

Thursday, 12th August, 1943

# COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

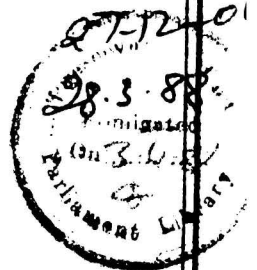
VOLUME II, 1943

*(2nd to 31st August, 1943)*

## FOURTEENTH SESSION

OF THE

# FOURTH COUNCIL OF STATE, 1943



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COUNCIL OF STATE.

Thursday, 12th August, 1943.

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

MEMBER SWORN :

The Honourable Mr. Narayanan Raghavan Pillai (Commerce Secretary).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE AT HOT SPRINGS.

132. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : (a) Is it a fact that about 38 nations took part in a conference with the United States on post-war food problems about the last week of April 1943, which was held in the U. S. A. which among others considered the possibilities of international agreements designed to assure efficient production of essential agricultural products at prices equitable to both the consumer and the producer ?

(b) Was India invited and represented in this Conference and if so, by whom ? What were the decisions arrived at in this conference so far at least as India is concerned ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. R. PILLAI : The United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture was held at Hot Springs, Virginia, and lasted from May 18th to June 3rd. Forty-four nations were represented at the Conference. The Indian Delegation consisted of—

Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, Agent General for India, Washington ; Chairman of the Delegation.

Sir Phiroz Kharegat, Vice Chairman, Imperial Council of Agricultural Research.

Sir David Meek, Indian Trade Commissioner, London.

Mr. H. S. Malik, Indian Trade Commissioner, New York.

Dr. W. R. Aykroyd, Director of the Indian Institute of Nutrition Research.

The resolutions and recommendations of the Conference are embodied in a document known as the Final Act of the Conference, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the Legislature.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : No reply has been given to part two of the question, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. R. PILLAI : I would beg my Honourable friend to have a look at the document called the Final Act of the Conference.

INTER-ALLIED TEXTILE CONFERENCE.

133. THE HONOURABLE RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : Will Government state whether India has been invited to attend a full-scale conference to which representatives from the Dominions and the Allied countries have been invited to discuss and settle the distribution of the World's textile supplies during the duration of the war, and some years of peace ? If so, who is to represent India ; and what steps have Government taken, or propose to take to safeguard the textile and other allied interests of India, against unfair foreign and international competition ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. R. PILLAI : Government are not aware that any such Conference is being convened, but they understand that the Combined Production and Resources Board and United States of America have been making, in respect of textiles of all kinds, a survey of the production and requirements of the United Nations.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Have the Government of India submitted any memorandum on this subject ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. R. PILLAI : No, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Have they been invited ?

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. R. PILLAI : No, Sir.

## NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS CREATED IN THE FOOD DEPARTMENT.

134. THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Will Government give the following information about the Food Department of the Government of India :—  
 (a) The number of posts created since 1st March, 1943 by different salary grades ;  
 (b) the number of Hindus, Muslims and Europeans and others appointed in each grade ;  
 (c) whether communal proportions apply to these, if not, how were they exempted from the Home Department 1934 circulars ; (d) the number of posts (by pay grades) advertised and proposed to be advertised in the near future ; (e) full statement of the proposed line of action of the Food Department to tackle the situation ; (f) a categorical statement whether price fixations will be adopted for wheat and rice in the current financial year or not ?

MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD : Parts (a) and (b) A statement giving the required information has been laid on the table of the House.

Part (c)—Yes.

Part (d)—

*Gazetted—*

1 post of Deputy Regional Food Commissioner—pay Rs. 1,000—1,500.

1 post of Assistant Regional Food Commissioner—pay Rs. 600—800.

7 posts of Area Inspectors of Food—pay Rs. 1,000—1,500.

50 posts of Resident Inspectors—pay Rs. 350—800.

7 posts of Hygiene Officers—pay Rs. 350—800.

*Non-gazetted—*

4 posts of Acceptance Officers—pay Rs. 175.

1 post of Estimator—pay upto Rs. 250.

50 posts of Analytical Chemists—pay between Rs. 150 to 300.

• 1 post of Stenographer—pay Rs. 125—300.

Parts (e) and (f)—Government propose to cover these points during the discussion on the food situation shortly to take place.

*Department of Food.*

(a) Number of posts by different salary grades created since 1st March, 1943. (b) Number of Hindus, Muslims, Europeans and others appointed in each grade.

Name of post.	Grade.	Number.	Hindus.	Muslims.	Europeans.	Others.	Vacant.	Total.
<i>Main Secretariat.</i>								
<i>Gazetted.</i>								
Reasoning Adviser.	Rs. 2,500	1	..	1	..	..	..	1
Under Secretary (P. C. S. Grade)	760 + 300 Special pay	1	1	..	..	..	..	1
Superintendent	600-40-800	1	1	..	..	..	..	1
<i>Non-gazetted.</i>								
Assistants	200-15-500 (old scale)	10	5	3	1	..	1	10
	140-10-280 (E. B.)-10-							
	310-15-400 (new scale).							
III Div. clerks	60-3-105-4-125 (E. B.)	24	14	8	2	..	..	24
	4-145-6-170.							
Stenographers	125-5-180-10-300.	4	3	1	..	..	..	4
<i>Inferior servants.</i>								
Record sorter	20-1-40	1	..	1	..	..	..	1
Duffers	15-1-20-1-30	3	1	..	..	..	2	3
Peons	14 to 16	16	8	4	4	..	..	16
Total		61	61	61	61	61	61	61

## Directorate General, Food.

Name of post.	Grade.	Number.	Hindus.	Muslims.	Europeans.	Others.	Vacant.	Total.
<i>Gazetted.</i>								
Dy. Director General (Grains)	Rs. 2,750	1	..	..	1	..	..	1
Asstt. Director General (Purchase)	2,130	1	..	..	1	..	..	1
Director of Grains	2,000	1	..	..	1	..	..	1
Asstt. Director of Grains	600	1	1	..	..	..	..	1
Asstt. Director of Grains	550	1	1	..	..	..	..	1
Dy. Asstt. Director of Purchases	360-400-25-550	2	2	..	..	..	..	2
Industrial Planning Officers	300	2	2	..	..	..	..	2
Asstt. Industrial Planning Officers	175-200-25-300	8	2	2	..	1	4	9
Veterinary Officers	175 to 300	30	..	..	..	..	30	30
<i>Non-gazetted.</i>								
Acceptance Officers.	175	8	2	2	..	..	4	8
Superintendent	400-20-500	1	1	..	..	..	..	1
Assistants	140-10-280 (E. B.)-10-310-15-400.	12	6	4	..	1	..	12
II Div. clerks	120-9-300	11	7	3	..	1	..	11
III Div. clerks	80-4-120-5-200	29	14	7	..	2	6	29
Stenographers	60-2-80-3-125	3	1	1	..	..	1	3
Estimator	125-5-180-10-300.	1	..	..	..	..	1	1
<i>Inferior servants.</i>								
Jamadars	22-1-40	1	..	..	..	..	1	1
Dufries	15-1-20-1-30	8	4	4	..	..	..	8
Peons	14	37	19	18	..	..	..	37
Farashes	14	2	1	1	..	..	..	2
Total	Total	161						161

Sugar Controller for India.

Name of post.	Grade.	Number.				Total.
		Hindus.	Muslims.	Europeans.	Others.	
Inspectors	Not exceeding Rs. 300	2	..	..	2	2
	Total	2	..	..	2	2
	<i>Regional Food Commissioners.</i>					
	Rs.					
Regional Commissioner, Eastern Region, Calcutta.	4,000	1	..	1	..	1
Regional Food Commissioner, Punjab	2,750	1	..	1	..	1
Regional Food Commissioner, Bombay	2,650	1	..	1	..	1
Regional Food Commissioner, U. P.	2,500	1	..	1	..	1
Regional Food Commissioner, Rajputana	2,500	1	..	1	..	1
Regional Food Commissioner, Madras	1,900+400 (S. P.)	1	..	1	..	1
Deputy Regional Food Commissioner, Eastern Region.	1,400	1	..	1	..	1
Deputy Regional Food Commissioner, Punjab.	1,000	1	..	1	..	1
Asstt. Regional Food Commissioner, Calcutta.	600	1	..	1	..	1
Group Liaison Officer, Punjab	1,000	1	..	1	..	1
Assistant	115-20/2-215-25/2-290-20/2-350.	1	..	1	..	1
Head clerks	150-10-300	5	2	1	1	5
Senior clerks	100-15-175	7	4	..	3	7
Stenographers	100-5-200	13	1	4	7	13
Junior clerks	50-3-80-5-100	13	4	3	6	13
Typists	50-3-80-5-100	5	1	..	3	5
<i>Inferior servants.</i>						
Duftry	15-1/2-20-1-30	1	..	..	1	1
Dufery	20-1-27	1	..	..	..	1
Jamadars	25	6	..	..	..	6
Peons	15	17	..	..	..	17
	Total	79	..	..	..	79

\*Information awaited to be filled in before issue.

**COSTS INCURRED IN DELHI PROVINCE ON SLIT TRENCHES AND SHELTERS.**

135. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Will Government state the costs incurred in the Delhi Province (a) in making slit trenches and refilling them in 1942; (b) in building other shelters; and (c) the average cost of each.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA :** (a) Cost incurred in making slit trenches and refilling them—Rs. 74,109. (b) Cost incurred in building other shelters—Rs. 1,10,357. (c) Average cost of each—(i) Shelter—1,269, (ii) Trench—about Rs. 45.

**RELAXATION OF LIGHTING RESTRICTIONS.**

136. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Will Government state the steps they have taken to reduce the expenses under the Civil Defence Department due to decrease in dangers of air raids and increased defence arrangements?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA :** It would not be in the public interests to give any details of the adjustment of India's Air Raid Precautions to the changes in the general strategical situation. The Honourable Member may rest assured that this matter is constantly under review and that adequate steps have been taken to ensure that personnel and material are not locked up in such defensive measures.

**STEPS TAKEN TO REDUCE EXPENDITURE ON CIVIL DEFENCE.**

137. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Do Government propose to relax the restrictions of lighting in far off places like Bombay; if not, why not?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA :** Lighting restrictions have been relaxed over the greater part of India. Where they have been maintained it has been on account of necessity imposed by considerations of naval, military and air security. The question whether a relaxation of the lighting restrictions in Bombay is possible is under consideration.

**PAY OF AMERICAN FORCES.**

138. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Will Government make a clear and comprehensive statement about the procedure adopted to meet the rupee expenses on supplies and pay of the American Army and Air Force? What was the amount in 1942-43 and how much of it was charged to our Defence Estimates and how much recouped?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES :** The pay of American Forces in India is met by the United States Government under its own arrangements. The amount is not known and none of it is paid for by the Government of India.

Expenditure on supplies is met partly by the American Forces themselves and partly by the Government of India under reciprocal Lease-Lend arrangements.

As regards the amount of the latter, I am not in a position to give figures at present, as the task of evaluating all services rendered is not yet completed.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** With whom have the United States Governments arrangements for getting rupee supplies?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES :** In the usual way, Sir. The American Government buys with dollars.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** What happens to those dollars which are acquired by the Reserve Bank?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES :** Exactly the same as happens to the dollars which accrue to India as a result of a favourable balance of trade if and when that happens.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Will the Honourable Member give us some figure about the dollar balances which the Reserve Bank have acquired?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES :** I should like to have notice of that question, Sir.

**NAMES OF CONTRACTORS AND RATES AT WHICH THEY SUPPLY BEEF TO THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH FORCES.**

139. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Will Government lay on the table a statement giving the names of the big contractors for the supply of beef to the American and British Forces in India and the rates of as many as possible in the Eastern Command?

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF :** Information to enable me to answer the first part of the question is not readily available and its collection



would involve an amount of time and labour that would not be justifiable in war-time Messrs. Associated Livestock Farms, Ltd., Calcutta, are the contractors for most of the Eastern Army area and their rates vary from Rs. 12-8-0 to Rs. 18-12-0 per 100 lbs. according to the locality in which the meat is required.

**COST OF MAINTAINING PRISONERS OF WAR.**

140. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Will Government give the cost of maintaining Prisoners of War in each of the years 1940-41 to 1942-43 ; and how much was paid by H. M. G. and Indian States ?

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF :** The figures in respect of cost of maintenance of prisoners of war in India are as follows :—

	(In lakhs of rupees.)
1940-41 . . . . .	70
1941-42 . . . . .	8,64
1942-43 . . . . .	5,78

The entire expenditure in respect of maintaining prisoners of war is being borne by His Majesty's Government.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** May we know what was the total number of prisoners on whose account this expenditure was incurred ?

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF :** I am afraid I have not got any information with me.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Do the figures include the capital expenditure and the current expenditure or the current expenditure only ? I think the Finance Secretary should reply to it.

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF :** I should like notice of that question.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES :** I also would like to have notice of that question.

**MANUFACTURE IN THE U. S. A. OF DEHYDRATED AND PULVERIZED MEAT.**

141. **THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Is Government aware that dehydrated and pulverized meat is being manufactured in U. S. A. for nearly a year ? Has Government made or proposed to make arrangements for its import for U. S. A. and other white forces and the allied prisoners of war ; if not, why not ?

**MAJOR GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD :** Yes. Government are aware that dehydrated meat is being manufactured in America and in certain other allied countries. But in the difficult shipping position it is the accepted policy not to employ shipping for any particular commodity that can be and is being manufactured in the country where the goods are required for consumption.

**TELEGRAM FROM VISCOUNT WAVELL THANKING THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE FOR THEIR CONGRATULATIONS.**

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Honourable Members, I would like to read to you, particularly as I have been requested to do so, a message which I have received from Viscount Wavell in reply to the message I sent him :—

“ Many thanks for your telegram conveying to me the congratulations and good wishes of the Council of State. Will you kindly pass my thanks on to the Council and say how much I appreciate this message from my former colleagues. Wavell. ” (Applause.)

**MOTION RE FOOD SITUATION.**

**MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD (Food Secretary) :** Mr. President, I move that :—

“ The food situation in India be taken into consideration ”.

The subject is a vast one. I propose to confine myself to the main points that govern and regulate the situation today. I propose to speak therefore on three general headings :—

(a) Certain fundamentals of the food problem that are peculiar to India.

(b) To examine the reasons for an insufficient degree of success in the last six months.

(c) To point to the position today and the task for the future.

Throughout the remarks I shall make I shall refer only to provinces and will leave it to Honourable Members to judge the application and connection of such remarks to Indian States.

[Major-General E. Wood.]

But before I approach those three matters I am anxious to make clear an important and substantial point to which I shall repeatedly make reference. I refer to the little recognised but none the less indisputable fact that for the execution of food policy in this country, whatever that policy may be, there is but one instrument and one machinery. That instrument and that machinery is found in the *administrative organisations* of the provinces. I wish to make clear that not only have the Central Government no executive instrument or machinery for the day-to-day execution of food administration but that it would be improper for the Centre to attempt to build up such instrument and impossible to do so even were it deemed desirable so to do. It would be improper because food administration means the exercise of controls and controls mean the exercise of statutory powers which in a province must be exercised by the Provincial officers under the guidance and direction of their own Governments. Were those powers to be exercised by another set of officers there could but emerge confusion, conflict and delay. It is impossible—and I say it is impossible for the obvious reason that it would be impossible to duplicate a staff so expensive as to echo or almost echo a totality of the administrative organisations of all Provinces and States. The personnel for such purpose do not exist in the country. But quite apart from these and any other issue the Provincial Governments have made known firmly and clearly their wish. They are firmly and clearly of the unanimous view that whatever the Centre requires to be done in the matter of food administration in the province shall be done by the province. To express the matter in more familiar terms and in respect of food administration the Food Department is in the position of being a general headquarters and the formations containing the troops are in the provinces. It is essential that this position be recognised by any one who attempts to examine the food position in India. It means that while the Centre can plan, co-ordinate, assist and direct it is dependent for execution on the administrations of the provinces. It means more than this: it means that the measures of success of food administration in India depend in the aggregate, and in the ultimate resort, on the efficiency or otherwise of food administration by the provinces.

I now approach the first of the three matters I wish to place before the House. I refer to certain fundamentals of the food problem that are peculiar to India. I would preface my observations, however, by some comment on the importance of physical control as a basis for any other form of control—price control, distribution control, or whatever control. The fundamental pre-requisite and necessity is physical control. By physical control I do not mean one hundred per cent. possession of the goods: that is physical control in its ultimate expression. There are, however, other methods of exerting physical control: for example, permits to trade, licences to import or export, the denial of movement, the grant of railway facilities, the holding of adequate reserves to influence supplies and prices, and other actions of a like nature. But unless some form, in some manner and measure, of physical control can be exercised, it is extremely difficult to be successful in distribution control in the required volume, and virtually impossible to control prices.

The reason for this can be stated quite simply. Controls of prices and controls of distribution can be defeated, because the goods, not being amenable to some degree of physical control, will either cease to flow or, if they flow at all, they will flow in other directions—subterranean directions. The goods will flow into the black markets and be sold at black-market prices. In the United Kingdom the requisite degree of physical control over foodgrains can be firmly and finally and positively exercised at two points: the port of entry, in respect of imported foodgrains, and at the mills in the milling industry, in respect of domestic supplies.

With these preliminary observations, I would ask the House to consider the parallel situation in India. In normal times the urban population of India is fed from the aggregate of the margins of 50 to 55 million subsistence farmers each of whom has a small surplus. These 55 million subsistence farmers grow about 51½ million tons of foodgrains. By far the great majority of it they require for their own consumption. Normally they surrender some 10 million tons of rice and some 4 million tons of wheat in each year for the urban populations. In other words, there is a marketable surplus of some 14 million tons of wheat and rice available for the towns and cities out of the 51½ million tons that are grown. I need not detain the House by a long explanation of why there is difficulty today in securing that the

normal marketable surpluses are surrendered and come forward from the cultivator. You are all aware that in normal times the cultivator is all too frequently forced to sell more grain than he would desire owing to economic pressure upon him. He must pay his land revenue. He must pay his debts to the *bania*. He must have cash to pay for the things he must buy. Today, with the increase in the prices of foodgrains and being able to secure the cash he requires by selling less of his produce, the compulsion upon him to sell has largely been removed, and therefore the first problem to be faced in the matter of physical control is, how are we to secure that an adequate flow of foodgrains begins from the cultivator? None of us will deny the cultivator his better prosperity, and none of us will begrudge him the little extra that circumstances now permit him to eat. But granted the satisfaction of this and similar matters, there remains the extremely difficult problem of ensuring that the cultivator does not withhold more than he requires. I will not venture to suggest the solutions, because to do so would anticipate the Report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, shortly to submit its conclusions. I would, however, permit myself one observation. It is that perhaps the big zamindars and landowners of this country have not appreciated the extent to which it has been put in their power to assist India in her food difficulties today. They have not perhaps realised the latent leadership that is in their hands. They have not perhaps realised the full significance of the fact that the small cultivator is prone to do what the bigger man does. If the bigger man sells his stocks, the small man would be inclined to do the same. If the bigger man hoards his stocks for a higher price, so will the little man. As regards the landowner or zamindar who takes action to dissuade the cultivator from surrendering his surplus, I beg to be excused from making comment: I feel as a soldier I have not the requisite degree of delicacy of expression.

In this first stage of physical control, the big landowners and zamindars have a responsibility and an obligation. Speaking in my personal capacity, I hope the future will show a better leadership than has been apparent in the last six months I have been in the Food Department.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:** Leadership by whom?

**MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD:** In making those observations I am referring to no particular Province or State. I am referring to India as a whole.

The next stage of control over resources lies in the marketing and milling of foodgrains. Wheat is the only cereal that has any organised marketing arrangements. For rice, although trading is extensive, the marketing is almost without organisation. For millets and other coarser grains, it is almost true to say that marketing arrangements do not exist. In all these trade channels there are no integrated, well-established and responsible bodies of traders, in the form of any sufficiently comprehensive numbers of Chambers or Associations, through which some degree of physical control could be exercised. And when we turn to the milling industry, here again no adequate degree of physical control can be exercised because so small a portion of the foodgrains pass through such mills; by far the greater proportion is hand-ground or hand-pounded. It is against this situation and in these circumstances that an answer is to be found of how the requisite degree of physical control can be exercised over an adequate amount of foodgrains. It admits of no facile solution. It cannot be solved by the issue of a few orders here or a few orders there.

Over the stages I have described the necessary degree of physical control can only be secured as a result of immense efforts which must have behind them sound, comprehensive and energetic administration. I remind you that this executive work falls to the instrument and the machinery to which I have already referred: the administrative machinery of the provinces. The weapon for the work is the Foodgrains Control Order. I hope all provinces now appreciate that only by and through a vigorous and efficient application of this Order can physical control over foodgrains in this country even begin to be exercised. So much for one aspect of control over resources. Let me now touch on a second. The Central Government has the prime responsibility, a responsibility that must rest on the Central one, of distributing the surpluses of India. Apart from planning and co-ordination and the extension of all assistance that lies in its power, this matter of balancing the resources of Provinces and States by the distribution of available surpluses constitutes perhaps the most

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important single responsibility of the Centre. Here an important point arises. The surpluses that the Centre distributes between the deficit areas is a tithe, a margin, in relation to the domestic resources that the deficit Provinces and States already have. Lest I should be accused of inaccuracy, let me exclude Travancore and Cochin from such general statement. But generally speaking every province and State in this country is agricultural more or less. In terms of 100 per cent. of sufficiency, a deficit Province or State may be 85 per cent., 90 per cent or 95 per cent. of self-sufficiency whilst surplus Provinces and States can be regarded as having figures of 110 per cent., 115 per cent., 120 per cent. or even higher. The point I wish to make clear is that the portion that is handed over by the Central Government to a deficit area is but a small fraction of the totality of its requirements.

Having made this remark it appears hardly necessary to make the statement that it is at least as important for a deficit province to make proper arrangements to bring its domestic resources under control as it is that it should receive the imported margin from the Central Government. But it is necessary to make this remark because it is a fact that a large number of deficit areas have failed to understand. I say quite bluntly that they appear to expect to subsist almost entirely at the expense of the Central Government; entirely to subsist on what the Central Government may give them. And in case this might be thought some species of *arriere pensee*, may I be permitted to quote from the official letter of the Food Department of the 26th of January; 1943 that laid down the outlines of what has now come to be known as the Basic Plan. The following is found in paragraph 3 of that letter:—

"It is definitely the intention that every province will set up machinery, and will make arrangements, in conformity with the principles of the scheme adumbrated in the attached Memorandum. Whether any particular province is normally regarded as a surplus or a deficit province, all provinces produce foodstuffs and whatever their production levels, it is clear that the full resources of each province must be brought into play whether they are in surplus or in deficit. It is incumbent on deficit provinces to utilise their inadequate resources to the full before expecting assistance from the surplus provinces. The problem facing India today is the same in deficit as well as in surplus areas, i.e., the need to prise loose stocks not being offered for normal trading and consumption purposes. The measures to be taken to secure supplies for exports from a surplus province differ only in degree from those applicable to the full utilisation of the domestic supplies of a deficit province for its own needs. For these reasons it is definitely intended that not merely the surplus but all provinces shall set up the machinery contemplated under the scheme."

A fundamental point that I desire clearly to put to the House is that the food administration in India does not begin and end with the Central Government securing surplus foodgrains from one Government and of handing them over to another. That is only a part of the task. I have attempted to explain that it is the smaller portion of the task and that by far the more important to successful food administration in this country is that the Government of all Provinces shall take such action as is designed to utilise their domestic resources to the full. Certain Provinces in this country have yet to learn that their salvation does not lie in a species of charity handed out by the Centre. The major portion of their salvation lies within their own boundaries. At this stage may I be permitted to summarise three points of supreme importance.

The first is that the Central Government have the task of balancing the books of the Provinces and States. They have the task of equalising the resources between the component units of India. But the margins by which this is done constitutes but a fraction of the domestic resources already available to them.

The second point is the imperative need for the deficit Provinces to bring their domestic resources under controlled distribution because it is these that constitute by far the greatest proportion of their aggregate resources.

The third point is that the instrument for the execution of all these and other matters of food administration is the machinery of the Provinces.

I now approach the second of my three headings, that is, the occurrences of the last six months; the reasons why the plans of the Central Government have not had the degree of success that was hoped. In my remarks I do not propose to mention any particular provinces. I propose to let them remain anonymous. I take this line for the sufficient reason that the Centre can only fulfil its task by and through the

execution and co-operation of the Provinces and States and I would do nothing here today to prejudice the better co-operation we hope in future to engender and to secure.

On the 26th of January, the Central Government published the first outline of its plan for the distribution of the surpluses of India. It has since become known as the Basic Plan. After study and correspondence, that Plan was unanimously accepted by all Provinces and States in India. There was no other control plan in the field. There has never been any other plan. At the end of February we were in high hopes. There was only one final obstacle before we moved from discussion to action. That obstacle was the determination of how much surplus each surplus area would surrender and how much should each deficit Government receive. The prospects of argument and trouble were obvious. Ultimately the plus and minuses of India were determined by the Central Government and were communicated to all concerned. But recognising the contentious nature of Indian statistics, the Central Government said in effect :

"None of us know whether these figures are really true and no amount of argument can prove it one way or another. They can only be proved by action. Action alone can determine whether the goods are there or not. Therefore take these figures we have given to you ; take them as the level of achievement and endeavour ; take them as the target to which you must direct all effort and let us see what happens ".

To this request that they do their best to reach the target figures, to this recognition that the figures so prescribed were neither binding obligations nor contracts but represented a level of endeavour, the Central Government received a chilly response. Everyone was prepared to subscribe to the theory that those who had too much should give to those who had too little, but, when it came to the acid test, only a few admitted their surplus. Many provinces refused to admit to any surplus and others only admitted to surpluses very much lower and so the basic plan began to falter. The consequences were quickly felt. The provinces of the north-east, being a homogeneous rice tract that is self-sufficient for rice, were to supply rice to Bengal. But nothing happened. In the first half of May, Calcutta was reduced to a few days supply. The Centre intervened and attempted to mount one of those arrangements that has now become known in the Food Department as a "rescue operation". The greatest efforts were made in the hope that, given time, the Basic Plan in that Region will begin to function. But it progressively became clear that no reliance could be placed on this happening. One thing was clear and that was that if this homogeneous rice tract, the largest in India, could not produce the margins necessary to sustain Calcutta and Bengal, then there was little hope of finding their rescue in terms of rice, from elsewhere in India. It would have been a case of "robbing Peter to pay Paul". In other words, a similar situation would have been created in places like Bombay, Travancore and Cochin. In a situation of this character I ask the Honourable Members to pause for a moment and consider what remedial action can take place where no adequate supplies of a particular grain can be found from outside. I suggest there are three and three methods only. Either the province that has the surplus must dig out the surplus, or the province that requires the grain should, through its authorised agents, be permitted to go into the surplus area and dig it out, or, failing those two alternatives, there only remains the possibility of permitting the trade to do so.

As the provinces concerned had substantially failed in the first, and as none were desirous of accepting the second method—

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS :** Why had they failed ?

**MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD :** As none were desirous of accepting the second method, there remained only the third course open. It was in these circumstances that free trade was established in the North-Eastern Region.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** With the consent of the provinces ?

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** If the provinces refuse to co-operate practically what is the good of their consent ?

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Order, order. You will all have your opportunity.

**MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD :** That is the history of what has been publicly stigmatised as the Centre's bewildering shifts of policy and their muddle-headed improvisation. We were aware that certain disadvantages were

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likely to accrue, and particularly in the matter of prices, but none can gainsay the fact that this action on the part of the Central Government saved Bengal in a moment of crisis. The position was critical and those who know the inner history of the supply position at that time can have little doubt that this action saved Bengal from disaster. But had the free trade policy not suffered obstruction, there are strong probabilities that prices would today have been at a more reasonable and sober level and the supply position generally easier.

No sooner had the worst of this supply crisis been overcome than difficulty began to appear in other parts of India. The failure to supply rice became almost universal except in the North-West of India and in consequence certain territories, such as Travancore and Cochin, were reduced to grave tribulation, and, failing remedial action, were likely to face possible disaster. The prospect of applying free trading conditions to wider areas led to the holding of the third All-India Food Conference in New Delhi in the first week of July and at this Conference the 85 representatives of Provinces and States made fully clear that rather than free trade they would prefer the resurrection of the Basic Plan in a modified form. The Government of India accepted this conclusion and the modified plan became effective on the 1st of August. Let it be said that it does not meet the full requirements. The declared deficits exceed the surpluses and we are only able to give a portion, but a very substantial portion, of the amounts that the deficit areas require. The Food Department believe, however, that having once more got some coordinated action moving, the surpluses will prove much more than many of the timid administrations at present regard as practicable. This abbreviated plan to which we hope to add flesh and substance as the weeks go past, covers a period up to the end of November in respect of the *khari* grains and up to the end of March in respect of the *rabi*. Again I remind the House that apart from circumstances and events that in this country are truly in the lap of the gods, much will depend on two things. The first is the efficiency with which the administrative machinery of the provinces will work, and secondly, the extent to which they will take action to bring their domestic resources under control. At this stage I would express the great hopes I have for the future. Increasingly action is taking the place of arguments about statistics and in action we will find our solution and not in talk.

This brings me to my third and last heading, the situation facing India today and the prospects for the future. As regards the present position I have briefly recounted how the Basic Plan has been resurrected which is another way of stating that the original policies of the Food Department, after a period of trial and tribulation, have been reaffirmed and by all concerned. Indeed, the Food Department was surprised and even gratified at the third All-India Food Conference held last month to be informed of the beauties and advantages of their original plans that they had themselves little suspected.

As regards the future, I must tread with some delicacy because this is a matter that has been remitted for examination to an expert Committee and it would be hazardous, if not foolish, to anticipate its findings. I can however inform the House of one decision which is very pregnant for the future : the decision to apply rationing to the cities and major towns of India as soon as possible and, thereafter and with the minimum delay, to other substantial urban areas. This was a recommendation of the third Food Conference. The Food-grains Policy Committee, now sitting, regard it of such importance and consequence that they have submitted an interim recommendation to the same effect. Supported by these views, the Government of India have accepted this recommendation. We are glad to know that the Provinces and States will not be caught unprepared. We asked them to think out the problem and to prepare their schemes seven months ago.

Now I ask the House to consider the meaning of urban rationing. If it is to be applied to urban areas of 100,000 and above, it means that through the length and breadth of this country there will be 58 places to be rationed ; if of 50,000 and above, there will be 156 ; if it means all places of 10,000 and above then it means there will be 990 rationing schemes. The annual amount of foodgrains required to support these schemes varies from approximately 1½ million tons of foodgrains to considerably over 4 million tons of foodgrains and these at a minimum of 1 lb. per head per day. In anticipation of this gigantic task the Food Department is to open an instructional

centre in Bombay where the officers who are to inaugurate and control rationing schemes will receive training on a uniform basis. The Centre opens on the 23rd of August.

I now turn to the implications of this decision so recently reached. It is obviously a gigantic problem of administration but how gigantic, it is perhaps not realised. It means, in the first case, that the Central Government's responsibility for transferring surpluses to deficit areas is a procurement operation that sinks into insignificance in comparison with the task before all Provinces and States, whether surplus or deficit in the matter of procuring the supplies with which to support and sustain rationing schemes. It means that all Provinces and States—and I repeat all Provinces and States whether they have comfortable circumstances or not, whether surplus or deficit in the matter of procuring their supplies to support and to sustain rationing schemes—can no longer burke the issue of bringing their domestic supplies under control. Whatever misunderstandings may have existed in the past there can be none under the rationing policy now decided. That this decision is right there can be no doubt whatsoever. By no other means can a reasonable price be secured and a reasonable price be enforced by the law ; by no other means can the poor man take his fair share with the rich man. How great this problem of administration will be can be gauged by the fact that the rationing of Bombay city requires a clerical staff in the Rationing Office of over 600, which is a staff bigger than the whole of the Department I have under my control at present. Apply this to the numbers of towns and cities I have mentioned. Link it with the machinery necessary to secure the supplies to make rationing possible and you will appreciate the immensity of the task. It cannot be satisfied by creating a small office with an officer or two. It is not a task for the proverbial " man and a boy ". It is something that is going to call for the full endeavours of the whole administrative machinery of a province. Only and only when the domestic resources are under controlled distribution to the requisite extent will the food problem of India be under control and will prices be effectively brought back to sanity.

I have now covered the ground and have put before Honourable Members the important factors which, in my view, must be the foundation of any examination of the problem as it stands today. I have attempted, however slightly, to draw aside the veil that hides the future. I have attempted to make clear how substantially the success or failure of food administration in this country is so directly related to the administrative machinery of provinces. Before closing, Mr. President, I ask your indulgence to say a few very brief words on two further matters.

In view of the public criticism of the position in Bengal, that has been so loud and clamant in recent weeks, it is perhaps proper that I should make a few observations on that situation. I am most anxious to say nothing that will embarrass the authorities who are struggling so manfully to deal with a difficult situation. If my remarks are indirect please bear that in mind.

Bengal has lost her rice imports from Burma. She normally imported 500,000 tons a year but against that she normally exported 350,000 tons. She has therefore lost 150,000 tons which against the annual normal harvest of something nearly approaching 9 million tons I leave Honourable Members to work out the percentage of the loss. But I am not so much concerned to deal with those figures as I am to deal with the immediate past, present and the immediate future. I will make my subsequent observations in terms of trainloads : trains of 50 goods wagons, the longest trains in this country. I do this for two reasons. The first is that it puts the issues in a manner from which the thinking man can draw certain obvious conclusions. The second is that I hope to avoid or at least to minimise contention. Now if we take the whole of the assistance given by the Food Department to Bengal and add to it the lesser amounts that were procured under free trade it means that from the 1st of January to the 31st of July, for every day of those seven months, there has been delivered over one trainload of foodgrains into Bengal. Recently a food drive was made in the rural areas of Bengal that brought to light a certain amount of rice. That amount of rice equals one trainload of rice to Bengal a day for each day of 365 days in a year ! In addition to this, a food drive is at present taking place in Calcutta and Howrah of which we have yet no details, except that it may prove even more successful than the rural drive. To turn to the future, the *aus* crop is beginning to be harvested and will progressively come into the markets during September. If

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this *aus* crop were shared at the rate of one lb. per head per day to each of the 60 million inhabitants of Bengal, you have enough rice to meet the full requirements for upwards of 90 days—three months. This rice crop equals five trains of rice a day for each of the 365 days in the year. And we are less than four months from the main rice crop of the province—the *aman* crop. It is usually over three times larger than the *aus* crop.

I may have said enough. But despite the great need of Bengal to do very much more in the matter of controlling her domestic resources, the Central Government are determined to do all they can to assist Bengal in her difficulties. Honourable Members might be interested to know the following figures. Under the modified Basic Plan she is to receive, after the requirements of the Defence Services have been met, 30 per cent. of all the rice that is available in the hands of the Central Government, 33 per cent. of millets, 58 per cent. of wheat, and 25 per cent. of gram,—which gives an overall percentage to Bengal of 36 of all the surpluses that the Central Government expect to receive in the next few months. I hope my friends in Bengal will not take these remarks amiss. But so much has been said and so many garbled versions of the transactions have been put out that it is desirable that some of the facts be more precisely stated.

My final word, Mr. President, and it will only take a moment, is to offer a word on what the Food Department has accomplished in its brief existence. We have heard so much of what it has not done.

It was called to the gigantic task of securing that 400 million people were fed. In the United Kingdom the Food Administration consists of 27,000 people for a population only two-thirds the size of Bengal. A new team was called together to build a dam against waters that were high, and were fast rising higher. In this struggle we have not received over much help from the grain traders who number perhaps half a million. Behind these traders we had the problem of the cultivators to which I have made reference. And what are our results? In the seven months from the 1st January to the 31st July, in contracts of one ton here and half a ton there, we have secured over one million tons of foodgrains. Taking an average, it means that day by day and every day of those seven months we have procured foodgrains to fill 250 railway wagons, and we have loaded and despatched 250 railway wagons—five trains a day—to the deficit areas. Few will ever know of the shortage and distress that has been prevented. And in this unceasing struggle during which scarcely a day passed without some appeal for help that rarely went unanswered, we exerted every nerve and sinew to put affairs on to a planned basis where, please Providence, we have now put them. I am not claiming success. I leave to the House to judge how far duty has been performed. (*Applause.*)

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The time-limit for each speech is quarter of an hour.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Sir, the last time you imposed this limit of 15 minutes, we accepted it as there were many Honourable Members wanting to speak. But today I want that we should follow the Assembly practice of giving a little latitude to the party leaders. I do not mind the limit of 15 minutes, but some latitude should be given to the party leaders.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: The other members too were allowed more time in the Assembly. I think the arrangement there during the last session was that the party leaders should be given half an hour each, and the other members twenty minutes each. Whatever time-limit you impose, Sir, I hope it will be more than 15 minutes. The debate will, in that case, not be finished today. I hope that Government will agree to the debate being carried over to another day if necessary on account of the greater time-limit allowed for the speeches of Honourable Members. In the last session, when my Resolution regarding the food situation was discussed, the discussion could not be finished in a day, although Government had provided special facilities, and consequently the discussion was carried over to the next day. I hope, therefore, that there will be no objection on the part of Government to the extension of the time allowed for the debate.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, I am bound by the statutory limit fixed under our rules. I do not know what is going on in the other House, nor am I concerned with it; I have to go by our rules and regulations. But



I quite realise that there are some occasions, when important questions come up before the House, when Honourable Members desire to have more time. But, as I have pointed out before, the whole blame lies on many Honourable Members. They persist in repeating observations which have already been made by previous speakers, and they waste time in this way, if they will excuse my saying so. In Parliament, the members take up separately individual points and dilate on them and do full justice to them within the time limit that is allowed. Here, on the other hand, every member wants to speak on the whole subject, whether it is Budget discussion or whether it is any other discussion. My own suggestion to you is that you should select your own speakers to put forward and argue particular, important points. If you do that, much of the trouble, much of the difficulty, and much of the disappointment would be avoided. In a matter like this, if the Government is prepared to give a second day for the discussion of this important Motion, I have no objection. But I cannot break any rule in this respect. I will leave the whole matter to be decided by this Honourable House; I leave it to Honourable Members to tell me what they propose to do about it.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** May we know whether Government propose to give another day for this discussion or not? We have both the Food Member and the Food Secretary in this House, and they can tell us what the Government attitude is.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN (Leader of the House) :** Let us wait and see. I think 15 minutes will be sufficient for Honourable Members to express their views on the subject, and in that case I do not think another day is necessary.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR :** May I put in a word, Sir? We always accommodate Government on important occasions. I remember that when I was moving my Resolution on heavy industries in India, Sir Homi Mody, who was then Member in charge, asked me to move that Resolution on a particular day because he could not be here on any other day and I accommodated him. So, we desire that the Government also should accommodate us. This is a very important question, Sir, and with due respect to your remarks, I request the Government to accommodate us and give us another day.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Which remark of mine do you object to?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR :** I am not objecting to any remark of yours, Sir. I only want more indulgence from the Chair on such an important debate as the debate on the food situation.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** If you talk of indulgence, you must have noticed that when some Honourable Members are talking on a Bill or Resolution or other matter before the House, and when their observations are worth listening to, then I know that the Council is respecting them and want to hear them and I have always allowed a latitude of ten minutes and more. So you cannot say that the Chair has been unfair to Honourable Members in the past.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR :** No, certainly not.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** No such allegation has been made against the Chair. There is no grievance against the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** I leave it to Honourable Members to say whether they want the 15 minutes' limit to be followed or not.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** I want again to ask Government whether they will allot us a second day for the debate.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** The Leader of the House has already said that he will mark the course of the discussion during the day and then he will think over the matter.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** How is it going to help if you limit us to 15 minutes per speaker?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN :** If we follow the advice given by the Chair I do not think another day will be necessary.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** In other words, we are to follow the advice given by you, namely, that we should not ask for a day more. I take you to say that you will not give us another day.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN :** Let us follow the advice of the Chair in restricting the speeches to 15 minutes. If necessary, we can go on to another day.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** I think Government ought to make up their mind now and say whether, if it is necessary that the debate should be prolonged, they will give us another day. I want a clear answer to that question.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN :** The answer is that it is not necessary in view of the remarks made by the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Permit me to say something, Sir. As was remarked by the Leader of the European Group in the other House, Government have given the least consideration to the most important subject before the country. If they want to stifle the debate I have no objection. We would rather prefer, Sir, in that case, to abstain from taking part in the debate than be restricted to the 15 minutes' time-limit. It is for the Chair and the Government to decide whether they want our opinion or not. If they want our opinion, we can give it only on the consideration that we must be given sufficient time.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** May I say on behalf of my Party that we entirely agree with what has fallen from the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam? If Government want to have a scrappy discussion of the subject, they can discuss it inter-departmentally. They do not want our advice at all and we shall, therefore, refrain from taking part in the discussion. The Central Government is a mighty Government. They have the monopoly of all wisdom. Yet they have failed utterly to solve the problem that was entrusted to them and they do not want advice from us. If so, let them carry on as they like.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN :** I never said any such thing. Even now I am prepared to leave the matter to the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT (to the Honourable Pandit Kunzru) :** You asked me to give 30 minutes to Leaders of Parties....

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** If I may interrupt you, Sir, I may say that I have no complaint against you. I am concerned only with the Government. What you have said is perfectly fair. We do not question a word of what you have said.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** You want me to give 30 minutes to Leaders of Parties and 20 minutes to other Honourable Members?

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** Yes, Sir; that is what was done in the Assembly in the last session.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Can you tell me how many people are going to speak today?

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** A good many people, Sir.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** Three members from my Party will speak, Sir.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** Almost all from my Party will speak.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** Is it possible then to conclude the debate today?

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** If it is necessary that the debate should be concluded today, then I say that the debate is not necessary. Government have got the necessary wisdom and experience to solve this question without any aid from us.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN :** I did not say that the debate should be concluded today. I have left it to the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** I do not understand this rigmarole. Government can answer a plain question in a plain way.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** I cannot make any discrimination between Leaders and the other Honourable Members. I think that all Honourable Members should be treated alike. I shall, therefore, show a little consideration on

this occasion but I do not want that it should be made a precedent. I shall give 20 minutes all round to all Honourable Members. If they will only avoid repetition I am sure we shall do a considerable amount of work today.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** I should like to understand clearly what the position is. Can the Government give us a day more or not? That is the question.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN :** If the debate is not concluded today, then we can go on to the next day. I have left it to the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** What is the Government's position?

**THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA :** If the debate is not concluded today, we shall give another day.

**THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** Why did you not say this before? Then, Sir, I still suggest that the Leaders should be given half an hour.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** That is a discrimination which I do not wish to introduce in this House.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** That is done in all debates with the consent of the Parties.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT :** You can amongst yourselves decide that a particular member speaking only on one point can speak for half an hour and another member, speaking on another point, can do so similarly.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** You can give latitude to the Parties to decide amongst themselves.

(The Honourable the President then called upon the Honourable Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das, who had already stood up, to speak.)

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS (Punjab : Non-Muhammadan) :** Sir, I have listened with rapt attention to the speech of Major-General the Honourable E. Wood. It is said that the hungry man becomes desperate. **موتی کیا نہ کرتی**. Sir, I should like Government to explain why they have been so late in their efforts knowing that import of rice from Burma and Malaya were impossible. General Wood has observed that his Department had to come to the rescue of Bengal from disaster. We all admire the efforts General Wood and his staff have made in this matter. But the fact is there what General Wood has explained that there were plenty of stocks in Bengal which had to be commandeered at the instance of the Food Department, and that there were sufficient trainloads of hoarded stuff in Bengal.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. SUSIL KUMAR RAY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) :** He said something wrong.

**MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD :** On a point of personal explanation, Sir, I did not make that remark. No exports from Bengal have taken place for many months past.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. SUSIL KUMAR RAY CHOWDHURY :** He said that several trainloads have been unearthed.

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS :** I have not been talking of exports. I have been talking of what General Wood said, and there were big stocks of rice in Bengal hoarded by people. My contention is that Provincial Governments have been sleeping over this matter and they have not been co-operating with the Central Government. The Honourable Sir Aziz-ul-Haque in the Legislative Assembly explained the case from his own point of view. He did not say at all how the situation which has arisen will be solved. Who is responsible for such a situation to develop? Why the Provincial Governments did not seek co-operation of leaders of the people. This is one important point that has not been considered by the Central Government or by the Provincial Governments. Sir Aziz-ul-Haque has said that Provincial Governments have not co-operated. It is a fact that so far as the Punjab is concerned a responsible Minister of the Punjab has been lecturing in various places and advising the zamindars to hoard foodstuffs and not to bring them into the market. His campaign has been going on and is going on still. People suspect why the Government of India cannot take action under the Defence of India Act against the open challenge to the Central Government by a Minister of the

[Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das.]

Provincial Government. It can be said that Provincial Governments have provincial autonomy. But in such matters they should not go against the Government of India and encourage people to hoard stocks. In case I am wrong, the Honourable the Food Member will put me right. Why has no action been taken in this matter? Notwithstanding His Excellency the Viceroy has special powers? Is there a clique in which the Government of India is a party. Why has that challenge not been met by the Government of India? That particular Minister advised the people to hoard stocks of foodstuffs in order to get better prices.

MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD: May I ask, Sir, to what period is the Honourable Member referring? Is he referring to any time in the last six weeks or is he referring to a period some time ago?

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: The period referred to by you as well as the present period. (Major-General the Honourable E. Wood shook his head, indicating dissent). You may shake your head, but I know it is a fact. By the efforts of the Food Department prices of foodstuffs have gone down and the people are blaming that Minister that his advice had been of no use. Prices have fallen from Rs. 13 to Rs. 10 and that is why people are criticising the particular Minister.

I now come to another point to which General Wood has referred, *viz.*, that there is no organised agency for the sale of rice and small grains in the Punjab. With due deference to General Wood, I can say that there exists an organisation and those foodstuffs come into the market and they are sold through various agencies and if I mistake not those agencies have been instrumental in sending quite a lot of rice and other foodstuffs to Bengal. One omission I find on the part of the Government. So far they have not availed themselves of the co-operation of public leaders particularly Mahatma Gandhi in this direction. Mere Ordinances and legal enactments will not serve the purpose as far as foodstuffs are concerned. I am not a Congressman. I see that Mahatma Gandhi is of the opinion that people should not hoard foodstuffs and they should share them with needy people. Why should not his co-operation be obtained? If that is done, hoarding will automatically vanish. General Wood has observed that there was hoarding in Bengal. But notwithstanding all these Ordinances and legal measures people have hoarded foodstuffs.

THE HONOURABLE MR. SUSIL KUMAR RAY CHOWDHURY: Hoarding in Bengal has not been substantiated.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS: My friend says that hoarding in Bengal has not been substantiated. But I am basing my remarks on the information given by General Wood and that information is that so many trainloads of rice have been found to exist in Bengal.

There is another point which as a commercial man I want to put before the House. I want information from the Government of India as regards stocks which each province ought to have for times of emergency. If the entire stocks are cleared every year, what will you do when there is an emergency of India becoming a centre of warfare. It has been also observed that we should not depend upon imports of foodstuffs from other countries. I may tell my esteemed friend General Wood that as far as wheat is concerned, India consumes about 9½ million tons and whenever the yield of the *rabi* crop is over 9½ million tons the necessity of export arises. As far as the regulation of prices is concerned, I can say that the rise in prices has been due to the wrong measures adopted by various Government agencies. I know that control prices were fixed in different markets in the Punjab. The United Provinces Government came in for purchase; a certain agency was appointed for this purpose. I know that it is a fact that in certain markets these agents broke the control rate themselves and purchased foodstuffs at much higher prices and if I am not wrong the purchases were made in such a way that three middlemen were appointed in the same firm; one was buying from another and the last one sold it to the Government purchase agents at enhanced prices. This is a fact which I can substantiate and this is a fact which everybody knows and they all blame the Government for this system of purchases. I am glad after all that the purchase of foodstuffs resulted in the Government of India in formation of the Food Department and asking them to co-ordinate efforts of the various provinces in this matter.

Sir, I would recommend to the Government the present way of price control and the present system of purchase will never succeed. The Government should buy all the crop itself and then make a distribution. In that way only you will succeed. I know the way in which the big zamindars act to help small ryots. Being a zamindar myself I know that when the time of paying of revenue comes we insist on our cultivators to pay the revenue and in lieu of that revenue we take a certain quantity in kind of the stuff they have produced, and the question whether the big landlord gives the poor cultivator anything or not is a question which does not arise in this case. Why the big zamindars have not co-operated and why the thing has not become a success is because there has been no co-operation from the public and more so of a Local Government. I regard that as a necessary step which Government should take and they will find that in case that public co-operation is forthcoming the difficulty which the Central Government as well as the Provincial Governments are experiencing will vanish.

Sir, the only right way of now controlling the foodstuffs is to buy the whole crop. Have a Committee of public men as well as officials to advise in the matter and as regards the distribution of the whole stock is concerned. Rationing in so many cities—as General Wood has observed that in Bombay alone an establishment of 600 people will be required—will be dispensed with then because when you have the public co-operating these things can be cheaply managed with a small staff than with a big staff.

Now, Sir, time has proved that notwithstanding the Ordinances, notwithstanding the Defence of India Act and Regulations, notwithstanding the various legal enactments which are now on the Statute-book or which are contemplated to be put before the Legislature or before His Excellency the Viceroy for more Ordinances have not succeeded. Therefore, Sir, I would request the Government to seek the co-operation of the public leaders and those leaders whose voice has a command over the minds of the masses and then and then only you will succeed.

With these words, Sir, I express the hope that Government will associate Mahatma Gandhi and other public leaders with them and with their co-operation successfully achieve the end that they have in view.

THE HONOURABLE MR. M. N. DALAL (Bombay : Non-Muhammadan) : The food situation in the country today is very serious. According to the Senior Vice-President of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce people in certain parts of the mofussil in Bengal have been eating leaves and grass. We are told that in the Central Provinces and Berar people have taken to tamarind seeds to satisfy their pangs of hunger. Food riots, once they start, might become a greater menace to this country than even the Japanese aggression. The main theme put up by Government for the failure of the food policy is that there has been a certain amount of hoarding. A certain amount of hoarding by the poorer and middle classes of people—say, about six months to a year's provisions in advance—has been in vogue in this country from time immemorial and inflationary prices have given an impetus to this practice. But it is, I think, a moot point whether we can condemn these poor and middle class people from an ethical or an economic point of view. There has also been a certain amount of hoarding by the producers, consumers and speculators, but it is idle to pretend that this is the main cause, because large hoards cannot be hidden for a long time and in my own Province of Bombay I know for a fact that the penalty for hoarding is so severe that it cannot be a real menace to the food situation in the country. Besides there is no small hoarding on the part of Government themselves. The All-India Food Conference, which met in Delhi on the 5th of July, *in camera*, without publishing even the Viceroy's opening speech, has arrived at certain indefinite conclusions and more or less maintains the *status quo*. The main decisions arrived at by this Conference are : no statutory fixation of maximum prices at the present stage, procurement operations, and the deficit provinces are left free to negotiate directly with the surplus areas. The surplus areas at the present stage do not seem to be very keen to help the deficit provinces and are taking the best advantage of the deficit provinces. For instance, I remember a few months back the Central Provinces had promised to give rice to Bombay : they have now gone back on their agreement. So far as the Government of Sind is concerned, we know that they have formed into a syndicate for the distribution of foodgrains and are working on a commercial basis. The Government of Sind, have made a profit of more than a crore of

[Mr. M. N. Dalal.]

rupees. The result is, Sir, that the price of rice in Bombay has gone up by four times, it has doubled only during the last six months and the quality has considerably deteriorated. If the present scheme of procurement is to achieve any degree of success the Central Government and the deficit provinces should not be left to the sweet will of the surplus areas. Having regard to the statistics and figures in the past the Central Government should insist on the surplus at a reasonable price.

Then, Sir, about procurement operations. The deficit provinces are now to make a direct approach to the surplus areas. This, in my opinion, might create a certain amount of unhealthy competition between the several deficit provinces and there might be a scramble for shipping and wagon space which might retard rather than enhance the food situation in this country. I for one would respectfully request Government to give up the idea of provincial autonomy in the several provinces when a question of life and death of the people is concerned. Besides this there are several other causes which account for the failure of the food policy. Firstly, there is no uniform basis of a rationing policy throughout India. For instance, in Bombay and its suburbs there is complete and stringent rationing, whereas in other important cities of India like Nagpur, Allahabad, Delhi and Lucknow, there is no stringent rationing. Then, Sir, the exports, at least in the past, by the Government of India, not only for military purposes, but for civilian purposes, and by such Government-helped agencies like the U. K. C. C., have been responsible to a certain extent for the shortage of foodstuffs in this country. I admit that all imports have been completely stopped, in view of the war situation—

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS :** Exports have stopped after meeting the U. K. C. C. demand.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. M. N. DALAL :** A Government spokesman recently said that the shortage of foodstuffs in this country was only about 2 per cent. But, Sir, I ask you, what is 2 per cent. of the population of this country? It is 8 million. And if there is only a 2 per cent. shortage, why have Government failed to control the food policy in this country?

The obvious remedy now is to import wheat from Australia and rice from South America. Shipping space should be no consideration and no plea when a question of life and death is concerned. We have been told that Government are now going to purchase foodgrains to the extent of Rs. 100 crores. But we would like to know further—we would like information as to the methods they will employ to collect these grains and to distribute them. In Great Britain a subsidy of £100 million has been given if I remember rightly, in 1940-41, for a population of 40 million approximately, which works out to Rs. 34 per head. Now, if this sum of Rs. 100 crores can at all be called an indirect subsidy, for a population of 400 million, it works out at only Rs. 2-8 per head. I am aware, Mr. President, that India is primarily an agricultural country, but the effects of this purchase of foodgrains to the extent of Rs. 100 crores has to be closely watched.

The Grow More Food campaign has failed to create sufficient momentum to improve the food situation in this country. In this respect I would impress upon Government the necessity of importing more agricultural machinery and fertilizers whenever possible. I am aware that there are two very important decisions taken by the Hot Springs Food Conference, in which no less than 38 Allied countries conferred. Two of their most important decisions are that India shall now manufacture and export processed articles, and that machinery for the establishment of a factory for fertilizers is to arrive in India very soon. It remains to be seen, Mr. President, how soon this very important and necessary machinery arrives in this country.

Finally, it must be admitted that even a little hoarding by every agriculturist, by every producer, on the aggregate may amount to a huge quantity, and something has got to be done to make these poor producers disgorge their individual small stocks. The only useful way to make them disgorge would, in my opinion, be to give them a certain amount of gold and silver, either from Government stocks or by importation from the United States of America. This practice has been followed in the past and has proved successful.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM :** During the last war.

**THE HONOURABLE MR. M. N. DALAL :** Mr. President, the solution of the food problem and thereby the improvement in the public morale is the essence of war-time

requirements. I would therefore request Government to create faith in the people by a firm, definite, sound and well co-ordinated food policy in the country. I congratulate Government on having now as their head in the Food Department a gentleman, a businessman who has a considerable amount of knowledge of commerce and foodstuffs, and I hope he will prove his worth by solving the food problem in the country.

**THE HONOURABLE SARDAR SIR BUTA SINGH (Punjab : Sikh) :** Sir, the food situation in some parts of the country is deplorable. I feel that we should give as much help as possible to our stricken country-men. At the same time it must be remembered that those provinces themselves must do all they can to improve their food position. My information is that one of our provinces where condition are worst, has not been able to meet with sufficient efficiency or firmness a situation which might have been avoided. Prices here of wheat and paddy have risen to over Rs. 30 a maund and the Provincial Government has so far taken no visible steps to rectify this position.

In the Punjab, agents coming from deficit provinces have been buying wheat freely at an average rate of about Rs. 10 per maund. The overhead charges of taking the same to distances of a 1,000 miles or so *plus* railway freight and grinding charges etc., come to about Rs. 2-8-0 per maund. But flour in Calcutta, I understand, is selling at Rs. 35 or above per maund. I should like to know from Government as to who pockets the enormous difference between the buying price in the Punjab and the selling price in Calcutta? The profits must be huge.

My province feels that we would not like to sell cheaply to traders and so enable them to make enormous profits at the cost of the cultivator. If we could be assured that prices in deficit areas would be controlled and that dying people are receiving their food at actual purchase prices *plus* freight and essential minimum overhead charges, then I am sure my province will be happy to be selling at prices far below those prevailing in Bengal.

Turning to the rise in prices of foodgrains, we must go into the causes which have led to a bullish tendency. Firstly, everything has gone up in price and may I be allowed to point out that whereas foodgrains have only appreciated to the extent of three to three and a half times, their pre-war level, other commodities have gone up ten times and even more.

Our costs of agricultural production have risen enormously. *Bullocks* are now five times their normal price, and so are manures such as oilcake, etc. Iron is becoming almost unprocurable and agricultural labour is scarce and much dearer. These are essential factors controlling production costs. The poor agriculturists' own requirements such as cloth, shoes and various other necessities of life are to be bought only at extravagant prices and in an uncontrolled market. So the remedy lies in cheaper production costs and in intensifying our agricultural efforts.

We must see that every inch of ground is put to the best use and made to furnish the requirements of the starving population. Here, I must again make it clear that deficit provinces must pull their weight and give immediate effect to schemes of greater agricultural effort.

Bengal has enormous areas which can produce rice. Manure can double the yield of those lands that are already under cultivation. We must produce more not only for our own people but for those far-off lands which have suffered the ravages of war.

Lastly, we must not forget the man behind the plough. One cannot realise here the sufferings to which he was put when wheat and paddy fell to a level where he could not meet his essential commitments. They had to sell the household effects to meet Government revenue charges, and went to the extent of selling the few ornaments women-folk possessed in the villages. And these conditions did not prevail for just one year, but were continued over a period of many years. I regret to say no one came to his rescue, neither the Government nor the rich living in the towns.

I must strongly refute the allegation that cultivators in the Punjab are hoarding wheat with a view to profiteering, when people are dying of hunger. I know and it is a fact that the whole of last year's wheat crop was sold out by the producers before the end of that year and even this year no hoarding is being done. The normal

[Sir Buta Singh.]

quantity which found its way to the market has already passed out of the stocks of the producers. It is mainly due to the shortage of railway wagons and inter-provincial barriers, stopping movement of grain which are responsible for slow movement of food. There have been violent insinuation against the province I represent but I can affirm that the Punjab has met all the demands of wheat made by the Government of India and is prepared to help up to its utmost capacity. I fail to see how the Punjab can be accused of anti-social tendencies if the Centre cannot arrange transport to carry the wheat that is available. The province cannot be blamed for this failure.

The remedy lies in the lifting of these barriers and allowing free trade through the normal channels to function.

Finally what is needed is to restore the confidence of the producer and to secure the co-operation of the trader. Without this it would not be possible to procure and obtain physical control over the commodities or to arrange their distribution from surplus to deficit areas.

THE HONOURABLE MR. SUSIL KUMAR RAY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, coming as I do from Bengal, the most affected of all the provinces in India, I feel very strongly about the food situation in my province. I regret very much that when people in my part of the country are dying of starvation the Government of India or at least some of its members are not paying sufficient consideration to the problem. It was amazing that the Leader of the other House made a statement in that House last week that he would be constrained to curtail the days fixed in the Assembly for discussing the food situation in the country on account of the slow progress of legislative business in that House as if legislative business is more important than finding ways and means for providing food to the starving population. Sir, I may be pardoned, if I say that this is nothing short of criminal negligence.

Then, Sir, may I ask the new Food Member whether it is a fact that a province was declared a surplus province after proper enquiries and statistics were taken, but subsequently a member of the Government of India coming from that province recommended that his province was not a surplus province as declared by the Government of India but was a deficit province and no export of foodstuff should be allowed from that province to the neighbouring province where there was acute shortage of food.

Sir, Bengal has fallen on very evil days. Last year we had a severe cyclone and flood in Midnapore and the main *aman* crop of the province was far below average, because of that and also on account of some insects damaging the same. This year again we have flood in Burdwan and several other districts. Besides we have an unsympathetic Governor whose denial policy in the coastal districts of Bengal is responsible for many of the sufferings of the people of the province. The Government of Bengal is having a food drive and the Food Minister of that province has crept under the bedstead of every householder in the province in search of hidden food but this has all been in vain as blood cannot be drawn from a carcass. Whatever that may be, the fact remains that the starving people from the countryside are coming to Calcutta in the hope of getting food and then dying in the streets of that city after several days of starvation and exposed to sun and rain.

Sir, I hope that the new Food Member of the Government of India will take steps to send some foodstuffs to Bengal immediately and earn the gratitude of that province. I also hope, Sir, that famine should be declared in Bengal and the Famine Code be applied therein.

THE HONOURABLE LT.-COLONEL SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR (Nominated Non-official) : Mr. President, Sir, I rise to thank the Honourable Food Secretary for his detailed and frank statement of facts and figures and for narrating all the timely steps taken from time to time by the Government of India, from the beginning of the war to date, and the description of the difficulties and obstructions they had to encounter. Thanks to the prudence and vigilance of the Government of India that the situation remained in hand and safe from deterioration in face of the unscrupulous hoarders and profiteers.



India today is in the midst of a most difficult food problem. I think it is far more necessary to tackle this problem directly by making concrete workable suggestions and find a solution in complete co-operation with the Government for the common cause, than delve into the past and try to find excuses and criticism. I would appeal to the side opposite that our entire efforts and energies should be directed towards this common problem and every assistance extended to the Government to bring to book the hoarders, who are public enemy No. 1.

In my opinion the Government of India should consider the feasibility of gradually restoring free trade throughout India as the means of ensuring steady supply, thereby bringing down the general price level and distributing supplies commensurate with the needs of various parts of India. The Central Government should take up the ultimate responsibility to organize and co-ordinate the All-India Food Policy. There should be Provincial, District and Local Towns Committees to advise the authorities on the food problems. The production of each province as against its requirements should be assessed, as this experiment has proved a success in Bhopal State. From the provincial surplus, to be intimated by the Provincial Governments to the Central Government, the demands of the Army and deficit provinces should be met.

The House will agree with me that the two million soldiers, serving either in India or abroad, form population of India and are India's liability and must be properly fed. They must be provided their share of the food, with a surplus from crop to crop. India is responsible to feed her two million children in the army.

I am sure by the simple workable skeleton process forming the fundamental basis as suggested by me, the much vexed question of food would be solved to the advantage of all concerned.

With these words, Sir, I support the Motion.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS** (Nominated Non-official): Sir, I have listened very carefully to the very good speech of the Honourable and Gallant

1 P. M. Member in charge of this subject. The Government, both Central and Provincial, were under the impression that India was not in need

of foodgrains from outside. They forgot for the moment that Madras was importing at least 140,000 tons of rice from Burma and about 50,000 tons of broken rice from Saigon. I am not concerned with the quantity that Bengal imported from Burma. We are now asked to feed the people in Ceylon, the people in Travancore and the people in Cochin, in addition to the large number of evacuees who have come to India, at least to the Madras Presidency and the hundreds of thousands of prisoners who are quartered in Southern India. Sir, forgetting these facts it has been asserted till quite recently that India is self-sufficient. Government imported a rationing expert from England. Before he even literally landed in the country, he said India is not suffering from want of foodstuffs and trotted out the bogey that there was hoarding in the country. Sir, I cannot speak for other provinces but I can speak for the Madras Presidency. Sir, there is hardly any hoarding in that Presidency. This is a bogey which is conveniently trotted out by the Government which has failed to do its duty to the people. We have been crying for a long time that we are in need of foodstuffs. Where have they got the hoarding? Have they prosecuted the people who have hoarded? Have they found hoarding anywhere? It may be that some of these ryots keep enough for the year. In Madras the practice is that the labourers are paid in kind in most of the districts. If they are not paid in kind they would not work and the lands will lie fallow. I can speak for Tanjore, Chingleput and one or two other districts. Can that be said to be hoarding when a man keeps enough for the year?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. SUSIL KUMAR RAY CHOWDHURY**: It is the same in Bengal also. They are paid in kind.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS**: Can it be said to be hoarding when a man stocks 100 kottais. He has got to feed 100 farm servants and his family. What is he to do? Money would be of any use. This bogey of hoarding has been trotted out by the Government in order to excuse themselves. So far as Madras is concerned, it is not correct. Then, Sir, to say that Madras has got enough to eat is not only a wrong statement, but a misleading statement. The West Coast of Madras at least has had an epidemic attack of cholera. Thousands were dying

[Sir David Devadoss.]

in Calicut and other places. Now I have read in a Madras paper that it has come to Madras. Your censors can control the spread of news but not the breeding or spreading of cholera microbes. What does this mean? It means that the people have not got the stamina to resist the disease, they have not got the strength to overcome the infection. My point is emphasised by this fact that the incidence of death was 80 per cent. of the attacks in Calicut and other places. It has never been so. When there was a serious outbreak of cholera the incidence used to be 20 or 30 per cent. But on account of the want of stamina of the people, 80 per cent. of the attacks have proved fatal. These are facts which cannot be challenged. We do not know whether you have got the correct figures, because the tendency of most of the lower officials is to reduce the number of attacks and deaths. For instance take Ajmer-Merwara; papers said that there were 8,000 deaths on account of the floods. This morning I read in the official communiqué that there were only 1,000 deaths. There is this vast difference. I leave it to the House to judge which is more likely to be correct. I am not holding a brief for anybody. This will affect you in a very important manner. Supposing the infection spreads to your army. It will do more harm than any number of bombs that the Japanese or anybody else could throw on them. You may burke all the information. You may censor all the information; but the fact is there that Madras is now affected by a serious epidemic of cholera and you have got a very large contingent there. You have got thousands of troops there. Supposing it spreads among the troop population, what will you do? Therefore, I say it is very important for you to feed the people and see that epidemics do not spread and consider it as a part of your war effort. Get food from outside and see that the people are fed, not overfed. I wondered which genius briefed the Secretary of State when he said that people have got easy money and they are overfed and that is the reason for the shortage of food. I was surprised to see that statement only a few days ago. He gave three or four reasons, but the main reason was that people have got easy money and therefore they eat too much and consequently there is a shortage of food. I hope he will pay a visit to India and see for himself. The Department is now saying "Grow More Food". You cannot grow more food by passing Ordinances. Not even the British Parliament which is all powerful can raise food by saying "Raise More Food".

In this connection I have got a complaint, if you will pardon a personal allusion, which shows how the Department is working. Pardon me for saying that there is want of common sense in the Department. I have the fortune or the misfortune of having an estate outside Madras within 12 miles. I grow rice there. In April last I wanted only one bag of rice grown by my servants on my own land to be taken to Kodaikanal when I went there. The Collector of Madras said you may take it. The Collector of Chingleput wrote a very nice letter and said "I regret very much that the Controller of Civil Supplies does not permit you to carry one bag of rice. One bag of rice means 180 lbs. It was for my own use add that of my family. We were prevented from having it because we could not get a permit. We could not send it by railway. And that is the way in which work is carried on.

Another instance. My daughter has got a coffee estate within the Travancore boundary but within six miles of Panagudi, a town in the Tinnevely district. There is no access to it from Travancore. The estate is situated on the British side. Well, Sir, she is prevented from taking rice for her own servants and for her work people. The work people are from Panagudi which is a British town and this is within seven miles of it only. The coffee crop has to be gathered and other crops have to be raised; vegetables and other things have to be brought down. No cooly would go. Money would not make them fill their insides. They want rice. I wrote two letters and the last reply was that they were considering the question. How long are they going to consider the question. There is want of a little common-sense on the part of these people. You want people to grow more food and when they want to do it you put obstacles in their way, because you have said that nothing should go out of the province into Travancore territory. Travancore territory is only a name. It is really the same thing. Within 7 miles you have got the State.

Well, Sir, I do not want to dilate upon these my own particular grievances, but I will mention other things. You say "Grow More Food". Quite so, we are

all trying to do that. I have told my agent in Kodaikanal to do as much as possible, but what happened? The Madras Government said "We will give you all the land for growing food". Well, middle class people—teachers and others—went and removed the undergrowth and began to cultivate potatoes and other things. Probably the Karnam was not properly looked after. He wrote to the tehsildar reporting that these people had cut down trees. Sir, there are no timber trees in Kodaikanal unless you plant eucalyptus and other trees. There are only wild growths of wattle and other things. The tehsildar said No..... They came and asked me to interfere. I told them to write to the Collector, and to the Divisional officer, they wrote to them but nothing happened for six months. Then luckily one of the Advisers to the Governor happened to visit the area. He knew the place and found that these people had put in a lot of money, they had removed the undergrowth from the virgin soil and had also put in a lot of labour and felt that they must be allowed to cultivate. This is now being done, but the difficulty is that though superior officers from the Governor downwards say "You cultivate and try to raise produce as much as possible" the revenue officials are in the way. If a man takes a bucket of water they threaten him with an enhancement of his assessment. I think those who are familiar with the conditions in Madras know that what is called an annual *Jamabandi* is held by officers of the Revenue Department. Every tehsildar, every Revenue Inspector wants to treat the people as the enemy of the Government. Now you say "Grow More Food". How can you make them grow more food. Give them all the facilities they want for the purpose. And then unfortunately, Sir, in Madras last year there was a failure of the monsoon. The north-east monsoon is a most important monsoon for the eastern districts. It was an utter failure and consequently famine conditions prevailed in several districts. Well, to add to the trouble we had a cyclone, in May last, which damaged a lot of crops in the Tanjore and in the South Arcot districts. Now, Sir, these things have to be taken into consideration. It is all very well for people here to write big theses and so on: I do not want to make fun of them but they must understand the real conditions: that the people are really suffering. Go into the provinces, go into the districts, go into the villages and take the opinion of the people who are there. Your official reports are of no use. With due respect, Sir, these official reports are prepared in such a way as to please the superior authorities. I speak no doubt freely but I am speaking with some knowledge of the things that are happening. You go and make private enquiries and see how the things are. They say they have to submit such reports as otherwise the superior authorities will not be pleased.

Well, Sir, I do not want to take up the time of the House but what I want to know is what steps are we taking now to relieve the distress in Madras. No doubt the Honourable Member said they are going to do a lot of things but it takes long before Government is able to do anything and we want action to be taken very urgently. We do not know what the north-east monsoon is going to be: if it is a failure conditions will be still worse and therefore, Sir, we must put our shoulders to the wheel. Get as much help from the non-officials as possible. Do not think of prestige, do not think of rules and regulations when people are starving and a change is badly wanted. What I say is this: make it a part of your duty, as you are doing in the case of the war, get food from outside, wheat or rice or whatever you can get from outside, just as you think of armaments, think also of feeding the population. There are already signs of an epidemic in my province. If this epidemic spreads you will find that the sufferers will be your army men, because, as you know very well, Sir, neither a European nor an American is immune to the Asiatic cholera that is prevailing in Madras.

With these few words I request Government to forget the past and do whatever is possible for the present and for the future. (*Applause.*)

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

The Council re-assembled after Lunch at Three of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

**THE HONOURABLE SIE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH** (Education, Health and Lands Member): Sir, may I intrude for a few moments and say that though the distribution of food and its marketing is important, its production is of no less importance. Food must be produced first to be available for distribution.

[Sir Jogendra Singh.]

Let us for a moment lift our eye and survey millions of men and women who are now engaged in the heat of the sun, in the pouring rain and in puddled mud in producing food, on a wage which does not afford even bare necessities of life. It is these men whose destinies we decide. It is these men on whose well-being the well-being of India depends. They have never known the meaning of hoarding; from the day the grain appears on the threshing floor, they share it, and share it freely with others. Indeed grain often disappears from the threshing floor and the producer has to live on borrowing till the next crop. This endless struggle continues from year to year. If the producers, by self-denial, instead of placing in the market consume an additional ounce per day, they can consume 30 lakh tons of grain in a year, and if they produce an additional maund per acre, they can place 30 lakh tons in the common pool for urban consumption.

The normal consumption per head of population is about 22 ounces. I am placing on the table a statement\* showing production per head for all the provinces of India. For instance, Bengal produces 19·9 ounces per unit of consumption and by imports and other sources raises available grain for consumption to 20·5 ounces, while the Punjab produces 25·7 ounces, exports 6,31,000 tons and provides for home consumption 23·3 ounces per unit of consumption. You will see that the margin even in surplus provinces is not very large.

These figures are illustrative as to the surplus available and the deficit to be met in deficit provinces. They reveal the naked fact that unless provinces pool their production as in normal times and surplus provinces consume no more than in normal times, the flow of food from surplus to deficit areas cannot be forced by measures which may have an adverse effect leading to increased consumption and decreased production.

We complain of the high prices of foodstuffs and milk and scarcity of ghee. The fact is that we, the educated classes, have done little to improve rural conditions and to modernise production. We have upheld the sanctity of the cow and we are anxious to promote human welfare, but we have paid little attention to problems of animal husbandry or to improve the living conditions in the villages. We have been caught by the war; we have been anxious to employ modern methods of controls and rationing, relying more on coercion than on co-operation of traders and businessmen. The result is that normal channels of trade have ceased to flow, the confidence of the people has been shaken and the traders no more coax commodities from the meagre resources of 650,000 villages and carry the grain where needed as in normal times. It is not only that the cultivator has lost confidence but Governments of Provinces and States, both in surplus and deficit areas, have been conserving their own resources, building up reserves in some areas and thus preventing the free flow of commodities. It has become a fashion to condemn the trader, and the businessman. The wise words of Colonel Sleeman written in 1834 are not without significance to-day:—

“In societies constituted like that of India”, he said, “the trade of the corn-dealer is more essentially necessary for the welfare of the community than in any other, for it is among them that the superabundance of seasons of plenty requires most to be stored up for seasons of scarcity and if public functionaries will take upon themselves to seize such stores, and sell them at their own arbitrary prices, whenever prices happen to rise beyond the rate which they in their short-sighted wisdom think just, no corn-dealer will ever collect such stores. Hitherto, whenever grain has become dear at any military or civil station, we have seen the civil functionaries urged to prohibit its egress—to search for the hidden stores, and to coerce the proprietors to the sale in all manner of ways; and, if they do not yield to the ignorant clamour, they are set down as indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow-creatures around them, and as blindly supporting the worst enemies of mankind in the worst species of inquiry”.

Without the trader, the trade of this country cannot function, and without the enterprise of businessmen we could not have assured supplies of iron and steel, sugar, cloth, drugs, paper and thousands of other requirements of war which our businessmen have been producing on a scale which could not have been possible twenty years ago. Indeed, it is by fostering growth of capital, encouraging business enterprise and trade that we can hope to serve the best interests of our population and secure some place in the world which is in the making.

On the production side, we have not been idling. We have been doing all that we could to increase production. Agricultural production cannot be increased by a

\*See Appendix at end of these debates.

mere waving of the wand. It needs months of preparation of the seed bed, and then nursing the sown seed, which in large areas is still at the mercy of the wind and the weather.

The need for increased food production was emphasised in March, 1942. Provinces were encouraged to offer facilities to growers for growing more food and 29 lakhs of rupees were given to Provinces and States in 1942-43 from the Cotton Fund to help those growers who switched over from cotton to food crops. As a result, 53.39 lakhs of acres were diverted from cotton alone to food crops. Taken as a whole, 13½ lakhs of additional acreage were put under rice, 1½ lakhs under wheat and 69 lakhs under millets and maize. Unfortunately the season for rice was very bad in the east and south, with the result that in spite of the increase in acreage the rice production decreased by 8 lakhs of tons. It is this deficit which is in part responsible for the present food situation.

In the current year 1943-44, in order to give a further impetus to increased food production, thanks to the help given by my colleague, the Finance Member, we were able to set apart Rs. 50 lakhs for helping provinces to increase their food production. A Director of Agricultural Production was appointed who goes round to the provinces and the Indian States and advises them as to the lines of work necessary for increasing food production. An Irrigation Expert has been appointed who advises provinces similarly about taking up suitable schemes for irrigation, particularly for tube wells so as to increase yields or bring more land under cultivation. Already grants to the extent of Rs. 49 lakhs have been given to provinces in addition to Rs. 15 lakhs from the Cotton Fund and Rs. 99 lakhs have been advanced to them as loans. Among the schemes sanctioned is one for treating town waste by a new method so as to supply several lakhs of manure to cultivators. Help has also been given to provinces for securing vegetable seeds and for growing seeds in this connection in India in future. It is hoped to secure an increase of a large acreage under *kharif* food crops and 13½ lakhs of acres under *rabi* crops as compared with 1941-42. If, however, nature is more bountiful than it was last year, it is hoped that the rice outturn will increase considerably and if so, the position will improve as soon as the main new rice crop comes in to the market.

May I take the Council into my confidence and say that my Department is busy in preparing material for Committees which are to plan a programme of rural reconstruction aiming at improving living conditions in the villages. I have already announced the constitution of a Health Committee. The Educational Adviser is engaged in preparing material for a programme of Education, both literary and technical. An Agricultural Committee will be at work from about the 1st November this year. It is my hope that these Committees will plan a programme and their recommendations would be acted upon and carried out within a definite number of years.

We have all been clamouring for controls and rationing because we know England has taken such measures to feed its population in war-time. We have forgotten that conditions are altogether different between the two countries. It is true that England has succeeded in securing steady flow of commodities at a fairly stable price, but it is perhaps not known what the system has been costing in subsidies. According to Mr. Mabane, quoted in *Economist* of May 22nd, in the year 1942 up to March 31st it cost Government in subsidies £145 millions. Milk, for instance, for general consumption has been subsidised to the tune of £11 millions and for schools £17 millions.

The debate would have a value if we can pool our knowledge and formulate a policy of permanent use and we can define the first principle of production and distribution. The grim reality which we must face is the fact that all the provinces of India do not produce enough food of the right kind to provide a mixed diet for more than a fraction of their population. It was not without reason that General Megaw in the year 1933 held that only 39 per cent. were well nourished, 41 per cent. were poorly nourished and 20 per cent. were badly nourished. Ten years have gone and the condition of our primary producer has not improved. Unless the working capacity and efficiency of the agriculturist is improved, the vicious circle of low wages and distressing living conditions cannot be broken. We have our eyes fixed on the spiral of inflation and rising prices, but what we need is giving some attention to the chronic spiral of scarcity, poverty, disease and distress. We shall have to face

[Sir Jogendra Singh.]

the problem of increasing production and purchasing power of our population. We may have to submit to high prices of commodities in the interest of all the people of India. If we do so within ten years we can break the spiral, create an enormous home demand for goods, leading to expansion of industry, rise all round in the wage structure and healthier living conditions.

The price is not a meaningless symbol, a mere rubric on the temple of money power. It determines the wage of the producer, creates or restricts the demand of consumable goods and controls the scope of industrial expansion. Indeed economic conditions even govern the political progress. If we can give our people full employment, wages bearing some relation to wages which obtain elsewhere and if we improve health and with it productive efficiency of our masses and secure a wide and fair distribution of wealth, I can assure you that problems which assail us today will find a natural solution and we shall rise by our own effort to a position of equality in the Commonwealth of Nations to which we are promised an entry.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, after the illuminating speech of the Honourable Member elsewhere and the special pleading of the Honourable the Mover of this Motion, one fact seems to be very clear, namely, that there was an incessant struggle between Centre and the provinces, that the Centre wanted to have its advice carried and wanted to effect co-ordination among the work of the provinces. Six price Control Conferences are said to have been convened from time to time at great expense and labour, and three Food Conferences seem to have been convened from time to time. The result of the very strenuous labours of these bodies is said to be that in the urban areas they should introduce rationing as a solution of this grave problem.

(At this stage the Honourable the President vacated the Chair, which was taken by the Honourable Mr. V. V. Kalikar.)

Sir, it seems to me that this problem of food is not so much in the cities and towns as in the villages and taluks, in the agricultural area, and amongst persons who produce food for others. In other words, you have the wealthy people who are sufficiently protected and then you have got the higher middle class who have equal opportunities with the wealthy classes to secure food and stock it, and there are also the poorer classes that are suffering. It is not because there is so much suffering in the cities or in the upper middle classes. It is the poor middle class of a particular section that takes advantage of the scarcity that prevails in several parts of India and wants to make capital out of it and agitate and say "That is entirely due to the failure of food supply". In other words, it is sought to make political capital out of the situation. But what practical suggestions have been made by the Government at the Centre or by the provinces in order to relieve the poor man of this difficulty, viz., scarcity of food. No doubt wages have increased, whether he works in a railway or company or in connection with any war work. But it takes him out of the village and the man and his family want food. He takes the basket round. The retail dealer refuses because he has no stock and they cannot buy from the wholesale dealer. What is to be the position of such people, the agricultural population of the rural areas? I am more concerned with them than with the other classes. Government servants have their fare secured for them. The company's servants are similarly provided for by the companies. Industrial agencies have been getting sufficient food for their employees. The labourers in the mill area have got their food supply properly. Who is it then who is the actual sufferer in the country? The people in the rural areas are not able to get sufficient food. That is the problem that the Government have got to tackle. The Central Government says it is a question to be dealt with by the provinces. Quite true, provincial autonomy has given certain powers for the provinces to be exercised by them. But as the Centre always claims to have certain control in certain matters, they have to invoke those powers for the purpose of guiding and controlling them. I do not wish that the Centre should interfere at every stage of the proceedings of the provinces. The provinces should be left to themselves. If that is done certain provinces will not be vying with one another in stocking food in reserve. No doubt there are two main causes why this kind of scare has been created. In the rural areas when the Provincial Administration appoints inspectors and others and they go round, scare is created among the merchants, the *banyas* and the *sowcars*, who bury their stocks under

ground without being made available for the market immediately. Some of them are very canny people and they have to be dealt with drastically. The officers who are deputed for this kind of work are not sufficiently strong people. They should make no distinction between the rich and the poor, between man and man. They should be dealt with drastically as they create scare in order to raise prices. The rise in prices is not due to the scarcity of food in the villages. It is due to this scare created by interested people, and everyone reserves a certain amount of rice or *ragi* and the result is that the foodstuffs does not get to the market; the consequence is that there is scarcity of food in the villages. How are you going to tackle the problem? I have listened to the speech of the Honourable Member but I am not able to find anything which would help me in trying to understand the position in the rural areas. You may do anything for the city in order to satisfy the cry of interested people, the cry of agitation, the cry of loud-mouthed people; but because the villages are silent, they suffer silently. You do not care for their interests. You have not provided any means by which you could carry relief to them. I understand that the Honourable Member has said that the village committees should be revived and the landholder and the zamindar should take up the question of relieving the rural areas. It is a misunderstanding of the position, Sir. The zamindar and the landholder are no where now. They are under the control of the tenant and the ryot; they scarcely get enough to pay the land revenue. When they can't help themselves, how can they help you? What have the Government, Central and provincial, done to relieve the troubles of the zamindars and the landholders? How can they relieve the situation? They are themselves in such a helpless position. In the old days they were certainly exercising a certain influence over rural areas. But those days are gone, and things have changed now. Therefore, it will be vain to expect them to help you in an effective manner. The problem of the rural areas is more serious than that of the urban areas. You may have rationing. But what about the rural population? It is their discontent that you have to take into serious consideration. I can warn you that already there is a rumbling noise in certain quarters. Unless immediate steps are taken to relieve the sufferings of the rural population, there will be great unrest. The problem is not one for conferences or for passing resolutions, but the Centre must ask the provinces to move in the matter—never mind whether they are governed by section 93 or whether there are coalition ministries there. In some provinces they are not doing what they ought to have done. They knew from the beginning that there is going to be scarcity of food. They were aware of difficulties that would arise from the situation of the war because not only the two millions of soldiers have to be supplied with rice, not only those prisoners who have been placed here in India have to be supplied, but they have also to feed the people. There are difficulties of transport. In this state when the Government is buying and Government's agents are buying and reserving food, what happens? The ordinary merchant sells his stock to the Government agent with a view to get more price for it and when he goes back to the village or to the town he says he has no stock, and then, Sir, he raises the price from Rs. 16 to Rs. 34. Now they have to pay and take it.

Now it is said, "Oh, the wages have gone up and the people are earning more money than before, therefore the economic position has improved and it is not, therefore, the economic distress that is prevailing". On the other hand, take the producer's case, of a family consisting of man, wife and three children. We have investigated the matter and it is found that he is always in chronic debt. This is my conclusion as a result of my non-official investigations into the rural problem and is also borne out by a Government agent—an official—who had been appointed to enquire into the matter. His recommendations showed that people who have had 16 acres of land are still in debt and unable to make both ends meet. Therefore, as you will see, the position of the ryot, or cultivator or the *pattadar* in the rural area is not that of a trader or a merchant, but he is a man who has to produce. What encouragement is there for him? Have you provided any form of help or encouragement to him? He has to pay off every time at re-settlement rates. He has to pay irrigation cess, he has to pay, what is called, the road cess and he has to pay — .

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: Village cess.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO :** Yes, village cess. He has to pay everything. It is the *pattedar* who holds the land. It is the cultivator who has to pay all these cesses and in order to pay these charges he has to sell produce. Not only has he to sell the produce, keeping something for his food, but even that reserve also he must bring out in order to meet the charges. Thus the position of the cultivator and the producer of food in the rural areas is a very, very discouraging one. Hence people in the rural areas laugh at your proposal to grow more food. They have told me, "What is this? How can we grow more food when we are not able to grow sufficient in our own holdings? What are the advances that Government is going to give us and what facilities are they going to give us in the way of irrigation? Are they going to repair our tanks or are they going to bring in a new canal from the river with a view to irrigate our lands? What is it that would encourage us to go in for fresh cultivation of the lands? Grow more food is really an unreal thing. It is a farce."

In the matter of irrigation any figures on paper—1 lakh or 10 lakhs—have been added. If the produce has been sufficient and if the produce has been such as the tales of the Government records disclose then why is all this struggle for food? Why should this discussion of the problem come in if really more food has been produced?

Then, Sir, the Honourable the Mover has told us what the three requisite fundamentals are and he has described them very clearly and described the way in which they have been dealing with the provinces in the matter of these. He has placed the whole responsibility on the provinces for carrying out the objects in view but then there are no uniform rules that could be applied to all the provinces. Provinces differ in their economic conditions and in their agricultural conditions. I will give just an instance of what is happening in the Madras Presidency. Take what are called the "Ceded Districts"; they are dry districts where they grow . . . . and not rice. Now they are periodically subject to scarcity and last year, owing to the seasonal failure of rains in the Ceded Districts, there was famine. On the other hand, in the adjoining district we had a good crops. In the province itself there are districts where the produce varies and the economic conditions vary. Therefore that you should apply a uniform principle seems to me altogether impracticable and that the Centre should insist on provinces not reserving even a straw for themselves but giving over surplus or excess to other provinces seems not a practical proposition. No doubt it was good in theory but what was the reply of the provinces and the Conferences? From the reports of the Conference we find that the provinces are unable to do so because they have to calculate what would happen to the next crop. Now the dry crops have all been harvested and it remains to be seen whether the crop would go to the market or whether it would be sufficient only for consumption by the people of the rural areas. Therefore, Sir, in these circumstances any attempt made by the Centre in the matter of distribution seems to me not a practical proposition. Secondly, you must leave the provinces a free hand to deal with but wherever there is necessity of co-ordination between a province and province the Centre may interfere and advise them in the matter. Such being the case the problem is not an easy one—it is a very complex one—and it must, therefore, be dealt with very cautiously.

**THE HONOURABLE SARDAR SIR JOGENDRA SINGH :** May I inform my Honourable friend Sir A. P. Patro, that so far as the Grow More Food campaign is concerned, the suggestions he has made about cleaning the tanks, affording new facilities for irrigation, digging up new canals, putting up tube-wells, this is what we are trying to do.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO :** By the time the well is dug the man will die.

**THE HONOURABLE SARDAR SIR JOGENDRA SINGH :** Is there any other way of doing what the Honourable Member desires?

**\*THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa : Muhammadan) :** Before I commence my remarks on the Food Resolution proper, permit me, Sir, to speak a few words about the fickle nature of the Government of India. This Department, the most important at the moment for the Home Front, has been the



shuttlecock of the Government of India, being transferred from one hand to the other, both as to its Honourable Members and Secretaries. If I am not mistaken, Sir, four or five Honourable Members and more than that number of Secretaries have tackled this question in the space of just two years, since we had the first expansion of the Executive Council. Government always regarded it in the beginning as a most unnecessary department, and it was impertinence on the part of the legislators and the representatives of the people to suggest even that there could arise a food crisis in India. We were regarded, as usual, by these misinformed people who have the government in their hands, as visionaries. I would have liked to trace the history of this Department since its inception—which is the normal period of human gestation. Since it was formed it has seen three Honourable Members, and it is going to see three Secretaries, and probably three more Members too. Within the short space of nine months! I ask the business people to tell me what would happen to a business in which both the head and the general manager were being changed so often.

The Department, when it was conceived, was in the hands of Mr. N. R. Sarker and the late Mr. Holdsworth. Then we had the unfortunate affair of the 10th February. After that the Department remained without a Member. Then the Governor General in his wisdom appointed a Member to take charge of this Department. I ask: Was the Government so blind to the reality of the situation that it did not think that the three departments were too many for one Member? What new situation has arisen? If they could not foresee anything, if everything must come before their nose for them to see, I am hopelessly disappointed in them. On the 3rd May the Commerce Member takes charge. Until then there was no need to bifurcate his Departments. But all of a sudden this wisdom descends on the Head of the Administration to divide up. Now, look at the unreality of the situation. The Executive Council is not consulted on this issue. The statement is very definite that Members who were concerned were asked. I have nothing to say against the Honourable Member who has taken over charge of this Department or against the Member who is handing over the charge. But I do ask the Head of the Administration to make clear what was the need for it and how the need cropped up all of a sudden after the 3rd of May—and before the 11th of August?

Now, Sir, further on we find that the Government has been showing discourtesy to the Houses of the Legislature consistently. Even this announcement of change of portfolios could neither be made in the Legislative Assembly when it discussed the food situation on the 10th August, nor could the announcement wait for today when this House is discussing the matter. It needs must come on the 11th August. Otherwise the heavens would fall!

**THE HONOURABLE THE CHAIRMAN** (The Honourable Mr. V. V. Kalikar): May I request the Honourable Member to confine himself to the Motion before the House?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM**: It will materially affect the handling of the food situation. My submission, Mr. Chairman, is that when there is no security of tenure, when the Member does not know how long he is to carry on the Department, when it depends upon the capriciousness of the Head of the Administration to transfer or to retain the portfolio, I do not think that I will get a fair deal from the Department and the Member. It will be really asking a Member too much to take responsibility on his shoulders and then keep the sword of Damocles hanging over his head.

There are many unemployed Members in the Government of India who have got very little work. We all know that the Honourable the new Food Member was not the only unemployed Member. There are two more unemployed Members still left. I do not know which other Departments will be smuggled to their portfolios—merely because of their unemployment. If they are unemployed, well, give them the dole, and send them to the Secretary of State's Council, because that is the place for them.

Sir, I will come back to the Resolution. I am grateful to the Department of Information for having sent to us the full text of the speech of the *ex-Food Member*. But I wish I had received it a little earlier, so that I might have been able to give more time to it. The speech of Major-General Wood was well documented. But unfortunately it was as silent as the Food Member's speech as regards the future. It told us what were the problems and what were the difficulties, and of the efforts which has

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

been made to surmount those difficulties. But in the matter of cut and dried schemes, we had very little information from Major-General Wood. The Honourable Member in charge of Education, Health and Lands made, as usual, a thought-provoking speech, with his impatient advocacy of the backbone of India—the farmer. But there were some special pleadings also for the traders and businessmen. I shall deal with these points in their order.

My difficulty, Sir, is that I do not know exactly where I stand. Members of the Central Legislature are in a sort of suspended animation. They have ceased, according to the Government of India, to be representative. And yet they are not sent back to their constituencies. While countries like South Africa, Australia and Canada are holding elections, in this God-forsaken country elections cannot take place, even though, according to even the Viceroy, the dangers are now far removed. Even then elections cannot take place. You deprive us of the opportunity of getting a fresh sanction from our people, and then you condemn us as being no longer representative. What is the meaning of this? It is really a farce to carry on the Central Legislature without a re-election. The Assembly has had its life extended three times. There should have been three general elections if they had not renewed the Assembly on one pretext or the other.

THE HONOURABLE THE CHAIRMAN (The Honourable Mr. V. V. Kalikar): May I again ask the Honourable Member to confine his remarks to the Motion before the House?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Mr. Chairman, my difficulty is that I come from a province where there is no representative Government. The Government of India consults the Provincial Government, which has absolutely no idea of what my problems are. It is worse than the Montford scheme. Those of us who have the misfortune to live in a section 93 province can find no voice in the Government of India. That is my complaint. You do not associate the Central Legislature. You do not have any other machinery of finding what my difficulties are. And yet you come and tell me that you have consulted my Provincial Government. The Provincial Government is just a subordinate branch of the Governor General acting in his own discretion, untrammelled by the advice of the Honourable Members, a *swaraj* within a *swaraj* within a *swaraj*. This is the third degree of *swaraj*. The Viceroy has *swaraj*, the Governors have their *swaraj*, and then Advisers have their *swaraj*. In the name of *swaraj* for the provinces, that is the reality of the situation to which the Government of India always turn a blind convenient eye. They will always bring forward the excuse that the Government of India Act stands in their way, as if the Government of India Act has not been torn to pieces in almost every respect. I do want the Government to tell us facts and figures and not estimates. I, along with the Honourable Member in charge of the Department of Education, Health and Lands, know how unreal our statistics are. They are not based on real factual data. They are estimates at the best. The organisation for bringing the statistics to the reality of the situation does not exist in India. There is no correct statistics of what the real position in the country is. I have before me certain concrete, definite figures. When we are suffering from this dearth of foodstuffs, is it really necessary that in addition to the Government exports for the Army and for the Allies, a huge export in foodgrains should be allowed on private account? The figures before me are very telling. In March, 1943, the export was Rs. 315 lakhs worth of goods, of foodstuffs. That was in one month alone. In April, it went up to Rs. 354 lakhs.

MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD: Will the Honourable Member say from where he has secured his information?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I am giving statistics from *Commerce*, which takes its clue from the information published by the Department of Statistics.

MAJOR-GENERAL THE HONOURABLE E. WOOD: Could he please tell us whether it is in tons or maunds?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Only the value is given here and not the details. But he has got figures separately for foodstuffs, for raw materials, manufactures and other items. In all other items, in March, there was a reduction and so was there in April too. The total exports amounted to Rs. 1,779 lakhs in April, 1942, and it fell in 1943 to Rs. 1,563 lakhs, a reduction of Rs. 2 crores

in 1943 as compared with April, 1942. But in the matter of foodstuffs, it had gone up from Rs. 245 lakhs to Rs. 354 lakhs. That is, more than a crore worth of foodstuffs were exported to outside countries, and this on private account. This is what has produced all this trouble. The total figure for the annual export is also illuminating. In the 12 months ending March, 1943, it amounted to nearly Rs. 47 crores. As you know, Sir, owing to the Japanese menace, nowadays very little of the home trade is carried on board ships. That is the greatest difficulty. I want the Government to come forward with a comprehensive, all-embracing measure. The difficulty is that the Government of India have many Departments. Each Department has got a *swaraj* of its own. If it butts into another Department's sphere, it is told, "You have no business to come here". Export is under one Department, "Grow More Food" campaign is under another Department, its distribution is another person's business. This sort of thing may be all right for peacetime, but when we are living in special conditions, this will never do. Government may go on changing the Secretaries and the Members *ad infinitum*, but they will never succeed in tackling the situation unless they have drive, imagination and determination to do the thing. This excuse that the provinces stand in the way is illusory. I for one believe that if the Government of India determine to do a thing—I am talking of the Government of India as a whole, as apart from the Department; that can only be decided by the general decision of the Governor General in Council—then they can do wonders.

I do not wish to take up the time of the House too much but I will be failing in my duty if I did not tackle some of the questions. Major-General Wood had something to say about the producers who are hoarding, and he instanced the big hoarders who are the first culprits, and then there are the small hoarders also. But are they the only persons who are to be blamed? Are not the traders doing the same thing? Are not the Government themselves doing the same thing? The Government are also hoarding, the trader is hoarding and the cultivator is also hoarding. I am a cultivator and a farmer and I can say this. But who are the men who are the real hoarders? Who is the enemy No. 1 of the country and the society who is rewarded by the Government of India? Every time you will find that when a crop is harvested, the prices are low. When it is moved to the urban areas and only a few producers have stocks, the prices start rising up and then the people who have hoarded reap the harvest and those who were patriotic enough to sell out are punished. They do not get their price. This happened last year too in the case of wheat. You insisted on Rs. 5 being maintained. Those who sold out were the sufferers. What confidence can any one have in you? Is there any reason why a farmer should ever place his trust in your promise that you will continue to do the same thing which you had promised to do? I asked a pointed question today as to what will be Government's policy with respect to the prices of foodgrains in future and the Honourable the Food Secretary told me that I shall get my answer during the course of the discussion. I am sorry I did not catch if he did make any reference to this question of mine. I

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had asked in question No. 134 a categorical question whether price restriction will be adopted for wheat and rice in the current financial year? Government has conveniently remained silent, with the result that people will draw their own inference and the inference will be that it pays to hoard. And you are going to reward those persons who have hoarded as usual, because the national characteristic of Englishmen is that they know only to muddle through? This is the racial characteristic and habit. You cannot change it. In that case you will not be justified in blaming anybody. You have never punished those who have hoarded and you have no intention of doing so. Let me be frank. You are too frightened to take real steps. You have taken steps in one respect, in the matter of textiles, and you have earned a rich dividend from it. Prices have wonderfully come down. That large stocks were being exported to outside countries and that the Government of India is taking everything for the army have been falsified. There is so much stock that it cannot be sold before the 31st October. Similarly if you have real determination to tackle the question of food, you could do so. But you should do many things. First of all you have to declare everybody to declare stocks over a certain limit. You must examine the figures. You will have to impose penalties, that undeclared stocks will be confiscated, etc. You must then have a machinery to examine these things and no more illegal gratifications. Government has legalised illegal gratification.

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THE HONOURABLE MR. R. H. PARKER (Bombay Chamber of Commerce) : Sir, I have one or two brief comments to make. I do not want to repeat anything that has been said by other members of the House. As a member of the European Group I very much welcome the decision of the Government of India to make one portfolio of this Department, for one Member of the Viceroy's Council. That was a thing that we always supported and we suggested in the very early stages of the discussions on food control. I think one of the most serious omissions—and it is largely I think a question of the Provincial Governments and their magistrates—has been the question of the lack of severity in dealing with the people who have done improper things in connection with food hoarding, charging higher prices than controlled prices and so on. I think it is a most important thing that in every possible case the maximum penalty should be exacted.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : No compromise.

THE HONOURABLE MR. R. H. PARKER : I agree.

The Honourable Mr. Dalal suggested that the question of shipping space was not such an acute one and I think he also said that as it was a matter of life and death the space should be utilised for taking grains to this country. Well, with that I of course fundamentally agree. But I think you have also to bear in mind that shipping space, which is wanted now to carry food, is also wanted in connection with the saving of lives from death among the forces. The fact remains that our troops overseas must be backed up : and it may be even more important that they should be backed up than that food should be brought here.

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There was a reference by two Honourable Members to subsidies. I have always held the view that the line adopted in England is really a sounder line than that which we have adopted here, and I would strongly recommend Provincial Governments to consider whether, when they have to purchase grain for their own provincial requirements, for the requirements of those who live in their territories, even though they may have to pay a high price, whether they ought not to sell at a fair and reasonable price to the consumers in their province.

The Honourable Sir A. P. Patro wanted to have rural rationing rather than urban rationing. I think that is purely a question of practical politics.—

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO : I never said that there should be rural rationing. What I said was that the rural problem was different from the urban, and I also said that you employers bought food at high prices to the detriment of the rural people.

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THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO : Where are the zamindars ? They have all disappeared !

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The Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam referred to the unemployed Members of the Viceroy's Council. Now, if there is one thing more valuable than any other in life, it is a large number of people who are unemployed, who have brains, and who are thinking : they are the thinking department of the world.

That is all I have to say.

\*THE HONOURABLE MAULVI ALI ASGAR KHAN (Assam : Muhammadan) : Sir, today we have met here to discuss the food problem, which is very important in India at the moment.

The price of foodstuffs is daily increasing, and has reached such a high pitch now that it is beyond the means of the masses to buy the necessities of life such as their staple food. In the Eastern Provinces rice is the principal food. The price of this commodity has gone up from Rs. 4 to Rs. 40 a maund now. How is it possible for the poor classes to buy rice at this high price ? Moreover, it has become scarce now. Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Orissa and Madras are the provinces where rice is chiefly consumed. The other parts of India where wheat is consumed there is a sufficiency of this commodity, and it is also imported from Australia.

In normal times Burma used to supply vast quantities of rice to the rice-consuming provinces to feed especially the people in the industrial areas such as mills and tea estates. But now Burma having been occupied by the enemy, these provinces are obliged to depend on their own resources.

With the war activities in India, the Military Department had stored up a vast quantity of rice for the army. Profiteers, finding that there was an extraordinary demand for rice, began to stock it for profit. Industrial magnates had stored up the same to provide for the labour employed by them. Thus the price of rice went up very high, especially in Bengal where this commodity is in deficit at all times. In addition to this, they had to supply to the India Government. In spite of the shortage in India, she had to export.

In order to lower the prices, Government introduced the control system. But this could not meet with the desired result, as the transport facilities for the supply were not available. So the net result was nil. Having had this experience, Govern-

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very little on actual increase of the same. All money available for agricultural improvement was spent for the pay of the staff and research activities. But actually money was not available for land improvement and other expenses in this connection. Government should settle all the available land to the people to increase the output of foodstuff and to control the price of the same. Government should themselves open up storing centres and buy the same for supplying to all intending purchasers at a fixed low price, so that it may be within the reach of everybody's pocket. In conclusion, Sir, I would submit that Government should increase the settlement of all cultivable land as I mentioned in my Province of Assam and in other provinces, so that commodities supply may increase and scarcity vanish. They should help the cultivators by giving money and supplying fertilisers so as to improve the outturn of the crop and also Government should be particularly careful in the matter of exports of foodstuffs to other countries, and should have import of foodgrains from other countries. I hope the Government will not turn a deaf ear to what Honourable Members say in the House, but will utilise same to improve matters.

With these words, Sir, I conclude my speech.

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. K. DAS (Orissa : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I happen to come from a province which is alleged to be a surplus province and which is a neighbouring province to Bengal, and still not much of foodgrains have flown from my province to Bengal. There has been some adverse criticism against my province. But I shall presently show that my province is not a surplus province. It is true that there may be Government records which were computed 20 years back in one propitious year and which perhaps has never been revised in the light of what is obtaining today. I shall also show that as my province happens to be in a deltaic area it is subjected almost annually to devastating floods and my province is practically denuded by about 10 per cent. of its crop every year. The last tornado which swept over Midnapore also was over Northern Balasore, a district in my province and a large quantity of crops was damaged. In that part of the Balasore district on the borders of Midnapore not only are there famine conditions but even deaths due to starvation. To add to all these troubles, a cyclone of severe intensity passed over the coastal area in Orissa in November last—the wind sweeping over 40 miles inland and crop that was ripening in November, to be reaped in December, was almost completely destroyed in that coastal tract of Orissa. So, therefore, Sir, taking all these facts into consideration—the geographical position, the annual devastation and then the two unusual factors of cyclone in successive stages in November and in October—you can take it that taking an average for the last five years, it cannot be said that my province is a surplus one, and, if I have to concede that it is, as Government records show it, really a surplus one I can go so far and say that it may be just on the very margin of being a surplus province.

As I have said, Sir, crop statements, I am afraid, are export figures and are rather unreliable. I have already said that they may have been computed some 10 or 15 years back on a very propitious year and have never been corrected since, with the result that Orissa is being shown now today as a surplus province, which has quite a large surplus of about 10 or 20 lakhs of maunds of rice. Unfortunately, Sir, these figures also take into account quite a large trade of this commodity that flows into Orissa from the neighbouring States. There are quite a large number of feudatory States round about Orissa and quite a substantial trade in this commodity flows from these States through Orissa. Some portion of the commodity is exported, while some is consumed in Orissa itself. So, Sir, these trade figures which show that my province is a surplus one are mostly based on this trade that flows from the neighbouring States. What happened this year, Sir, was that these small States, which were certainly very panicky, as everybody else was because of an imminent invasion by Japan of the East Coast, kept back everything they could and did not allow any of this commodity to flow out in the regular and normal channel of business, and the result was that my province was deprived to that extent of quite a large amount of its rice and paddy and of course pulses, too.

Then, again, Sir, in spite of all these facts and in spite of the fact that the Government of Orissa had some knowledge, or at least had some signs of this case happening, the Government of Orissa did agree to spare to the Government of India pool, at their request, about 3 lakhs of maunds of rice, and we did actually give to the Government



employing as manager of a company, but I also did it for my own personal staff. I started a little grain shop in my compound which was run by one of my servants. There also I had to keep a stock of grain. That is all very harmless, in general terms. But the fact remains that it gives the impression that large stocks are being bought and taken away. People think they are being consumed. They are not. They are there for use. And to that extent our position is probably not as bad as it seems.

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In order to lower the prices, Government introduced the control system. But this could not meet with the desired result, as the transport facilities for the supply were not available. So the net result was nil. Having had this experience, Govern-

[Maulvi Ali Asgar Khan.]

very little on actual increase of the same. All money available for agricultural improvement was spent for the pay of the staff and research activities. But actually money was not available for land improvement and other expenses in this connection. Government should settle all the available land to the people to increase the output of foodstuff and to control the price of the same. Government should themselves open up storing centres and buy the same for supplying to all intending purchasers at a fixed low price, so that it may be within the reach of everybody's pocket. In conclusion, Sir, I would submit that Government should increase the settlement of all cultivable land as I mentioned in my Province of Assam and in other provinces, so that commodities supply may increase and scarcity vanish. They should help the cultivators by giving money and supplying fertilisers so as to improve the outturn of the crop and also Government should be particularly careful in the matter of exports of foodstuffs to other countries, and should have import of foodgrains from other countries. I hope the Government will not turn a deaf ear to what Honourable Members say in the House, but will utilise same to improve matters.

With these words, Sir, I conclude my speech.

THE HONOURABLE MR. N. K. DAS (Orissa : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I happen to come from a province which is alleged to be a surplus province and which is a neighbouring province to Bengal, and still not much of foodgrains have flown from my province to Bengal. There has been some adverse criticism against my province. But I shall presently show that my province is not a surplus province. It is true that there may be Government records which were computed 20 years back in one propitious year and which perhaps has never been revised in the light of what is obtaining today. I shall also show that as my province happens to be in a deltaic area it is subjected almost annually to devastating floods and my province is practically denuded by about 10 per cent. of its crop every year. The last tornado which swept over Midnapore also was over Northern Balasore, a district in my province and a large quantity of crops was damaged. In that part of the Balasore district on the borders of Midnapore not only are there famine conditions but even deaths due to starvation. To add to all these troubles, a cyclone of severe intensity passed over the coastal area in Orissa in November last—the wind sweeping over 40 miles inland and crop that was ripening in November, to be reaped in December, was almost completely destroyed in that coastal tract of Orissa. So, therefore, Sir, taking all these facts into consideration—the geographical position, the annual devastation and then the two unusual factors of cyclone in successive stages in November and in October—you can take it that taking an average for the last five years, it cannot be said that my province is a surplus one, and, if I have to concede that it is, as Government records show it, really a surplus one I can go so far and say that it may be just on the very margin of being a surplus province.

As I have said, Sir, crop statements, I am afraid, are export figures and are rather unreliable. I have already said that they may have been computed some 10 or 15 years back on a very propitious year and have never been corrected since, with the result that Orissa is being shown now today as a surplus province, which has quite a large surplus of about 10 or 20 lakhs of maunds of rice. Unfortunately, Sir, these figures also take into account quite a large trade of this commodity that flows into Orissa from the neighbouring States. There are quite a large number of feudatory States round about Orissa and quite a substantial trade in this commodity flows from these States through Orissa. Some portion of the commodity is exported, while some is consumed in Orissa itself. So, Sir, these trade figures which show that my province is a surplus one are mostly based on this trade that flows from the neighbouring States. What happened this year, Sir, was that these small States, which were certainly very panicky, as everybody else was because of an imminent invasion by Japan of the East Coast, kept back everything they could and did not allow any of this commodity to flow out in the regular and normal channel of business, and the result was that my province was deprived to that extent of quite a large amount of its rice and paddy and of course pulses, too.

Then, again, Sir, in spite of all these facts and in spite of the fact that the Government of Orissa had some knowledge, or at least had some signs of this case happening, the Government of Orissa did agree to spare to the Government of India pool, at their request, about 3 lakhs of maunds of rice, and we did actually give to the Government

of India pool about 3 lakhs of maunds of rice. This was somewhere in May this year and as this was given on practically I am told, a distinct understanding that since crop prospects were not quite very bright in Orissa this year and since they had already had devastations from cyclone and other causes during the last year the Government of India will not insist upon the Government of Orissa to make further contributions on this account and that the Government of India will leave the Government of Orissa to manage things by itself. But contrary to this understanding—if this was an understanding at all—the Government of India declared the Eastern Zone as a free trade zone on the 18th of June, 1943, and as a result of that people from Midnapore and people from Bengal used to come or started coming in large numbers. They used to board running trains and they used to carry with them small baskets and they dropped in at the nearest places possible and used to buy whatever they could of rice or paddy or whatever was available to them in the countryside in Orissa. The number of such people, Sir, was not very small. On a modest estimate it might be said that at least 5,000 people used to do this sort of travelling and purchasing rice and paddy in Orissa every day. This went on for about a month or so and then the Orissa Government in order to save their own people—I mean in order to save their own skin, perhaps they had no alternative—decided to resort to a plan of attaching all that was available in the country. They did so, and I must say that it was a very bold step taken. If that step had not been taken, Sir, I am sure to day worse conditions would have prevailed in my province than those prevailing today in Bengal.

**THE HONOURABLE THE CHAIRMAN** (The Honourable Mr. V. V. Kalikar) : How long will the Honourable Member continue ?

**THE HONOURABLE MR. N. K. DAS** : For another ten minutes, Sir.

**THE HONOURABLE THE CHAIRMAN** (The Honourable Mr. V. V. Kalikar) : The House will now adjourn till 11 A.M. tomorrow. The Honourable Member will resume his speech tomorrow.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, the 13th August, 1943.

APPENDIX.  
(Vide page 204.)

	Assam.	Bengal.	Bihar.	Bombay.	C. P.	Madras.	N.-W. F. P.	Orissa.	Punjab.	Sind.	U. P.										
	Pro- vinee. block.	Trade vinee. block.	Pro- vinee. block.	Trade vinee. block.	Pro- vinee. block.	Trade vinee. block.	Pro- vinee. block.	Trade vinee. block.	Pro- vinee. block.	Trade vinee. block.	Pro- vinee. block.										
Population in thousands	10,305	10,980	60,314	62,456	36,340	20,858	32,857	16,822	20,876	49,342	57,334	3,038	3,088	8,729	11,764	28,419	34,972	4,537	5,666	55,021	55,949
Foodgrain acreage in 1,000 acres	5,532	...	19,847	...	20,136	28,171	20,196	22,305	25,485	27,187	2,141	...	6,165	...	20,998	26,291	4,167	4,891	38,331	38,965	
Of known outturn	5,283	...	15,138	...	15,776	24,190	14,379	16,988	17,657	17,657	2,004	...	5,943	...	19,708	19,708	3,897	4,121	31,440	31,440	
Tapioca estimated at 1/3 ton	...	...	620	...	638	639	10	1,082	2,782	40	...	...	292	...	19	167	...	...	248	396	
Of outturn estimated at 1/3 ton	...	...	4	...	...	23	...	-16	121	...	...	...	4,439	...	352	...	...	...	...	...	
Of outturn estimated at 1/6 ton	249	...	1,219	...	4,089	...	5,307	6,130	6,211	97	...	...	680	...	1,371	1,977	270	270	6,643	6,767	
Production in 1,000 tons Total	1,838	...	9,188	...	5,702	...	3,737	5,548	4,544	5,090	8,102	9,425	611	...	1,750	...	6,870	1,325	1,395	10,241	10,419
Known outturn	1,797	...	8,983	...	4,813	...	3,070	4,776	3,657	4,208	6,517	5,517	582	...	1,548	...	5,376	1,290	1,350	9,071	9,071
Unknown outturn	...	...	205	...	839	...	667	...	887	1,585	19	...	202	...	218	...	1,494	45	45	1,170	1,348
Imports (+) or Exports (-) in 1,000 tons	...	...	+12	...	+344	...	+209	...	+839	...	-227	...	+5	...	-431	...	-431	...	-204	...	-146
Consumption in 1,000 tons	...	...	1,850	...	9,532	...	5,911	...	6,387	...	4,863	...	10,389	...	616	...	1,563	...	1,191	...	10,273
Per capita per year in tons	1,838	1,650	9,188	9,532	5,702	5,911	3,737	6,387	4,544	4,863	8,102	10,389	611	616	1,750	1,563	6,870	1,325	1,191	10,241	10,273
Per capita per year in ounces	4.99	4.6	4.14	4.15	4.26	4.42	4.87	5.28	7.34	6.33	4.46	4.92	5.47	5.81	5.45	3.61	5.35	4.85	7.94	5.71	5.06
Per capita per day in ounces	17.6	16.6	14.9	15.0	15.4	15.9	17.6	19.0	26.5	22.8	16.1	18.0	19.7	19.6	13.0	10.3	17.5	28.6	20.6	18.2	18.0
Per adult male per day in ounces	23.9	22.1	19.9	20.0	20.5	21.2	23.5	25.3	35.3	30.4	21.5	24.0	24.3	26.5	20.1	17.3	25.7	23.3	27.5	24.3	24.0