

# EMINENT PARLIAMENTARIANS MONOGRAPH SERIES

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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI  
1990

**EMINENT PARLIAMENTARIANS  
MONOGRAPH SERIES**

**PANDIT NILAKANTHA DAS**

**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI  
1990**

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## Foreword

The Indian Parliamentary Group has recently celebrated the birth anniversaries of some eminent parliamentarians in order to recall and recount their valuable and multifarious contributions, to our national and parliamentary life. In this connection, a new series known as the "Eminent Parliamentarians Monograph Series" was started in March 1990 and three Monographs on Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Dr. Lanka Sundaram and Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, were brought out on their birth anniversaries. The present Monograph—fourth in the Series—is a modest attempt to remember and keep in record valuable services rendered and contributions made by the distinguished parliamentarian, Pandit Nilakantha Das, who witnessed the crucial period of our national life both as a legislator and as a freedom fighter by being a very active member of the Central Legislative Assembly during 1924—45.

This volume consists of two parts. Part I contains a brief biographical sketch of Pandit Nilakantha Das covering his early life, education, social and political life and role in national freedom Movement.

Part II contains the ideas of Pandit Nilakantha Das as reflected in his speeches delivered in the Central Legislative Assembly, while participating in debates on a variety of issues and problems—local, national and international—the country was facing at that time. While editing the selected speeches of Pandit Nilakantha Das included in this part, every attempt has been made to retain, to the extent possible, his distinct style.

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Pandit Nilakantha Das, we pay our respectful tributes to his memory and hope that this Monograph would be found useful and interesting.

NEW DELHI;  
August 1990

RABI RAY  
*Speaker, Lok Sabha  
and  
President, Indian Parliamentary Group*

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**PART ONE**

**His Life**

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## Pandit Nilakantha Das: A Profile

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Pandit Nilakantha Das, one of the makers of modern Orissa was born on 5 August 1884 at village Sriramchandrapur in Puri District of Orissa. Born in a middle-class conservative Brahmin family, he was the only son of his parents. His birth was celebrated in a grand manner as he was considered as the gift of Lord Nilakantha, after whom he was named. His father, Shri Anand Das used to look after his landed property and his mother, Shrimati Hira Devi was a pious, homely lady. His grand-father was a Tehsildar in Government service. In the year 1905, Pandit Nilakantha Das got married to Kumari Radhamani Devi, daughter of Shri Harihara Rath of Puri. Though not highly educated, her dedication and encouragement to her husband was a constant source of inspiration for him to serve the nation and the people.

### His Education

Pandit Nilakantha Das had had his early education in a traditional way in his own village *Pathsala*. After his studies at the Middle Vernacular School, he went to Puri and joined the Puri Zilla School, from where he matriculated. He had been a brilliant student since his early boyhood, as is evident from the fact that he was admitted into a lower class in Puri Zilla School in order to learn English, but he got a double promotion in the second year. He had acquired wide knowledge of Sanskrit and had started writing Sanskrit *slokas* even as an adolescent. Graduating from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, he left for Calcutta University for his post-graduate studies. After completing his M.A. in Philosophy in 1911, he returned to Orissa and

joined the famous Satyabadi School, founded by Pandit Gopabandhu Das, as a teacher.

### **Association with Satyabadi School**

The first quarter of the present century witnessed tremendous developments in the life of Orissa, which included the establishment of a new School, known as Satyabadi or Sakhigopal Vana Vidyalaya (Grove School), near Puri by Pandit Gopabandhu Das. The School was established with a view to dispel the darkness of superstition and conservatism then existing in the colonially subjugated society in Orissa. The School had on its teaching staff some of the best educated and talented youngmen of the period, including Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godavarish Misra, Pandit Krupasindhu Misra and Acharya Harihar Das, who were known as 'five friends' or the '*Pancha Sakhas*'. Pandit Nilakantha Das, who was a strong moralist, strict disciplinarian and a staunch advocate of national education, found full scope for the implementation of his ideas on education and social reform through the Satyabadi School. This School served for more than a decade as a radiating centre of education, politics, literature and social and national service, besides playing a vital role in shaping the history of the region, particularly in orienting the youngmen towards freedom movement. Pandit Nilakantha Das, who, alongwith his associates, was engaged in the task of eradicating the socio-economic evils of Orissa, was convinced that the situation could be improved only through proper development and purposeful training of the youth. His method of education was an amalgamation of the Indian tradition of spiritual foundation and the Western progressive ideas. He advocated Western education as one of the important factors in *bringing cultural enlightenment and scientific outlook* in India. But, he always tried to adapt it to Indian conditions. He pursued that ideal through Satyabadi School, which used to teach the students the importance of discipline, high moral character and simplicity, bordering on austerity in their daily life. Along with their studies, the students were taught the essence of life which

would make them complete human beings—self-sufficient, courageous and confident—ready to work for the development and upliftment of their fellow brethren. Physical training as well as social service were obligatory on the part of the students. Literary discussions were encouraged and during the weekends, the students used to have elocution, essay and other literary competitions, discussions on national history and heritage, recitations and similar other activities. The students were imbued with the spirit of nationalism. It was a part of curricula of the school to take the students on foot to places of historical interest to revive memories of old glory.

Sir Edward Gait, the then Lt. Governor of Bihar and Orissa, once visited Satyabadi and confided in Pandit Nilakantha Das, who was the Principal of the School at that time, "I received C.I.D. reports that bombs were being manufactured in your school." Thereupon, Pandit Nilakantha Das, pointing towards the students said, "Yes, these are the live bombs which will ultimately destroy the British Empire in India".

After nine years of sustained and dedicated service, disquieting signs appeared at Satyabadi. A clash of personalities became evident since Pandit Gopabandhu Das was obliged to introduce a pattern of administration for the school in 1918 under which the headship was to rotate. Soon thereafter Pandit Nilakantha Das left for his village. Subsequently in 1918, at the invitation of Sir Asutosh Mookherjee, he joined Calcutta University Post-Graduate Department as a Lecturer in Oriya and comparative philology. The School was converted into a National School when the 'Five Friends' plunged themselves into the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921. Pandit Nilakantha Das became the Chief Supervisor and Headmaster of the School and took up the position of Pandit Gopabandhu Das after the latter's untimely demise in 1928.

### **As a Litterateur**

Pandit Nilakantha Das was a Litterateur of no mean distinction. He was a great and versatile scholar and made remarkable contribution to Oriya language and literature. He is

considered to be the earliest linguist expert of contemporary Oriya language. Among his publications mention may be made of: *Atma Jivani*, *Bhaktigatha*, *Pranayini*, *Konarke*, *Kharavela*, *Samskruta O Samskruti*, *Oriya Vyakarana*, *Dasa Naik*, *Pilanka Gita*, *Pilanka Ramayana*, etc. His essay, *My Moustache* had received commendation from no less a person than Rao Bahadur Madhusudhan Rao, the great devotional poet of Orissa. He had varied interest in the fields of religion, philosophy, history, archaeology and philology. Literature was the vehicle of his patriotism. Pandit Nilakantha Das also occupies a predominant place in Oriya literature as a philosophical writer and literary critic.

He was also a journalist of great repute. He was editor of *Nababharata*, a monthly literary magazine (in Oriya) from 1933 to 1945. His periodic writings and editorials in daily *Nababharata* (in Oriya) of which he was also the Editor, were intended to develop a patriotic spirit among the people. After independence he became the first President of the Orissa Sahitya Academy. He also received the National Academy award for his autobiography. His introduction to his *Commentary on the Bhagabat Gita* (in Oriya) is a very learned thesis on ancient Indian culture and civilisation. For sometime he also edited the *Samaj* and the *Seva* as well.

Pandit Nilakantha Das was also Chairman of the Utkal University Committee, whose recommendations led to the establishment of Utkal University. He was made the Pro-Chancellor of the University in 1955. The honorary degree of Doctor of Literature was conferred on him by the Utkal University. He was awarded the title of *Padmabhushan* by the President of India in 1960.

### **As a Social Worker and Reformer**

He was a great social worker and reformer of his time. Although he came from a conservative Brahmin family, he always rebelled against social superstitions, prejudices and class-barriers prevalent in the then society. He fought against the Brahminic discriminating traditions through various means.

He sought to pull down the walls of obscurantism and usher in an era of social progress.

At the Satyabadi School, Pandit Nilakantha Das had led a "moustache rebellion" in which bands of Brahmin boys went about sporting moustaches in protest against the caste prohibitions. He had also grown a moustache, which used to be a taboo among the Brahmin communities of Orissa. This was resented to by the orthodox Brahmins. At the Satyabadi, community dinners for students of all castes were also introduced. The local Brahmins who were already very much agitated by the unorthodox conduct of the teachers of the school, burnt down the School building and the Library.

Pandit Nilakantha Das was opposed to caste system, particularly the practice of untouchability and other prevailing superstitious practices in the Hindu society. He vehemently fought against child marriage. As a believer in women's emancipation, he supported female education.

The Cholera epidemic used to overtake Puri district frequently during those days. Pandit Nilakantha Das used to go from village to village alongwith his students, to look after the patients. He had started practising homoeopathy by consulting books to save the lives of the patients since allopathic and other kinds of medicines to cure Cholera had not been discovered by that time. He helped the Cholera patients in a great way by supplying homoeopathic medicines to them. Once there was a severe drought in Puri district and that time also he went to the drought-prone area to provide relief measures to the sufferers. He would therefore, always be remembered for his social service to the mankind.

### **Role In the Freedom Movement**

Pandit Nilakantha's close association with Pandit Gopabandhu Das, which blossomed during his college days, had a great impact on his life. Once Pandit Nilakantha, along with his colleague, Acharya Harihar had gone to visit Pandit Gopabandhu's village in Suando. While sitting on the bank of the river

Bhargabi, Pandit Gopabandhu Das made them promise that none of them would go in for any Government job; they would rather do something for their country and countrymen. While in Ravenshaw College, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godavarish and Acharya Harihar Das came in close contact and they formed a close group, which centred their activities round the ideas of Pandit Gopabandhu, who moved from place to place as an apostle of Non-Cooperation Movement explaining the meaning and necessity of *Swaraj* and exhorting each individual to play a role for its attainment. Pandit Nilakantha, along with his close associates carried the message of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Sambalpur district. He also supervised establishment of a national school on the Satyabadi model there.

Pandit Nilakantha Das has published a newspaper called *Seba* and mobilised public opinion for the success of Non-Cooperation Movement. He organised numerous meetings and demonstrations and delivered stirring speeches. When the spirit of nationalism was at its zenith, Pandit Nilakantha accompanied Gandhiji during his tour of Orissa. This visit intensified the freedom movement in Orissa. For his nationalist activities, Pandit Nilakantha served imprisonment several times during 1923, 1932 and 1933.

### **As a member of Central Legislative Assembly**

Pandit Nilakantha Das served as a member of the Central Legislative Assembly for more than two decades (1924–1945). He had joined the Swarajya Party and remained its loyal member. He was the General Secretary of the Swarajya Party in the Assembly for sometime, when Pandit Motilal Nehru was its Leader. He believed in fighting against the British through constitutional means.

He had deep understanding of a variety of problems before the country during that time and always looked for a practical solution to them. Being an active member of the Central Legislative Assembly, he used to take keen interest in the

debates on local, regional, national and even international issues.

He pleaded that people in the coastal areas should be given the right to manufacture salt free of duty for their own consumption. He espoused the cause of the famine-stricken people of Orissa by delivering stirring speeches.

He used to put forward his point of view emphatically on whatever subject he spoke. He had spoken on a variety of subjects viz., Establishment of Village Panchayats, Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill, Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Bill, Development of Indian Industries, Salt Tax, National War Front, Treatment of Political Prisoners and Detenus, and Food and Agriculture Organisation of UN, etc. It is evident from his speeches that he was a great social reformer and a staunch nationalist.

### **Struggle for a separate Orissa Province**

Pandit Nilakantha Das fought for the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking areas scattered in the neighbouring provinces under one common administration and for a separate Orissa Province. Pandit Nilakantha Das and Shri Bubanananda Das, Oriya members of the Central Legislative Assembly kept up their pressure on the Government of India for conceding to their demand for a 'United Orissa'. Pandit Nilakantha had always debated in the Assembly for the formation of an Orissa Province.

On being asked a series of questions in this regard in the Assembly on 31 January and 1 February 1927 by Pandit Nilakantha Das, Mr. Alexander Muddiman who was the then Home Member, assured Oriya legislators that the Government had already under consideration the claims made by certain Oriya-speaking tracts after having consulted the concerned local governments. He had also agreed to consult the public opinion before adopting any definite scheme for the future of the Oriya-speaking tracts.

But, despite the assurance given by the Home Member,

Pandit Nilakantha Das moved the following resolution on 8 February 1927 in order to pressurise the Government to take immediate steps to put all Oriya-speaking areas under one local administration:

That this Assembly recommends to the Governor-General-in-Council to be pleased to take immediate steps to put or publish the scheme of putting all Oriya-speaking tracts under one local administration.

The resolution was debated at length in the Assembly. Participating in the debate Pandit Nilakantha Das, who had surveyed the history of Orissa which led to its administrative vivisection and the historical injustice caused to its people, insisted on uniting them under a separate and distinct provincial administration. He was not satisfied with the constitutional shape and system of the Sub-province. Therefore, he wished to have a province without the prefix 'Sub' because he knew that the Sub-province would certainly be subordinate to another bigger province.

The Oriyas, in course of time, had become increasingly aware of the ineffectiveness of the Congress Party to solve their problem. In 1928, the Nehru Committee with Pandit Motilal Nehru as Chairman had suggested a regrouping of Indian provinces on linguistic basis, but made no specific recommendations for Orissa in the absence of any special memorandum or representation by Oriya people.

At the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress in December 1928, a delegate Shri Niranjana Patnaik was disallowed by the President, Pandit Motilal Nehru, while he was proposing an amendment to his Report. Pandit Motilal spoke rather sarcastically of the Oriya members' desire for a separate province. This caused a great dissatisfaction among Oriya delegates. Pandit Nilakantha Das thereupon walked out of the Session alongwith 300 Oriya delegates. He led a procession in Calcutta, protesting against the ruling of Pandit Motilal Nehru.

These incidents caused disenchantment in the Congress circles in Orissa. The Oriya leaders eschewed their mutual



differences at the All Parties' Conference held in Cuttack on 2 May 1931 and unanimously adopted a resolution of Shri Harekrushna Mehtab for forming a Committee to initiate measures for the realisation of a separate Orissa province. Pandit Nilakantha Das was chosen as the head of the Committee and was requested to plead the case of the Oriya-speaking people before the proposed Boundary Commission.

Oriya nationalism presented two aspects: first of all it wanted the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts which lay prostrate under different provincial administrations, and secondly it wanted the unified Oriya areas to assume a separate identity. There was controversy regarding amalgamation and separation. Following the publication of the Simon Commission Report, Pandit Nilakantha Das pointed out at the all Parties' Conference on 22 May 1931, that the two issues of Oriya movement viz. amalgamation and separation should not be confused. He had further stated that amalgamation was not needed without separation.

The Government announced the formation of the Boundary Commission in September 1931 to examine the question of setting up a separate administration for Orissa from financial and other aspects and make recommendations regarding the readjustment of the boundaries in case Orissa was made a separate province. Thereupon, Pandit Nilakantha Das telegraphically pleaded to Gandhiji, "We are concerned about the outlying areas that should be included with the political Orissa in case it becomes a separate province. I believe that you would keep in mind this demand of Utkal along with your other important preoccupations". He had also sent another telegram on similar lines to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

The news about the Boundary Commission also accelerated the Oriya campaign. Pandit Nilakantha Das alongwith his friends also campaigned at Midnapore. They conducted meetings, formed associations and toured extensively, earnestly asking the Oriya people to join the nationalist movement for amalgamation of Midnapore with Orissa.

While on Orissa tour, the Boundary Commission visited

Singhbhum, but by then relations between Congress and the British administration had got very strained and in 1932 the Congress was declared illegal by the Government. Pandit Nilakantha Das was instructed to boycott the Commission at Singhbhum. Pandit Nilakantha's long-cherished dream became a reality when his sincere fight for the creation of a separate Orissa Province brought it into existence on 1 April 1936.

He remained as the President of the Orissa Provincial Congress Committee for two terms after the death of Pandit Gopabandhu Das. In 1940, he left Congress on account of differences in approach to the Second World War. He worked as a leader of the National War Front to help the then Government in their war efforts. In July 1941, he along with Pandit Godavarish Misra actively pleaded for the War efforts and advised the people to subscribe to the War funds, to be spent for defending the country from aggression. In 1941, he even formed a coalition Government with the Muslim League in Orissa.

### **Role in Orissa Vidhan Sabha**

The first general election to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies were held in 1952. Pandit Nilakantha had by then formed a party, named Independent Jan Sangh. He contested for and was elected to the Orissa Legislative Assembly. After some time, he joined the Congress party. Again in 1957, he was elected to the Legislative Assembly and also elected as its Speaker. As a Speaker, he was impartial and always ensured observance of decorum in the House. He tried to implement the rules and procedures relating to the Assembly in the spirit in which they were conceived. He was very careful in the matter of giving rulings and making observations in the House.

Pandit Nilakantha Das passed away on 16 November 1967. He was a simple, quiet and modest person. He was a versatile genius imbibing in himself the multifarious roles as a freedom fighter, parliamentarian, a social worker and reformer, a great scholar, an educationist and a prolific writer in Oriya

prose and poetry. He will always be remembered as one of the makers of modern Orissa.

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## **PART TWO**

### **His Ideas**

(Excerpts from select Speeches of Pandit  
Nilakantha Das in Central Legislative Assembly)

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## Resolution regarding Amalgamation of the Oriya-Speaking Tracts \*

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Sir, I beg to move:

That this Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to be pleased to take immediate steps to put or publish the schemes of putting all Oriya-speaking tracts under one local administration.

To the Government this is not a new subject. It has been before the country practically in the forefront of our political issues for the last 25 years or so. The history of this movement is a very long one, and since 1903, when first the then Home Secretary considered it necessary that all Oriya-speaking tracts should be put under one administration, for some reason or other of purely administrative convenience it has been postponed from time to time. We are given assurances that all our outlying tracts should come under one Government. Sometimes some hope of a sub-province has been put forward but nothing practical has come of it yet which would satisfy the Oriya people. In 1920 just towards the end of the last Imperial Legislative Council, a Resolution was moved by the Honourable Mr. Sachchidananda Sinha on this subject. Government gave assurances that they would enquire into the matter and probably they meant to do something as early as the Reforms scheme was put into operation. Practically the first term of the Reform Council was over and the Government did not move in the matter. At the beginning of the second term, to a question of my friend Mr. B. Das. Government however agreed to institute a committee of enquiry so far as the Madras Oriyas are

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\*Central Legislative Assembly Debate 3 February, 1927. pp. 546—52 and 571—74.

concerned. Accordingly the Phillip-Duff Commission were sent out to enquire into the matter and their report, though it has not been published to all the Members of the House, has been published in the office. After all their enquiries in the Ganjam and Vizagapatam districts they have made out a clear case that the people expressed a very strong desire and anxiety to be united with their fellowmen in the present division of Orissa—I mean the four or five districts in Bihar and Orissa. In case of a few of these outlying localities in the Ganjam and Vizagapatam districts there may be some difference of opinion on account of our census figures; but I may here inform the House that Oriyas have been under several administrations in several tracts, and practically in each of the tracts an intermediary ruling race with vested interests has been created, and the Bengal Government puts it clearly that the census supervisors and enumerators are afraid to record people as Oriya-speaking, because they fear if they put it like that, the tract will be transferred to Orissa. It is there in the letter which was written to the Bengal Government and came to the Government of India in 1922. Actually the Superintendent of Census at a meeting of enumerators and supervisors heard it remarked by one of them that they were not willing to record people as Oriya-speaking even though they had evidence to that effect.

I may quote the passage:

(in the gathering of Enumerators and Supervisors).

I heard someone say that if there is a large number of Oriya-speaking population at Danton, there is every likelihood of Danton being transferred to Balasore.

This was the remark he heard. It is in a letter by Mr. A.M. Chakravarty, Circle Officer, regarding Oriya-speaking people in Danton and Mehanpur, dated the 5th July, 1921.

Another reason is advanced that the expression of desire on the part of the people is sometimes due to agitation. It may be a fact that when a movement is started some leaders create a public opinion in favour of something which they know will be conducive to the interests of the country. Ordinary people do

not understand generally the future of any new movement and it is a fact everywhere in the world that opinions are created when the masses are not in a position to understand what is what. But before I go into the history of this movement and criticise it, I should like to enlighten the House about what Orissa is, what it was in history and what are its claims for being constituted as a separate province or to be put under one administration, as I have called it, for I am put in mind of a very curious incident. I was talking to one of my friends in this House—I mean the last House. He asked me, where I came from. I said "Orissa". He looked as if he could not understand me. Yes; it was a fact; then I said, Bihar and Orissa. He said "Yes, yes; it is somewhere near Assam." I need not say what then followed and how I explained where I came from. But it is perhaps a fact that our people being for the last two hundred years in a state of practical vivisection, so to say, other people in India do not sometimes understand who we are and who we were.

The present Orissa inherits the culture of three ancient provinces; one is Kalinga, another is Utkal, and the third is Udra. Ancient Kalinga was the first colony of the Aryans on the fringe of the Dravida country. The clear history extends so far back as the 7th century B.C. It comprises the coastal strip from Calcutta or Tamruk to the southern extremity of Ganjam. This was the Kalinga, which was conquered by Asoka, the King of Magadha, whose conquests made a saint of him. Kalinga had a robust culture and the present colossal art of Orissa which is a distinct type of Aryan art is the remnant of the development of ancient Kalinga art, which in original may be found even now in the cave temples of Orissa. The sea-faring habits and navigation of Kalinga are well known. The name Bijay Singha is well known to Indian history. He himself is claimed by four provinces, Orissa, Bengal, Gujarat and Burma. But it is a certain fact that his wife who accompanied him to Ceylon and colonised and civilised that land belonged to Kalinga. She was the daughter of the King of Kalinga; and the colonisation of Kalinga in Burma and the Eastern Archipelago, is also a fact of history.



The local name of the present Pegu is Ossa, which is a correction of Orissa, and some temples in Burma were constructed after the pattern of the cave temple of Udaygiri in Orissa. Kalinga navigation was still being practised in Orissa till the seventies of the last century when it was practically crushed out of existence by the high export duty on saltpetre and the salt trade which was killed on account of the ballast system of foreign salt—foreign salt being carried into this country as ballast. It was still living in Balasore and some other coastal towns in Orissa till practically the latter half of the last century and the sloops and small ships in a broken state may still be found in some seaports of Orissa.

Then again Kalinga was a strong Buddhist centre of culture: the Buddhist religion made a stronghold there; when it was again Hinduised the stream of culture came from the Udra country which extended over the South-east portion of the present Central Provinces; and I may say here that the present temple of Jagannath, which stands out as a religious monument throughout India, is a gift of the Udras, and the present Orissan culture may well be proud of that temple where no caste or untouchability is in practice. You will find it nowhere else in India. The culture is purely Orissan; Orissa has kept it up, but that Orissa is not recognised to be a distinct individual factor in the Indian federation of races.

Of Utkal, I should not say more. It would be seen, however that the ancient Utkal influence came from the side of Singhbhum and added many permanent and highly delicate elements of civilisation and advancement to this synthetic stream of culture. Thus it stands out as a fact that we in Orissa from ancient times developed a distinct and individual culture of our own, whose identity could not be killed, though the attempt has been perhaps seriously and continuously made to kill it for about two hundred years.

Orissa was in history always a separate province. It is not in this 20th century that we appeal to the British administration for the first time and claim it to be so. History shows, Sir, that it was always a separate province not only maintained anyhow

with its slender revenue, but it was a flourishing State. Even during wars with neighbouring races it could build up a robust art and literature and it could spend enormously on religious art and other institutions of religious and social importance. The extent of Orissa which is now claimed to be from Midnapore to the southern point of Ganjam and from the shores of the sea to somewhere beyond Singhbhum and in the Eastern Central Provinces is not a recent discovery. In olden times it was much larger in extent and a powerful kingdom. Even during the palmy days of Bahmini, Vijayanagaram and Bengal, our kings kept up their independence and carried their mighty peasant militia into the very heart of those countries and our separate existence as an independent race and kingdom was kept up till the latter half of the 16th century when no other province in India except Khandesh—which perhaps succumbed about the same time—kept its independence against the Imperial Moghul arms. Then when Akbar took it, he understood the position. He was a statesman, and not a mere conqueror. He could understand the necessity of the separate existence of the Oriya people and he made it into a separate province. Throughout the Moghul rule it remained separate, and so I must inform the House that our Muhammadans are a respectable class of people, and therefore in Orissa you will seldom find any tension between the Hindus and Muhammadans, nor has any kind of communal rowdyism ever disturbed the peaceful atmosphere of that land.

Then conquest after conquest came, and we were treated like a football. Perhaps during the British regime matters have been carried to extreme lengths. Sometime before the time of the battle of Plassey it was made a part of Bengal. A little before that it was given to Nagpur. I do not know whether—and it is quite probable that—Orissa was given in lieu of the tribute of Bengal to the Mahrattas by the Governor of Bengal under the influence of the merchants of Calcutta who were afraid of the Mahratta raids. Then again it was made a part of the Central Provinces. During the second Mahratta War, it was again thrown on to Bengal. The famous historian in his statistical accounts, I mean Sir W. W. Hunter, has admitted how the

British Government was responsible for the famine and poverty of our ancient land. It was in Calcutta that the headquarters of Orissa were situated and without practically any notice to the Oriyas our zamindaris were sold in Calcutta for paltry sums, and many of our zamindars now are therefore absentee zamindars, and they live in Calcutta. This is distinctly an act of the British Government.

This has been our fate, Sir. Since that time we have been made something like a commodity. When it is necessary for the safety and happiness of a major province, we have been thrown about, either partially or wholly, practically like a football. The last of such cruel and heinous experiments was made in putting us with Bihar. Perhaps the Government remember that we were told that we were to supply the sea-board to Bihar. If by supplying the sea-board was meant that we were to wash the feet of Bihar by the gentle offerings of the breezy waves of our hoary and sacred coast of ancient Kalinga, one could well understand it. Or, was there any port open? Was the sea coast of Orissa developed? Was anything at all done to call Orissa a sea-board of Bihar? It was simply an experiment to supply a portion of feeder land to Bihar to enable it to maintain itself as a separate province.

Sir, we should like to be a separate province as Assam or the Central Provinces. Assam has been made into a separate province with practically the same or even less population and with about the same amount of revenue. It has not yet got a High Court nor even a University, but it is recognised as a separate province, and the people are expected to determine and rule over their own destinies, while we are always being thrown about. It is quite natural that we should like to be a separate province as we have been throughout the course of our history, but for about these 200 years, when on account of the fault of the Imperial Government we have been thrown about from place to place. As I have said, like a football, and we have been vivisected and thrown in portions here and there. And it is natural that even at a great risk to our economic life we should much like to be a separate province. But perhaps

here I feel called upon to refer to the amendments of my friends from Bihar.

They always like to put in an amendment to say that we should remain under Bihar and Orissa, not the present Orissa Division but a little bigger territory. When in 1921 early in the Reforms a Resolution was moved in the Bihar and Orissa Council, such an amendment failed, and the Resolution as I have put it now was unanimously passed. I do not know what charm there is in putting in the words "under the administration of Bihar and Orissa". I have said "under one administration" with the distinct intention that I do not commit myself either to remain under Bihar and Orissa or to be a separate province, which latter course we should like very much. Here I may be allowed to put in a word about the advantages and disadvantages of being under any other province. If the experiment to tag us on to some other province like a barge to a steam boat is to go on, then I think it would be much better first if we are tagged on to the Central Provinces, for there we shall count for something. Our population is almost as large and the railways communication from Cuttack to Sambalpur, which is under contemplation I understand, may be extended up to Nagpur through some station on the Bengal Nagpur Railway, while the Vizagapatam Harbour Railway will also be another advantage. Or if we are to be put under another province, then Bengal with its High Court and University, which have not only a tradition but which command a certain amount of influence and independence, is nearer our home and is within easy reach of any part of Orissa, not more than 12 hours rail journey. I do not know what charm there is in putting us with Bihar, to wash the feet of the province, as I have said. Patna is perhaps more distant from Cuttack than any other centre, and besides throughout our history we have never been with Bihar. We were once with Bengal, then with the Central Provinces, and then we were thrown back into Bengal. It was only in 1911 that to annul the partition of Bengal and to give Bihar some advantage of territory, we were put under Bihar. Still the wheels of Government sometimes are calculated to crush our destinies and to

dictate what we should be, and if it is still found convenient to the Government that we should be with Bihar we must submit to our destiny, but we should like all the Oriya-speaking people to be under Bihar together. That is the only desire now. We are practically a dying race under the present arrangements of administration, and in this state who or where are we to choose between Provinces except that we appeal and plead for being under one administration. For the present any administration that is given us we shall and we must accept, for there is no other way out. Then we shall wait and when we develop as a united race we shall compel the hands of our destiny. I mean the Government, to give us a separate province, which is our hope and goal and without which we cannot have rest. And as to the redistribution of areas, whatever be the objections from the Government standpoint. If the Government do not put one and all our areas together—that is, the remnant which still remains after all the killing agencies have been in operation for ages and generations, nay, even centuries—if all those areas be not now put together—if some are still left out—the process of killing in this present age will not continue any longer. It cannot. Discontent will never vanish; it will still flourish even in the smallest outlying parts. You may say that some parts of Bengal are unwilling, that the Central Provinces Government does not like the idea, or that a portion of Singhbhum is not naturalised in Oriya culture although it has taken that culture for two or three generations; you will see to your great disadvantage that the agitation will go on. The present age is an age of agitators in the political world and our agitators—I confess it—will come out again into the outlying areas. They will again give you trouble and the question will not be finally settled till all our people still living are put together under one administration, and, if possible, and as soon as possible, under a separate administration, a distinct provincial administration.

Some suggestion has been thrown out to us under the name of a sub-province. I do not understand, nor does my friend the Honourable the Home Member there understand what it actu-

ally means. To call a province a sub-province is somewhat odd. If I may define it now as I understand it, it is a province without a High Court and a University, which we are told we shall not be able to maintain independently, although I hold that in spite of the famished condition of our land and its economic disadvantages so often flung in our face we shall try our best to maintain a separate University and a High Court. But if it is not found possible by the present masters of our destiny, it may be made into a province like Assam, which has not a University or a High Court. But what does a sub-province mean? That is something rather derogatory in name, and our people are afraid that by calling our province a sub-province we may again be put under disadvantages.

I should like rather to have a province like that than an administration with the prefix "sub" which would give some one the idea that we shall again be tagged on to another bigger province with similar disadvantages to those under which we now have to live. With these words, Sir, I move my Resolution.

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Sir, my thanks are first due to the Honourable the Home Member for his appreciation of our desire, qualified though it was in many respects and hedged in by many considerations some of which I consider practically foreign to the question. He says this is a local problem. Yes, local it is. But I maintain it has been made local by the Government themselves. The North-West Frontier question was not a local question, nor was the partition of Bengal. We have been cut to pieces and thrown into different provinces for these 150 years or more and this is distinctly an act of the British Government; and our question when it is pressed in this House is called a local question, so that members may be dissuaded from interest.

I am sorry that though I raised the question of comparison with Assam, my Honourable friend the Home Member did not enlighten me in any way as to whether a real comparison can be made and we can be formed into a province like Assam. He refers us to Local Councils and says that the question should

be raised in the Local Councils and it should be first decided there. The opinions of the people may be gauged there in the Local Councils, for the outlying areas are represented there. If that be the intention, then it comes to no practical importance. They are in a very small number there. If he refers to the note of the Joint Parliamentary Committee under section 15 of the Government of India Act, then I am sure he will be satisfied that this question was urged in 1921; it was raised in the Bihar Council and received the unanimous support not only of the people representing Oriya tracts by a majority but the unanimous support of the House; and about the same time it was moved in the Madras local Council by Mr. Sashi Bushan Rath; there were only two members representing the Oriya tracts of Ganjam and both of them spoke and supported the Resolution, though it was ultimately withdrawn in view of the fact that Government gave an assurance of making an enquiry and coming to a settlement on the subject. As to other small tracts in the Central Provinces and Midnapore, the question in local Councils means nothing very practical; there may be half or even a smaller portion of a member representing those parts in the Councils.

Then if he is under this technical difficulty I am sure he is satisfied. Local Councils—I mean the people representing the area in the local Councils, have sufficiently expressed themselves in most emphatic terms. He says that because I have said that this step of putting all Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration is a preliminary step towards putting the whole tract under one separate government, the question of Ganjam coming into the present Orissa does not perhaps so prominently arise. We hear something strange. We are suffering under dismemberment, and as I have said before, we have become a dying race. Piece after piece is falling off. We cannot make any common cause to help one another. Our culture, which is based upon the language, that ancient culture is practically falling out of existence, and we want that all our people may be put together so that we shall make a common cause and develop our culture, our land, and help the adminis-

tration in developing ourselves into a separate province. If that is not done we shall be appealing to this Government for all time to come, *i.e.*, so long as we live, and that perhaps without effect. Fragments in all the provinces without any common voice to make it audible to the Central Government or even to the provincial Governments themselves fall as under and perhaps lose themselves in the alien environment so difficult in nature for assimilation to a grown up individual with a developed culture.

Then as to the question of a separate province, administrative considerations always weigh more with the Honourable the Home Member, and as to administrative convenience, much has been quoted by Mr. Gaya Prasad Singh and Mr. B. Das. In provinces, in the Madras Presidency especially, it is very difficult to transfer an officer of the Government from Madras to Ganjam.....

Sir, I was rather surprised to hear the Honourable the Home Member say that, by criticising the administrative and financial aspects of the question, I had alienated his sympathy. I did not know his sympathy depended on the feeling which one man's criticism might create in him. It should not be so very slippery that it should be alienated so easily and on such flimsy pretexts. This is a problem which perhaps from the administrative point of view he, representing the Government, should view most dispassionately and from a different aspect, and he should look to the good of the people and how much this good is involved in such a momentous problem as the one under discussion. Whether my remarks are palatable to him or not, is not what matters in alienating his sympathy from the interests of whole race of people. To please him, however, I desist from making any more remarks on the financial and administrative aspects of the question. But one thing I must say. It pains me as a representative of Orissa to hear very often the remark flung in our face that we are a famine-stricken, flood-stricken and poor people. Yes, a poor people we may be, but I must make this point clear and carry the idea home to my friend the



Honourable the Home Member, that all this is to a great extent, although it may not be entirely, due to the administration, to the Government under which we have been living. I do not know why my Honourable friend did not ask the official representative of my province to have his say on the subject. Unlike my Honourable friend, who has seen Orissa, I doubt whether the representative of my Government over there, Mr. Shyam Narayan Singh, has ever been to my place, and if he says anything here, he will say it from papers or some experience of a pilgrimage which he might have made at least once in his life to Puri. If my Honourable friend Sir Alexander Muddiman, goes to my province, in future, I shall be glad to show the Honourable the Home Member if he comes to country villages how the system of irrigation and village planning was made by ancient kings of Orissa and how those canals and embankments built for the purpose of irrigation and development of land have been neglected. Two or three years ago it is a fact that the Bihar Government wanted to make some enquiry, and constituted a Committee for the purpose; and it is a fact, too, that the Committee sat in the Commissioner's bungalow and wrote a report to say that all the embankments should be demolished, though no evidence worth the name was taken and no witnesses were examined; and this is how we are cared for. Honourable Members in the House may know now that the famines and floods are due not to any fault of the people but are to a great extent the fault of the Government and the want of care under which we have been labouring for these 150 years and more. If we go into history we see that famines were practically absent in olden days, and yet they have been so frequent under the present administration. I do not like to alienate my Honourable friend's sympathy for a poor and oppressed people as we are, we cannot afford to alienate any man's sympathy in a matter like this, whatever be our political principles; we have no principles in this matter. We cannot afford to have any, we are so very neglected, so very lonely, so very outcasted so to say. But I must make it clear that I expected the Honourable Member, after so many years' agitation, to understand our position and give us some sort of

assurance in this House that our wrongs are going to be redressed.

Now, the only thing that remains for me is that I must clear the doubts of some of my Honourable friends who have spoken. Let me again make it clear to my friends here that nothing less than a separate province will satisfy us, and I never want to commit myself to the amendment of my friend, Mr. Gaya Prasad Singh. My friend, Maulvi Muhammad Yakub, has also raised a question and said he understands the Bihar Muhammadan friends oppose this proposal, but so far as I know the majority of the opinion among the Bihar Mussalmans is not opposed to it.

In most clear and emphatic terms I say on the floor of the House to-day that nothing but a separate province will satisfy us. If Government wishes to attach us to any province, our agitation will go on so long as we are unable to determine our own destiny. That is what we want and that is what every individual race should want. As for the language question raised by my friend over there, Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum, that there are many languages in India, he may if he likes attempt to adopt the English language as the common tongue of the nation. But that question does not arise here. I stand here not for a language alone, but for a language linked to a culture. There are languages which are not based on culture. Here there is a language which has been linked for thousands of years to a distinct culture which has something to give to the federal nationality of India, and if that culture, of which the language has been the vehicle, is allowed to die or to go to rack and ruin in disruption and neglect, then I feel and every one else of my friends should feel that a distinct element of Indian nationality will be no more. This is the principle on which the linguistic provinces will be based. There are about 671 languages in India. India cannot be formed into 671 provinces. But language, linked to culture and a common history and

tradition, should be recognised; and the principle of forming our provinces in future should be based on this. With these few words I commend my Resolution to the support of the House.

## The Indian Finance Bill (Salt Tax)\*

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May I rise to a point of order? I presume you will allow my Honourable friend Mr. Acharya to move his amendment at this stage, and if so, I rise to a point of order. That amendment is for reducing the duty from Rs. 1-4-0 to four annas. I have got an amendment to clause 2 of the Indian Finance Bill relating to Salt Tax which is No. 8 on the list. It is remitting the salt duty in its entire extent.

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My amendment is:

To clause 2 of the Bill the following be added at the end:

'and the said provisions shall, in so far as they enable the Governor General in Council to remit any duty so imposed, be construed as if, with effect from the 1st day of April, 1929, they remitted the duty to the extent of the said one rupee and four annas and such remission shall be deemed to have been made out of the leviable duty by rule made under that section'.

The whole clause will then read like this as amended:

The provisions of Section 7 of the Indian Salt Act, 1882, shall, in so far as they enable the Governor General in Council to impose by rule made under that section a duty on salt manufactured in, or imported into, any part of British India other than Burma and Aden, be construed as if, with effect from the 1st day of April, 1929, they imposed such duty at the rate of one rupee and four annas per maund of eighty-two and two-sevenths pounds avoirdupois of salt manufactured in, or imported by land into, any such part, and such duty shall, for all the purpose of the said Act, be deemed to have

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\* Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 21 March, 1929, pp. 2293—2310.

been imposed by rule made under that section, and the said provisions shall, in so far as they enable the Governor General in Council to remit any duty so imposed, be construed as if, with effect from the 1st day of April, 1929, they remitted the duty to the extent of the said one rupee and four annas and such remission shall be deemed to have been made out of the leviable duty by rule made under that section.

Section 7 of the Salt Act, 1882, provides:

The Governor General in Council may from time to time, by rule consistent with this, Act,—

- (a) impose a duty, not exceeding three rupees per maund of 82  $\frac{2}{7}$  pounds avoirdupois, on salt manufactured in, or imported by land into, any part of British India;
- (b) *(My amendment is under this)* 'reduce or remit any duty so imposed, and reimpose any duty so reduced or remitted'.

From time to time, duties have been remitted by notification under this particular clause. In 1893, in the case of salt manufactured in the Punjab mines, the duty was remitted for salt used in glazed earthen ware. On another occasion in case of Madras salt sent out to Travancore and other places. There are other instances also quoted in the foot note of the section and clause. So, under this amendment, if it is carried, the effect will be that the duty will be levied, and that duty, so far as Indian indigenous salt is concerned, will be remitted entirely to the extent of Rs. 1-4-0. The idea is that the tariff duty on foreign salt is just as much as the excise duty on salt manufactured in India. If we have Rs. 1-4-0 as excise salt duty on salt manufactured in Bengal, say, then the tariff duty on the salt which is imported into Bengal from Liverpool or Germany will be just Rs. 1-4-0. If we say, we have no duty here, then the import duty goes as a matter of course. When there is no imposition of excise duty, there is no standard by which we can levy a duty on imported salt. So the excise duty there technically, according to my amendment, remains untouched. That excise duty will be remitted, though technically it will be there on the Statute-book for the purpose of the tariff duty on imported salt. That is the idea of my amendment.

....For, this salt tax is the centre of the objectionable features of the Finance Bill, so far as the economic aspect of it is concerned, this salt tax is the crux of the whole problem. He may not have known it. He is new to this House. Year after year, this salt tax has been, as my friends described it, a hardy annual. I think my amendment requires little persuasion on this side of the House. I know we shall be very strong in carrying this measure, for this measure requires little persuasion to the representatives of the people, irrespective of their political opinions.....

This salt tax painfully puts me in mind of a tax, which I call mediaeval, I may even call it primitive. It is, Sir, a poll tax, and as such, is full of the humiliating memory of the days and dealings of ancient slavery as well as mediaeval fanaticism. I need not go into details of this historical significance of the problem for obvious reasons. Let me say this much, that it is all unseemly for a people to fight with their Government in this second quarter of the 20th century on the issue of a tax round which cling the associations of barbarism.

It is a poll tax, a capitation tax, and more so from the viewpoint of the Government. We know, it can be proved on authority that consumption of salt decreases, when the tax is increased. But to the Government the consumption is inelastic. What else is it then but a poll tax, a capitation tax? What else is the principle and significance of a capitation tax? True, it puts one in mind of the days of human slavery. Which Government was that that thought of poll taxes? Not an organised, not a civilised Government. A poll tax can only be thought of when the Government wants to make money out of the ignorance of the people. No Government would ever think of a poll tax. This salt-tax is a poll tax veneered over, with what the Government calls "indirect" I mean, the principle of indirect taxation. It is a direct poll tax I say, and it is primitive in its character.

It is a tax which is levied on food. Rich people are not affected by this tax, although I don't say that rich people have nothing to do with the tax. It is a tax all the same, and they pay

as much perhaps as the poorest man pays. It is in keeping with the character of the present Imperialistic civilization, which should no longer find its *pro sto* on the exploitation and oppression of the poor. For, it has always been the function of Imperialism, to exploit the property of the world where protection of such property is the weakest. The poor man is exploited and what else is this tax? It partakes of the distinct character of that Imperialistic policy of exploitation. It is, a tax on human blood. The poor man is bled to find money for the coffers of the State under this tax. I don't propose to pose as a chemist in this House, but I say salt has very much—perhaps 90 per cent—to do with human blood, and when you tax salt, you tax the poor man's blood. Poverty has been a sin for a long time and therefore it is being punished. But how much longer will it be punished like this? Whatever may be the character of my opposition to this tax, I say it should not be a source of revenue. Salt should not be a source of revenue. If you make it a source of revenue, as I remarked some time ago, you are always tempted to make it your sure reserve, a certain source of revenue. Many other taxes are there, they are not certain, but there is no uncertainty about the poor man, or even the rich man for all that, taking a pinch of salt. You are always tempted to grasp the poor man, to bleed the poor man. It engenders a sort of depravity which is not healthy to the cause of humanity. It stands to murder humanity in ignorance and weakness. This is such a tax.

You may say there is France, there is Italy, there is that Republic of Brazil. They have it, they have this salt tax. It does not matter if, England does not have it. It has something else. We shall explain that later on, but big countries have it. Why should you not have it in India? There are examples in the West and in the countries Westernised. I know, but I refuse to enter into the circumstances which actuated them to put on this salt tax. I look within before I look without. What have I got to do with Brazil having a salt tax, I have not been to Brazil. You may have got many books, many accounts, this and that. Only yesterday my friend Mr. Chaman Lall's statements and mine

were being questioned for our not having been personally to the tea gardens in Assam. For that reason our statements could not be regarded as authoritative. Whether authoritative or not, whether facts or not, whether reasonable or not, I don't go to question or to criticise what others are doing in this world. I ask myself what I should do, and I say, so far as I am concerned, I am not going to give any sanction whatsoever, moral or physical, for this tax on the poor man's blood.

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I was going to say, Sir, that the salt tax should not be made a source of revenue. One may very well ask if it is not to be a source of public revenue, what do you propose to have in its stead. There are two reasons for the total abolition of the entire-tax on indigenous salt in India. I have got to explain them a little. One reason is that this is a measure of protection. The other day when Demands for Grants were being discussed, we carried a cut in the salt Demand on the issue that India should be made self-supporting in matters of salt. Indian salt should be made to supply the whole of India. There is a difficulty and the main difficulty is foreign imported salt. If we cannot make Indian salt, it was found out the other day—at least it was so given out—if we cannot make Indian salt very very cheap, as compared with foreign salt, we have no hope, at least for the next 20 years, of making India self-supporting so far as salt is concerned. It will be very difficult to put a very heavy protective tariff duty on imported salt. It will not look well for many reasons, salt tax being a poll tax, as I have said, it is a bad tax, it is obnoxious to tax the blood of man. Realising all this, and Indians as we are by culture, we have been all along throughout our historic tradition first members of humanity and then members of the nation, it is not for us to say, let English salt, German salt or Aden salt be taxed not ours. It does not look well. But we are here constrained to give some protection to indigenous salt, and what is the compromise? I will give you here a compromise. The compromise is to remit the excise tax, *i.e.*, excise duty on indigenous salt. Then, this Rs. 1-4-0



per maund remains on imported salt and that is a measure of protection.

It is said that the people in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and some parts of Assam have to depend entirely on foreign salt. They have also been made, during the course of the last hundred years or so, to contract a kind of liking, natural or artificial, whatever it be, they have been made to contract a kind of liking for foreign salt on account of its quality....

My Honourable friend (Mr. C. Durai Swamy Aiyangar) proved it home the other day that quality matters very little to the common man, even in Bengal and Assam. It is not a question of quality so much as the question of unavailability. It is not made available there. That is our position. But supposing a certain section of the people are attracted by its quality, they love foreign salt, they prefer it on account of its better quality. Admit for the sake of argument, that it is so, I believe even the Members of Government will agree when I say that such a preference can be found only with the richer section of the community. It is quite natural that, when protection comes, the richer and the more enlightened section for that matter, who have been mainly responsible except Government, for killing the indigenous salt and for killing its market in Bengal, they ought to be made to pay for relieving the poor.

It will be a very small burden which such people will never, I believe, grudge to pay. It will be in the fitness of things that, if any one is to be taxed in this country for the purpose of giving a certain protection to the native industry, I mean indigenous industry, it is that section of the people who can bear such a burden without difficulty. In this case, there will be practically no difficulty to them.

My second reason is that it is not possible for us to propose an abolition of tariff duty perhaps on this occasion. Had I wished to abolish the tax altogether, I am afraid, Sir, I could not have done so. It is only the duty on excise salt which I propose to remit—perhaps some of my friends do not understand the significance of it; I apologise to them as I have not perhaps

been intelligible. The Bill says "salt manufactured in, or imported by land into" India and not Burma. That is, if we pass this Bill as it is, we levy a duty on indigenous salt alone. This Bill is for excise salt duty only. Our difficulty arises there. In this Bill, by no amendment shall we be able to abolish the duty on imported salt. That duty. I mean tariff duty, is, according to the Tariff Act, levied on the basis of this excise duty which by rules made under Section 7(2) of the Indian Salt Act, can be remitted by the Governor General in Council. Thus the duty will remain leviable for the purpose of taxing imported salt, and will not be realised on indigenous salt on account of the remission proposed here. Now, I hope, it is clear that the abolition of the salt duty altogether is forbidden ground so far as this Act is concerned, and we shall have to take the previous sanction of His Excellency the Viceroy before we can bring in such an amendment. That amendment as I understand it, and as far as I have experienced it in previous years, that amendment means the putting in of something new into the body of this Bill. If you want to do that, you cannot do that merely by means of an amendment. Two years ago, I looked into the question, and I applied for sanction to amend this particular section to that effect. I am sorry to inform my Honourable friends that I was not allowed to do so.... So, I say that the question is hedged in a double difficulty. For these two reasons, I propose this particular amendment.

So far as the other countries are concerned, I have said, I refuse to enter into the circumstances prevailing there; our main concern is India, and in this connection, I confess, to a certain extent, also England. England is the home of my Honourable friends who rule over our financial and political destinies. When they think of making money out of the poor man's pinch of salt, will they look back across those 6,000 miles of the blue ocean and tell me what are the things obtaining there? Is there a salt tax in England? I know there was one some hundreds of years ago. That was in the middle ages. The world has advanced since then, and much water has since flown under the bridge of the Thames. They had a salt tax then; but as soon as the

people realised that they had a certain right, a substantial right to govern themselves, as soon as their eyes opened towards the political and national future of their country, and their particular share in it, they did not brook a medieval, a primitive tax like that. Objections were raised—I could write pages and volumes, and I can read many quotations, but I refrain from doing so, because I do not propose to take much time of the House if I can avoid it. But I know, from the point of view of human health, health of industry, health of agriculture,—from all sides there were objections—so many and varied that the levy of such a duty was at last found impossible.

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My Honourable friend\* ought to have known by this time perfectly well what is meant by the health of industries and health of agriculture. If he looks only to his own orchards and fields, and if he goes to some industrial centre or even to a village to inspect what the state of cottage industry is there, he will see that it is anything but healthy. I know he is a big zamindar; I am making no reflection on him but I am afraid he is not in touch probably with the real state of things in the villages.

I am going to quote one passage to show that even in England, where I need not say anything about the income of the individual or the circumstances of living or the standard of life, which is dinned into our ears day in and day out, even in this House for imitation; but I shall quote one thing. An English salt manufacturer, giving evidence before a Select Committee on Salt in 1836, by name William Worthington, said this. A member of that Committee put the question, "Since the repeal of the duty, has there been an increase in the demand for that sort of salt which is used for household purposes?" The answer—what is the answer? "Very considerable." And here in India the salt tax gives you, gives the government, six,

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\*Shri D.K. Lahiri Chaudhury interrupted to know what was meant by the health of industries and agriculture.

sometimes ten and sometimes even more, crores of rupees year after year. We are told it is only six annas, or four annas or something like that *per capita*, as if it were a very small thing. But the gentlemen who are sitting during the winter in this Imperial Delhi and enjoy the summer on the heights of Olympus, Simla I mean,—to such people four or six annas I know means nothing. They do not understand what a four-anna piece means. I am afraid they have not seen one, for it is not gold nor is it paper. But we, all the representatives here on this side of the House, have very painful experience of what that little thing means, that four anna piece, to our villagers.

I should like to remind you of the history of the salt tax in this country. We are sometimes told that the history of this tax is a very long one; I know long and painful it is under British Rule in India. But I was once surprised that even the Arthashastra of Kautilya was laid under contribution to afford an authority for this particular tax in ancient times. I felt sorry to think that there should be so much ignorance—genuine or put on, does not matter here—about Indian life, Indian culture, Indian government, Indian polity. On account of a kind of a spoon-feeding in culture, we have been gradually accustomed, innured, to things which, if we knew what our forefathers were, we should not care a tuppence for. Now what was the principle of taxation in India in those days? The land today belongs to the Government, or the zamindars—for that matter, through the zamindar it is Government's land—the land then never belonged to Government. It was never the Raj's land. When the kingship was first conceived as is illustrated in the story of Bena, there was no idea of King's proprietorship over the land. It was a willing contribution of one-sixth of the return on the land, later on supplemented by a land tax that maintained the King and maintained him to please the people and to work for the good of the people, to consider himself the real servant of the people. This was the principal theory of our Indian taxation. How can it be possible that there was a salt tax? If there was a salt tax, the men who made salt perhaps used to give one-sixth of what they made out of it to the King probably a little land tax in

addition in later days. As a matter of fact, a mendicant in the forest, who used to live by picking grains from the streets or cart ways had to pay one-sixth of those grains picked up, and that was the King's portion. If you look at it from the side of the King, that was a tax; but I must tell you clearly that in India there was no tax which the King ever imposed on the people: the basic principle of our culture, I may say, was "Duty", whereas a complete change has come over the world and now the basic principle is "Right". Now the King, as well as the people, are always demanding of each other—the King says "Give me my tax", the people say, "Give us our rights of representation and of shaping the state policy." "No representation, no taxation". But in ancient days there was no such struggle for existence or for kingship; there was no oppression of the people by the King, and the people did not feel that they should take away anything called power from the King. That was the culture then, the smooth working, the dovetailing of each other's interests, and in such an arrangement, the salt tax must be impossible. Then what is the meaning of quoting Kautilya to prove the ancient history of the salt tax?

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It is during the Muhammadan period we are told that there was a salt tax; but what was that? 2½ to 5 per cent. Was it a tax? I cannot say what it actually was. Perhaps just as the produce of the land was taxed, so was the produce of the sea, or the land which produced salt. It was like a common tax, an ordinary tax; it was no salt tax, it was no poll tax, it was no capitation tax: that is what I want to impress upon the attention of the House. It was 2½ to 5 per cent. Now, will any one compare the percentage of the present salt tax. What is the present percentage? 1,000, 1,200, is that the proper calculation? It will come to even more, for the salt price is sometimes 1a 6p. whereas the tax is Rs. 1-4. According to the proper rule of three calculation, it comes to how much? 1,600 per cent. Am I right? And during the Muhammadan times it was 2½ to 5 per cent. I take it out of reports written by English-

men—authentic reports; but I am sorry I have not got them to quote from. Was that a tax at all?

If you say what is the character of the salt tax, I have already told you it is the public revenue reserve. Had it been so, every one, every school-boy knows the story of Muhammad Tughlak, that idealist, that scholar-Emperor, who dabbled in economic problems without studying them, and he would have been the first man to draw on this tax, had it been the custom in those days. He was in want of money, and he went from house to house to collect a poll tax; for state expenditure he collected his own subjects' property in desperation; he was in dire need of money and he wanted to issue notes, I mean, paper currency without any metallic reserve in the treasury; and he wanted that copper coins with the stamp of the Emperor should pass as gold and silver coins. He took to so many means of making money; but we do not hear of the salt tax even then; it has never been recorded by Ibn Batuta, that famous African traveller who was a friend and for seven years practically an associate and a colleague so to say of Muhammad Tughlak. Am I to hear that he could not record it? I maintain, Sir, that the salt tax had no history before the coming of the East India Company.

I shall simply rapidly pass over the Sikh regime in the Punjab, when some little money—inconsiderable though it be—was realised from leasing out mines in the salt range, the stronghold of the Indian Government's monopoly even today. But the salt, as such, was never taxed. Though in the Sikh days in the Punjab, which were the days of the East India Company in other parts of India, when these mines were leased out and when we might expect to hear of a salt tax in the Punjab salt range, we do not hear of anything like that at all. It was a mining lease rather than anything else; that is not a salt tax. Just as a zamindar lets out his stone mines, or the Government lease out their silver mines, so it was with this salt range; under a mining arrangement it was let out.

But admitting for argument's sake that the salt tax was a tax in India just as it is today, for argument's sake I take it, it was

so; but will the Honourable the Finance Member take note of the fact that all the sources of supply were open to the people? The mine was there in the Punjab and the sea from Sind to Chittagong; all this was open to the people who were making their own salt. Who began the monopoly? The word "monopoly" came into this country with the East India Company. That cursed word "monopoly" of salt came into this country with the advent of the British merchant rulers. Evidently there was no monopoly of salt in India before then. There being no monopoly, it would be self-contradictory if you say that there was a tax. People were not making salt in factories, and *Nimak Mahal* is a word which the East India Company probably coined. In those days there was no big centralised manufacture of salt. Sometimes people carried a potful of water from the sea, boiled it in their houses and made salt. I shall now tell the House how the monopoly system has pressed heavily on the poor people, how it has actually operated itself on the people, and how clandestinely people prepared their own salt for which, not they, but their zamindars were punished.

But you may say that if today we give salt free, how can it be supplied to the people in the interior? They will be put to a lot of expense and trouble to carry salt into the interior from the sea coast. You may say that. But, Sir, I have got literature in my hand to show—I do not know whether I shall be believed at this hour of the day if I tell you, Sir that all over India there is salt earth from which salt can be made easily. It is made in this way, Sir. First take out the earth and then put it into water. The water is then filtered and boiled and allowed to evaporate, and the deposit that remains is salt. That is how salt is made, and the earth for making salt nature has supplied in her abundance, and such earth can be found even in the land of my friend over there, in Allahabad.

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The salt produced "was in well-formed small crystals" like the Cheshire salt. "That produced in red soil is dirty and red

in appearance, the former is used largely for human consumption and the latter exclusively for the use of cattle." Mark, Sir, there was a provision in every household for giving salt to cattle.

Sir, the earth salt policy of the Government recently came in for criticism at the hands of Sir Thomas Holland in a speech which he delivered before the Royal Society of Arts. He alleged that the restriction on the manufacture of earth salt pressed heavily on the poor. The policy, he maintained, was responsible for stinting the supply of salt for agricultural operations, and to that extent accountable for agricultural deterioration in India. This is the criticism of Sir Thomas Holland.

Sir, five years ago, in March, 1924, a question was put in this House regarding salt earth, not by a man who lived on the sea coast, but by a man who lives in the Surma Valley, I mean Mr. Ahmed Ali Khan. He was pressing for an industry, the extinction of which affected his own constituents, and as a matter of fact, here is my friend Mr. S. C. Duttā from the same constituency, who tells me that, not only is there an abundance of salt earth in his district, but there are springs in his own gardens and orchards which give saline water and formerly salt was made out of that water. Now, Sir, a stone has been put and a guard has been established there so that no man can carry a jarful of water and make salt out of it. But whatever be the real state of things there the answer given to the question put by Mr. Ahmed Ali Khan was that, "The Government of India do not propose to abolish the restrictions, nor do they think it worth their while to institute any inquiry in regard to the extent and nature of hardships occasioned to the poor". I hope my Honourable friend, Sir George Schuster, will take note of these words—Government do not consider it worth their while to institute an inquiry in regard to the extent and nature of the hardships occasioned to the poor. And, Sir, we are crying ourselves hoarse, we have been crying ourselves hoarse on several occasions in this House, for the promotion of cottage industries which are being killed day after day. Of course the machinery for this extinction is imperceptible to the common man. But may



I tell you, Sir, that this salt industry was almost a cottage industry throughout India, and it afforded occupation to people in their slack season for which Mahatma Gandhi is now putting,—I cannot say unwelcome or welcome,—the *charka* into the hands.....

But I submit the formation of salt is connected with the taxation of salt. If you take out the tax, then I want to show to the House how people will have their cottage industry, how they will thrive, how it will help them to grow, how their agriculture will be improved, and how their cattle will be fed with salt. All this is relevant, I submit, to the question of taxation on salt. You have heard of the floods in Orissa in Balasore district in 1927. That was a salt-producing district. Formerly there were monopoly centres there, but now there are not even those centres, and people are thrown out of employment and they are sinking in floods and dying of famine: Nobody cares for these *rayats*, sometimes they are decoyed by *sirdars*, and sent out to Assam plantations. If they have got a plot of land, it produces nothing. For a land on which salt was formerly manufactured cannot produce rice. Men who have experience in land will tell you that on a land where salt was being manufactured for about half a century at least, not even the best scientific manure can bring the proper amount of fertility. If they have got a plot of land, that land is taxed, cultivated or fallow—for that is the *royati* tenacy—and in order to pay the tax, these *rayats* have to go to Jamshedpur or to Calcutta to earn money and pay the tax.... They were, out of pity, in 1927 allowed to make their own salt, and for a full year, I have not got statistics with me, emigration from that particular land was arrested.

It is the salt of the Government. I cannot be true to Government salt. They were very healthy, and I have seen them making their salt. Government had not the face to forbid them from doing it. Gradually some preventive officers or some other officers were secretly set on them, and local officers were

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\*The Deputy President interrupted to remind Pandit Nilakantha Das that the question of taxation and not the manufacture of salt was being discussed in the House.

made by law to fine these people Rs. 5 or 6, or 10. That was enough to produce the effect desired by Government, for the people got terrified. They are probably now emigrating in large numbers to industrial centres, Fiji and other places as before.

I do not know whether some of them are today carrying loads of salt as labourers from ships which come from Liverpool to Calcutta. The purpose of my saying all this was to show how a whole machinery of spies, under the name of preventive officers, is constantly in operation so that people cannot even have a pinch of salt if it is not purchased directly from Government. These machines of demoralisation, some germs of which have developed into the Criminal Intelligence Department, were invented even when the monopoly first began, in the early days of the East India Company. They were then fresh—brand new. Those were the days of regulations. In those days there were no Acts as we have now. There were two regulations, Regulation X of 1819 and Regulation X of 1826, to which I shall refer here. One of them, namely of 1819, makes the boil of salt water criminal. Then there occurs in the other, *i.e.*, of 1826 a peculiar thing, a very interesting thing. Under the Regulation of 1826 burning of straw soaked in salt water was to be severely dealt with. If it was burnt, what was the punishment? They were not so civilised in those days. Criminality in those days could perhaps be transferred from one man to another. Vicarious punishments were, I suppose, allowed. The zamindar was to be fined Rs. 500 for each single case found out among the tenants, and the cases were dealt with not by judicial officers. There is another very interesting thing too. If the zamindar had co-sharers, 2, 3 or 4 or 5 shares, then the fine, *viz.*, Rs. 500, for each offence was not divided. Each of the co-sharers was to be fined Rs. 500 for each single case. That was the law in respect of which Devendranath Tagore on behalf of the British India Association made a petition where he said:

In general it is the poor *rayats*, often without any malicious designs against their landlords, and owing to their inability to pay the high price of so necessary a condiment, who have brought

themselves under the operations of this rule, by preparing solely for domestic consumption a little salt upon their daily fires in one of their ordinary cooking utensils, or by burning a little straw steeped in salt water. The manner in which the *rayats* prepare the salt for such daily consumption precluded all probability of discovering . . .

Still, if cases were discovered? Mr. Devendranath Tagore was fined Rs. 500 each time. I shall not tax the patience of the House by narrating the long history of how it grew in severity and how it killed many races of poor people during the course of a century and a quarter. In the Famine Report of Orissa of 1866, page 222, paragraph 49, it is said that "salt manufacturers, who had turned to landless labourers through sheer helplessness" on account of the Government monopoly in salt were the people upon whom "the utmost severity of the calamity" had fallen. You do not, perhaps, know the extent of the mortality in that famine. Now, I am quoting from the Government Report on the famine of Orissa and Bengal. 20 lakhs of people died out of a population of 60 lakhs. That is one-third of the population died, and this salt monopoly was substantially responsible for this calamity.

Then comes another chapter in the history of the salt tax. It is against the imported salt that I propose my amendment to-day. Now, Sir, the East India Company came here. When the East India Company came here, they pounced upon this salt. Who were the manufacturers and who were the taxpayers? As I hinted the other day, servants of the Company were not paid. They were let loose on the people. Yet, it is a fact. One of my friends told me that he went to pay a visit to that great historian Vincent Smith. He was buried among his books. My friend found in his library that there were many records about the doings and activities of the East India Company and their servants. He asked Vincent Smith, "In your books I find nothing about the things one may find here". The historian said "My dear friend, what can I do? I have come to realise that these men were a perfect set of scoundrels, but for political reasons, I do not write about them." This is what I have heard from my

friend. I do not know how far it is true, but I have reasons to believe it to be true from what I know of this salt tax business. I know how the early servants of the Company were let loose on the people. They were paid very little, and were freely allowed to carry on business and plunder people. There was a Resolution to prevent them from taking part in the manufacture of salt. What was the reply? They must make some money. The service must be made attractive to them.

The East India Company was making lots of money. In England, why should the nation of shopkeepers brook this profit making of a few individuals? A set of people are making profits in India. Why should others be deprived of doing the same? The Borough of Droitwich complained. Then the Chamber of Commerce in the City of Gloucester also pointed out that the manufacture of salt by the East India Company was a manifest violation and evasion of Act 8 of William IV, c. 85 and protested against the exclusion of "the British merchant from the benefit of a market to which he had natural and paramount claims to be admitted." Similar Resolutions were passed by the Chambers of Commerce of Bristol, of Liverpool and other important Trade Centres.

I will be very brief though I have so much to say, for the subject is so vast and momentous, and the description is so painful. Then with regard to the principle of the duty. It was to give facilities to the English merchants in the market of India, where they had a paramount and natural right. What is that paramount and natural right? I cannot say, nor have I any desire to say that. I don't like to say unpalatable things, especially because my friend over there is so very polite and sweet. Then what was the principle? The principle is, as first mooted by the Duke of Argyll, that famous Secretary of State for India, that the poor man must pay something. Perhaps I am not going to speak for a very long time. The Duke of Argyll said:

On all grounds of general principle, salt is a perfectly legitimate subject of taxation. It is impossible to reach the masses by direct taxes, if they are to contribute at all to the expenditure of the

State, it must be through taxes levied upon some articles of universal consumption, there is no other article in India but salt answering this description, and therefore I am of opinion that the salt tax of India must continue to be regarded as a legitimate and important branch of the public revenue.

I consider this to be not an indirect tax as it is called, but a direct tax, and if I get time and if you will allow me, Sir, I will prove it.

This is the principle of our salt tax—our salt *magna carta*, so to say, as my friend Mr. Aney would like to remind me here—and if this be the principle, may I ask what about the poor man's matches in the market? Is it not a taxable commodity? Do we not fill the coffers of our State with taxes on matches?

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But considering the importance of the subject, and the fact that we have been paying a tax like this for such a long time, over a century and a half, I hope I shall be wanting in my duty if I do not make it a point this year to convince even the Government Members who have not yet been convinced by argument. I asked, this being the principle of the salt tax, that every poor man must give something to the State for its protection of the poor—if I may say so—perhaps the other aspect of the same principle is that the poor man is protected by the Government, receives some benefit real or chimerical, and should be taxed for that purpose—if it be so, I was just going to ask on how many things is the poor man not paying in this land? Kerosene, does he not pay for it? Does he not pay a heavy tax for matches and for income-tax? Who actually pays the income-tax? And all the taxes that are gathered that come to the Government coffers, where do they come from? They are all based on the primary articles of human consumption. Prices go up. There was the currency trouble, and the price went high and low. Whom did they ultimately affect? And that, I say, is a thing which reaches each and every poor man in every land, not to speak of matches, or kerosene, or even income-tax, which is sometimes directly levied on the debtor. As a matter of

fact I know that many creditors, at the time of lending money, take some proportionate advance as interest for the income-tax. That does not matter. Am I to explain here that the grain of rice, the grain of wheat which the poor eat, is the real article which ultimately bears the burden of almost all taxes? Then how do you say the poor man must pay something and that it must be out of salt? By no stretch of logic can such a position be maintained. Here I am reminded of a very curious statement of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who was discussing this self same subject long ago:

What a humiliating confession to say that, after this length of British rule, the people are in such wretched plight that they have nothing that the Government can tax, and that Government must therefore tax an absolute necessity of life . . . and how can anything be a greater condemnation of the British lines of policy that the people have nothing to spend and enjoy, and pay tax on, but that they must be pinched and starved in a necessary of life.

This was what our famous Grand Old Man, Dadabhai Naoroji, a man who gave the ideal of nationalism in the single term *Swaraj* to the country at a time when the whole country was going to be thrown into chaos, a man who brought cosmos out of chaos, this was what he said about the salt tax. He condemned this salt tax and condemned the Government on that score.

It was said that the tax was no tax at all and that it did not affect the consumption of salt. It was so stated in this House, and I myself heard it often. It is not we are told, like India rubber, elastic. It is inelastic. If you tax salt at the rate of even Rs. 30 per maund, even then the man has to eat salt. He must find money for paying the tax and eat it. The other day, in a communique which we were discussing, the average was given as 12 lbs. in India per head consumption. The lowest was 8 ¾ lbs. per head. That is the figure, if I remember aright.

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I hope I have convinced the House of the fairness of my motion. That was my only object in speaking at this length. I am

very very anxious to convince the House with as many arguments from as many aspects as I can. I never mean to obstruct the business of the House and I never like to stand in the way of any honourable Member exercising his right of speech.

Then Sir, let me be brief. Before I was interrupted, I was upon that *per capita* consumption. It was 12 lbs. average and  $8\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. minimum. But what was the official calculation when the salt tax was yet green and young?

General John Crawford (not our Honourable friend here. Colonel J. D. Crawford), Medical Officer of the Bengal Government, in a statement to the Select Committee on salt (1836) says:

“A Bengal or a Madras sepoy receives a ration of 17 lbs. per annum that is  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz. per diem. A Bombay sepoy 2 oz. per day or 45 lbs. per annum.”

This is the land allowance,

“at sea it is 40 per cent. more with salt fish to boot.”

This was what was being given in the thirties of the last century.

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at the question with an outlook it deserves, and see if it is so used only in this land. Peculiarly circumstanced as we are, the question moreover has a special significance here in India. Let us not mince matters. I do not know, as a matter of fact, what is not politics in this land. The basic principle of living in this land is the struggle to get free. It is as much necessary to me in this House as it is necessary to the poor man who is engaged in those city slums of Bombay. It is again with a view to relieve him and to give him better conditions of life that we want better Government in this country, that we want our own Government. To that extent at least, all labour organisations and all labour movements are intimately connected with the political movements in the land. Politics divorced from labour is as much sham, as labour divorced from politics is abject slavery—and that specially in a land like India. When one ought to seek the solution of our national problem in a proper study and practical application of this aspect of the question, people from those Benches want to keep politics apart from labour.

Labour, it is said, should not be exploited by politics, or politicians. To men of this way of thinking, labour has never been anything but an object of exploitation. They think of labour in no other terms. Well, it is a question of exploitation in any case. The thing is that the commercial men, and those that have interests allied with them, object to labour being exploited for political purposes. Sir, that exploitation for political purposes, if it is exploitation at all, is quite legitimate. But it is not exploitation. It is education of labour in understanding its own interests. In all such attempts of the politician it is only labour's own interests which are concerned. But, Sir, what about the exploitation of the other side? The other exploitation is the exploitation of labour by capital for commercial and profiteering purposes, for putting money into the pockets of the capitalists at the dire expense of labour. It is for that exploitation that the entire punitive portion of the Bill has been framed, and it is that exploitation which we must counteract—which it is our duty here to combat at any cost.

It has been said, Sir, that there is no necessity and no case has been made out for re-circulation of the Bill. Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla said this. He is not here unfortunately, but in the same breath he says, in his minute of dissent that the Bill cannot be acceptable unless some clause about picketting gets in there. It was not there, as far as I know, in the original Bill; it is not there in the Bill as it has emerged from the Select Committee; but my Honourable friend, Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla, is going to move an amendment to that effect. Is it not proper, Sir, on that issue alone that opinions should be elicited? He speaks against himself, he says all the opinions are there and no more opinions are necessary. But, Sir, he proposes an entirely new amendment himself. This is his amendment:

After clause 18 the following new clause 19 be added, and the subsequent clause be re-numbered accordingly:

'19. Where any trade dispute is under inquiry or investigation by a Court or Board, any person who, with a view to compel any workman employed by an employer who is a party to the dispute to abstain from doing or to do any act which such workman has a legal right to do or abstain from doing, wrongfully and without legal authority'. . . . .

The amendment proceeds:

- (a) persistently follows such workman about from place to place; or
- (b) watches or besets the house or other place where such workman resides, or works or carries on business, or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place, shall be punishable with simple imprisonment, which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both.

I am sorry to have to say, Sir, that this is more formidable than any of the existing provisions, and on this particular amendment alone opinions are necessary. But I am simply saying that the gentleman who proposes this comes forward in this House and says that no case has been made out for recommitting the Bill for eliciting opinions.

My Honourable friend, Mr. K.C. Roy, suggested that he was a journalist himself and that he always depended upon the opinions of the Press in this matter. If, Sir, the Press has already given their opinions and do not give any fresh opinions at this stage, it is perhaps because they do not think it worth their while to give any more opinions. Perhaps they simply entrusted the entire question to the good sense of the Members of this House

It is therefore clear that what you want is that in no way should the very smell of politics ever enter into these city slums. I would first of all ask those who hold this view to explain to the House and to the country what exactly they mean by politics. If we want to give some more wages to the labourers and make that an issue for a general strike, I think we are legitimately entitled to go out into the country and approach the labourers from door to door to go on strike on that issue. If we, the politicians, who look to the better government of the country, who know what the country wants, if we feel that a certain state of things should not continue among our labour population, I maintain, it is our duty, at the risk of being imprisoned even in that Meerut jail or anywhere else, even at the risk of being charged with the most unrelishable intention of exploiting labour for politics, to go from door to door in the slums of cities and ask them to come out on a general strike. But, Sir if you are going to prevent things like these, you are simply cutting us away from the mass of our people who are the real elements in any fight for Swaraj. You simply do not like that the labouring population of our country should come in contact with us or that we should come in contact with them. Your object is to shut out labourers from all light as well as right of citizenship, to make them convenient victims to your own greed of profit and power.

The framers of this Bill, Sir, come here and tell us that this is a Trade Disputes Bill, that there was some requisition from certain trade union organisations to have arbitration boards or things like that in order to settle trade disputes. And, Sir, the occasion was taken when the Government thought the oppor-

tunity was ripe, to put in some venom like this. They saw this opportunity and took advantage of this requisition of those trade union organisations in this country to further their own purpose. As the Bill stands, clauses 15 to 20 form a separate portion altogether and have nothing whatever to do with trade disputes as such. If you want to separate trade and industry from the politics of the land, if you want to estrange these two things from one another, you not only destroy our national wealth, but kill our legitimate national aspirations. I must point out, Sir, that politics is comprehensive and is the very life of our nation. To any nation, it is a thing which pervades the entire life of that nation; and to a subject nation I say there is nothing else but politics, pure and simple, in every department of life. I cannot think of a state of affairs in India where even some of my Honourable friends on the opposite Benches can divorce themselves from politics. Every moment in this land the struggle is going on in labour, in industry, in Congress, in fact in every department of human activity, and that struggle is political and political alone out and out. If you will divorce politics from your trades and industries, we will be nowhere; we will not be able to live in this land. This is our position.

Now, as to eliciting opinions, after the full analysis by my friend, Diwan Chaman Lall, of the opinions that you have elicited, how can any one stand up here and say that there is no necessity for re-circulating this Bill. Whether you accept the principle of the Bill or not, it does not matter to me, and I do not want to enter into that technical question. Suppose you did accept the principle of the Bill, you are entitled to change your opinion even now. Even just before the Bill is passed, you are entitled to change your opinion even now. Even just before the Bill is passed you are entitled to change your opinion. Now, look at the array of the minutes of dissent. People who have signed the Report, subject to their minutes of dissent, stand up one after another and say that the Bill should be sent out to the country for eliciting further opinions thereon. . . . .

After all this, to hear it said that no case has been made out to justify a re-circulation of the Bill is simply astounding to me.

Again it has almost become customary, to say, at the end of the Reports of Select Committees, that no such change has been made in the Bill as to require its further publication. These two or three lines at the end of the main Report of the Select Committee here are being made much of in favour of immediate consideration of this Bill. I have seen it stated so many times in other Reports similar to this. I am a common man; I am not a lawyer; still sometimes I have seen that Bills have emerged from the Select Committee out of all recognition. I am a common man, and even as such I have not been able to recognise some of the Bills after they come out from the Select Committee. You must take me as the test, because lawyers who have to deal with legal matters day after day can find out the intricate points, but I am a common man, and even then, as I have said, I could not recognise some of the Bills after they had come out of the Select Committee. I don't know if I recognise even this particular Bill. But this common formula is here. Sometimes I have myself signed Reports, typewritten without this common formula, which is afterwards put in after the signatures are taken, as if that were a formal matter. I have very often seen such things, and I have myself signed many such Reports though I did not attach any importance to those three or four lines at the end. The present is a somewhat similar case. Members, again, whose dissent is the very negation of the main Report, are asked to sign the main Report. I myself have got the experience. What importance can they attach to such a signature, and why should they care for the last three lines which is, so to say, a common conclusion to almost all main Reports? Now, to base arguments on those three lines seems absurd.

Well, what a pity, I don't understand the whole situation. We are asked not to use labour for political purposes. Certain clauses of this Bill have been surely used for political purposes, to kill all our political movements, to kill Indian nationalism, as if to promote nationalism is politics, and not to kill it. I cannot enter into the details of those clauses now lest the Chair should call me to order. One way to stifle all legitimate discussion on

the Bill is to gag people, by telling them that it is bad that politics should be allowed to be introduced into labour problems. Another way of gagging is to come from the Chair, and it is from the Chair. I know, for it was protection against this gagging that I intended in the point of order I wanted to raise yesterday. For every sentence that I or any one else on this side of the House will utter about these clauses will have intimate reference to facts and circumstances, such as,—how the strikes have been conducted, who are the leaders, whether they are Communists, whether they are influenced by any other labour movement in some other part of the world. Things like these are bound to be discussed, and I do not know whether the Chair will allow it. The Chair will not allow it, but without making such a reference to these things I do not know how the discussion can at all go on. Then, where is the consideration of the Bill? Gagged on both sides the House would feel helpless. There is no scope for discussion. Still people are here who stand as it were hypnotised and take this moral and material gagging as the best argument on the Government side.

Material gagging is there from the Chair. It requires no explanation. To say that politics—national politics—is taboo so far as labour is concerned, is a real hypnotic influence. Politics and labour are poles apart. They are two distinct things and Indian politicians should shun the criminal habit of mixing them up. This is politics—that is labour. I really don't understand this watertight division—this attempt at creating psychological compartments, as it were, to divert our attention from the real issue.

Therefore, Sir, I say that a good case has been made out by my friend, Diwan Chaman Lall, and the Bill must be recirculated for eliciting opinion, and whether the Whitely Commission comes or not in the meantime, or it comes and goes, it does not matter. I do not attach much value to its being limited for five years. Other Acts were so limited in 1919. Such limitation may again be the thin end of the wedge. I need not predict what is in store for this Bill as an Act, or in effect what may fall to our labour population or to the politicians of India. But my present position clearly is that the Government should not gag

people morally and materially, and in various other ways in their attempt at passing the Bill, and the Bill must be re-circulated for eliciting public opinion. There is no other way.

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## Resolution Regarding the Establishment of Panchayats in Villages\*

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I must say that establishment of panchayats in villages is a subject which is *prima facie* very alluring, because it speaks of panchayats, a name which is so famous in the ancient history of the world, and especially of India, and in our studies of ancient law, we heard much about these panchayats, I mean, village communities. The village panchayats were thriving under a system in India which I am afraid is daily being destroyed. I am sure many of us are under the impression that we have come here to have some Constitution under which we shall run our own Government. I do not know if many of us realise whether the Constitution in which we are being trained, rather spoon-fed, is one which is being evolved from within the country itself. In India all institutions were evolved from villages, and our real life was in the village. Now, the system is quite topsy-turvy. In everything that we think of, we imagine placing ourselves under conditions obtaining in countries across the ocean, where the system of culture is something quite different from our own system, a system which is Indian and is the best suited for India. We now try to impose things on our people, and that from above. We are imitating things every day from the West and I do not know whether, in the existing state of affairs, in our fatherland, which is a vast agricultural country, and where the real life is still to be found in the villages, alone, such imitation can ever be assimilated . . . .

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\*Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 17 September, 1929, pp. 978—80.



There should be central offices, but there are central offices and central offices. Central offices may be the apex of a synthesis of village units or it may be that, analytically, things may be forced down into villages from cities and central places. There are two ways of getting the very self same thing in appearance. That does not matter. That which comes I am afraid cannot be avoided. We are destined to imitate without assimilating, and we will have to submit to our lot. But coming to village panchayats I was not much enamoured of the Resolution as it was expounded by the Mover the other day, but after hearing the speech in support of the amendment of my friend Mr. Mukhtar Singh, I feel that I should make the best of a bad case. I have not studied the panchayat system as it exists in the different provinces of India. I do not know if it exists in the North West Frontier Province and if it exists there. I do not know in what form it exists, perhaps it does not exist there. But I know something of the panchayat system which is called the Chaukidari Panchayat as it exists in the province which I should formally call mine in this House . . . . . However, I know the chaukidari village panchayat system in Bihar has existed for a very long time. It is a sham, something planned, promulgated and artificially kept up by those who apparently never care to understand Indian life or culture. Now, as the political life in India is growing this village panchayat system has come to be an organised system of espionage. It is nothing less than that. That system of espionage is being run at the cost of the chaukidari taxpayer. The villager pays the taxes and that too with much reluctance. He knows only that the system is one of paying fresh taxes. He pays them in order to be relieved of the difficulty and harassment of his household articles being attached and sold away as often happens in case of non-payment. He pays the tax, and that is all he knows about the village panchayat system . . . It is also a fact that the appointment of the panchayat whosoever's duty it might be under the law, is made not by the District Magistrate but by a raw Deputy Magistrate or a Sub-Deputy Collector, as he is called in our province. I speak of the practice.

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He goes and makes a report that the villagers have elected such and such people as panchayats, whereas the villagers do not know anything about it at all; as a matter of fact, they do not know that they have got any right at all to select the panchayats. The chaukidars who are employed are appointed practically by the local police, with the sanction of the raw Deputy Collector or Sub-Deputy Collector, and the villagers who pay for these chaukidars have not got a word to say about what they do. Once it actually happened that some crops were stolen from a villager's fields. He approached the police and complained that the chaukidar did not keep watch. He was told that the chaukidar was not the guard of the things in the fields, but that he was to keep a guard over the *mohalla*. When there is a theft in the *mohalla* itself I do not know how much the chaukidar is paid, and through the chaukidar the Thana police too, so that there may not be any further trouble in the village due to police inquiry and all that sort of thing.

Thus I submit that you are practically breaking the ancient village life. When this is the state of things, it can well be imagined why litigation increases. Why there are parties and factions in villages, and police rule reaches every door. Our new village panchayat should therefore be based on the beautiful system of the village community, the remains of which can still be traced. Even now if you go into our villages and look into the remains of the old village community system, what do you find? There are commune lands in the villages including pasture lands, and those lands which are still there, unprotected by any law; any man,—the zemindar or any big man—can encroach upon those lands. The pastures are gone and the beautiful village irrigation system is now out of repairs completely. No village panchayats look after it. It is not their duty. You know, like the present Sind, Assam and many other places, Orissa perhaps yields to very few provinces in India in the matter of her floods. But do you know how these floods actually submerge villages there in Orissa? It is because the

ancient system of irrigation planned and protected under the time-honoured system of village communes has now been abandoned. Any Member who is interested may come with me and I shall show him the very village from which I come and he will see how things were all right and how those embankments and canals, which are there even now, the remnants of the past, have been neglected and spoiled. Under the present village chaukidari system they are all practically abandoned. Nobody looks into the sanitation, or education of the villages. It is only, as I have said, a system of police espionage, and we realise that there are so many chaukidars, an army of them, in the district, only when a Governor or any such big official comes, for then these village chaukidars have to guard the railway line for days and nights, and I don't know what provision there is for guarding even the *mohallas* or the villagers' houses when such an official comes, and for days villages are without a chaukidar. That is the use of the chaukidari panchayat made by the Local Governments. I know that we must evolve this aspect of our national life through these our national institutions. The Central Government should take an interest in evolving that system of village panchayat and not the system which would carry the police espionage to the doors of the villagers only to destroy life and organisation in the village. It should not be done by putting things from above. The institution must grow from within and must be synthesised in our coming national Constitution.

I am very glad that there has not been want of a quorum and I submit that the Central Government, if it is going to give place to a national government, should take an interest in that beautiful system of village communities in a land where the population is purely agricultural and where industrial cities will not very easily grow and change the entire atmosphere of our culture and constitution. I therefore support this motion, with a recommendation that the Central Government should take an interest in village communities.

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## **Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill \***

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I was a Member of this House and also of the Select Committee when Mr. Har Bilas Sarada's Bill Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill, 1929 was passed. I know that it took about three years to come to a definite decision, not because the Bill, as such, was a bad Bill but because there was not a majority in the country for the Bill as it was drafted. It was finally decided that the Act should only indicate a social outlook and be framed in such a way as to prevent any social persecution if a man marries his boy or girl young. Practically that was done in the Act, and now after about nine years there comes this Bill to improve that Act. Some measures in the Bill are very stringent but I am very glad to learn from the Government reply that they are against many undesirable provisions of the Bill. First, the Government are practically against the injunction proposed in it.

I personally think that such an injunction will create difficulty. The second thing is the separation. There too comes the economic consideration involved in such a measure and it is quite reasonable that if the Government is not prepared to provide for the maintenance of the girl, under the present

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\* Speaking during the discussion on a Motion, "That the Bill to amend the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, be referred to a Select Committee....," Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 10 February, 1938, pp. 522—25.

circumstances, I agree that such a provision should not become law, even apart from other consideration.

Then the question is whether the complaint will be made by a person, or the Court will take cognizance otherwise. The Court may take cognizance. It is a very small 'improvement and practically if there are some safeguards, then the present Act will remain practically as good or as bad as the Sarda Act.

I do not want exactly a stronger Bill but what I want is that at this stage we should not be cultural fanatics. I am rather the other way. In my opinion we shall do the best thing under the circumstances, if, in our over-zealousness, we do not change the existing Act out of recognition. We shall keep it practically the same. So, with that object in view I support the motion for a Select Committee.

But many things have unnecessarily been said about statistics of young wives and the health of the nation. They are not only controversial but rather irrelevant in this Bill. If this is conducive to the health of the nation, then there are many other things which are also conducive to the health of the nation. They are not surely to be all regulated by statutory provisions. Here again particularly the doctors do not agree. I have read of eminent medical opinions in favour of child marriages, upon the point at what age a girl should be allowed to bear children. Now it has been brought out in agricultural science....It is established that even a plant has the best chance of its existence if it bears fruit the earliest, and that plant lives the longest which bears fruit the earliest, as agricultural science will tell you. So, let us not here go into these matters which are highly controversial. Now, Sir, I have seen in my own Province that in Sambalpur even expectant mothers contract marriages for their children that are still in their wombs. This was till very recently the general custom in that district. But nevertheless the progeny of these child marriages are generally the strongest and the longest lived, very robust and very handsome. In the coastal districts of Orissa, on the contrary, where the marriage age is

generally post-puberty, the health is not so good and the progeny are not so strong and virile. But admitting that late marriage is conducive to the health of our villagers, should we enforce it among them by statutory compulsion? The health of the nation will be improved by the administration of quinine and by vaccination and so forth: but should we, therefore, enforce it by law that a man who does not take quinine in a malaria-stricken area should be imprisoned for four months? This will be legislative fanaticism. In such things the legislator should give a lead and nothing else.

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What is it to say here that Man is always cruel to woman—throughout history, in culture, and perhaps since the days of creation! On that basis surely, we should not contemplate enactments like this. Let us for a moment examine, who is cruel to whom? Man to woman, or woman to man? As in all other human institutions, so even in respect of the institution of marriage, the progress has been from 'status to contract'. What was the original status? How has the contract of marriage developed? We must remember that there was a time—and many eminent anthropologists are of this opinion—when neither the man nor the woman knew that conception was the result of their coming together, *i.e.*, of sexual act. Their sexual act was to them a mere functional action just like answering the call of nature or any other like operation. For long ages such sexual act was not known to have any connection with the child-birth of the woman or her conception—they did not know this. Then gradually the concomitance of the sexual act and the conception revealed itself to them as a result of long practice and observation. Then, after that—and these are the stages through which early human society passed and many anthropologists are of this opinion—the woman sat down with the child but the man responsible for the child was not there to take care of it. He was not even known or spotted. The home was matriarchial and so came to be the society. There are such homes and such societies in the world even today. Then after a time

contract, called our marriage, came to take its place. The woman said, as it were, "you are responsible for this child of mine, where are you going? You must come and marry me and you should take charge of my children". Then the man said, "What is this? Why should I take charge of these children? How do I know that the children are mine? You must give me the guarantee that your children are mine." So, that is the substance of the contract, out of which came the marriage institution. Sir, a man must breed, he is to distribute seed like any other male creature in nature. He is by nature free, as free as the bird of the air. For woman it is that he is bound down to a marriage and a home. In this contract he has given up his freedom for woman. So, these very controversial questions have no place in the discussion on this Bill. So also is the point of equal status of man and woman. Equality does not mean uniformity. Want of functional uniformity in the very arrangement of nature precludes that equality of which many of our woman-minded men make so much of. But why should we bring in these things into the discussion of a Bill of this nature?

So, I suggest that these extraneous matters should not be discussed in connection with a simple Bill like this. Some women have given opinions; whether they are representative women or not we do not know. We should dispassionately consider whether this measure will be good. We are the representatives of the people, and we should see whether it will be convenient to the majority of our people: that is the only consideration by which we should be guided. But we should always remember that we should not be fired by cultural fanaticism—we should not assert that such and such a measure will give salvation to our race, to our nation; it may be that most of us may be fired with such a belief, verging on a faith; but should we on the point of the bayonet enforce it on the country at large? The tendency seems to be in all our speeches in all our conversations; that we feel somehow or other by our cultural eminence or because we believe we have gone to a very high stage of culture, that such and such a thing will give salvation to our race. Then we must come out like a hand of

fanatics and enforce it on the nation. But we must realise that we are representatives. The Select Committee ought to remember that there should be no such measure which should be enforced with a proselytizing culture, a culture which wants to proselytize others without educating or leading with reason. That they should not do; for a culture which proselytizes is rather crude. Besides, a proselytized culture is also slavery and under that culture man does not grow. With this psychological background they must approach measures like these even in the Select Committee and in this House. In this Bill, after the Government speech, I am quite hopeful that this measure will be a necessary corollary to the existing Act and I support it.

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## Railway Budget and Development of Indian Industries\*

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Sir, I move:

"That the demand under the head 'Railway Board' be reduced by Rs. 100."

This is a very old question and has become practically a hardy annual. I am going to discuss the policy of purchase in connection with the development of Indian industries. Sir, our railways have been said to be a 'national asset'. I do not know whether actually they are a saleable commodity. We have, however, just heard that Branch lines have been dismantled and sold in foreign countries. To that extent and in that sense they may be national assets. But they form no part of national wealth, so long as the nation does not command the skill of making the materials and using them. As for using them, the skill relates to the services. It means that the key positions and the technical posts should be manned by Indians. But this aspect of the question is not within my province now. I can only discuss how the skill for making these materials has never been sought seriously to be secured in India and from year to year it has been avoided, so to say, as best as it could be.

Sir, I shall straightaway come to the figures which will speak for themselves only with a little preliminary remark on the Stores Department. Early during the period when Montford

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\*Participating in the discussion on the Railway Budget — List of Demands, Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 26 February, 1941, pp. 716—19.

Reforms were in the making, an Industrial Commission was set up with very good intentions towards Indian Industries. One of their main products has been the Indian Stores Department. I do not know what this Indian Stores Department actually does directly and by any planned method for the promotion of Indian industries. I cannot say to what extent it is really Indian in its purchases of stores, except that the expression Indian Stores occur in its name. This Department is meant to purchase articles either from this country or from abroad for Indian consumption. A recent innovation has now been introduced, and it is said to be a very great improvement that the Department should call for rupee tenders. That is the only important measure meant to make purchases Indian more and more and that rapidly and we find that that has been actually rather a very easy cloak for making foreign purchases under the name of 'Indian stores' for there is no difficulty for foreigners in tendering on rupee basis. Sir, in this Railway Administration Report we are given, year after year, a list which is to be found on page 83 of Volume I of this year's report. It shows how much has been purchased through the Indian Stores Department, year after year, as if it was something which would convince this House that the Indian industries are actually being developed as they ought to be. But purchase through Stores Department does not necessarily mean purchases of Indian Manufacture.

Then, so far as the railway purchases are concerned, I may point out that a demand has been made so far as I know since 1924 in this House that these purchases should be centralised so that the House and anybody else interested in the subject may know at once how the purchases are made. But it has not yet been done. Whatever be the virtues of the Indian Stores Department, all purchases have not been centralised even there. Company-managed railways, we are told, under the terms of their various contracts cannot be compelled to purchase through the Indian Stores Department. They can only be

persuaded to make their purchases through that Department. They are thus at liberty to make their own purchases. Yet their purchases through the Indian Stores Department have gone up from one per cent to three per cent. Evidently they have got other agencies through which they make the rest of their purchases and they may do so till they are themselves purchased by the States. But what about the State-managed railways? In their case also, there is a good deal which is purchased through other agencies. During the year under report they were able to make 38 per cent of their purchases not through the Indian Stores Department but through the Railway Board themselves. Then, there must be some other agencies in these railways for the purchase of their things. Therefore, we must have some explanation as to what articles are allowed to be purchased by themselves and what are the articles which are purchased by the Railway Board, and why? Why should the Railway Board make purchases at all when there is the Indian Stores Department to make all the purchases? And if the Railway Board is to make so much of the purchases, what is the necessity of the Indian Stores Department? The purchases ought to be centralised. The Administration Report should give proper analysis marking out articles, such as, rails, sleepers, bridge material, etc., as completely indigenous, and detailed explanation as to how and to what extent other purchases are gradually being Indianised.

Then, we have got some figures for which my Honourable friend, the Railway Member, ought to be thanked. But so far as their explanations are concerned, I shall show how misleading suggestions are put in. For example, they say that "the value of 'indigenous materials' purchased increased by 95 lakhs while that of imported materials declined by 8 lakhs". This happened this year, that is, the year under report. When I say 'this year' with reference to the report in my hands, it must be taken to be 1939—40. The purchases of imported materials were less by eight lakhs. But this does not represent the actual position. Just look at the figures for the State-managed railways. Here it is three lakhs more. There may be some explanation. It may be

that on account of anticipation of war conditions certain stores were purchased in advance and there is, therefore, some increase. But this is only a plausible explanation. Why was it less by eleven lakhs so far as Company-managed railways are concerned? Why were they not anxious to purchase more materials? Again this suggestion is misleading in other ways. It is only this year that it is eight lakhs less than the previous year, taking both the Company and the State-managed railways together. But look at the whole list? When was it less? It has increased practically from year to year since 1932—33. In the case of State-managed railways, it was in the beginning, *i.e.*, in 1932—33, Rs. 234 lakhs, then next year it was 257 lakhs, then 262, then 343, 363, 322, 342 and then it has come to 345 lakhs in 1939—40. It has been increasing practically from year to year. So also if you take the Company-managed railways, this item of imported purchases began from 1932—33 to increase and it is now 297 lakhs in 1939—40. Here look at the year 1931—32. This is much nearer to the years of 150 crores scheme when imported purchases were purchased like cakes and even wagons and other stores and plants and machinery were allowed to rot and to be rejected. In that year the amount for imported purchase was 217 lakhs and now this year it is 297. Only last year, it was 307. In all other years it was less. It has been increasing decidedly from year to year.

Then we are told that in the case of Company-managed railways, “the value of stores imported direct declined from Rs. 155 lakhs in 1938—39 to Rs. 137 lakhs in 1939—40”. This is a fact. How misleading is the statement? I do not know why such a misleading analysis is given at all in this table. There is no explanation for it. In the analysis of stores purchase we have got here in two columns: one column gives—stores imported direct from foreign countries, the other—imported stores purchased in India. What difference do they make either to the taxpayer or to the Railway Board or to the Indian industry. Perhaps you have got some agents here whom you ask to purchase from abroad and you purchase from them paying them some commission. Does it make any difference, if

anything, then the difference is that you pay more by way of commission. If you do not do that, there is no difference at all. But from time immemorial these two columns appear in giving the analysis. You say very suggestively that the stores "imported from abroad direct" decreased from Rs. 157 lakhs to Rs. 137 lakhs. This means nothing. There is the other column of imported purchases, which must be added to the figures for direct imports and then it should be seen whether there is a decrease or increase. In this much valued table and in this analysis such misleading things should never appear. For instance, what do you understand when you find that last year imported articles worth Rs. 10,000 were purchased direct by State-managed railways? The actual foreign purchases that year for State-managed Railways amounted to Rs. 352 lakhs. When they purchased Rs. 352 lakhs worth of stores imported from foreign countries, they have imported articles worth only Rs. 10,000 directly from foreign countries so far as State-managed railways are concerned. Therefore, giving figures separately for stores imported direct is misleading. Rather it may be suggested that all foreign stores should be imported direct. No middle men should be patronised in the purchase of imported stores. Apart from other disadvantages, this practice is calculated to damage the interest of indigenous stores.

Sir, I say there should be detailed analysis, complete explanations and there should be some machinery to see that year after year Indian manufactured goods are purchased more and more. I simply draw the attention of the Honourable Member to this aspect of the question so that he might take steps thus to increase the national wealth of this country in a planned and conscious manner.

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## Utilisation of the Resources of the Country\*

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Sir, I move:

"That the demand under the head 'Executive Council' be reduced by Rs. 100."

Sir, for purposes of national defence primarily and also for purposes of national reconstruction the outlook of the treasury Benches, so far as utilising the resources of the country goes, has been traditionally narrow. I shall refer to some of my past experience in this matter. We have always looked to England for our articles of use, so much so that for a long time our outlook has been the British standard specification. We have very often been told in this House that other countries' standard specifications were useless and the British standard was the only standard which India should have. The other day it was said that when the necessity came, even for making a gun barrel the steel was not available in India. I do not know whether it is sufficiently available now, but I know that our steel is not used at all in the making of machine tools and machinery. It is not because such steel cannot be made in India, but because we have never attempted to produce that steel. It is a particular kind of formula, some technical adjustment. But that steel has not been made in India so that we cannot even now produce those machines by which we can make machinery or machine tools. We are always complaining that aeroplanes and motor cars are not made in this country. These are very large

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\*Participating in the discussion on the General Budget—List of Demands, Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 6 March, 1942, pp. 788—90.

questions. But as for power alcohol Provincial Governments have tried, but I do not know whether it has engaged the attention of the Government of India.

Now, petrol from Java and probably from Burma will be stopped and we shall have to depend entirely on the Persian Gulf, *i.e.*, petrol of Iraq and Iran. But, no one again can say what will be the condition there after the spring. Perhaps, all the petrol that our Government can command may be required there in that area. There is every danger. The present war is a war of petrol and we do not know what India will do if in the next spring we have some Japanese onslaught from the East. We have never attempted any other sources of supply or any synthetic substance. We read in newspapers that other countries can manufacture power even from coal and seaweeds, but we do not know, in spite of the heartening lectures we have for keeping up the morale of the country. We do not know what sources we have tapped or are going to tap so far as the supply of petrol is concerned, without which I am sure our army, navy and the air force will be of no use. That is one aspect of the question. We have not attempted scientifically to tap all our resources for the defence of the country and I should like to know generally what we are actually doing even today.

The second point I wish to state is that the Honourable the Finance Member has told us in his speech that the present purchases for war purposes have given an impetus to our industries so much that in future these equipments will be utilised for the reconstruction of the nation. The country will be industrialised and our national wealth will increase like anything after the war. But the same traditional blindness, if I can use that word, prevails even here. For instance, once I asked in this House—I found that in some area salt was selling at three annas per standard seer, whereas in a contiguous area within a few miles salt was being produced. I was very young in those days as a Member of this House. I knew that salt was a Government monopoly and I knew that, when all salt was in the hands of the Government, the Government must have made some arrangements for distribution to the consumers. For I

came to know in this House that it was only Rs. 1-4-0 tax per maund, that is, six pies per seer, and the charge for making salt is about four annas per maund. Then it must be three pice a seer or utmost four pice. I asked in the House that in an area very contiguous to the area where salt was being produced, salt was selling at three annas. I asked the Government whether they knew it. They said, "We do not know where it sells and at what price. Selling we are not responsible for." Then you do not distribute salt in the country though you have got the monopoly? Even when an area is starved of want of salt, you do not care? They can pay one rupee per seer. There was no arrangement, I do not know if they have now got any arrangement for distributing an article of primary necessity of which they have got the monopoly.

As regards industries, I was often taken in this House to be against protection. It is not exactly that, India is a vast country, it is a continent so to say. There are certain producing areas, there are certain manufacturing areas and there are other areas which are much vaster. These are consuming areas. I am not speaking on the provincial basis: but I can say that there are certain provinces which are consuming provinces and there are certain provinces which are manufacturing provinces. Here I want proper distribution. We come forward and give protection to steel, to sugar. I look at my own province. It was not then a province, it was part of Bihar and Orissa. In Bihar there was sugar and in Orissa there was none. Now, I can give you a very good illustration in my province though, Madras, Bengal and Orissa are all consuming provinces. Mine is a completely consuming province. I once mentioned in this House the amount of indirect tax per head of the population including the protective duty. Each man pays in the shape of an indirect tax to the Government as well as to the industrialists Rs. 4 per head per year. Orissa pays more than three crores of rupees every year, partly to the Indian exchequer and partly to the industrialists. What does Orissa get to add to its purchasing power? Orissa had, however, one way out. Orissa was getting money from the tea gardens. Assam for tea is an industrial



centre. It used to get wages from Jamshedpur, Calcutta and Rangoon. But these sources of income are drying up. Now, you ought to try to distribute the advantages of your industrial schemes as well as the purchases for supply throughout the province.

I have on previous occasions spoken for the handloom industry, cottage industry and many other such things. The other day I was very pleased to hear from Sir Homi Mody that the Supply Department was going to have a scheme of village industries throughout India for war supply. But that was my idea also all along. But what have you got now? What are the coastal provinces of Madras, Bengal and Orissa going to have? In Orissa we are having practically all the evacuees from Rangoon, Burma, Malaya, Calcutta, Jamshedpur and other places. From Jamshedpur we are probably having only women and children. They have been driven away from there by some arrangement. What are you going to do now? You say that on account of this impetus which you have given to the industry of India there will be a millennium of prosperity after the war. But what are we, the poor people, to do both during and after the war? How are you going to meet this problem of evacuees specially in view of the fact that soon we are going to face famine. Besides, I am compelled to say there may be loot and murder. What is the effect of these purchases? We have already purchased 250 crores of rupees worth of articles, including even foodstuffs. As far as I can see, Orissa has supplied timber worth about two lakhs of rupees, and nothing else. Would you not like to develop certain other industries? You are pouring money in Cawnpore and in Bombay. I do not know what other people have to say about corruption that is going on and how the money is being spent. I am not going to say anything about it. But it is a fact that corruption is going on and you can well understand it. There is plenty of money in the country in the shape of paper and such other forms as coins. I do not mind the money in these forms. But all the same the prices are rising and the evacuees are coming to the coastal regions. I am speaking of Orissa and the case of Madras is

practically the same, though their purchases are a little better. But if you were to look at the purchases province by province, the result will simply be staggering.

You say that the purchasing power has increased. Of course, theoretically that is a correct statement. But have you seen what is happening to those people who are living in the coastal regions? To what extent their purchasing power has gone down? All things are not purchased in Bombay. My suggestion is that there should be some Department to stand between the Supply Department, the Defence Department, the producer and the consumer. Some planning department at this juncture is necessary. You are spending so much money for the industrialisation of the country. It should be distributed in some justifiable manner. When you are facing difficulties in defending yourself, you have got to spend so much money. But do not waste all the money. If you do so, soon after the war you will have to face other difficulties and other problems which will be perhaps as difficult if not more difficult. You are going simply to ruin the agricultural India, I mean the coastal consuming India.

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## Resolution Regarding Implementing the Federation of India \*

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Sir, I move:

“That this Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps for implementing Part II (the part relating to Federation) of the Government of India Act, 1935.”

Sir, at the outset, I may tell the House that I am not particularly enamoured of this Federation provided in the Act of 1935. Since the Act was passed, much water has flown under the bridge and we have now come definitely and distinctly to the idea of Indian independence, complete and full. All people on all sides including the British Government agree to it. We have all decided, even our masters have said and promised in so many words, that if certain conditions are fulfilled we shall get independence at the end of the war when the new order comes to be promulgated. I do not like to enter into any controversy. I do not want to tell the House at this stage how it is practically something unachievable as at present visualised. But whatever be the character of what you are going to have the idea of independence, full and complete, is there and all sections of our politicians including the Rulers agree to it. That is a fact. But where are we at present, though we perhaps think of independence every moment of our life, all the time and all the 24 hours of the day and the night, during waking as well as sleeping time. I do not know what we are exactly doing now to

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\* Central Legislative Assembly Debates, 18 February 1943, pp. 377-79 and 397- 99.

achieve it. We have been offered several times several kinds of Governments within the Constitution and unfortunately for us we have come to no agreement. There was the offer of August, 1940. It did not suit us. Then there was another one in 1941. Then last of all, Cripps came. Every time we thought we would come to some understanding and achieve something; but one party has sold itself to complete and absolute self-abnegation expecting that the world will come to influence our rulers to give us what we want or the rulers out of pity will throw the entire Government on our shoulders and go back bag and baggage. Whatever be our idea, we sold ourselves to complete and absolute negation. We could not agree among ourselves, which is a condition precedent to our getting anything. One side talked of ideals; another side talked of impossible terms. We have not come to any practical understanding and so we are where we were and the whole thing has ended in frustration. Such a thing as frustration always creates a void in the national life of the country. So, there is a deadlock. We do not know in the long history of our nation, when a deadlock like this existed before. We are now in the midst of a very serious calamity, so to say, and we cannot do anything, this way or that. We always expect other people to do things for us. That is a state of mentality in which no national life can progressively develop. We never like to take the responsibility on our shoulders, for this reason or that reason or for no reason whatever. So, we should arrive at some understanding among ourselves and our rulers are pledged to give effect to our agreed solution. We are told that everything will be done at the end of the war. We are told that measures will be taken to give independence to India after the cessation of hostilities. Many things are held out as hopes to be done after the war; but we must first think of shouldering the responsibility ourselves and doing things here and now. We are always wanting to do something but we are not doing anything, because we cannot agree upon anything.

But this Federation is a thing to which our Government, the British Government, is bound by a distinct and definite promise.

It is in the Act, and the communal differences, which are the main obstacle and which are now the main cause of the deadlock and because of which we visualise various difficulties in our achievement even after the war will not stand in the way of achieving this interim measure of Federation. When talking about communal settlements, we are giving this or taking that before we have actually achieved anything, before working any Constitution or working for anything with any outlook and before having anything that we can confidently call ours. We are always going to divide first. We have nothing to give and yet we promise to give. And that perhaps exhibits the character of our slavery all the more. We talk like people who have really no idea of what they are talking about. But here is something where there is no question of give and take and all the communities, if this thing is promulgated, will *ipso facto* have to lay their heads together and will have to work in collaboration for the working of this Constitution which is a statutory provision already.

Sir, it is by working together for the Government or for the people that we can achieve communal settlement. As I once said elsewhere, it is in coalition ministries in the provinces and composite Government in the Centre that we can develop and advance towards our independence or whatever our goal may be. By talking and negotiating in an atmosphere where we have really nothing as ours to deal with we cannot achieve anything. We have not achieved anything so far and we are simply going more and more asunder every day. If we look back at the history of our communal settlement, what have we achieved during the last ten years or more? We are simply going apart every day more and more. So, I think—and this is my definite opinion—that we should take advantage of every situation where we can work together, though some people may call it sham. I believe that in any working there is some substance, but if some people like to call it sham, let them do so. I firmly believe and I trust many of my friends will share this belief with

me that we shall develop, we shall grow and we shall progress even in communal harmony when all the communities sit together in whatsoever proportion and run the Government themselves. In the measures they consider and adopt there will be no communal colour. If they want to decide some fiscal policy or some tariff or some dearness allowance, will there be anything communal in it, which a Hindu or a Mussalman or a Parsi or a Harijan should get or should not get? It is in these measures that we should now try to work together and collaborate from day to day and from hour to hour. This is the only constructive thing which should now be opened to us and we should always try to take advantage of these opportunities.

It is a fact that a large section of our politicians think of giving up everything. Sir, I have been a very strong Congressman in my life and a nationalist of the extreme wing and I believed for many long years of my life in this policy of self-abnegation. But when the war came and when this policy was going to be carried out to its extreme at such a critical time by giving up the Ministries, I was simply taken aback. Then I made a public statement and said, "For God's sake do not commit this mistake". "There may come a time", I said, "when, not to speak of aeroplanes, not even a single soldier will be able to come to this land from abroad, and our masters, who have ruled over us for these six generations, and have not given us any opportunity to shoulder a gun will want us to join in the Defence forces without any distinction of colour or caste, martial or non-martial". "So", I said, "do not lose this opportunity. If you wish to be recognised as a nation, you must take this opportunity by the forelock". I then wrote to the then Congress President Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and said that, unless better sense prevailed, I was not with him. I am very sorry to say that after so many years of association I had to part company with the Congress. I believe that there should now be effectively pursued that policy which is called responsive co-operation and that is the only way to progress in our national advancement.

It is with this object in view that I am moving this Resolution, though it may seem very strange to many that I am proposing

such a measure at this juncture, for even after the passing of this measure many important parties of politicians in this country said that they do not want it. Even those who put their seal of approval in England to this idea of Federation said after it was passed into law that they do not want it. They may or may not want it ultimately but as an interim measure it will be a much better thing to work than to live in an atmosphere of negation and frustration.

Sir, frustration always creates a vacuum which nature never likes. When you are not there, surely other people will come in, and your protest to influence the world opinion, if you have not a sanction behind your demand, will never come to be anything substantial; it will never be fulfilled. Suppose you demand something from inside the jail or outside it or wherever you may be, and if, your demand is not accepted by those from whom you demand it, you must have to look back upon something which is called sanction in the ordinary phraseology. For creating that sanction the working of some constitution has always been necessary. I have already said that for that sanction you should join in war measures. If you can successfully join in this war no nation in future will say that India is unfit for its self-defence. Whatever be your communal difference, if you are practical you can create that sanction. Our rulers even will then feel and they will be convinced that we are fit for defending our own country. Negotiations, promises and every thing else will then change in colour and character.

We must now try to look at things in this really practical way. Now, we must face facts and not lose ourselves in lofty ideals. Philosophers think of ideals and Prophets speak of them. In this world all Prophets have preached ideals. Even Christ's ideal is claimed by Hitler to have been practised in action. That does not matter. In the ordinary spheres of the world's affairs practical men should always face facts. We have carried on in pursuit of an ideal for a long time and I have said it landed us in frustration. We are again thinking in the same line as if some miracle will happen which will lead us to a place of prosperity and achievement. It will not be so. So let us now sit down

together in any form of Government where we can work together with some kind of responsibility for our people—work in collaboration and work in consultation. Let us not lose ourselves in empty negotiations of give and take when we have nothing to give and nothing to take.

In conclusion, I appeal to my friends in the Treasury Benches to think of the matter now seriously, if they are sincere in their efforts. Let the British Government now decide whether in spite of any opinion in the country it is not for them to take this usefully practical measure for the entire co-operation of India. I think they can put it in actual practice at once. I appeal to them again and again to do a thing to which they are already pledged and not to allow any people to scan and criticize it without practising it. It is the only usefully practical measure before us now and I submit that both the British Government and the Government of India should now practically think over the matter and introduce it as an interim measure till after the war. Before better things or other things come—before independence of India comes—till then we must work this most practical measure. Let us have it. Sir, I move:

That this Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to take immediate steps for implementing Part II (the part relating to Federation) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

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Sir, I have to confess to a feeling of great embarrassment throughout practically the whole of the debate: perhaps if the intention of the Resolution is interpreted and studied in association with the speech of the Mover, he might have got more support for it. I was very careful all through never to enter into any controversy.

As for Pakistan or Bakistan as I may call it because the remaining land will not then be Hindustan as there will be other people also in it and, therefore, it will be Bakistan, *i.e.*, the rest of the land—I do not stand in the way of that controversy or any negotiations or demand. You have been quarrelling and negotiating; you have been doing that so long and so far





things, for we shall then be running our own government. After doing that, if you want to have Pakistan and Bakistan, and you come to some agreement on that, you can do that by all means. But now you have no experience; you do not come to anything; you do not come to any action.....

Something was said about the Orissa Ministry, perhaps under a misapprehension. The Ministry is still working in Orissa and many of my friends might know that personally and directly I am responsible—I wrote to the President of the Congress that I do not like that we should withdraw any ministry and that if they withdrew, I would see to it that other ministries function; and so I have been directly and definitely responsible for the Ministry now working there and I can tell my Honourable friends that though the Muslim population in my province is only 1.7 per cent—less than 2 per cent—in the Ministry their percentage is 33-1/3 per cent. If it had been demanded I would have liked that all three or even two out of three to be Muslims. But that demand has not been made: why, I do not know. In my province, again, in the services the Muslims are not less than 20 per cent and nobody ever grumbled. I have never heard of any demand in this poor province, in that corner, which is simply a land of the evacuees and a land of coming famine,—there is no question of Pakistan or Bakistan coming into prominence anywhere. Nobody thinks of it. We are up to now living peacefully, Hindus and Muhammadans together. I do not know what my Honourable friends will think of what I say and how it will direct their future activities. But I can assure them that in the province there is no feeling of Pakistan or Bakistan, Hindu or Muslim. I have never heard of any such thing. I go to my Mussalman neighbours, I know my Mussalman Minister, we are all friends....

....For the present,—I may tell you that I have not spoken about the Princes in order to avoid controversy. I send out my appeal from here even to the Princes, to my friends on those Benches and to those on these Benches who are now governing the country, and those in England—to see and face the realities of the situation and to put the Indian people in

touch with those realities, and that can be done only by implementing Part II of the Government of India Act, 1935. With these few words I commend my Resolution to all sections of the House.

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## **Delhi University (Amendment) Bill\***

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Sir, as to the whole discussion on the Delhi University (Amendment) Bill, I find there is nothing said in favour of circulation. One may oppose the Bill and it is being generally opposed, because the entire Delhi University scheme is not a good scheme. There are so many defects in it. If the Delhi University is bad, then it may be that we throw out this Bill and have a Commission or something like that to enquire and report. But when this particular measure is to be considered, we should narrow ourselves down to the particular points raised. I find in the discussion that there are five points that have been raised. Five changes have been sought to be introduced in this Bill. The first is, the three-year degree course; the second is, giving of the power of recognition and withdrawal of recognition of colleges to the Executive Council; the third is, two women to be nominated and two professors to be elected to the Executive Council; the fourth is, the new selection Committee to appoint and recognise teachers of the University; and the fifth is, the Vice-Chancellor to be nominated, if necessary, by the Chancellor and made a whole-time man and paid for the purpose.

Let us deal with those points one by one. First, the three-year course. Nobody has spoken against the merits of the measure as such. There may be difficulties; adjustments may have to be made and money may have to be spent, but these are questions not exactly germane here. In my opinion a university is an autonomous and statutory body. Those that are in charge of it have settled upon some plan of expanding the degree course to three-years and adding one year to secondary education. For this purpose they simply want some consequen-

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\*Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 1 April 1943, p.p. 1710-13.

tial amendments in the Act. 'Here no power is taken away if there was any power. It appears to me like that. It is a simple question whether we shall give them the facility for a measure they are going to adopt. I understand they have already adopted the measure. Boys in high schools are already preparing for the 11th class; and these little consequential measures are necessary. If we were to oppose the entire scheme of the Delhi University, that is a different question; but I think that is not exactly relevant here. Here the scope is very narrow. As to the merits, whether one year will go to the secondary education, whether the intermediate examination will remain there or not, whether the degree course will be three years—they have been discussed ably by some of our friends who know the subject well. If the Delhi University is going to promulgate this measure of three-years' degree course, as for money and the adjustment, they will either gradually advance by experience or, may be, they have already provided for such contingencies, though they have not said so. It may again be an experiment. But it is a very good measure and in a model university like Delhi, let it at least be experimented upon; that may be their idea. So much for the first point.

The second point is to give the power of recognition and withdrawal of recognition to the Executive Council. This is said to be a retrograde measure. I do not think the provision was not there already. If it is retrograde it was there already. The framers of that Act and the people who passed the Act in 1922 may be to blame. That is how it appears to me. Who are we on this occasion to get into all those big subjects? Here the provision in the Act itself is this—section 28:

“Subject to the provisions of the Act, the statutes may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:

(g) the recognition and management of colleges and halls not maintained by the university and the withdrawal of such recognition.”

Thus it has been provided for that the court, in its statutes, will definitely direct. The making of the statutes is the work of

the court. The court is the authority. There is no doubt. But in 1936 by some wrong reading of the law, as it appears, this provision was interpreted to mean that on every occasion a college will have to be recognised or some recognition will have to be withdrawn—on every such occasion the court will be required to pass a statute and at once go to execute it, just as if it were when the Finance Bill passes the salt duty here, all of us would proceed for the collection of salt duty at once. Nowhere perhaps, in no university such executive functions are left to any other body except the executive body. No power has been taken away. The court will legislate: even in the new amendment the conditions will be laid down strictly and in detail by the court and then the function of the executive body is to execute. I do not know how it becomes more retrograde than what is already provided in the Act itself.... It is a very simple question and even then in considering this subject you can say that on every occasion the court will go and do it, Section 22 (i) says:

“The Executive Council shall exercise all other powers of the University not otherwise provided for by this Act or the statutes.”

Under this sub-section whatever is provided for by the court, the Executive Council will have to execute.

The third point is, two women to be nominated and two professors elected on the Executive Council. There may be very serious objection for nomination of two women; but it is quite open to us to provide for some machinery for election: it is not very difficult, for nomination is not a very good thing apparently to many in these days. It should be avoided, if possible. As to two professors, perhaps there will be no objection from any side. They will be elected by the professors of the university, and my friend, Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad, who was talking of experts knows that in the central university of Delhi there are already men of the type of Dr. Sir Santi Swarup Bhatnagar. Such people should be allowed to be elected into the Executive Council and I think some machinery should be devised for the two women to be elected as well.

I may say in this connection that already there are all the principals of all the colleges in the Executive Council: They are there *ex-officio*. In my opinion, if possible, even in this Bill, out of six, some two or three may, be elected from among them and as to the rest the vacancies may be filled up by eminent educationists or even experts by other means of representation.

As to the fourth point, I agree that the Selection Committee should include experts, but it cannot be an expert committee out and out. There are already one official, one elected by the Academic Council, and the nominee of the Governor General. But there should be a provision whereby these three or four persons may be permitted to co-opt one more expert on each occasion for the purpose of the subject under consideration. Supposing they are going to appoint a geologist and if they have no geologist among themselves, they should be empowered to co-opt one expert who will be suitable for the particular purpose.

Then the fifth point is regarding Vice-Chancellor to be nominated, if necessary, by the Chancellor and made whole-time and paid for the purpose. If the Vice-Chancellor becomes whole-time, he should be paid. This practically goes without saying. But this provision appears to be an alternative provision, for the old provision is there. Here a proviso is sought to be added:

“Provided that, if the Chancellor is of opinion, and so informs the Executive Council, that a Vice-Chancellor should be appointed on the condition that he gives his whole time to the work of the University, the appointment shall be made by the Chancellor after such consultation with the Executive Council as he thinks fit, and in that case the Vice-Chancellor shall hold office for such period as the Chancellor may fix, and shall be paid such salary as the Chancellor, may determine.”

Look at the existing provision:

“The Vice-Chancellor shall be appointed by the Chancellor after consideration of the recommendations of the Executive Council

and shall hold office for such term and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by the Statutes."

If necessary, this alternative provision will be effective. May be, some necessity has perhaps arisen. Government is perhaps providing money and they are going to reorganise the whole thing, to develop the university so that a new Act, an amending Act, may be possible very soon. It is for a certain purpose that the alternative is being provided. In the old Act there is the recommendation of the Executive Council for the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor. No Court comes here, no Legislature of the university. The Executive Council shall recommend. I am very sorry and grieved to tell the House that in the Delhi University—Delhi is a very small place, it cannot be compared with Calcutta or Madras or any other like place—for Vice-Chancellorship, for anything, even for a teacher to be recognised as a university teacher, there is interested canvassing. Such canvassing in these matters, my friends will agree with me, must be condemned. It should be discouraged. Again, sometimes it so happens that for recommending a man for Vice-Chancellorship, the Executive Council sits and adjourns itself *sine die*. Sometimes such an adjournment is carried as to make it quite inconvenient for the Vice-Chancellor to be recommended for selection. Probably it is to avoid that that the Bill provides that the Executive Council will be consulted, but the manner of consultation may not exactly be a vote in the House, for in that case the whole thing may be postponed or otherwise frustrated. So, in a small place like Delhi, only perhaps to avoid the disadvantages of bad canvassing, this has been provided. I do not exactly know, but it appears that it has been provided for a particular purpose,—if it is considered necessary for a certain purpose; otherwise the old provision is there. For the present, however, the question does not arise, as Sir Maurice Gwyer is there, and so long as he is there as Vice-Chancellor this provision will not apply at all, I understand.

So, these are the only grounds which are the basis of certain very ordinary amendments with limited scope and application in this amending Bill. I am quite at one with those that think that



there are many defects in the Delhi University organisation which require reform and modification; but that bigger issue is not involved here. The Delhi University is not an ideal thing, nor is it going to be quite an ideal thing on account of this Bill. Nobody perhaps says that. So, within these narrow limits a basis for this amending Bill can be well looked at in this manner.

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## Resolution on Treatment of Political Prisoners and Detenus\*

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Sir, coming to my amendment to the resolution on treatment of political prisoners and detenus, I must express my thankfulness to the Honourable the Home Member for taking the earliest opportunity to reply to the Resolution as well as the amendments. I have, therefore, got the advantage of the reaction of Government to the Resolution as well as to my amendment; but I must say I am disappointed. I am sorry to say that I find a trace of the same superannuated woodenness in his reply. What does he say? He puts forward the same plea that the Central Government or, for the matter of that, the Central Legislature can have nothing to do with provincial matters, be the province under the autocratic rule of a Governor or under a popular ministry. I was not prepared to hear such a reply. It is always said in this House that the Central Government can have nothing to do with matters concerning the provinces and this legal opinion of the Government of India I might have taken as true—for I am myself a layman—had it not been for the fact that very recently some of the legal decisions of the Government of India have been reversed by various Courts in the country. I think when the British Parliament was enacting the Government of India Act, 1935, specially Section 102, it had before it the report of the committee on Australian Constitution, which said that during the last war on account of judicial decisions the Federal Government of Australia had become practically a unitary Government, and under this

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\*Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 27 July 1943, pp. 91-93.

provision, after the promulgation by the Governor General of a state of emergency in the country, I take it that this Government has turned into practically a unitary Government and, therefore, the Central Government and this House can control all the affairs in the country, either in the provinces or at the Centre; I am a layman and I do not know; there might still be some technical difficulties and legal obstacles, but I am sure it will not be difficult for the Government of India, especially the Legislative Department, to overcome such difficulties. I take this opportunity to extend my cordial welcome to my Honourable friend, Sir Asoka Kumar Roy, to this House as the Law Member. He is now the head of the Law Department and if there is any defect in the organization of the Department or if he wants any more assistance he will doubtless reorganize it, secure all the necessary assistance he requires, and I am sure he will repeat his legal victories in the provincial sphere at the Centre, and we shall never hear in future—especially in these bad times when the administration is under proclamation of emergency—that the Central Government and the Central Legislature are not competent to interfere in provincial matters, or even to advise them effectively.

The Honourable the Home Member had told us that Members of the Central Legislature have no status to advise the Provincial Governments. I know that perfectly well. Whoever ever claimed that status, I did not claim it in my amendment. What I demand is that some members of the Legislature or public men in the country should, by arrangement of the Central Government, interview the detenus and political prisoners in the provinces in order to ascertain whether they have changed their views and are prepared to cooperate in the war measures, and if they are satisfied they should recommend their release. There is no question of status or anything of the sort. The Government of India ought to be able to select some of their non-official friends to help and co-operate with them in this matter in the way in which such co-operation should be offered and accepted.

Again, the Honourable Member asks what guarantee is there that those prisoners should be taken to have changed their views. I am simply sorry that he has uttered this counsel of despair. What is the policy behind this detention and imprisonment? I think the Government should always try with determination to rally round all opinions in the country for co-operation, and I am glad he has plainly said that these are precautionary measures and not measures of revenge, and I wish that he would look for all sorts of ways and means to see that those prisoners are released and are utilized in the improvement of the present situation.

I may here refer to the demand of the Mover of the Resolution as well as the other amendments. Before doing that I may tell my Honourable friend the Home Member—though the matter is very delicate—that, as far as I know the circumstances in my province are such that if I go and interview the prisoners in jails I can ascertain their views and can recommend their release if they have changed their mind. I am quite sure that there will be many other Members in the House, as well as members of the public outside this House in this vast land of India to do the same thing as effectively or even more than effectively. Besides, the war situation has now changed and the policy of the Government should change accordingly. Mussolini has abdicated. He is now under arrest, and the Allies are at the gates of the Italian mainland. Germany on the Russian front is also in a tight corner. In the Far East Japan is shaky. I am appealing for those patriots who are in jail. I know many of them and I know that probably 99 per cent of them will be useful to you in present circumstances. They will help us; they will help the Government; they will help in the affairs of the war and in the business of the nation.

So now let me say one word to my friends, the Mover of the Resolution and the movers of the other amendments. They want release of these prisoners in a covert way. I want it openly. I prescribe and propose a practical method for their release. I never believe that my friends will be satisfied with

these crumbs of concessions, as they have put it—a candle here, a letter there or eight annas more a day to supplement food and things of this kind. What they say in a covert way, I say openly that methods and means should be devised to release them and that these patriots should be used for the betterment of the present situation in the country.

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## Famine in Orissa\*

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Sir, the famine that is raging in Bengal has been characterised as a man-made famine, but it has been forced upon the Orissa province from which I come.... The famine has been forced by the Central Government on account of its weakness, want of foresight and disorganised activity. All these things can be well illustrated there and note may be taken by the Government for their future action. Here I must, however, remark that it is very regrettable that unnecessary and undesirable political propaganda is being carried on there and capital is made of the sufferings of my people for that propaganda. Apart from that, I will now describe how the food distress happened in my province. I may at the outset refer to the normal economic conditions of the Orissa peasant. I may refer the House to a statement made by my Honourable friend Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh in the Council of State on the 12th of August last during the food debate there. Very interesting figures are given in the last three columns of his statement: *per capita* production in oz. and in mds. and *per capita* consumption of foodgrains in different provinces. Here I may point out that Orissa is perpetually on starvation diet. It is always on the verge of starvation. In Orissa, the *per capita* production is 19.6 oz. per day and *per capita* consumption is only 13 oz. foodgrains. In the neighbouring province of C. P. the *per capita* production is 26.5 oz. and consumption is 22.8 oz. In Sind, the *per capita* production is 28.6 oz. per day and consumption is 20.6 oz. The Oriya peasant has got nothing to supplement his

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\* Speaking during discussion on a Motion on "Food Situation". Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 16 November, 1943; pp. 372-75.

food, such as meat, eggs, fruit, etc., unlike the peasants in N.W F.P. or even in Sind. This 13 oz. foodgrain is paddy and not wheat, nor even rice. Orissa is not a wheat eating province. There is also another factor to be taken into consideration. The non-coastal districts are better off in production and consumption.

This *per capita* consumption if calculated in rice will come to about 6 or 7 oz., that is, about 15 or 17 tolas of rice. Any one who knows the peasant in Orissa will bear me out that the Oriya peasant does not even supplement his rice with an onion, and sometimes not even with salt. The peasant has got to sell his paddy because he has no money—no other means of paying his land rent and taxes and also for his little necessities of life like salt, cloth, etc. According to the figures, given by my Honourable friend in the table referred to Orissa exports 187,000 tons of foodgrains outside the Province per year on the average though it is not a surplus Province as such. The Oriya peasants have no money to meet their ordinary demands, they are obliged to sell their produce. It is not real surplus. The situation now in Orissa has been aggravated on account of people coming back from Burma. On account of the bombing of Calcutta and Assam, an army of such people also came back from those places. We used to send out 187,000 tons or 45 lakhs of maunds of paddy or 30 lakhs of maunds of rice from the Province in normal years. There is no margin. If the export is a little more or production a little less we are sure to be in the grip of famine. The Central Government should be careful. Foodgrain control merely in theory will not do. These little details must be observed and carefully attended to.

When last year it was required that all surplus Provinces should contribute to the deficit areas, our Provincial Government carefully calculated, for last year the stocks and sent out 18 lakhs of maunds of rice before the middle of this year. Suddenly there appeared to be alarming conditions in Calcutta and the Central Government went off its head, and there was declared free trade in the eastern regions of India. Many of the Honourable Members might have observed what the Premier of

Orissa then said. He said, that if the free trade continued, there was no other alternative for the Ministry except to resign. There was a public statement to that effect. But in the meantime 10 lakhs of maunds of rice had gone out to Bengal, and 4 lakhs of maunds had been amassed by stockists to be sent to that Province. When the appeal was made by Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee for opening free kitchens, these 4 lakhs of maunds were finally allowed by the Premier of Orissa to be sent to Bengal. On the 4th of this month a statement was made by that Premier that only 1.5 lakhs of maunds out of this stock were sent out to Bengal by that date.

When this was the position the Provincial Government wanted somehow to bring paddy from the non-coastal districts where there was some surplus to save the situation, if possible. But in the last statement of the Premier it was made clear that there were no transport facilities available, and in the words of the District Collector of Ganjam "starvation stalks in the land" and we are today in the dire grip of the famine. Who made this famine possible and who forced it on our people? Ganjam, Puri and Balasore, the coastal districts were all caught up in the famine. This is, in short, the history of the famine in Orissa.

There is another factor also to observe. I found that some patriotic people, for humanitarian reasons wanted to open free kitchen in Puri, and they got some rice locally. Perhaps some shopkeeper got it by providing means of private transport from Sambalpur. So the real difficulty for the starving people was that there was no money. Rice was selling at ten annas a seer, but there was no money to buy it. People were starved to death for want of money to purchase rice. This condition is peculiar and must be taken note of. Sterling balance, inflation and various such other money creating devices do not mean anything to the poor Oriya peasant. You should give money to this land. Oriyas must get money.

I was a Member of the Supply Department Committee since when the department was organised. I quite realised that money was being poured out to all in India. No money was sent to Orissa, because there were no industries which could supply



war materials. I also stressed this point in the Committee and here I must acknowledge with thanks the kind sympathy shown by Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan and Sir H. P. Mody towards my poor Province. I named small industries like pottery, China clay, tinning and dehydrating fish, etc. I wanted them to start those industries in Orissa with small capitals.

Today the fact remains that though you have purchased 600 crores of rupees worth of articles from this country for war supply, Orissa's contribution will not be anything near a few lakhs. I was told to go to the Commerce Department and the Transport Department and from this door to that door, but I have gone to all these places in vain. This disorganised thing is no Government; you must organise the Departments in proper co-ordination and co-operation with one another. It has been now held that a strong Government is necessary. But a strong Government may be still oppressive and it might create panic among the people. It must be properly organised to make it one unitary institution. One department should always count upon the co-operation of another whenever necessary.

In this connection I will give another fact which is very significant. In the coast of Orissa the only factories worth the name are rice mills. I may say that those rice mills ought to be closed at once if possible because they are the worst hoarders. And many of these millowners have no life interest in the land; they come from outside like so many merchants and others also in Orissa. They are not only the worst hoarders but they can corrupt even the blind God of justice. Apart from that, they employ a very small number of people. In this region there is only one factory, a glass factory, which employs about 600 labourers. This factory is near my home and some six months ago I found that the managers there employed very few people in spite of getting some war supply orders. To my question they said they had no coal. I went to the Provincial Government and they said that they had recommended 15 wagons a month. I went to the Transport Department and the Commerce Department and what they said or what they did I need not here say. The glass factory is practically closed today for want of coal

whereas for those rice mills coal is being supplied and there much of this supply is being sold in the black market today.

There are three aerodromes in Orissa and many Members here might have read the statement of Maharaja Parlakimedi, the Premier of Orissa, when he resented even labour being brought from abroad, from C.P. and Malabar for these aerodromes. Orissa is famous for its labourers, and the adaptability to skill of Oriya labourers is well known.

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## **Resolution regarding constitution of the Permanent Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations\***

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Sir, the Honourable the Mover of the motion relating to the constitution of a permanent Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations gave us a very rosy picture of what happened in the Conference at Hot Springs. He has given the information that our Agent General represented India at the Conference and India was one of the 44 or 45 nations. It is very gratifying to hear all that on the floor of this House, particularly so in the case of India because it satisfies the vanity of our people who are dependent and who somehow want to become independent and be counted as one of the nations of the world. But, I think, after my Honourable friend, Mr. Neogy, has picked the bubble, my Honourable friend Mr. Tyson must look back and think what undertaking he should give in order to convince the Honourable Members like Mr. Neogy.

Sir, I must confess that I have no access to any other report, such as, the report of the Agent-General, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, except this report given to us. When I read this Report I suspected that there was some fly in the ointment. It is only natural that I first referred to the portion relating to percentage of contribution to this Organization. I found, that 25 per cent of the contribution will go to the United States of America, 15 per cent to England. Next comes Russia—with its vast agricultural area from Moscow to Samarkand and from Kiev to Vladivostok and with its population of 17 crores—only 8 per cent. Then

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\* Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 21 November, 1944, pp. 1138-40.

comes China, which has to feed 44 crores—only 6 per cent. India comes next and its share is 4.25 per cent, and yet it is perhaps the only agricultural country in the British Empire with such vast agricultural lands and its teeming population. One would naturally ask the question. what is behind this scheme? It is generally known and apprehended that these countries—England and the United States of America—want to capture markets like India in the post-war period. In so far as this Organization is concerned, America has some claim to be called an agricultural country, but what claim has England to be counted as one of the agricultural countries? What do they produce, except perhaps manufacturing some pearl, barley and vitamin tablets, and such other things? Or, is it a charity to the world or to Empire countries? Why should England pay 15 per cent? If there was anything real in the Conference, India, China and Russia, should have been asked to pay perhaps more than half. Therefore, I say, what is it, if not to exploit, as my Honourable friend Mr. Neogy has said, countries like India and to capture our markets and raw materials? There is certainly something behind it. Anyone would suspect that. I think the entire Organization should be ours. England should have a very insignificant place in it. The House has a right to get from the Honourable Member a definite statement and undertaking that India will join the Organization only for the good of its own people. We want this because we suspect that there is something behind this move. Perhaps, say, there will come a programme for co-operative farming, and thus a necessity will be created for thousands of tractors of which India has none. They will be offered to us, and all this is besides our raw materials to be exploited as my Honourable friend, Mr. Neogy, has said. Then again, say, artificial fertilizers, which India does not produce and for which India possesses no machinery, may be recommended and these may be readily exported from England because food production must go on. There may be

many things on those lines that England may, in the post-war period, produce and sell such products to this country. So, the undertaking should be definite and it should be given on the floor of this House that there is no such idea behind this organization, and if we are to accept any such idea or proposal involving exploitation ever comes up, India will be entitled to revolt and cease to remain a member. This is the economic aspect of the question.

There is another aspect—the constitutional aspect—and the Government of India must go into it carefully. Government is going to get our recommendation to accept the Constitution of this Organization. What will be the good if it proves to be only a pamphleteering organization, a 'tract' society—like the Christian Tract Society of Madras—so far as India is concerned? Some tracts will come; some instructions will come and some expert advice that will be issued from the Central Organisation. They will probably be translated into all the Vernaculars and sent out from Delhi so that the agriculturists in provinces may read. What else can it be if a Centre has to struggle with so many autonomous Provinces? You must here again give us a definite statement and undertaking that this present arrangement of Centre and Provinces must change so far at least as agriculture is concerned. But if it remains, that is, if provinces remain autonomous in their activity, as they are now, then before coming here, the Government of India must have been assured of entire provincial support. But as in the case of the Hindu Succession, so in the case of this food production we are beginning at the wrong end. How can you put this food scheme into operation? There is your land system. Can you do anything here in the Centre with regard to the land system? There is the flood problem. But the rivers are not only provincial, but inter-provincial. Then there is also the standard consumption for all people of India. Here in India, Orissa with its 13 ounces of consumption of foodgrains per head per day is a surplus province and Bengal with 19 ounces foodgrain consumption is a deficit province; and there are the Central Provinces whose consumption is 30 ounces per head per day. How can you

equalize? How can you come to an equitable standard for all? You cannot do it here in the Centre. Though you have taken advantage of some amendment in the Constitution Act in solving Food problem, still Orissa is there with its 13 ounces and the Central Provinces with their 30 ounces. Yet in solving the food problem any how, on account of the war time emergency, you have made provinces agree to your direction and control only temporarily though it be, by some statutory provision. We should like to know whether there will be any such statutory provision on a permanent basis in the case of food production and agriculture. This question you will have to answer for this is a subject which is provincial. In such questions you cannot do anything without statutory powers of direction and control in the provincial field. I shall give you an instance.

The Government of India is out to provide for the Grow More Food campaign. Crores are being spent on it. What is being done? If we ask questions here, in reply we are given some statistics, of lakhs of acres more under cultivation. But the high price is there. It has gone up by 300 per cent and you know that every cultivator under these conditions will scratch and plough even the sandy river beds and grazing slopes of hills. If you calculate all this and tell us that there is a great increase, we are really helpless. But the fact is not as you say. I know how these things are working in the provinces. I speak from experience. The money is simply squandered, and wasted. In one case the seed was to be distributed. The workers of course had been appointed. However, fine paddy for seed, made into rice, was sold in the market and the profits were divided between the cultivator and the worker. This is what is being done everywhere. It is not a rare case in my province. If this be the arrangement, then what is the good of asking us to accept this? Shall we only read pamphlets in our vernacular? What else shall we do with this acceptance? I request the Honourable Member, therefore, to give us an undertaking. Either the Provinces should be by statute made to agree to the control and direction of the Centre in matters relating to agriculture or

that the Government will be more unitary in the next constitution than it has been ... So I wish to make these two points - one the economic and the other the constitutional. But I know the whole House is going to support the motion as it is here and now I cannot oppose it.

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## Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Bill\*

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I thought after the Bill was withdrawn\*\* on the last occasion it would not come up again for discussion in this House, at least in this form. A Select Committee was proposed last time and I find another Select Committee has been proposed here and I was amused to see a bit of a difference. I did not understand what it exactly meant. Perhaps the Committee has been sought to be made more democratic under the modern practical, non-intellectual and non-Sanatanist ideas. In the last Committee there were names like Bhai Parma Nand and of poor myself and others. We are Brahmins. But the Committee was not found to be democratic and persons like my friends Mr. Chapman-Mortimer, Sir Ratanji Dalal and Mr. Hooseinbhoj Lalljee have been included. I am glad they are there. It is more democratic today. But in India the general phrase is "all castes and communities". This is not the occasion but if the motion comes to be put I shall probably propose half a dozen other names, which will include castes which have not been included here. It is a very peculiar and rather important thing and it struck me. Perhaps this is the practical way of achieving reforms in Hindu society. There are some people who are not wanted and others are wanted for democratic purposes. The latter will help the reform of the Hindu society better.

My friend Dr. G.V. Deshmukh always quotes law-givers like Manu. I do not know whether he knows that Mr. Manu or rather Dr. Manu had to labour under very different circumstances. He

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\* Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 14 February, 1945, pp. 358—61.

\*\* The motion of the Bill under the same title moved by Shri Govind V. Deshmukh was withdrawn by leave of the Assembly on 10 November, 1943.



never had a legislature like this where views are legislated and enforced. The Hindu culture is based on a different organisation and it is different in conception from other cultures. Manu gave some ideals to a small section of the society. My friend has quoted instances like Vasudeva and Devaki, Pandu and Kunti. I am sorry he forgot to tell the House that our Lord Sri Krishna connived or allowed his own sister to be stolen away by his own cousin Arjuna.... He has not probably heard of Swetaketu and I may remind him that in those days a guest in a host's house could enjoy the latter's wife, if he liked, even sexually. That is also in the Puranas and in the Mahabharatha. It is in our tradition. The Puranas record events and customs from the days when human sacrifices were offered to the days of even Dr. Deshmukh, himself.

I was speaking of Ancient Law-givers like Manu. They had a very uncommon sense of discrimination in selecting and stabilising customs and institutions. I gave the illustration of Swetaketu. Some of my friends objected to my giving that illustration, for in their opinion marriage had not been developed by the time of Swetaketu. That may be disputed. But take the illustration of Draupadi. Manu never allowed a marriage like Draupadi's marriage in Hindu society. He has given no injunctions to the society to have polyandry. The conditions of society which prevailed then were different. To say that we should all be Manus and we should be recognised as Manus may well serve to tickle our vanity, but personal vanity and truth do not go together. If I may go back to history, my friends like Dr. Deshmukh will perhaps accept that in those days the Aryan people who conquered some portion of northern India wanted the cultural absorption of the foreign people among whom they lived and had to propagate their race; their sense of racial purity achieved by such absorption was an outstanding fact; even today some of those who think they are Aryans—I mean the Germans—have their sense of racial purity as an Aryan tradition. In order to preserve their racial unity at the time the Indian Aryans had to marry even their cousins and to keep the unity in absorption they legitimised all sorts of children. But it

does not follow that the eight forms of marriage of which Manu has spoken should be treated as precedents for some law which you now want to enact today.

My friend has given some illustrative interpretations which are, in my opinion at least, *prima facie* wrong. In explaining *gotra* he goes to the root, but the branches and the fruits he cannot see, because he looks below at the root always. *Gotra* is made up of 'go' and 'traī'—that is a fact; and he knows that 'go' means cow as well as earth, 'traī' means to save, to keep secure. But how he makes it out to mean grazing ground I cannot understand. It is the man who keeps secure both land and cow. In those days the properties of our Aryan ancestors consisted in a plot of land, perhaps adjoining the house or homestead or in the jungle somewhere for cultivation of a little rice or barley. Their *dhanam* or money was the cow. The cow was considered the coin, or currency and so the name 'godhanam' is so very common in our ancient sastras. So the man who keeps secure the property—cow and land—of the family was the Gotra. He was the head of the family; under Roman law also you find that the father was the man who was responsible for keeping secure the property of the family and so he was the head of the family. Gotra does not mean a plot of grazing ground.

Then he says that the gotras were first five, then seven and then eight and then became numerous and he says there is no meaning in it. I am sorry he does not care to understand—or perhaps does not care to say what he understands—that there were first a few families only and therefore a few gotras, and then as the families spread and went to different places and settled down, the number of gotras increased: the fathers became more and more; and so it is not a fact that gotra has nothing to do with our blood. Whether you accept it or not at this distant date after many generations, it is a different question; but do not deceive yourself and deceive your audience by saying that gotra means a plot of pasture ground.

Then he gives his interpretation of pravara. He does not understand what it is. If it means anything it means the father,

grand-father and great-grand-father of some man who was living somewhere in ancient times. I could not follow him. He did not go to the root—a man who is so much addicted to roots did not go to the root and its meaning here. Pravara means most prominent, pra-vara—from which comes the word 'bara' meaning big. One gotra has been divided into so many branches naturally in course of time to indicate the particular line, pravaras, or prominent men of that line are mentioned. My Gotra is Kausika. My Pravara is, or more correctly pravaras of my line are Krusika, Aghamarshana and Viswamitra. The meaning of it is not as stated by my friend. So, he should be better advised to study these things and to discriminate things properly, if he likes to be, if not a Manu, at least one like Manu in this age.

Then I was surprised to see him saying that marriage has nothing to do with children. What is the meaning of marriage as a social institution? Marriage in law means legitimacy for those that will come out of the marriage. If you mean that you should marry only for the pleasure of the union, then it has nothing to do with law or legislation.

Then, I particularly wanted to know if on account of this pravara or gotra there has been any difficulty in society. He said nothing on that point.

I say that there has been no difficulty in society owing to the lack of this reform. That is my contention. Pleasure of individuals in union is not the ideal of marriage as a legal or social institution. Rather, limitations have got to be put upon such union to make it a social institution.

Then again Sudras are excluded from this gotra business. They have nothing to do with it. This is a Brahminic institution, it is an institution of people of high castes. My friend should understand that even the highly cultured Bengali Kayasthas are excluded from this category. They are not governed by this gotra or pravara business. It is only the high caste Hindus and Brahmins who are affected. High Courts now say who is high caste and who is not. Sudras are not to think of Gotra or

Pravara in marriage and highest courts have said that even Bengali Kayasthas are Sudras. Then for whom in India is this law wanted?

Then my friend appeals to all communities to help him. What does he mean? No other community is concerned. Only the Brahmins are concerned. This is being trumpeted as a very important piece of reform. What reform is this? What importance is there? Why should this House be insulted with so insignificant a thing like this, I do not understand. You are outraging the Hindu feeling for nothing. If there is some utility one can understand it. Last time, the Mover of the Bill was well advised to think of Civil Marriage Act, or some kind of Registration in cases which are cases of extreme hardship, according to him. There is also Arya Marriage Act. But being a Brahminical institution how can this come under sacramental law? I am a Brahmin. So are Deshmukhs. When Dr. Deshmukh was given the hand of his bride by the bride's father or guardian he must have known the *malhavakaya* or the great utterance. In this the father of the girl has got to say the gotra of his family and then that of the bridegroom's family with all the solemnity of a Vedic rite. What will happen if the same gotra is to be repeated in case of the bridegroom? The gift will be invalid and as soon as it is repeated, the priest and the 'promptor', i.e., the *Pushtakacharya*, will be horrified and probably go away. So I say this being purely a Brahminic institution, why not in the exceptional cases, if any, take to civil marriage or the Arya Samajist form of marriage which is also a form of Hindu marriage. Why do you come and outrage the feelings of the poor Brahmins of the country. I know in some communities first cousins marry. But I do not think agnates marry.

Then I say that the drafting of the Bill is very defective. I do not know what is behind the back of the mind of the Mover of the Bill. He says:

"Notwithstanding any custom, rule or interpretation of the Hindu Law, a marriage, which is otherwise valid, shall not be invalid because—

(a) it is between Hindus belonging to the same gotra or pravar; or''.

I want to know where does it exclude Sapindas? Of course, I am not a lawyer, but the drafting of the Bill seems *prima facie*. It is also likely to be contended that all Sapindas are not otherwise excluded. You must have specifically mentioned that. Cases will go to the High Courts; it is not a joke and you will not be there to interpret it. You have not said that and therefore somehow there will also be a loophole for the cousins to marry.

Then, there is another thing, the sub-castes. I have never heard in my life that any sub-caste marriage, that is, a marriage between sub-castes within the same caste, has been objected to by anybody. Perhaps some conservative caste men sometimes object and take Rs. 5 or Rs. 500. That might be the only barrier, but I have never seen such a marriage ever falling through. Sub-castes have never objected and inter-marriages are going on, for it is considered to be one caste. So, I want to tell my Honourable friend that he was very well advised last time to have withdrawn the Bill and I request him to do the same thing today.

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## National War Front\*

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Sir, this National War Front consists of two ideas: National and War Front. I can speak from my personal experience that it is neither national nor has it anything to do with war, or its front. Nothing is being done to maintain the morale of the people. During the last Ministry of Orissa, for the formation of which I was mainly responsible, at the request of the then Premier I accepted the duty of working for the organisation, as its chief. I found that it was meant to be a non-official organisation, which it ostensibly was, but only 'safe' non-officials were wanted, and real non-officials were discarded. If real non-officials offered to serve on this organisation, they were not accepted. It came to such a pitch that within a few months of its inception, I, being a non-official myself, had to sever all connection with it by tendering my resignation publicly. In the resignation I stated that so long as this mentality prevails in this organisation, people like myself cannot serve on it. To describe this organisation in one word—and here I only speak with regard to its working in the Province of Orissa; I cannot say about other provinces—it may be called a 'nuisance.'

We have heard of the Savings Drive, the Grow More Food Campaign and many other such campaigns in which this organisation is engaged during these days, and as everybody knows—people may not speak out, but they know it—our organisation of food, civil supplies, grow more food organisation are replete with corruption and bribery. When officials indulge in it you have got some remedy, you can bring their case to the notice of higher authorities and personally I do not think that

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\*Central Legislative Assembly Debate, 2 March, 1945, pp. 975-76.

higher authorities everywhere are either themselves indulging in these things or permitting them. At least there is some way open to bring them to book, but in the case of non-officials—all street boys and young men—what can you do? They create panic among the people, they threaten the people by saying, 'Do this and do that, otherwise you will be punished under the Defence of India Rules'. They create panic and prepare the ground for all sorts of corruption—at least that is what is happening in my province. The propaganda van is moving and I know that some people if they were otherwise war-minded, they are now non-war-minded only on account of this war front propaganda.

My people fortunately are not addicted to drinks, but all the same, perhaps the idea proceeds from the Centre, dancing parties are organised. Sometimes when I go out I find arrangements being made for holding dance parties. I ask on occasion and I am told that the National War Front has organised dancing parties and the singers are to sing for the "Fifteen days saving drive" or some such thing. Things like that happen of course, but I do not know whether any drinks are also served. Perhaps I cannot speak with authority, because I am not in close touch with this organisation.

Sir, I do not propose to take much time of the House. I am definitely of the opinion that if this organisation must continue to help the Government in their Grow More Food campaign, or procurements, or in connection with their Savings Drive, let it be official. Don't you have this non-official organisation to protect your officers indirectly against charges of corruption. I appeal to the Government that if they want this National War Front and if they want to make people war-minded, they should not adopt such means which only result in making the people panicky and the officers corrupt.