

Tuesday, 9th September, 1924

THE

# COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

(Official Report)

Volume IV, Parts II & III.

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*(3rd September to 23rd September 1924.)*

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FOURTH SESSION

OF THE

COUNCIL OF STATE, 1924.



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## COUNCIL OF STATE.

*Tuesday, the 9th September, 1924.*

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

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### BILL, AS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, LAID ON THE TABLE.

THE SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL: In accordance with Rule 25 of the Indian Legislative Rules, I lay on the table a copy of the Bill further to amend the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, for certain purposes, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly at its meeting held on the 8th September, 1924.

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### RESOLUTION *RE* SETTLEMENT OF THE SIKH QUESTION.

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH (Punjab : Sikh): Sir, I move :

“That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a Reconciliation Board to consider the whole Sikh question and to promote its settlement by mutual agreement.”

I am moving this Resolution after a great deal of careful thought. As the only elected representative of the Sikh community in this Council, I feel it my duty to place all the facts before this Council in the hope that our combined efforts may find a solution. I am conscious that what is likely to embarrass my Government is no less likely to embarrass my community. I realise fully the need, one of the greatest needs, of our times, is to preserve law and order and to uphold the authority of the State. The Sikh community, as a whole, stand firm in support of the State. Take for example the Hindu-Muslim trouble at Amritsar. The Sikhs came forward to help the Government, and I can affirm without hesitation that to-day, if the call came again, the Sikhs would join in large numbers the army to defend the Empire. I am sure His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief will support me in this as he has been recently touring in the Sikh districts. Then, Sir, there can be no greater test of loyalty than the desire of a community to serve the Empire in its armies. The Sikhs as a body are anxious to keep their religious movement free from politics. I have no hesitation in declaring that my community would be fully satisfied if their absolute right to govern their Gurdwaras was fully recognised by a legislative Act. This is all we want. I have for nearly four years endeavoured, without coming before this Council, to assist in finding a solution. I must freely acknowledge the kind and considerate hearing given to me by both the Punjab Government and the Government of India. The question has been on the brink of solution. An agreement was very nearly reached when General Sir William Birdwood came on the scene ; but somehow the Birdwood Committee never came into existence and private negotiations never took shape.

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[Sardar Jogendra Singh.]

The negotiations were broken off so far as one could understand from the newspapers when a settlement was practically reached. I am sure that the Birdwood Committee would have reached a settlement if it had come into existence and if it had been given a free hand and allowed to proceed on its own lines. I think I am revealing no State secret in mentioning that I warned both His Excellency Sir Edward Maclagan and General Sir William Birdwood, whom I am glad to see here to-day, not to follow the methods which had failed before, but to take a new line of free and open discussion with all the members of the Sikh community. The question in itself is very simple. The Sikhs wish to restore the control of the Sikh congregation over their places of worship. The history of the Sikh Gurdwaras goes back to the earliest days when the Sikh religion was founded. The present difficulties crystallised a generation after the annexation of the Punjab. From time to time the community used to appoint suitable men to administer Gurdwaras and the lands attached to Gurdwaras with the purpose of propagating the Sikh religion and maintaining a free kitchen. Good and saintly men were nominated and they made our temples and shrines centres of the Sikh religion. These *sewadars* or servants depended on the approbation of the Sangat or congregation. Things however changed with the annexation of the Punjab. The community was bewildered and the *sewadars* were entered as owners not only of the lands and endowments but even of the temples in some cases. The men in occupation were men who enjoyed public confidence, and the community did not realise that any rights were being conferred on them till this generation of experienced old workers had passed away. It was then that the change which had actually taken place became apparent and the community realised what had happened and appealed for help in vain. The Courts were powerless to interfere and the Government, too busy to take notice of the views of the community, paid no attention. I have ventured to bring this question before this Council because I am confident of the support of Hindus and Moslems and our old friends the English officials. Hindus are the bone of our bone and the foundation stone of the Golden Temple was laid at the instance of our Guru by a Muhammadan saint Mian Mir. For nearly three generations English and Sikh blood has mingled on many a battlefield. That is why every Sikh expects whole-hearted support in his desire for Gurdwara reform. Nothing surprised and hurt him more than the lukewarm consideration which the British official gave to his earnest desire for reform. It is said when Mansur was being taken to the Cross men threw stones at him and he smiled, but when a friend pelted him with a flower he wept. This is how the Sikhs feel when their friends laugh at their desire to make their Gurdwaras the centres of the Sikh religion and accuse them of violating the laws of the State.

I will now give you the history of two or three Gurdwaras as most of the Council are not acquainted with the history of the Sikh religion. Take the Golden Temple first. It was founded by Guru Ram Das and Arjan Dev. Of him Jehangir wrote in his Tuzak :

"So many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, many foolish Musalmans too, have been fascinated by his ways and teachings."

The Golden Temple and the Akal Takhat are our most sacred temples. These temples more than once passed out of our hands. Ahmed Shah Abdali razed

them to the ground, but Jassa Singh restored them. His descendants are here to-day and may as well claim the temple as their heritage. It was again destroyed by the Durani conqueror in 1763 and once Massa Rangar took his seat in the temple. The Sikhs took possession of the temple and restored it again and again. Who dare say that the temple belongs to any particular person and that other communities have a claim? It is the temple of the Sikhs and shall remain the Sikh temple to the end of the Sikh religion. It was this temple where the Puritan Sikhs were refused admission; it was here that Government wished to maintain their own management. That is how the trouble began and is continued, because it is held that private people had acquired hereditary rights in the House of God.

Now let us turn to another temple, Nankana Sahib, the birth-place of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. The place is most sacred to the Sikhs, and the lands now attached to the temple were bestowed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who told Baba Sahib Singh Bedi to go out on horseback and all the lands that he could go round before dinner would be given over to the temple. The Baba galloped his horse and covered as much ground as he could and this secured the large endowments which we are asked to surrender to a profligate Mahant. Who are these Mahants you may ask? The Sikhs considered it as poison to use any offerings and asked the Udasi or ascetic Sikhs to serve in the temples. The three last Mahants or abbots at Nankana Sahib were men of loose character. Sadhu Rama and Kishan Dass died of venereal diseases. The present Mahant Narain Dass snatched the keys out of the pocket of dying Kishan Das, got hold of the money and made himself the Mahant. At the time of his succession, in the presence of a Magistrate, he promised to behave as befitted a religious teacher. He declared in writing that, if he was proved to go wrong, he would abdicate at the bidding of the Sangat. He soon began to drink and keep women, had children and built houses for his mistresses and started nautches in the temple. It was he who killed in cold blood over a hundred Sikhs. He is now undergoing a life sentence. It is at his behest that the Court appointed a receiver, a Muhammadan Patwari to manage an estate yielding over a lakh and a half per year! The Sikhs were put in possession and are now soon to be turned out, all in the name of law and order. Can anything be more provoking? It was at the martyrdom of the Sikhs at this place that the following words were added to the Sikh prayer :—

“Those who, to purge the temples of the long-standing evils, suffered themselves to be shot, cut up, or burnt alive with kerosine oil, but did not make any resistance or utter even a sigh of complaint: think of their patient faith and call on God!”

There is another decree to be executed at Gura-ka-Bagh. The Mahant was a bad character. He submitted in the early days, he and his mistress were baptised Sikhs. He went back on the arrangement and claimed a plot of land, the Government offered him assistance and later hundreds of Sikhs were mercilessly beaten. Men who had gone to the battlefield as soldiers of the Empire were beaten in cold blood. How any British officer could tolerate it passes my understanding.

It was not without tremendous provocation that the Sikhs, tired of Courts and law suits, decided to reform the Gurdwaras. The servants of the temples

[Sardar Jogendra Singh.]

had given themselves up to wine and women, and in some cases sold Gurdwara properties. I am sure no community could tolerate such desecration of their temple and wait and watch for the coming of a legislation, which, in spite of their sacrifices and many promises, is not in sight. The conditions in our temples are much the same as told in the Church History. I might just quote from it :

"There is no need to recount in detail the misdeeds recorded against them ; suffice to say that charges of immorality, hypocrisy, and luxurious living were proved against the majority up to the hilt, and not denied. If vows of chastity, self-denial, and poverty could not furnish safeguards against breaches of the moral law they deserved to be done away with. The acknowledged bad character of many who professed excessive piety brought all religion into discredit ; and the notorious scandals to which they gave rise, combined with the attempts made by 'foreign' houses to denationalise the ancient Church, made all true-hearted Englishmen hail with satisfaction the various Acts of Parliament by which the land was rid of their evil influences."

The Sikhs to-day expect in the same way every Englishman to rejoice in the attempt of the Sikhs to rid their temples of the bad characters and to support them so that their centres of religion may be purified and these large endowments may be used for charitable and good purposes.

Some of our religious abbots have been convicted in Courts for offences which would prevent their appearing in decent society, much less permit them to preside over religious institutions. What would you say if a Church and the lands attached to it were claimed by profligate priests as their private property ? The Sikhs tried to get redress in ordinary Courts, they applied to Government for long years but without any success. Can you blame the Sikhs for their decision ? They hoped, the hope is not even now dead, that the Government was their friend, and once they proved they were in earnest the Government would come to their aid. They decided to accept self-suffering in holding to the principle, that principle simply being that the community must resume full control of their Gurdwaras and temples. Is it right to think that such a large number of men are nothing but dupes and they deserve no consideration whatever at the hands of the paternal Government ? The Government must be guided not by mere perverseness but by some right principle. The struggle still continues. Thousands of good and simple-minded men are in jail and thousands prepared to take the place of those who are ushered peacefully into prison. So far as I can see, this will continue till the Sikhs obtain what is theirs by right. A great many side issues have been raised. It is said that there are other communities concerned in the Sikh Gurdwaras. I can assure you that the Sikh temples essentially belong to the Sikhs. They are open to all communities who come there for worship. It is not our intention to close the temple doors. We want to fling them wide open. I challenge the Government to show if there is any Sikh temple that has been built or endowed and maintained by any other community but the Sikhs. I challenge them to show if the vows taken by Udasin permit their acquiring any personal property. If the congregation attending the temple is no other but a Sikh congregation and if in the temple there is no other worship but as laid down in the Guru Granth Sahib, then the contention that other communities are concerned is much too far-fetched to deserve any attention.

If I may for a moment linger I should like to describe to you, Udasi, Nirmalas and Sikh proper.

- (1) The Udasin is a Sikh who puts on the yellow robe of a mendicant and gives up the life of a householder. He has been greatly respected, but he has never claimed to belong to any other fold. Indeed, at times of stress, Udasins have been fighting in the forefront in the wars which the Khalsa waged in the days of old and he has been the pioneer in propagating the Sikh religion. You might as well speak of a Christian monk as following some other religion than Christianity.
- (2) Then we have the Nirmalas who again take the vow of devotion to religion but they too like the Udasins form an integral part of the Sikh community. When ordained they receive their baptism exactly like any other class of Sikhs, i.e., they are given the Amrit in the same form as other Sikhs. They, like Protestant priests, dress distinctively and can marry.
- (3) I need not define to you the Sikh proper. He is a householder devoted to agriculture and other occupations. He is always ready to defend his religion and its freedom. He believes in one God and His justice, and believes in the protection which pure steel offers, hence the wearing of the Kirpan. This is what our Gurus have taught us.
- (4) Then there are the Sahajdharies or laymen. They may be Hindus or Muhammadaus who are attracted by the Sikh teachings and yet are unable to take baptism which would give them admission to brotherhood. The bulk of this community are Sikhs. They make up 99 per cent. of the population and that is why they claim a decisive voice as to the governance of our temples and shrines. It is they who have made endowments. It is they who have given lands. It is they who have built temples and it is they who have given their lives for them. It is they who maintain the Udasins and the Nirmalas.

The Government can at any moment by a referendum to the whole Sikh population ascertain the views of the community. We as Sikhs claim that it is the Government who in the beginning made the mistake of entering as owners men who had no rights of ownership. It is now for the Government to cure the defect for which they alone are responsible. We are frequently told that Government will welcome any legislation which the Sikhs would bring into the Council, but the Government are aware that a minority community like ourselves in the Councils has absolutely no chance of carrying through any legislation which is not in the first instance approved of by the Government. That is why we have been trying to reach an agreement beforehand before introducing any legislation in the Council. We want a simple Act, restoring to the community all lands and temples and shrines that are ours, the whole Punjab knows it, and if the Government raise any objections those objections are raised

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owing to apprehensions which have nothing to do with the Gurdwara question. A simple notification in Kapurthala State has served the purpose. It runs :—

- (1) That all historic Gurdwaras and Dharmshalas would thenceforth be under the direct management and control of an elected General Committee of Sikhs inhabiting the Kapurthala State.
- (2) That all village Gurdwaras and Dharmshalas would be managed and controlled by local Sikh Committees.
- (3) That all property (moveable and immoveable) attached to historic and other village Gurdwaras and Dharmshalas, which had hitherto been shown in revenue registers against Sadhus and Mahants, would at once be mutated in favour of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
- (4) That all Sadhus and Mahants leading vicious and wicked lives or not following the main principles of Sikhism as laid down by the Panth would be, after having been given an opportunity to reform themselves, at once turned out of the Gurdwaras or Dharmshalas.
- (5) That the General Committee would manage its work in accordance with the wishes of the Tahsil sub-committees, the members of which will be elected according to the rules prescribed by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

In the name of the Sikh community, speaking with authority, I affirm that if Government give us a simple Act containing the substance of the clauses I read out to you we shall accept such an Act with gratitude and do all in our power to work it in a moderate, generous and chivalrous spirit. The following resolutions were passed in 1921 and give an indication of the Sikh spirit :—

- (1) That all Sikhs arrested by the authorities in connection with the Gurdwaras should be released.
- (2) That the Panth strongly resents and condemns the action of the authorities concerned in arresting the Sikhs from Gurdwaras in various places and handing over the same to their previous Mahants and Pujaris.
- (3) That pending the enactment of legislation on the lines suggested by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee for the management of the Gurdwaras and other religious charitable institutions of the Sikhs, the control and management of Gurdwaras be left in the hands of those who were exercising such control at the time when the arrests of the Sikhs began in various places.
- (4) All efforts of the Panth to make the Government alive to the pressing need of reform in the Sikh Gurdwaras and charitable institutions having failed, the Panth standing before the Akal Takht in the presence of the Guru resolves solemnly that, if the innocent Sikhs arrested are not released and a satisfactory legislation of the Gurdwaras is not passed up to the 10th April, 1921, the Sikhs will consider it an interference with their religious rights and will be compelled to resort to all necessary means of reforming the Gurdwaras themselves.
- (5) The Guru Panth calls upon every Sikh to join the Akali Jathas to effect the reformation of their Gurdwaras.
- (6) As by the grace of the Guru, the Sikhs during this hour of trial have shown the greatest fortitude and self-control, so the Guru Panth ordains that in future, too, they should similarly maintain their calmness and self-restraint in the face of even greater



hardships and should never be prompted by an idea of revenge or retaliation. Thus should they remain faithful to Sikhism up to the last breath."

I need hardly add that, however, unimportant a community we may be considered to be and that we cannot cause any inconvenience to the Government, we may be driven out of our Gurdwaras, but we shall never admit defeat. We are determined to assert our religious freedom in the sense of having full control over our Gurdwaras and temples. We shall return again and again till we recover our Gurdwaras, so help us God. We stand for justice, fair play and equality for Sikhs and Sikh States. The Government can immediately close the chapter by introducing the necessary legislation and by a promise to release our prisoners.

There is one more point I have to deal with. Supposing we have a temple in an outside place, supposing our rights to worship there are interfered with, are we wrong in looking up to our Government to protect our rights there as in our own country? Can you imagine an English congregation being refused admission to a Church in China? Can you imagine a congregation of Englishmen going to worship being stopped and fired at?

Can you imagine the British Cabinet and the British Parliament sitting with folded hands without protecting the rights of its subjects? This is what has happened in a neighbouring place. Our Government has taken no part in the inquiry or in asserting that its subjects have the fullest right to enter and worship there.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. P. THOMPSON (Political Secretary): I rise to a point of order, Sir. Is the Honourable Member in order in referring to the administration of a State which is under the suzerainty of His Majesty?

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The Honourable Member is aware of the rule on the subject and I must ask him to keep within its provisions.

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH: With your permission, Sir, there is this point, I think it is a very important point which will have to be considered, whether Indian nationals outside India anywhere have their rights, and if the Legislative Councils have no right to express their views on that subject. That is the point, Sir, on which a ruling is required.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I have given my ruling. The Honourable Member may proceed. Incidentally I would draw his attention to the fact that he has now only three more minutes in which to conclude his speech.

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH: I leave out any reference to that matter. At the same time, before proceeding with my speech, I should like to point out that it is a question for the Government to consider whether the Legislatures in India have no right to express any opinion or protect the rights of nationals here or outside.

Briefly speaking, I conclude my remarks by summing up what the Sikhs desire. We have heard in the newspapers for the last month or so what the

[Sardar Jogendra Singh.]

Government are prepared to do. Well, the Sikh demands are :—

- (1) Immediate legislation restoring to the community the control of the Gurdwaras.
- (2) The release of all prisoners sentenced in connection with the Gurdwara movement on the passing of the Act and the withdrawal of cases and cancellation of notifications now in force.

Can you tell me that our demands are unreasonable? I am the only elected representative of the Sikh community in this House, but I have faith in the wisdom of this House in which I have worked for the last four years. I have faith in my Muhammadan, Hindu, Parsee and English colleagues to take a broad view of the matter and help the Government to reach an immediate solution and thus save a loyal and law-abiding community from ruin, even if it be granted that a few members of my community are guilty of transgression. I ask nothing more than what the Government have already sanctioned, the appointment of the Birdwood Committee to deal with the problem. I can promise you that, if such a Committee is appointed, the Sikhs will prove as good friends as in the past. You have only to refer to what was done by King Henry when such a situation arose. I think most of my Colleagues know how King Henry dealt with the question. Possibly we are 400 years behind the times. The same sort of legislation is required in India now to meet the need of the moment. The mistake was originally made by the Government by making these entries, and it is now for the Government to remedy the defects they created.

As a loyal subject and well-wisher of the Government, can I silently see a whole body of industrious and loyal workers like the Sikhs being converted into a discontented class over a religious question without doing my utmost to restore the old relations between the Sikh community and the Government existing since the annexation of the Punjab?

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Resolution moved:

"That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council to appoint a Reconciliation Board to consider the whole Sikh question and to promote its settlement by mutual agreement."

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. CRERAR (Home Secretary): Mr. President, I should like to be the first to acknowledge, on behalf of Government, as I am sure the whole House will acknowledge, the sincerity, the earnestness and good will which have inspired the Honourable Sardar in moving this Resolution. If I apprehend the Honourable Member's position correctly, he yields to no Sikh in his fervent desire for the maintenance of the Sikh religion, for the regulation by that community of their communal institutions and for the vindication of all their just claims and rights. I think he deplures, as much as Government and any other friend of the Sikhs must deplore, the results of a barren and acrimonious controversy and the adoption by a certain section of that community of methods which are as little calculated to attain their ostensible objects as they are inconsistent with good citizenship and the rights of other communities.

And on these considerations the Honourable Member is deeply impressed with the urgent importance of exploring every possible road to a remedy and

a solution. Sir, I am not merely content to acknowledge the justice of these sentiments, though I am unable, for the reasons which I shall subsequently lay before the House, to accept on behalf of the Government the precise terms of the Honourable Member's Resolution. I hope to make it clear that, though it is my duty to oppose this Resolution, we not only respect these sentiments but reciprocate them. And not merely because they are just in themselves. I am not afraid myself to avow a certain partiality in the matter, and if I may intrude a personal note in so grave a matter of public importance, I should like to say that, though I have never had the fortune to serve in a Sikh district, I have nevertheless had many opportunities of acquiring a close, and I think I may say not unsympathetic, acquaintance with the problems which confront, and I have many personal friends from amongst the Sikh community. I can, I hope, appreciate their many admirable qualities. I can respect their devotion to their religion and sympathise with their aspirations, and, most of all, we can all recall with pride and mutual congratulation their long and glorious association with the armies of the British Crown.

Sir, I do not abate one iota of these sentiments in approaching the Honourable Member's proposition. Government are as anxious as the Honourable Member himself to promote a solution and to restore the old relations—never completely severed, and shortly I hope to be completely restored—of cordiality and confidence. Our objects are the same and if we differ—and even so by no means by an insurmountable gulf—it is only in expedients.

I must, however, approach the proposition in the light of the general policy of the Government. That policy is a simple policy, it is a straightforward policy; it is the only policy which could be declared and acted upon by any Government alive to its responsibilities and determined to discharge them. It can therefore be simply stated, as it has been simply stated in a reply by His Majesty's Under Secretary of State in the House of Commons and in the following words:

"The policy of the Punjab Government, which has the full approval of the Government of India and of the Secretary of State, is to maintain order and public security by consistently applying the law against all offenders and at the same time to neglect no means of arriving at a suitable and equitable solution of the matters in controversy with due regard to all the interests that are affected."

A somewhat more detailed statement of this policy has recently been announced by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab, and I will ask the permission of the House to read one or two extracts from that speech. His Excellency remarked:

"I cannot properly distinguish my own feelings from those of the Government, but if I attempt to define our position it is a genuine desire to save the Sikhs and not to destroy them. We wish to save them from the discredit and loss of position which must be the fate of a community which yields to the advice of those who for whatever motive attempt to inculcate a mentality which is contemptuous of the rights of other communities and subversive of the authority of the State. We desire to aid it to gain by legitimate and constitutional methods a full control over its religious institutions. We have never attempted in the past, nor shall we ever attempt in the future, to check it in the fullest exercise of its religious practices within the bounds of law and good citizenship. We have come into this matter not because we were actuated by any feelings of hostility to the religious aspirations of any section of the Sikhs, but purely because it is our duty to maintain law and order, to prevent invasion of the rights of other communities and to secure to individuals the peaceful enjoyment of any privileges secured to them by the verdict of our Courts."

[Mr. J. Crerar.]

That, Sir, is an expansion in some detail of the very brief statement of policy made in the House of Commons. With regard to what was spoken by His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab on the matter of the decrees of Civil Courts, I may remind the House that in executing the decrees and orders of the Civil Courts, the Executive Government are merely the instruments of the judiciary; and the judiciary in their turn, in pronouncing their judgments, are the instruments of the Legislature. Well, Sir, that is the policy of the Government in the matter. I will now indicate the action which Government have taken in pursuance of that policy. I will remind the House that, when this matter was under discussion in another place, Sir Malcolm Hailey, then Home Member, gave the following assurance:

"We shall consider with the Punjab Government whether it is not possible to find some better machinery than appears to exist at present for enabling the Sikhs to state definitely their claims and their grievances and, if possible, to enable them to find a solution in co-operation with Government."

The House is aware what steps were taken by the Punjab Government, with the complete approval of the Government of India and of the Secretary of State, to give effect to that assurance.

If the very distinguished soldier, whom we have recently had the privilege of welcoming as an accession and an ornament to this House, will grant me the indulgence of saying a few words personal to himself—I am afraid His Excellency will be reluctant to grant me that indulgence—I would say this, that Government could have no better proof of its genuine solicitude to arrive at a satisfactory solution of this question than its action in entrusting the task to his hands. He accepted it at great personal sacrifice and inconvenience and established a claim, which I now very inadequately acknowledge, on the gratitude of Government, and I think no one will contest it if I add, of the Sikh community and the Indian public. These efforts were sincerely made, but they bore no immediate fruit. I do not intend to dilate on the causes and the reasons why these efforts were infructuous. I will only say this, that as I do not wish to look back on the old controversies, the old quarrels, and the troubles of the past, but as I look forward with hope and confidence to the future, I will say nothing now, I will speak no unnecessary syllable, I will make no superfluous gesture, which could possibly prejudice these hopes and anticipations. I listened with the utmost interest to the remarks of the Honourable Sardar when he recited the history of some of the religious endowments of his community. I cannot see eye to eye with him either in his recital of the facts or in the interpretations which he placed upon the actions and intentions of Government; but again, for the reasons which I have mentioned, I consider it unnecessary to go into controversies of that character. Mr. President, let us look to the future. The Honourable Sardar left me in considerable doubts as to the precise nature, the precise functions, of the Board or Committee which he contemplates. I merely wish to point out that if, as the actual terms of his Resolution imply, the duties of such a Committee were to cover the whole ground of grievances which have been alleged, or the claims which have been made by persons purporting to represent the Sikh community, we should have to travel not only over questions of the control of Gurdwaras, but over many questions involving constitutional points of a very

wide implication, and I doubt very much whether the Government of India would be competent to give them the powers requisite for so wide an inquiry. But apart from that, I would ask the Honourable Member to reflect and consider whether the time is now quite opportune for the action which he asks the Government to take. Do those who have hitherto claimed to speak for the whole of the Sikh community—do they still predominate in their counsels? Do the methods which have been adopted—the methods which we hear are still being persisted in—do they truly represent the methods which are accepted by the community as a whole? The Honourable Member has given us the strongest reasons for believing that that is not so. We have intimations that reasonable, moderate, opinion among the Sikhs is beginning to assert itself, and I invite my Honourable friend and his friends to exert themselves to establish that fact. Certainly, if negotiations are to be resumed with any reasonable prospect of success, the move in that direction, as things now stand, should come from the Sikh community as a whole; or if that is not yet practicable, it must come in a form which will render it possible for the whole community, not merely a party or a section, but for the whole community, to be fully, freely and effectively consulted. It is open to the Honourable Member and his friends to promote and to create such a situation, and their efforts will command the sympathy and the applause, and ultimately the active co-operation of all true friends of their cause and their community. I have very little more to say, but I should like to quote the words used by His Excellency the present Governor of the Punjab in his capacity as Home Member. He said in another place:—

“Let me say, again, as I said before, that we have no feeling against the reforming section of the Sikhs and no bitterness. But it is only reasonable that we should ask that the Sikh community at large should recognise the position not only of Government but of other sections and communities in this matter. In an India which is rapidly rising to full nationhood, no one community can justly claim too great insistence on its own position or its own rights, and certainly there are other ways of preserving its religious and social institutions, than by those which run counter to the methods of good citizenship. I will say no more than that. It is no exacting claim on our part, and we do not make it entirely on our own behalf. If they will recognise this, then I do not think we should have to wait long for a return to happier conditions. We look back with pride on our long association with the Sikhs, an association happy in peace and glorious in war. We desire nothing better than to see once again that old feeling of confidence and of mutual trust that our predecessors knew. The hand of friendship never has been withdrawn; it is there to-day, if only they would grasp it. We want to see again the day when officers of our administration are honoured guests, as they used to be, in their Diwans; we want to see the day when the regimental officer who salutes the Granth Sahib, as he is bound to do when it is carried past, salutes it not as a duty, but because it is the emblem of the faith of a people bound to us in ties of friendship and unalloyed good-will.”

Mr. President, though this was spoken more than six months ago and though much has happened in the interval, I am perfectly prepared to make it the burden and the tenour of my concluding words. The door is still open; the hand is still extended. (*Applause*).

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. KHAPARDE (Berar : Nominated Non-official) : Sir, I wish to support this Resolution. The reason of it is that the demand is so moderate. All that my Honourable friend wants is a Conciliation Committee on which the most influential families of the Sikhs will be represented, and I believe that others able to decide a difficult matter of this kind will also be there. So in the event of this Committee sitting together and going into

[Mr. G. S. Khaparde.]

all the matters, the important Sikh families will be represented. I suppose they will be the highest among them and will have an inward knowledge of the Sikh religion and the various tenets about which the fight is going on, and the other gentlemen on the Committee will settle the other matters that are necessary to come to a finding on a delicate matter of this kind. The matter appears to me to be really very delicate in this respect that since the annexation of the Punjab rights have grown up—rights generally brought into existence by the laws of limitation I believe. They say that for so long this person has been in possession and therefore he is the owner. That is an approved doctrine and is well established in British jurisprudence, but I beg to submit that in India such a doctrine did not exist before the British Government came in. The laws of prescription, or the statutes of repose as they are called now, found no counterpart in the older laws.

Right is right and if there was really a mistake made and if the property of one community was put in the name of one person by a mistake, certainly, if that mistake can be proved, I believe Courts would grant relief except for these laws of limitation and prescription. The policy that has been read out by the Honourable Mr. Cregar is a good policy and I think that it does not conflict with the demand that has been made to-day. That policy is that the Sikhs shall respect the judgment of the Courts and they will go by the precedents. There is room for talking this matter over with the Mahants and finding a way out of the difficulty. In this respect also I believe the policy of Government is not in direct conflict with the demand that has been made by the Resolution. The Resolution asks for a Reconciliation Committee and there is always room for reconciliation. Reconciliation means that each party has to give up a certain portion of its right in order that peace may be purchased and that that peace may be enduring. All that I am anxious about is that high Sikh families should be represented on that Committee, and I take it that there should be others to bring in their experience of the world to find out a way in which that reconciliation should be brought about. In this sense therefore and fully recognising that there are very delicate matters involved, I support this proposition that has been put forward by Sardar Jogendra Singh.

THE HONOURABLE SIRDAR CHARANJIT SINGH (Punjab : Nominated Non-official) : Sir, I entirely sympathise with my Honourable friend Sardar Jogendra Singh regarding the improvement of the Gurdwaras, but I am afraid I cannot support the Resolution as it stands. Every well-wisher of the Sikhs and of the Punjab would like to see the Sikh question settled as soon as possible, but the method proposed by my Honourable friend is, I venture to say, not the right method to achieve the object we have in view. The reasons advanced by the Honourable Mover have left me quite unconvinced regarding the advisability of his scheme, particularly at the present juncture. If the matter could be settled by a Reconciliation Board it would have been settled by the Committee so ably presided over by His Excellency the present Commander-in-Chief.....

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH : May I mention that the Committee never came into existence ?

THE HONOURABLE SIRDAR CHARANJIT SINGH : . . . . . who has won the respect and esteem of all the Sikhs by his sympathy and regard for their welfare. Moreover, Sir, one of the ablest and sympathetic Governors has only recently taken charge of the province, and I do not think it would be wise or proper to tie him down to one particular course of action. Already things are beginning to have a somewhat brighter appearance and I have no doubt, and in saying so, I am sure I shall be voicing the feelings of a large number of the well-wishers of the Sikhs and of the Punjab, that His Excellency Sir Malcolm Hailey will be able to solve this problem amicably if he is left a free hand and full discretion. Under the circumstances, the House, I beg to submit, would be well advised not to force on the Local Government a Committee like the one proposed, which, I am afraid, would only complicate matters. I therefore oppose this Resolution.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF : I have listened to the speeches of my Honourable friends Sardar Jogendra Singh and the Honourable Mr. Khaparde with the greatest interest and attention and having done so, I have failed to realise as to whether the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh has fully considered all that has been previously done in the very matter which he recommends, and also whether he has attempted to think out to its logical conclusion the results that would happen were Government to take the steps which he now asks them to take. I know from personal experience how very anxious Sardar Jogendra Singh has been to bring the Sikh troubles to a satisfactory conclusion for a long time. As he and the Honourable Mr. Crerar mentioned, His Excellency the Viceroy and Sir Edward Maclagan, the late Governor of the Punjab, did me the honour a short time ago of appointing me as President of a Committee which they had hoped might be able to deal with the Gurdwara questions. While so employed, the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh was kind enough to give me his help and advice whenever he could possibly do so. And not only he, but a very large number of Sikhs belonging to the different sects of the community from all parts of the Punjab, Jats, Khatri, Ahluwalias, Aroras, Bedis, Sodis, Keshdaries, Sajihari and Sanatan Sikhs Mahants, Udasis, Nirmalas all came to me and gave their advice and assistance. After being engaged in this for a day or two, it struck me that the work to be performed must surely be a simple one. I only had implicitly to follow the advice given me by each deputation and all would be well. When however I came to analyse the various panaceas that were suggested, I discovered that the recommendations made, differed as widely as the poles apart. These varied from handing over all shrines in the Punjab immediately to the Akalis, to the depriving of the Akalis of any shrines of which they have taken possession. I was much struck by the extreme anxiety of every section of the Sikh community to come to an understanding, and I can honestly say this that I too was equally anxious to help the Sikhs to arrive at a satisfactory settlement. It is just 40 years now since I have had the privilege of serving alongside Sikh soldiers. Starting in a small cantonment in Central India, I had the amplest opportunity of associating with my men in their work, in their sports and in their play and, after all, the impressions and friends of one's boyhood are not easily forgotten. Later on, I had the advantage of paying many visits to the Punjab villages as the guest of my Sikh

[H. E. the Commander-in-Chief.]

officers, living with them, joining in the village life with my Sikh officers and men, sitting under the village trees and conversing with them. Ten or twelve years later in 1897 I witnessed the magnificent *bahaduri* of the Sikhs during the successful defence of the Fort of Gulistan, and the defence, and I am sorry to say, fall of the small post at Saragarhi where every Sikh soldier of the small garrison gave his life with shouts for the Sirkar and "Wah Guru." It is only natural that, knowing men like that, I should feel confidence in entrusting to them the custody of my wife and children in the sure belief that they would defend them with their lives, if necessary. Again, quite recently during the last four years I have had opportunities of visiting personally a great number of Sikh villages scattered about in the Punjab, mostly on our new canals. It has been a real delight to me to visit them, if only in the first instance to see the extraordinary change that has come over the whole face of the country. What in days gone by used to be miles of barren "Put" are now rich lands of golden corn, and beautiful cotton—the results of the far-seeing and efficient administration of Government and the wonderful genius of our canal engineers. What specially pleased me was to satisfy myself that my old Sikh comrades and many others are enjoying their full share of the prosperity of the country, enjoying that prosperity and perfectly happy tilling their land. It was nice too to find that same old stolid democratic spirit among the Sikhs there. Perhaps I am not right in using the word "democratic". I should rather call it theocratic, because I feel that the word "theocracy" is the one which describes the Sikh community better than any other. Nearly every man is imbued with a strong religious feeling and very jealous of anything that might interfere with his religion. But in talking with them I found that they were under no illusions; I never came across a man who was able to say that he felt his religion was in danger owing to the action of Government. In fact the old soldiers would remind me how in days gone by when they first joined the regiment the British officers were the first to ascertain if they had taken the *Pahul*—if not to insist on their doing so—to insist also on their daily attendance at the Gurdwara to be instructed in Gurmukhi and to learn to read the Granth Sahib—in which one of the British officers would often be associated with them. But one could not help noticing that there was in ways a subtle change coming over some of the villages. In the more distant ones they told me that they only wanted to be left alone to be able to join in the general prosperity. They did not want to be visited by any Jathas either of Shahidi or so-called Dhurli Jathas, and certainly not to join in agitation. In the villages nearer the big towns the changes were most noticeable and there was apprehension that everything was not all right—something was being done about their religion. But that, I have only found in and near the biggest towns. The ordinary villagers of the Punjab, the zamindar, had no such feeling. He had confidence that he was being treated fairly and squarely by Government on the subject.

The Honourable Mr. Crerar mentioned the subject of the Committee of which I was appointed President. As Sardar Jogendra Singh said, that Committee never met, and perhaps that is the best of all reasons for my not saying anything at all about it. But we did have a certain amount of negotia-



tions and conversations with some of the Sikh members of the Punjab Legislative Council, men who were in the confidence of the Parbhandhak Committee. I am unable to tell you about those conversations because they were privileged.

I will only say how deeply I regret the fact that they should not have led to success. Now Sardar Jogendra Singh recommends that the Government should again start a Reconciliation Committee. I would ask him whether he has really thought out how Government could hope to do that with any real hope of coming to a satisfactory conclusion at the present moment and with all due dignity to itself. Rather I would say that the time has come—if the time had not already come long ago—for the Sikh Sardars to step forward and take their places like men. They know better than we do how Government is perfectly prepared to meet them half way, and what one wants to see them doing is to go to their people, lead and help them, talk to them, and above all tell them the truth. As leaders this is their duty—and for the zamindars it is their right. That is what they have not done. They can tell them the truth now. The Honourable Mr. Crerar has told us how the Punjab Government is in full sympathy with any movement to purify the Sikh shrines. The one thing which they insist upon is that nothing shall be done outside the four corners of the law, which must and will be upheld by the Punjab Government and by the Government of India. But the Punjab Government are perfectly prepared to accept any Gurdwara Bill that may be brought forward by the leaders which is acceptable to all classes of the community and which may receive the approval of the Punjab Legislative Council. I am specially thinking at present of the Sikh Members of this Council, of the Legislative Assembly and more especially of the Punjab Legislative Council. Let them cease from hiding behind the shadow of Government. Let them realise that their duty does not merely consist in formulating Resolutions and asking questions. Let them go among their people, help them and, as I say, tell them the truth. It has struck me that for the last few years some of the leaders of the Sikhs have taken the attitude of those of whom you sometimes, in a Punjabi crowd, hear a wise man saying with a shrug of the shoulders or a shake of the head "*Ghar phuk tamasha vekh*". That surely is a most ignoble attitude for any leader to adopt. While there is still time, associate with yourselves every section of the Sikh community, for representation of all sects is essential—the representatives of the big landholders of the Punjab of whom there are many, representatives of traders and merchants, lawyers and professors, retired civil and military officers—they will all help you, and if I can say a word in the way of advice I would go to them and remind them in the words of one of your Punjabi couplets: "*Bhantee beetee thoree rahee*, etc."

THE HONOURABLE DR. SIR DEVA PRASAD SARVADHIKARY (West Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, this would have struck one as a purely

12 NOON. local and provincial question. But the fact that you have

been pleased to admit the Resolution shows that it is recognised that it has all-India features and important all-India features. And it is from that point of view that I think Members from provinces other than the Punjab may well present their points of view to this Council and through it to the Government. Sir, no one, be he a Sikh, a Hindu, a Moslem or a Christian, can withhold in principle his support to the Resolution that Sardar Jogendra Singh has tabled, namely, that some agency that has not yet been thought of or been

[Dr. Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikary.]

successful should be found for the purpose of getting rid of the situation created by the more than regrettable nightmare that has been sitting upon all India for so long a time. The Honourable Mr. Crerar has told us that the door is still open, the hand remains extended. No one has or ever had the slightest doubt or misgiving on that question. That the Punjab Government, both under Sir Edward Maclagan and Sir Malcolm Hailey, and the Government of India have been doing all that they can and know to bring this regrettable episode to a conclusion, there can be no room for doubt. And, if a happy conclusion has not yet been arrived at, it must be due to reasons other than the disinclination of Government officials not only to agree to but to be active parties to an agency of the kind that is now suggested. We had a Government enunciation of the position in regard to the Birdwood Committee which Sardar Jogendra Singh told us was non-existent. This is a matter that needs clearing up. We had it on the authority of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief that it did come into existence but did not function. Without the facts before us relating to its ineffectiveness shall we assume that it could not meet or is it the case that it would not meet except upon the terms insisted upon by those who are accused of defying law and order? If the latter is the case it is difficult to see what another more official or even a purely non-official Reconciliation Board is likely to be able to do. These, Sir, are questions of fact upon which I think the House is entitled to full information before either supporting or throwing out the Resolution that has been moved. Neither from the Honourable Mr. Crerar nor from the Commander-in-Chief have we had any clear indication as to why a Committee so influentially presided over could not get to its work and make a report that might or might not be acceptable to some of the parties in the dispute.

Unless we have a clear indication regarding those matters, it will not be easy for those who want to keep an open mind to say that, whatever the difficulties in the way of the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh's Resolution from the practical point of view may be, it ought not to be supported in principle.

His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief has told us that Government would be prepared to accept any Gurdwara Bill that the Sikh leaders wished to bring in. I do not know how far such an elastic proposal may take us. We had an indication from the Honourable Sardar as to the sort of Gurdwara Bill wanted by those he seeks to voice. He would like us to go back to the years of Henry the VIII who was of course not at all a profligate man and who had amiable methods both about his wives and about Church resumptions. He would also like us to go back to more recent legislative undertakings by notification such as he tells us obtain in Kapurthala and would thus have a clean slate provided. If, Sir, that is to be conceded, why, matters are no doubt simplified. The Sikh leaders would have only to bring in a Bill saying that all Sadhus and Mahants shall go out, as in Kapurthala, and the Akali representatives shall come in. Is that the sort of Gurdwara Bill that according to what the Commander-in-Chief says, would be acceptable to the Government? If that is so, we in other provinces would have reason to be a little apprehensive. If this example that the Akalis are setting of capturing Gurdwaras because the law and law Courts are all too slow and unsatisfactory, and because the new fangled law of limitation, to which the Honourable Mr. Khaparde has

deprecatingly referred happens to be in the way, were to spread why, then, the natural course of taking the law into their own hands and asserting themselves would be bound to be followed in other provinces. And that is happening or is about to happen in other parts of the country. My friends from Madras will tell you what is happening in South India in regard to some temples. My friends from Bengal can tell you what is happening, and what would happen there if the lead which the Akali leaders are giving in the Punjab were to be successfully followed up. And we in this House, Sir, where you have permitted the discussion of the question from the broader points of view, shall with some apprehension await the pronouncement of the Government as to what would be permitted to be followed if agitation could be worked up and if sufficient strength in its favour could be demonstrated would, law, legislation and law Court proceedings be at an end or would Government help in quick and effective eradication of admitted evils? Sir, I must join in deploring that our law Courts and our procedure are not always as quick and as efficient in these matters as they might be, and the Honourable the Law Member might take up the question with more vigour than has been done in the past. I remember nearly 10 years ago attending a conference, a big conference attended by people from all parts of the country at Delhi on the invitation of the Government, which was to devise and suggest methods and measures as to how religious endowments of all communities could be protected. If action in this direction had come in time, much of the existing difficulties might have been minimised. Government are not absolutely powerless in enacting an elastic workable all-India Act, and, if that was impossible or undesirable, provincial enactments might be undertaken by which, having regard to local conditions, religious endowments of different sections of the community might be looked after. I am prepared to agree with the Honourable Mr. Khaparde that an inequitable Limitation Act about which he complains too late in the day, need not necessarily stand in the way of right being done. Right is always right. A reasonably quick and effective legal procedure would put an end to any wrong however long standing, but of course on proper materials. We started after the conference with suggestions about keeping registers, and requests for furnishing information from time to time, upon which the individuals or the societies or corporations interested in the different endowments could proceed as the basis of their legal proceedings. All that, however, has unfortunately been of little avail and the matter has not been followed up. And we are naturally reaping the harvest, such as it is not only in the Punjab, not only in Madras, not only in Bengal but elsewhere. The trouble is sure to grow, and therefore the question has to be looked at apace from a larger point of view than the mere Sikh point of view, which I take, Sir, is the reading of your admitting this Resolution in this Council. I hope a clear lead will be given to all provinces as to what will and can be done, with the aid of amended and strengthened law and quick law Court proceedings for which these demonstrations show there is a claimant demand. A clean sweeping of the slate by a quick short cut would involve interfering with private rights that have grown, and rights of communities and corporations that have a say which no Government or well ordered society can tolerate. All these are questions that have in the first instance to be looked at as a whole, and can be looked into by an organisation such as the

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Resolution suggests, unless the Birdwood Committee will yet grapple with the situation.

**THE HONOURABLE DR. MIAN SIR MUHAMMAD SHAFI (Law Member) :** Sir, I entered the House this morning without any intention of taking part in this debate. But my own friendship for my Sikh brethren and the keen regard I have always had for their educational, economic and political progress impels me to say a few words on this Resolution. Sir, my Honourable friend, Sardar Jogendra Singh, is aware, as I am sure you, Sir, yourself are aware, that years ago when I began to take a humble part in the public life of the Punjab, I had the privilege and the pleasure of coming into close contact with the leaders of the Sikh community. It was but natural that it should have been so, for, being myself a member of an agricultural community, and my Sikh brethren, the overwhelming majority of my Sikh brethren, being also members of agricultural communities, it was natural that there should be a community of interest as well as of feeling between them and myself. I well remember the days when for some 12 years the then acknowledged leaders of the Sikh community and myself took part, and a very intimate part together, in trying to promote the welfare of our province. I well remember those days when I had the pleasure and the privilege of attending some of the Sikh gatherings in my province, educational, religious as well as political, and of showing my keen interest in the welfare of the Sikh community. Sir, you will remember, the Honourable Mover of the Resolution will remember, the Punjab Sikh Educational Conference, the annual gatherings of which held in different parts of the Punjab were really a source of intense pleasure and delight not only to the Sikhs themselves, but to those who had the welfare of their Sikh brethren at heart.

Where are those great educational gatherings of the Sikh community now? I well remember having attended some of those gatherings when I saw with my own eyes 20,000 Sikhs, men and women, gathered together deliberating over the burning educational questions of the day and discussing measures for the educational advancement of the Sikh community. Since the rise of this Akali movement, what has happened to that educational movement among the Sikhs of the Punjab? I well remember the movement for social reform among my Sikh brethren and the activities of the Sikh leaders of those days when I was in the Punjab before I left Lahore in order to play a humble part in the Executive Council of His Excellency the Viceroy, a social movement which was bringing about results which delighted the hearts of not only the Sikhs, but those of us who had the welfare of the Sikh community at heart. Where is that social reform movement amongst the Sikhs now."

Sir, this new phase of the Sikh situation arose in the Punjab, as I said, since I left Lahore on my appointment as Member of the Executive Council; and as one who is no longer taking an active part in the social, political and educational movements but is watching, and watching naturally as a Punjabee with the greatest interest, the various movements which are now going on apace in my province, I am perhaps in the best of positions to form not only a correct judgment upon the existing situation, but to compare it with

the state of things which existed in the Punjab in the old days before the year 1919. And I assure you that, comparing the Sikh situation at present with the Sikh situation of those days, my heart is filled with sorrow. So far as the Gurdwara movement itself is concerned, I am sure that no non-Sikh, be he a Christian, be he a Hindu, be he a Muhammadan, can but have sympathy with the object which the Sikh reformers have in view. I am perfectly certain, and as a Punjabee I wish to avail myself of this occasion to assure my Sikh brethren, that the Government of India, as well as the Punjab Government, are in entire sympathy with the Gurdwara reform movement. Was it not because they were in sympathy with the Gurdwara reform movement that the Government of the Punjab introduced the Gurdwara Bill in the Punjab Legislative Council? As both His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Honourable Mr. Crerar have pointed out, the door is still open. Indeed the recent appointment of what is known as the Birdwood Committee itself is proof positive, if proof were needed, that the Government of India as well as the Punjab Government are as anxious to bring about a reconciliation and to restore the old situation between the Sikhs and the Government as the Honourable Mover of this Resolution. Government could not have selected—and I am perfectly sure that the Sikh community itself could not have selected—a better President for such a Committee than His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, whose close and friendly association with the Sikh community is well known to us all, who knows the language of the people, who knows the customs and habits of the people, who has intimate knowledge of the social life of the Sikh community, than whom how could you find a better head of a Conciliation Board?

**THE HONOURABLE DR. SIR DEVA PRASAD SARVADHIKARY:** Will the Committee meet and work?

**THE HONOURABLE DR. MIAN SIR MUHAMMAD SHAFI:** The Committee did not hold any formal meeting it is quite quite true, but.....

**THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH:** Was the Committee constituted?

**THE HONOURABLE DR. MIAN SIR MUHAMMAD SHAFI:** As the Honourable Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikary is perfectly aware, there are certain preliminary steps which have to be taken always when one is face to face with a difficult and complicated situation like this before a formal Committee can be appointed and can meet, if there is earnestness, if there is desire that the step taken should ultimately end in success. But if during those preliminary steps, a situation arises which makes it absolutely hopeless to expect that any good result will accrue from the formal constitution of the Committee and from taking formal proceedings, then what is the good of proceeding with steps like that if impossible conditions precedent are laid down by one party or the other? But if impossible conditions precedent are laid down by one party or the other before they come to grips in order to deal with the difficult and complicated situation, then really a solution of the problem becomes hopeless. To-day I wish to point out not only that the Government are willing and ready to accept any Gurdwara Bill which the leaders of the Sikh community may frame consistently with the rights of other communities, but that they have always been so willing and ready to accept such a Bill as that. Let

[Dr. Mian Sir Muhammad Shafi.]

them frame a Bill. I believe, if I am not wrong, that the Sikh Members of the Punjab Legislative Council were asked to bring forward a Bill on those lines. What is there then to prevent a reconciliation? What is there really which prevents the termination of the unfortunate situation which has arisen in the Punjab? I, for one, as a Punjabee and as a sincere well-wisher of my Sikh brethren, fail to see what is the real stumbling-block in the way of such a reconciliation; and I appeal, earnestly appeal, to my Sikh brethren and to leaders of the Sikh community like my Honourable friend Sardar Jogendra Singh to exert their influence in earnest to produce an atmosphere in which this painful and unfortunate Sikh problem can be settled, settled satisfactorily, settled to the mutual satisfaction of the Sikh community, the other communities as well as the Government, so that normal conditions may be restored in this unfortunate province, which has had to go through such series of crisis in recent years. I, who am looking forward to going back to public life in a few months and who will again have to come into contact, and close contact, with my Sikh brethren, with my Hindu brethren, hope and pray that before I go out of Government, normal conditions may again be restored.

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH: Sir, I have listened with deep interest to what my Honourable friends, the Home Secretary and His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, have said. I do not doubt their sincerity nor the desire on the part of the Government of India and the Government of the Punjab to find a settlement of the difficulty. I am quite confident that no one desires more than His Excellency General Sir William Birdwood, who sacrificed his well-earned holiday to find a solution for the Sikh trouble, to find a settlement of the difficulty; but at the same time I am not prepared to allow the present position to continue without asking this House to find some remedy, to provide some kind of machinery for the purpose of arriving at a settlement. The position, so far as I can see, and so far as the Government of India are concerned, has not changed in the last four years. Is it our fault entirely that the atmosphere which my Honourable friend Sir Muhammad Shafi wishes the Sikh leaders to create has not been created? Have not the Government to take any part in creating that atmosphere? I ask the Government what they propose to do to hasten a solution of the question. It is for this reason that I propose that a Reconciliation Board should be appointed, so that the question may be immediately dealt with. I freely admit that in appointing General Sir William Birdwood the Government of India really did what the Sikhs desired. It was really at the request of the Sikhs that Sir William Birdwood was asked to preside over this Committee, and the Sikhs were extremely anxious that under him a solution should be found. Difficulties however arose, which I am not in a position to detail before the Council, but I would say that those difficulties were not insurmountable and would have been surmounted if a little more time had been given. If this Council permits me I would like to point out what would be the result of delaying a decision and what has happened within the last four years. It is true that the Sikhs have marched in batches of 25 and 500 to take possession of the Gurdwaras; but when the suffragists in England wanted to get the laws modified they went in larger crowds to demonstrate their desire for certain changes. The Sikhs

in the same way are continuing to demonstrate that they require a new Gurdwara Bill. We want new legislation to rectify the defects that exist in the existing law. Perhaps the Council is not unaware of the fact that the Sikhs have undergone a great deal of suffering. They have laid down their lives in various places. There was a demonstrating crowd near Rawal Pindi, when a train was allowed to run over it. I do not know if in any civilised government such a thing would be permitted that a crowd which was demonstrating should have a train running over it. Then again nearly twenty thousand people have already gone to jail. I am not aware under what law they are detained, and how long they can be detained under that law. These people are silently sent to prison. If this method of creating an atmosphere is the best in the view of this Council, I have certainly no objection; but if this Council thinks other methods of creating a better atmosphere are desirable, then I think the Council should help me to pass this Resolution, so that the Reconciliation Board should be immediately constituted. We have been asked that the Sikh Members of the Legislative Council should introduce legislation, and I have no doubt that in due time such legislation will be introduced. But, on the other hand, I may put it to you that the Governor occupies a dual position. He is the representative of the King on the one hand and on the other is responsible to his Council. It is for his Cabinet to introduce this law. It is done in other countries; why should we be asked to introduce this legislation when Government can do it more easily and more effectively? My friend, the Honourable Mr. Barron, was telling me that they have already passed an Act. There is an Act in existence. There is a dispute about certain Gurdwaras in Courts. That Act is now the law of the land. Why then are Government not making use of the Act to prove its usefulness? It would certainly prevent the difficulties that are arising, and are likely to arise, in enforcing decrees.

I am really grateful for the kind way in which the Government have received this Resolution; for the way they have expressed a desire to promote Gurdwara legislation. At the same time I might inform them that to us who are more in touch with popular opinion than they, it is extremely desirable that certain machinery should be provided to carry out an immediate settlement. I do not see why Government should hesitate in accepting my Resolution. The delay will only result in more difficulties. I think it is the desire of this House that the question should be immediately settled.

If I may, I should just like to read a letter which I have received from a Risaldar Major who has given the best years of his life in the service of the Empire. It is a very long letter, but at the end he says:

“Your forefathers and mine fought together for the British Empire. We have done our best to serve the Empire. Is not Government going to save us now by enacting the legislation we require? The result would be that when the people who now go to jail come back, many people who have lost their properties and have no profession, these will take to leading lawless lives. Are we going to continue in this way to swell their number and to increase the numbers of the discontented, to continue to give real cause to people to be dissatisfied?”

Then, Sir, there seems to be some misapprehension that all that could be done has been done. The Secretary of State, when speaking on the Indian question, dwelt largely on what was done in India. He said, let us establish a Sikh Board of Control which shall be made the repository of the Sikh religion, so that these temples may be administered in the interests of the Sikh religion.

[Sardar Jogendra Singh.]

I desire to say here that the Sikhs require nothing more than the promise contained in the words of the Secretary of State; nothing more than what His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief just now offered, and after getting full control over their Gurdwaras, nothing more but to be on the friendliest possible terms. But at the same time they feel that the centres of their religion must be purified and that they must have control over their Gurdwaras.

The question before this House is not a very difficult one. The Government have already said that they are prepared to pass legislation. I do not think there has been a voice in this House which has been dissentient on that point. The main question is to provide an early remedy to reach that decision, and this lies with this House by supporting my Resolution for the creation of a Reconciliation Board such as was proposed by me and which should come into existence. If that is done,—I speak for the Sikh community, they have come and told me, if such a reconciliation takes place,—the Sikhs have the greatest desire for friendship. In the villages I can assure you there is not the least amount of bitterness among the population. They feel puzzled, very very puzzled, why early legislation has not been passed, why their rights have not been recognised, and why we are still left to our own resources to find a new law and push it through the Council with our small minority.

I will not detain this House any longer; I wish I could withdraw this Resolution, but, in the interests of the community, I do not think it would be expedient to withdraw it. It is for this House to consider fully and carefully and to take into consideration the phase which we are passing through, to see the psychological aspect of the question, and then to decide which is the best way to reach the solution. To my mind there can be no better way than to constitute a Board to take up the question and introduce legislation by agreement. If that is done, the question can be easily settled.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. CRERAR: Mr. President, I do not intend to detain the House very long in replying to the debate, largely because, when I first addressed the House, I endeavoured to give as comprehensive and as concrete an account as was in my power of the policy and the intentions of Government; and very little has fallen from Honourable Members during the course of the debate to render it necessary for me either to add to or to subtract from the statement I then made. One Honourable Member observed, and he observed with some point, that he would have supposed from the general content and character of this Resolution that it was a matter which was more nearly the concern of the Provincial Government than of the Central Government. That was in a sense a perfectly just remark, and I hope the Honourable Mover of this Resolution and the House will realise that the fact that Government took no steps to have this Resolution disallowed on that ground was an indication of the kind which they have in many other respects and repeatedly given, an indication of their absolute willingness that the questions involved in the Sikh controversy should be freely discussed and that no means of arriving at a solution should be neglected. That opportunity was again given to-day to my Honourable friend. I do not know whether it would be proper for me to remind the Honourable Member, but I think it is correct, that he framed this Resolution



and gave notice of it at a time considerably anterior to the efforts which Government made to constitute a Committee of Inquiry. Now the Honourable Member disappointed me in one respect,—and this is a point to which I have already adverted,—he failed to give any indication to the House as to what he conceived to be the functions of this Committee, the manner in which it should proceed, and the powers which it should possess. I, Sir, speaking on behalf of Government, affirm that we will neglect no practical remedy. If there is any remedy which we think offers a reasonable prospect of success, we are perfectly prepared to examine it. My main objection to the Honourable Member's Resolution is not the spirit in which it is conceived. I have already acknowledged that, it is not the manner in which it is put forward; I have stated that on some points the Government and the Honourable Sardar do not see eye to eye; I do not quarrel with that; my objection is a practical one. Should we by this means further the cause we have at heart? I observe that the Honourable Sardar spoke plaintively and rather vaguely of "some remedy," of "some solution." That is exactly the point. We are all anxious to find some remedy and some solution; and though my Honourable friend, in his concluding speech, spoke in the same vein, the same rather indeterminate, though I admit the same sincere, manner in which he had already moved his Resolution, there was lacking in it precisely that element of practicality which I would adjure the House in any Resolution to which they may commit themselves strictly to adhere. The Honourable Member rather surprised me by inquiring why it was that the Government of the Punjab had not applied the provisions of the Act which they had themselves passed. That is a singular complaint for the Honourable Sardar to make because he is as well aware as I am that that Act has been placed on the Statute-book of the Province of the Punjab, that it is entirely a matter....

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH: I think it received the assent of the Governor General.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. CRERAR: Quite so; that Act is on the Statute-book of the Province of the Punjab and the initiative lies under that Act primarily with those who desire their institutions to be regulated by the provisions of that Act. It is not due to any supineness, any inactivity on the part of the Government; it is due, as far as I can discover, to a reluctance on the part of the Sikh community or of some section of it to have recourse to this measure. My Honourable and learned friend opposite (the Honourable Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikary) adopted an attitude which I confess caused me some bewilderment. As far as I can judge, he in the main approved and endorsed the policy of Government which I have endeavoured to explain, but he came to no final conclusion on the Resolution. He left the matter in suspense, and in suspense on one ground, because he wanted to know why the negotiations which have already been referred to were infructuous.

THE HONOURABLE DR. SIR DEVA PRASAD SARVADHIKARY: And whether the Committee could and would go on with the work.

THE HONOURABLE MR. J. CRERAR: I will reply to that with a remark which I have already made: I think the auspices are now more favourable; I think the sky is gradually becoming more clear; I think views of moderation and common sense, which I am sure are entertained by my Honourable friend the

[Mr. J. Crerar.]

Sardar and by his friends, are beginning to assert themselves. It is for clear, tangible and unmistakable proofs of that we are waiting, for nothing more. The Honourable Member made no reply to the invitation which I had the honour to address to him, and which was endorsed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, that he and his friends should get to work and promote and create the atmosphere which is necessary for any hopeful project of this character. I have one word more to say. My Honourable and learned friend opposite was perturbed by the words which fell from His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief. He seemed to be under some apprehension that Government would be willing to accept any kind of Bill from any source whatever. I must draw the attention of my learned friend to the fact that he has not precisely and correctly reproduced or interpreted the words of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief. What His Excellency said was that, if the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh and his friends, if the real leaders of the real opinion of the Sikh community, those who regard these matters with common sense and with a due regard for all the other considerations to be taken into account, got together, His Excellency admitted that a Bill bearing the impress of such leaders and based on such principles would almost certainly be one which Government would be willing and anxious to promote. I would further reply quite specifically to the question which was asked by my Honourable and learned friend. He asked, what kind of Bill would Government be prepared to promote? Government are ready, and have always been ready, to promote and assist in the enactment of a measure for the administration of the Gurdwaras in accordance with Sikh sentiment, provided always that that measure is in accordance with recognised legal principles, and provided further that the rights of all other communities are respected and protected.

With these words I would merely ask my Honourable friend—he has had his discussion, his Resolution has been received and discussed, he will himself admit, with sympathy from all quarters of the House—I will not ask him to withdraw his Resolution, but I will merely appeal to him to consider whether at the present stage we ought not to let the past alone and look forward with hopeful confidence to the future. If there is anything to be gained by pressing it to a division—if the Honourable Member is convinced of that,—I will say nothing further to the contrary. I will merely say—Is it not our duty now to avoid anything in the nature of recrimination, to start afresh from the point at which we now stand and to endeavour to do nothing which will prejudice the prospects of an early and successful settlement of this controversy?

THE HONOURABLE SARDAR JOGENDRA SINGH: With your permission, Sir, I should like to withdraw this Resolution.

The Resolution was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

#### RESOLUTION *RE* ANNUAL PROVISION FOR THE REDUCTION OR AVOIDANCE OF PUBLIC DEBT.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY (Central Provinces: General): Sir, I beg to move:—

“That this Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that the Government be pleased to take steps to introduce suitable legislation at an early date to provide for an annual provision for the reduction or avoidance of public debt.”

Sir, with your permission I will take the liberty of recalling what I said in the Council of State on the 7th March last with reference to this matter. I then pointed out, in the course of the Budget discussion, that—

“there is one other important matter regarding our national debt which requires profound consideration and fresh examination. That question too has been dealt with by the Honourable Sir Basil Blackett with the instincts of a born financier. There has been in the past no system, no policy, and no recognised method adopted by successive Finance Ministers for the purpose of liquidation of our national debt.”

Then I proceeded further and stated :—

“I only hope that as the subject is of very great importance and cannot be fully discussed during the time allotted for the Budget debate, the Finance Minister will give an early opportunity to this Council to discuss this question by a separate motion or Resolution to ascertain the views and wishes of the Members of this Council.”

If therefore any apology is needed for this Resolution, this is one. I am grateful to the Finance Department for giving me and Members of this Council an opportunity of discussing this important question. This question is not so exciting as the one which we have just debated. I fear it is an abstruse one and requires thoughtful consideration. Sir, in order to enable the Council to appreciate the significance of this Resolution, it will be necessary for me to bring to the attention of this Council certain figures. The national debt is the supreme concern of every country. It is the primary matter which affects the best interests of every nation, and India is no exception to that. I do not propose to weary the Council with any detailed figures, but I must, in order that the Council might be in a position to understand the situation, point out the composition of our national debt and the means hitherto adopted by the Government of India for the repayment of that debt. It is known to this Council that our total national debt at present is Rs. 917 crores. Of this national debt, Rs. 362·92 crores represents what we call our rupee loan and Treasury Bills in the hands of the public. We have likewise a similar sum floated in England which is known as the sterling debt. The sterling debt of India also amounts to nearly Rs. 393 crores. In the course of my speech I shall try to avoid as far as possible small decimals and fractions. The unfunded debt of the country is also of some significance. The unfunded debt represents the Post Office Savings Banks, the Cash Certificates and the Provident Funds and other departmental and judicial receipts held in the treasury. This debt comes to nearly Rs. 73 crores. We have to add to this the capital value of the liabilities undergoing redemption by way of railway annuities and the like, and this amounts to the figure of Rs. 90·14 crores.

This is the position of our national debt. It is a jaw-breaking figure, but there is nothing to be alarmed about it. It is a big debt, but it does not in any way mean that India is not solvent. Compared with many other nations, we stand in a very favourable position. Our national debt consists largely of what we call productive debt—monies spent on the construction of railways, irrigation canals and other important public works. Other countries also have very very large public debts ; but when an examination of our national debt is made, it will clearly appear that we stand in an exceedingly favourable position as compared with other countries ; and in order that we should improve our position in the future, in order that our borrowings should

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be based on a proper and satisfactory principle and a sort of systematisation may be approached and accomplished, this Resolution has been brought forward.

Of this total debt, Rs. 578·39 crores represent productive debt ; and the unproductive debt is only Rs. 228·45 crores. I shall refer to this unproductive debt a little later. Now, what is our position ? In India our debt falls under the category of two important headings. One is what we know as terminable loans, the other is what we call non-terminable loans. You are aware that all our 8 per cent. stock, our  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. stock, are called non-terminable loans. There is no period of redemption fixed.

1 P.M.

A time-limit was originally fixed for redemption of these stocks which gave the option period to Government. That time-limit has expired, and now this amount can only be redeemed at the will of Government, and as you all know, when Government can retain and hold money at 3 and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. they are not likely to redeem this category of debt very quickly. Of course in this category also fall two small loans—one the Scindia loan and the other the Nawab of Rampur loan, both intended for the purpose of construction of railways. Their terms also are practically non-terminable. The terminable loans represent the two big loans that were floated in 1915 and 1917 during the war for the purpose of war expenditure and making our contribution to England, and those 5 per cent. and 4 per cent. loans amounted to about 39 crores, 16 lakhs. Then Government also floated war bonds to a very large extent which were to be repayable within a period of about 15 years. And these war bonds come up to a very large amount. They fall due from time to time during the next 10 years. The total then of our non-terminable loans is 197 crores and the total of the terminable loans is 138 crores. A large sum also was raised by way of sterling loan. Now, in regard to our rupee loan floated in this country, the Council will be pleased to bear in mind that the Government have made no proper provision for its redemption except the two war loans, 5 and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. 1929-47 and 1945-55 loans which were floated, for which Government have set apart a sum of money on the scale of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. as depreciation. That depreciation Sir Malcolm Hailey found in 1921 insufficient to support even those loans and asked the Council to vote for 80 lakhs a year as an additional support for the following years. Happily Sir Malcolm Hailey's prophecy has turned out to be incorrect and, as was pointed out in the course of the last Budget speech, there was no occasion to fall back upon this extra item of 80 lakhs a year.

I have given this Council a brief account of our debt position. Now it will be of interest to the Council also to know what has been the policy of our Government in respect of our rupee borrowings. I do not wish to go into very ancient history, but I will tell the Council that these rupee borrowings started in the time of the East India Company. The East India Company borrowed at large rates of interest ; they borrowed money and raised loans at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum. From 1820 to almost 1857 the rate of interest gradually fell from 6 per cent. to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Lord Canning found himself in difficulty after the Mutiny and required money for the purpose of reconstruction and carrying on the administration and he again altered the financial policy and increased the rate of interest to 6 per cent. That continued

till the year 1871 when the policy of Government was again altered and they continued to borrow at reduced rates till in 1894 they issued a big loan at 3½ per cent. and in 1896 at 3 per cent., loans which are now called non-terminable loans and which have been the cause of so much discontent among their holders during the last five years and which have also given trouble and cause for serious reflection to our Finance Department. What I wish to point out to this Council is that the Government have made no methodic, no regular, no systematic, provision for the payment of our national loans. In earlier years, perhaps, it was not necessary, in view of the fact that in those years our borrowings were not so large. It was only after 1910 that our borrowings began gradually to increase till during the war period when and after they reached a fabulous figure. In the two years 1916 and 1917 we had to raise nearly 43 and 47 crores by public borrowings. So, in earlier years it was perhaps not imperatively necessary to provide for the amortization of debt. But now our national debt has reached a figure which makes the question one of very serious consideration. We cannot, consistently with sound finance, allow the present policy to continue. I may at once say that I do not claim any credit for this Resolution. The credit for this Resolution is due to Sir Basil Blackett who a little time after arriving in this country discovered the defects in our system and applied his mind to the solution of some of the most important questions concerning the financial policy of this country. Unhappily, in the past, our finances have come under the baneful influence of politics. Political sentiments have in the last few years affected our finances. But I am sure that it is the opinion of all right-minded people that politics should be entirely divorced from the question of finance, and that all financial matters should be discussed and debated by this Council purely from the point of view of public interest and the welfare of the country at large. Sir, the Government of India have provided in the last Budget a sum of Rs. 4 crores for the amortization of debt. In the previous year some sums were also allotted for the purpose. But these are the result, not of any systematic or methodical policy of the Government, but of accident. You are aware that Government had entered into contracts with some of the Railway companies to purchase their property by way of terminable annuities. We had to provide for these terminable annuities in our Budget. We had also entered into an agreement with the subscribers to the two big loans of 1929-47 and 1945-55 to provide for a depreciation amount at the rate of 1½ per cent. In order to meet this depreciation and in order to meet these terminable annuities, these four crores have been provided. But it is not by virtue of any settled policy of the Government that this has been done. My Resolution now seeks to impress upon the Government the necessity of arriving at some definite settlement in respect of this matter. We cannot allow this most important financial question to remain in its present condition any longer. The Government and some of my Honourable Colleagues may say that the credit of Government is large and there is no necessity for providing an amortization fund. I admit that the credit of this country is large. But the credit of any nation is a very fragile and fleeting article. You cannot always depend upon your own national credit. A sound financier will not depend upon national credit. This credit is liable to be affected by internal and external shocks. This credit is liable to market convulsions, both inland and foreign, this credit is liable to be affected by political influences, this

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credit is also liable to be affected by other causes, such as drought, scarcity, famines, and similar other happenings. So, you cannot always depend on credit. That country is great, that country's finances can be considered sound, which has made adequate provision for the repayment and the timely liquidation of its debts. It is like the case of an ordinary individual. The individual in his domestic budget provides for the repayment of his debt. Why should the nation which is only a community of individuals avoid provision for the repayment of the national debt and depend upon fortuitous, accidental, circumstances for that purpose? Sir, I therefore request that this Council will agree with me and press upon the Government the necessity of coming to a decision upon this point. I submit that in a matter like this it is essentially necessary for us and for Government to examine the sum total of our national debt and to see what actual assets we hold against our debt. These assets require also annual verification. They appreciate and depreciate. Every commercial house at the end of the year examines its books, allows so much for depreciation and arrives at a true idea of its own position. The Government do nothing of the kind. They only proceed upon the budgeted figures for the valuation of their assets. We have got so many millions invested in the railways, so many on irrigation, so many on canals and public works! How much of that has really appreciated or depreciated — the Government make no inquiry. This is the position. I therefore submit that it is necessary that we should make a full examination of the subject and provide for the repayment of our debt, and I also submit that the repayment should be a statutory provision. The reason why we should provide for statutory repayment is easily understood. Otherwise the policy of repayment will depend on the whim and fancy of each successive Finance Minister, and there will be no continuity of policy. There will be no method in the matter of dealing with a question like this. It is all right, as I said in my Budget speech, as long as we have got a Finance Member of the type of Sir Basil Blackett. He knows the real position. He has been nurtured in the financial problems of His Majesty's Government where he had access to and means to know and learn the whole position. We do not know what is going to happen in the future. I do not for a moment suggest that all the money which we would lay aside or earmark as a sinking fund should not be used at all. I do not say that it should be accumulated with interest and compound interest. It should be utilised in the repayment of the existing debt, or it should be utilised in expenditure on productive works. Again, whatever amount of sinking fund we may be able to lay aside may be put into the entire balances of Government, and from those balances every year a certain percentage of our securities may be purchased and cancelled. For instance, every year we may purchase a certain percentage of our securities in the open market and cancel them.

It is impossible for me to place before you a cut and dry system of liquidation. I fully recognise that the question is a very very important one and requires considerable reflection. The experts of the Finance Department with the assistance of experts at Home can easily devise a policy which will be of material assistance to the country in this connection. Now, as regards our non-productive debt it is scandalous, I say, to allow it to remain stagnant in its present position. Very little has been done during the last few years towards

the liquidation of our unproductive debt. Our unproductive debt is a real debt. It is a debt which would threaten and weigh upon any community. That debt ought to be liquidated with the quickest possible despatch. I know that the greater portion of our non-productive debt, 228 lakhs represents, as I have pointed out to you, our war gift to the British Government and the accumulated deficits of the five years ending the 31st March 1923; but in peace times it should be the policy of Government to liquidate the debt, especially unproductive debt, as early as possible, because any moment a serious emergency may arise such as war and large sums of money may be required for fighting a war or for the protection of our frontier or for any unforeseen internal purposes and you may have to float a large loan. It is therefore very necessary that the unproductive debt should be kept under control, and every possible and legitimate means should be adopted for its rapid liquidation. Now, Sir, I suggest these plans in the best interests of Government. By the plan I have suggested the credit of Government will materially improve. Our future borrowings will be obtained at a much cheaper rate in the market. We shall be in a position to secure loans at easier rates, and in order to do that, the Government should make a definite announcement of their policy that in no case are the Government in future years, except for emergent necessities, going to pay more than 5 per cent. I must respectfully point out that it was a great blunder committed by Government, when they floated the sterling loan last year in England at 7 per cent. and when they permitted the Bombay Government to float the development loan at  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. What was the result? It temporarily ruined Bombay, because merchants and other people withdrew all their money from the joint stock companies and banks where it was deposited and invested and employed it in the purchase of the  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. development loan, with the result that there was no money left at a very critical time for the purpose of carrying on the trade of Bombay, and that fact, accompanied partly by the Reverse Councils which were then in vogue, accounted for the partial ruination of the industrial activity of Bombay. I must try and curtail my speech as unfortunately I have to my credit very few minutes. It is a very important subject and I have taken some time, but it is a subject which cannot be dealt with within the thirty minutes allowed by the rules. However I will try and summarise it.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT:** The Honourable Member has only two or three minutes.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY:** There is a lot of money in the country. Government can obtain any amount of capital cheaply. Unfortunately the money power has not been properly mobilised in India. That ought to be done. I do not believe that there is any large volume of hoarded wealth but large sums of money are available in the country, and if the Government made their loans attractive by instituting a scientific system and method in their borrowings and providing for a regular and scientific system of amortization, a large sum of money would be annually forthcoming. If trade facilities are given they will conduce to the prosperity of commerce. I also think that the time must arrive before long when the Imperial Bank will have to be converted into a State Bank and the Currency Department to be handed over to the Imperial Bank of India with power to issue notes.

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And the State Bank when constituted should also be authorised to issue seasonal currency against inland commercial paper. When this is done there will be a flow of great prosperity in the country and the Government of India will have the good fortune to obtain large sums of money whenever they desire at a cheaper and less burdensome rate.

I am sorry, there is much more to be said on the subject and other kindred matters, but time does not permit me to do so. I hope therefore that the Council will accept my Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : It has been pointed out to me that the Honourable Lala Sukhbir Sinha is not present, and that therefore his Resolution, which stands third on the paper, will not be moved. I have also just received a communication from the Honourable Saiyid Raza Ali that he will be unable to move the Resolution which stands in his name on the morning of the 11th. The position thus is that to-day we have to finish merely the Resolution now before the House, whilst on the 11th there will be only one Resolution standing in the name of the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh. It has been suggested to me that when we adjourn now we should not return this afternoon, but that we should finish this debate on the morning of the 11th, and then proceed with the Resolution of the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh, in the hope that both will be finished before the adjournment on that day. I should like to know the pleasure of the Council.

THE HONOURABLE DR. MIAN SIR MUHAMMAD SHAFI (Law Member) : Sir, I think it would be convenient for Honourable Members, instead of returning after lunch to-day, to continue this debate on Thursday morning when we will have plenty of time for the discussion.

THE HONOURABLE MR. YAMIN KHAN (United Provinces West : MUHAMMADAN) : I have got an amendment standing in my name to the Resolution of the Honourable Lala Sukhbir Sinha. Am I entitled to move the Resolution first ?

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : I am afraid that under the rules of the Council, the Honourable Member is not entitled to move the Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE MR. YAMIN KHAN : May I point out that the Honourable Saiyid Raza Ali might authorise somebody to move the Resolution which is standing in his name on the 11th.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The Honourable Member is not familiar with the rules of the Council of State. It is not permissible to do that.

Does any Member object to the procedure suggested ?

*(No objection was made.)*

Then I propose to adjourn the Council now until 11 o'clock to-morrow morning, and to adjourn this debate to the morning of the 11th, when it will stand first on the paper.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, the 10th September, 1924.