

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Wednesday, 25th February, 1953

The House met at Two of the Clock.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

3 P.M.

MESSAGES FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATES

Mr. Deputy-speaker: Secretary will now read messages from the Council of States.

Secretary: Sir, I have to report the following message received from the Secretary of the Council of States:—

"In accordance with the provisions of sub-rule (6) of rule 162 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to return herewith the Appropriation Bill, 1953, which was passed by the House of the People at its sitting held on the 19th February 1953, and transmitted to the Council of States for its recommendations and to state that the Council has no recommendations to make to the House of the People in regard to the said Bill".

RAILWAY BUDGET.—GENERAL DISCUSSION—*contd.*

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The House will now proceed with further discussion of the Railway Budget. Shri Hiren Mukerjee.

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Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta North-East): We are discussing what I fear I must call a dismal budget, dispiriting alike to passengers, to railway workers and to business people, a budget of the *status quo* which is all the more melancholy when we remember that we live today in stirring times. For change is in Asia's air and perhaps we live in times which are more dynamic than any in history that has gone before.

Now, the Minister in his very disarming way has told us in the other place that he is inclined to have his doubts in regard to the possibility of our railway earnings continuing to be what he has estimated them to be for the time being, but he prefers to be an optimist, and if I may put it that way, he has decided to hold fast to the 9 crores surplus which still remains. He said he would not let it go down below that figure. I think he seems to be very thankful for small mercies and I wish him all joy as long as the going is good.

We are proud of our railways, particularly because our people have paid with their blood and treasure for every foot of railway track that has been laid in this country. From 1853 to 1949-50 we paid enormous sums by way of what was called euphemistically interest charges to British moneybags—and this was a permanent feature of our annual railway revenues. In 23 years between 1926-27 to 1949-50 we paid British capitalists the staggering sum of 677.2 crores of rupees as interest on their capital. I find this computed in the *Eastern Economist* of 1st March 1952.

The maximum capital then invested was about 839.33 crores of which about 50 crores were held by Indians. This was quite apart from salaries and pensions which were paid to British Railway officials and also quite apart from the purchases which were made at surely inflated prices from Britain in regard to our supply of railway