successful food policy."

To this I would now add the field of mortality statistics. Many persons of note have visited the famine areas; the press have supplied articles and pictures which can only be described as terrible; we know that starvation and destitution are occurring in many districts on a serious scale. But if we are to be honest there are none of us in this House either upon the Government Benches or elsewhere who can put a figure to the mortality resulting from starvation. I have examined public health statistics such as are published and I have attempted to compare them with the mortality figures now available, but even if the former provide an accurate picture (which I doubt) there is no official figure of current mortality with which I can make a comparison. Thousands of destitutes, for

instance, have been flocking into Calcutta; many are suffering from disease as well as from mal-nutrition, but there is no accurate figure of their numbers and their effect upon the normal death rate of the city is impossible to gauge. Thus, it seems to me that the Government of India and the Provincial Governments are not only working largely in the dark as regards statistics of food supplies, but also as regards statistics of mortality.

I have dealt with the matter of statistics because I find here the greatest need for careful inquiry. The Grains Policy Committee seem to agree in this and it is to my mind essential that some non-political and unbiassed body shall examine the whole matter carefully and make recommendations. This may necessitate drawing attention to certain unpalatable features both in administration and public morals, but if faults are to be eradicated that must first be pointed out beyond all argument. I would emphasise that we have no intention that this enquiry should interfere with or interrupt the steps which are now being taken to deal with the situation. Indeed, the time for the enquiry must be chosen carefully so that consistent with arriving at the earliest possible conclusion, no interruption takes place in the urgent efforts which are being made to remedy the situation. We do not wish officials or public men to be occupied in defending themselves instead of arranging food supplies for the people. One does not put out a fire by making an inquiry into the circumstances responsible for its starting, however necessary it may be to ascertain its causes for future protection. Moreover, it would be idle to pretend at any rate in Bengal there are not political differences which interfere with complete concentration upon the end which we have in view, namely, the adequate feeding of our people. Our main intention on this side in supporting the demand for a non-political enquiry is to supply data for the future. We sincerely hope that the next few months may see the corner turned but it would be dangerous to count upon this. We must establish without doubt the main causes of the present distress and do our best to ensure that similar causes do not reappear. The food situation in the whole world may be disorganised for some years to come and we may still suffer from the impact of unprecedented conditions upon a population of 400 millions—a population moreover which is very largely illiterate.

In this country, the war has brought us face to face with a number of unprecedented situations and it is necessary for us to employ all our imagination and all the experience of other countries to which we have access, to guard against catastrophe. Over 18 months ago, we on this side raised a debate regarding civil defence. I then drew attention to the effect of bombing upon illiterate populations and the civil paralysis which might result. Last Budget Session, we drew attention to a boom in agriculture and advocated an enquiry into the utilisation of such conditions in order to effect permanent benefit. I must admit for myself that I did not think forward to a sufficient extent. I never realised fully the strain that India's fast mounting population placed upon her food supplies and I never asked myself what would happen if what appeared to be agricultural prosperity turned itself into disastrous inflation.

We used the valuable experience of Great Britain in devising air raid precautions and we are now using the same experience in devising the rationing of large cities, but whether such experience coming from a comparatively small and concentrated population of highly educated people can be applied in all cases to India's illiterate millions, I am in some doubt. There are many departures in which U. K. experience will not apply. The experience of the U. S. A. might be useful in some respects since territorially and in population figures, their case is more similar although illiteracy is not prevalent, nor are our trans-Atlantic Allies so close to our enemies. Possibly the case of Russia could provide us with even more useful experience but this does not appear to be readily available. We are therefore bound to do everything we can to solve our own problems and obviously we must waste as little time as possible in getting to grips with them.

To examine the causes from which the present situation arose as indicated by the Food Grains Policy Committee first they place the lack of imports of

[Mr. C. P. Lawson.]

rice from Burma. We have every reason to believe that these have been made up in the rice crop soon to be harvested. Second, there was the cyclone in Midnapore and the crop disease in Western Bengal; God willing, we may not have to suffer these, this year and we hope that the disastrous breaches in the railways will not recur. On the demand side, the main causes as at present put forward appear to cover, first an increase in consumption of rice and next an increase in the retention of rice stocks for various purposes. As regards the increased consumption this is all to the good and crop increases should meet the extra demand, but I am less sanguine regarding the retentive capacity of food producers and dealers. Broadly speaking, if the question is merely one of retentive power, the high prices which have been current for rice supplies should enable those who wish to carry stocks to carry five or six times their normal margin if they so desire . . . I do not propose to dogmatise on the subject of whether there is a wide intention to carry stocks either for profit or for security, but I do say that the danger is there and must be guarded against. During the food debate last Session, my Leader said:

"We do not know what stocks we have at present, but surely, we can make some effort not only to ascertain what new crop we are getting but to keep track and control of it. If this can be done, both Provinces and the Centre will know where they stand and the burden can be distributed fairly if there is a shortage."

He added that the position would not be saved by each Province looking after itself or by each Department of Government working in a separate compartment. I would like once again to emphasise these points. I do not believe that it will be possible to go into thousands of villages or provincial towns and force them to release the food grains which they may be carrying. We must, however, have full knowledge as to what is available and we must do our best by persuasion and by administration to ensure the free flow of the *Aman* crop as soon as it becomes available. Once the free flow starts I believe that it will continue.

There is little doubt in my mind that the absence of consumer goods has been to some extent a factor preventing the free flow of food grains. It is difficult to make any calculation based upon the Bengal crop yield figures which are available, but making allowance for the subsistence consumption of the agricultural population, I calculate that the normal balance of the crop if sold at present rates in Bengal would yield a total return of something like 100 crores of rupees more than normal. If consumer goods are not available and if the sellers have not easy access to investments, it would be reasonable to expect that they would carry their surplus in the form of agricultural produce. They might not even wish to do so, but equally there might be no alternative. An attempt must be made to supply alternatives using imagination and persuasion. I have often thought that while many shiploads of wheat from Australia or Canada may be urgently needed to relieve the immediate situation, one tanker of kerosene oil might result in the release of many shiploads of wheat from the hands of the stockists in this country. A shipload of bicycles might be worth many cargoes of grain. I am sure that these are matters which the Honourable the Finance Member had fully in mind when he spoke the other day regarding the supply of consumer goods for civil consumption. It is a matter which will need careful thought and original thought. We have little or no parallel experience to draw upon. Above all, I would reiterate the need for making use of the present situation to do some permanent good to the agricultural population. We hope one day to hear from the Department of Education, Health and Lands, what steps have been taken since the debate which we sponsored last spring on the subject of improving agricultural conditions. There is now a still greater incentive towards active measures in this respect because there must be now some wealth in the countryside although it may be difficult to gauge exactly where that wealth lies.

I would conclude by pointing to the fact that we have at least now from the Food Grains Policy Committee a clear indication of a policy which has met with the highest common factor of agreement. Let us now make an effort to carry

out this policy with a single purpose and let us be certain that no considerations, political or otherwise, deflect us from the main purpose which is no less than that of saving the lives of our fellow citizens.

I have dealt with matters mainly from the Bengal angle because that is the Province from which I come and which is most affected. Naturally also the rice position has been most prominently in my mind. There are other aspects of the problem with which I hope some of my colleagues may deal later in this debate.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali** (Lucknow and Azamgarh Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, we listened today with patience to the speech of the Honourable the Food Member and we found platitudes and thanksgiving to others for what they have done in this famine. We were told that His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief has done this and the Viceroy has done that, but we do not want that; we want to know what the Government of India have been doing. We have been told about committees on food planning and pamphleteering and this thing and that, but these papers and reports will not fill hungry stomachs. I do not want to describe the condition that prevails in Bengal or may prevail in India but I want to ask the Government and the Honourable Members here what they as representatives of the people or as Government have done. It is of course our foremost duty to help Government to the best of our ability but that help is not required by Government.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** That may be only now when the question has been so much agitated. Only after a repeated questions, etc., we were able to get this report of the Foodgrains Committee even; but, as I said, these papers will not feed hungry mouths. I know that on account of the hue and cry raised in the country they are now trying to conciliate the legislature, but we have heard the harrowing story of Bengal from Pandit Maitra and others. The other day I said that the calamity in Bengal may spread in the next few months to the whole of India. May I ask the Food Member how many of us have been taken into these committees? I do not think even one Member here has been taken into the food deliberations of Government. The same is the case in the provinces. This Legislature is absolutely ignored and neglected. The representatives of the people here are prepared to do their bit in their respective provinces but the Provincial Governments never care to seek our assistance; the representatives of the people are not consulted at all.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** But you are supreme.

**Sir Syed Raza Ali** (Cities of the United Provinces: Muhammadan Urban): This is no time or occasion for irony.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava:** It is not irony; you are the supreme authority.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** But how have you respected that supreme position? I know your past, I do not know what you are going to do in future when things may be more serious. The trouble in India was correctly described by Sir John Anderson in the House of Commons, when he said:

"The trouble arose from the enormous expenditure on goods and services by our own Government, the military authorities and American authorities on the one hand, and a serious curtailment of consumer goods on the other."

Can any one after that deny that the military authorities had sufficient for the army? I am sure Government Members had enough to fill their stomachs; high officials, central and provincial, must have had enough allowance of food. But when we Members of the Assembly come here we find the greatest difficulty in getting our requirements in the shape of fuel, atta, ghee, milk, and so on. And yet the Honourable Member says we are supreme!

That is the position. I would ask the Railway Member whether it is not a fact that the Government of India took away trucks, rails, locomotives, wagons, etc., outside India. At the same time the rates have been increased. Was it in those conditions possible for the Government of India to transfer goods from place to place very easily?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall** (Member for Railways and Water-transport): Yes.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali**: You may say Yes, but we have heard from the Punjab and also from Bengal that goods could not be transported.

**The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava**: That is not correct now.

**Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan**: What do you mean by 'now'? Since when? Since yesterday?

**An Honourable Member**: Since last night.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali**: You cannot deny this. It is a fact and I hope that the Honourable the Railway Member will bear it in mind. These difficulties may not have been told to him but these are the difficulties which the country is experiencing at present.

Now, Sir, I have to deal with a matter which, I am very sorry to say, many Members of this House have taken for granted. It has been said that the cultivator—the tenant—in India is hoarding simply to prevent people from having their proper nourishment. It has been declared in the British Parliament also, obviously because notes have been sent by the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India. But the fact is that it is wholly incorrect. I challenge this view. I ask those Members who are not villagers to go and see the condition with their own eyes. How can the poor tenant, who lives alongside his cattle under the same roof in a small *chappar* (hut), hoard his grain? It is not possible. They have no silos to put away their harvest, no granaries, nothing. Whatever little they have to keep for themselves and their children is stored in earthenware pots; the rest they have to sell to meet their requirements and to pay the taxes. The moment the cultivator gets his harvest ready, there is the *banya* on his threshold, there is the zamindar's man, and so on.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai** (Sind: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Now the Government is the *banya*.

**Mr. K. S. Gupta** (Ganjam *cum* Vizagapatam: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Worse than that.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali**: He cannot possibly keep back his harvest. He has to go to the market at once to sell his grain and get money in order to pay the *banya* and his rent. Until he has done that, the fellow is dragged by the Tehsil people. I hope my friends from the Punjab, who know the conditions in the villages, will endorse what I have said. My European friends may not know the true conditions of the tenantry in India. They seem to compare the conditions here with what exist in their own country. But the farmers in England are rich, they have got big good houses, they have got granaries, and everything. Not so in India. I ask my friends to tell me where the tenants in India can hoard. I say it is an erroneous idea, and it has somehow entered the minds of the people not only here but even outside India.

Now, the question is: who is the hoarder? The true hoarders is the *banya* who deals in grains, the Government departments and the War Department. This is patent. When His Excellency the Viceroy went to Calcutta he advised that the War Department should come to the help of the Ministry in Bengal. Why? Because the Viceroy knows—and even His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief knows it—that they have hoarded stocks of grains through contractors who purchased on their behalf and made money out of it. It is not the tenant who is making money; he simply has to sell what is over and above his requirements at whatever price he can get. He just has to keep his body and soul together and for that he holds back a little, and if you call it hoarding I am simply surprised that the Government of India, with all its resource, should be so ignorant of that simple fact.

Then, Sir, is it or is it not a fact that in every province, the tenants have been asked to pay their mite towards war loans? Do you consider the Indian peasant to be rich as to subscribe to your war loans. My Honourable friend, Sir Raza Ali, says that he is forced to pay. I think he is right, and I can endorse that from my own experience. There are different ways of collecting subscriptions: *Dangals* (wrestling matches) are held and these poor tenants have

to subscribe to it. I know of a very sad case in Dobari estate in the United Provinces (towards Azamgarh). The proprietor of that estate has died recently. I was informed by him that the Collector of the District wrote to him that he must give up all his produce in the estate. Why? Simply because he was not allowed by the Provincial Government to transport his produce from that district to the district where he lived—there are orders to that effect. So he had to give away his whole produce because he could not transport it. Is that not *sulum*? And that is going on in the whole of this country. You may not be aware of it, but we who are representatives of the people, we who go into the villages, we who know the actual conditions, know it for a fact. What happens then when the grain comes to the market? Mostly at the entrance of towns there are police thanas or Tahsils.

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

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali**: I will just finish, Sir. So when the tenant brings his stuff to the market, the first place where he has to keep it is the thana (police station) or Tahsil and there he has to sell it according to their wishes before the crop actually goes to the market.

**Lala Sham Lal** (Ambala Division: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, the Party to which I have the honour to belong, *viz.*, the Congress Party has been keeping aloof from the debates in this House for a long time and that was in the belief, as they expressly declared, that to take part in the debates in this House was not only useless, but inconsistent with the dignity and honour of a proud country. Sir, a country that has a proud history in the past and a country that has to come out much prouder still during the course of the present evolution that is going on all over the world these days and when the present tribulation has wiped off the sins of mankind and subsides.

But that keeping aloof could not be for all time. There could be occasions when the Party had to come back and assert themselves. The present subject under debate, the food crisis in India, is considered to be a subject in which the Party ought to make observations in this House. Therefore, Sir, I rise to make a few observations in the matter, not so much for the use of the Government, whose representatives are sitting opposite, as for the use of my own countrymen, and for the use of the representatives of my countrymen who are sitting on Benches by my side.

It is really heart-rending to hear of the horrible accounts that appear in the papers coming from Bengal and other places in India on account of the numerous deaths that are taking place, due to starvation. It is sad that this should be the state of affairs in a country which is predominantly agricultural, that this should be the state of affairs acuter in a province which is regarded as one of the most fertile provinces in the country. It is sadder still that so many benevolent societies working in India today should have been handicapped in extending their helping hand to the situation in Bengal.

From the long history of food conferences and deliberations given by the then Food Member in the last Session, the Honourable Sir Azizul Huque and supplemented by the future developments of the present Honourable Food Member, it is pretty apparent that the matter of food has been very well before the Government since the start of the war. Notwithstanding that, we see that the food situation in India went on deteriorating day by day till the present crisis. It is unthinkable that so many big brains in the Government of India, in the expanded Council, should not have been able to pre-gauge the coming crisis or that they could not be alive to it. It must be taken that they were conscious of this, but that they too were helpless in the matter for the way in which the Government of India was to be conducted. When they had been deliberating for the last four years, their deliberations in future also can be of little avail under the circumstances.

Sir, it seems to me that the food problem as it has a bearing on India today is not a disease in itself which can be cured outright. To my mind the food crisis, the food shortage and the distress prevailing in the country is one of the



[Lala Sham Lal.]

severe symptoms of a deep-rooted disease in the Government of India, and that deep-rooted disease is the maladministration at the centre all round. Unless the real diagnosis is made, unless the real disease is properly handled and treated, surely the symptoms can never subside. I say that all Government's formulae, basic plans, etc., and all other devices in the Government of India will not help. Unless and until the real disease is properly handled, and treated, the proper solution of the food problem cannot come and I dare say will not come.

Sir, there are so many obnoxious policies prevailing in the Government of India today, all interdependent on each other, none separate from the rest and all having a bearing on the food situation in this country.

In the first place there is the currency policy, so vehemently resented to by the Indian public as a whole. This has much to do with the food problem.

Then we have the transport difficulties. Then we have the control and monopoly policy that are obtaining in the Government of India today and also in the provincial Governments, with all the corruptions that have crept in on account of these policies in the departments.

Then we have the labour difficulties. Then above all, we have the heavy purchases made by the Government of India for military purposes, not only to supply food-stuffs to the Indian forces or for Indian purposes, but to supply food-stuffs to allied countries also, no matter whatever may be the circumstances in which the Indian people may be placed.

These are the circumstances and these are the policies; and the cumulative effect of all these policies has led to the present food crisis in the country. Unless and until all these policies are fully dealt with and are dealt with in a manner which of course goes to the welfare of the people of this country, surely the problem will not be solved. If it has not been solved during the last four years, I dare say it will not be solved in the future, whatever plans may be devised by the Government of India.

I see that it is being stated all round that the war has to be fought. True; the war has to be fought—I do not deny it; and the war has to be carried to a success—there is no doubt about it. But I should say that it is equally true that in this war India has been forced to bear the brunt of it. That being the case, is it not a pity that the brave men of India should be fighting the war abroad so bravely—as everybody admits it—and that their countrymen their kith and kin should be dying of starvation at home? I say that if the matter of this position prevailing in the country, that their relations are dying of starvation at home while they are fighting the war, goes to the soldiers outside and overseas, what would they be feeling about it? Would their hearts be the same as they ought to be otherwise? I should say that allowing the peoples of this country to die of starvation, as of course is the case nowadays and so many speeches are being made about it—then can it be supposed, I ask the Government, whether it is a war measure, whether a war measure which strengthens the hearts of the soldiers fighting abroad, a war measure for which the Government of India is so very eager? I should say that to allow in this way the people of this country dying in the manner as has been stated, they are in a way retarding the war measure itself, for which the Government of India is so very eager. So under these circumstances . . . . .

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I do not know if the Honourable Member wishes to conclude his speech now.

**Lala Sham Lal:** I will continue for another ten minutes.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Assembly stands adjourned till tomorrow.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Saturday the 13th November, 1948.