

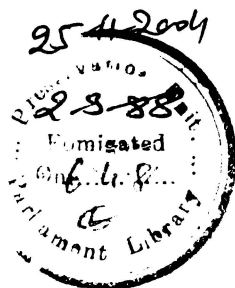
THE
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

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SIXTH SESSION

OF THE
SECOND COUNCIL OF STATE, 1929



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COUNCIL OF STATE.

Friday, 22nd February, 1929.

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

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE RAILWAY BUDGET.

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS (Central Provinces : General) : Sir, I would have been very much delighted if I could have seen my way to congratulate the Honourable the Commerce Member and the Chief Commissioner of Railways on the Budget they have presented to this House. Sir, in spite of the best efforts made by the Honourable the Commerce Member, I think the Budget which we have before us is not a satisfactory Budget. Congratulations in the other place have been showered upon the Honourable the Commerce Member for the greater earnings of Railways which he has shown in this year's Budget. But, Sir, if we see the earnings from the financial point of view, and if we go somewhat deep into the matter, we find that the position is altogether different. The earnings should be judged from the percentage of the profit which we derived from the capital and not from the lump sum of the earnings, which have been shown in the Budget. Now, Sir, as regards the profit on the capital, if we see the figures we find that in 1924-25 the total mileage of the railways was 27,324, the income per mile was 37,407, that is, 5·85 per cent. To-day, that is in 1929-30, we find that the actual mileage of the railways has gone up to 30,000 and the income per mile has decreased to 35,666 and the percentage is 5·39. When they go on increasing the mileage, the lump sum in the earnings will naturally go up, but we have to see whether this increase is according to the mileage of the railways ; and if we see the mileage of the railways we find that in fact the earnings have gone down and have not increased. Half per cent. looks a small amount ; but on 700 crores of capital this becomes about 3½ crores and therefore it is in fact a big loss. It will be said, Sir, that this decrease is on account of reduction in fares. In this respect, first of all, I have to say that the reduction in fares has not been appreciable and then the reduction which has taken place in the fares is more than compensated by increased traffic. Therefore, Sir, this argument has no legs to stand upon. However, I do not mean that Railways should go on earning more and more and give 19 per cent. dividend to the State or to the private companies, as has been done by the Bengal and North Western Railway. In England there is a Standard Revenues Act that controls the affairs of railways which belong even to private companies. Here, Sir, the railways belong to the State and we in fact want such a kind of law in India. The point which I wanted to make was that the jubilation which has taken place in an unusual degree on account of the increase of the earnings of the railways is without reason, because, as I have just pointed out, the earnings from the financial point of view have actually gone down.

[Seth Govind Das.]

Now, Sir, as regards the new proposals in the Budget, we find that these proposals are also not so sound and cannot be said to be beyond dispute. The first proposal is for the appointment of a new Member on the Railway Board and it is said that this new Member will specially look after the affairs of labour. Rupees 64,000 per year have been demanded from us for this expenditure and we have been assured that this Member will look after the interests of 8 lakhs of labourers who are working on Railways. To me it seems, Sir, that Government have tried to kill two birds with one stone. They want to provide somebody with this big job and at the same time they want us to support this proposal, because this Member is going to look after the affairs of labourers. In fact, Sir they have tried to place us on the horns of a dilemma. If we sanction this amount, Rs. 64,000 per year, there will be an additional burden on the public of this country, and if we do not, then Government will accuse us and say that we did not stand by labour. Sir, this is not a novelty with the Government. They have always tried to place us on the horns of a dilemma. When they wanted the 1s. 6d. ratio, they said that this ratio would be beneficial to the labouring classes and we found that the capitalists and labourites were about to quarrel. When we wanted to reduce the salt duty, they came forward and said, "If you want to reduce the salt duty, provincial contributions cannot be remitted", thus they seem to amuse themselves at our expense by always placing us on the horns of dilemmas. But, Sir, thanks to the Government, we have also become used to face these. If we think that the appointment of this new Member will be a useless burden on the public of this country, we will not hesitate to reject this proposal. My submission is, Sir, that if the Government really care for labour they should appoint a Director or a Deputy Director under any present Member on the Railway Board. Sir, the task of looking after labour is not of a technical nature and it is not required that a man on such a high salary should be appointed to this office. (*An Honourable Member* : "Question".) But, Sir, if the Government have decided to create a new job, for God's sake let them not do it in the name of labour.

The second new thing which we find in the Budget is the reduction of third class fares on the Eastern Bengal Railway. In this respect I have to urge that this is only a piece of belated justice. On several State Railways third class fares have already been reduced and this is only a thing which was overdue.

Sir, on the 18th instant, when I moved a Resolution in this House for the reduction of third class fares the Honourable Sir Geoffrey Corbett assured me that the Railway Board had launched on a policy of reduction of third class fares and that they would do as much in this respect as possible. I thought that this year, which according to them was a prosperous year for Railways, they would reduce third class fares on all lines, but to my entire disappointment I find that only on one line has the fare been reduced and that too over long distances. Many times I have said that third class passengers do not travel for luxury. They travel for necessity and their necessity does not take them to long distances. We find that third class passengers travel roughly for three purposes. Firstly, for their business, and they have no business concerns in Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi or Rangoon; their business headquarters are in their own districts and they go to these headquarters either for purchasing or for selling things or for litigation, and these district headquarters are not far off from the places where they actually live. The second purpose for which these poor people travel is for social visits, such as marriage or condolence, and I may point out, that these places also are not far from the places where they live. The third object of their travel is pilgrimage, and I admit that this

object takes them to long distances. But, Sir, if we go a bit deeper into the matter, we find that on pilgrimage too they do not travel at a stretch. They break their journey at all intermediate stations where there is a place of pilgrimage and they do not stay there for a day or two but for weeks. Therefore these long journeys also break up into small travels. Sir, as I have said so many times and as many Honourable Members have said in this House and in the other place, the reduction of third class fares is not beneficial to the poor people of this country unless and until they are made for smaller distances, because the poor people of this country do not go to long distances, and we find that in this Budget the reduction for small distances has not been made.

Now, Sir, as regards the facilities which are given to third class passengers I have more than once said in this House that they are far from satisfactory. Writing in *Young India* recently, Mahatma Gandhi said :

" Now that I have resumed third class travelling after many years, my eyes are opened to the fact that the condition is about the same that ruled five years ago. Third class carriages and especially latrines are just as dirty and unkempt as they ever were. Then, there is the larger question of improvement in accommodation by the construction of more and better carriages. This no doubt involves considerable expense. But as it is the third class railway traffic which is the most paying part of railway administration, it is due to that vast travelling public that at least a minimum of comfort is insured for them."

Sir, I hope this year the Railway Board will see its way to look after the comforts of and facilities for third class passengers.

Now, Sir, the third new thing which we find in this Budget is the reduction in freight on coal and forest produce, and I have to mention that here too the position is not very satisfactory. As far as my province, the Central Provinces, is concerned, it is full of forests and what we have to pay to send our timber to Calcutta by the East Indian Railway is much more than what the Burma people have to pay for the timber which they export to Calcutta. The result is that the Burma timber which is sold in Calcutta becomes cheaper than the Central Provinces timber which is sent from the Central Provinces to Calcutta. I hope, Sir, that the Railway Board will see that more reductions are made on the East Indian Railway for this forest produce.

One thing more, Sir, and I have done, and that is about the capital outlay on the Railways. In this respect, I have to speak about my own province. The Central Provinces is a province which needs more communications for the development of its industries. These are some of the lines which are wanted in the Central Provinces as soon as possible : Jubbulpore to Damoh *via* Singrampur, 69 miles ; Bilaspur to Mungali and then on to Mandla, 70 miles ; Mandla to Dindori and on to Birsingpur in the Rewa State, 108 miles ; and Jukehi on the Great Indian Peninsula beyond Katni to Bijiruhogarh, Barhi to Chandia on the Bengal Nagpur Railway, 80 miles. In Berar the following lines are required : Akola to Hiverked and on to Khandwa, 96 miles ; Amraoti to Mosi and Narkhed, 72 miles ; Khamgaon to Khikli and Jalna, 114 miles ; and Akola to Basim and to Hingoli, 92 miles. These lines total about 700 miles. The last two have some connection with the Hyderabad State and the Railway Board will have to consult the Nizam's Government about it. What I want to submit is that the Railway Board should do as much in this respect as possible.

In conclusion I beg to mention, Sir, that what we want is a reduction of expenditure and the Indianisation of the Railways. Now, if we look at the present Budget, we find that it has not been improved in this respect. At the same time, we want that facilities and as large reductions and concessions in fares as possible should be given to the poor people of this country

[Seth Govind Das.]

Sir, as this has not been done in the present year, I am not in a position to congratulate the Honourable the Commerce Member and the Chief Commissioner of Railways on the Budget which they have presented before this House. Of course, I admit that the Honourable Sir George Rainy has tried his best to do as much as possible, but our disappointment is keen to find that his efforts did not bear the fruit which we expected they would bear. Sir, I have done.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY (Central Provinces : Nominated Non-Official) : Sir, I rise to offer a few observations on the Railway Budget. In doing so, I entirely disagree with my Honourable friend Seth Govind Das when he states that he is not able to see his way to congratulate the Railway Administration on the presentation of this Budget. I never expected a member of the Congress Party and an absentee landlord to appreciate the magnitude of a great commercial undertaking such as our Indian Railways.

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS : I am interested in commerce also. I am not a landlord only.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY : My friend has stated that he is disappointed with the small percentage of the railway earnings, and he thinks these earnings are not compatible with the large sums involved and comprised in the railway assets. My friend brought forward a Resolution only the other day for the reduction of third class railway fares. To-day he is dissatisfied with the small percentage of the railway earnings. My friend has failed to appreciate that he cannot blow hot and cold on the same occasion....

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS : I think both things can be done at the same time.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY : He forgets that an increase in railway earnings is incompatible with a general reduction in freights and rates.

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS : May I point out, Sir, if the Honourable Member will give way, that last year considerable reductions were made in third....

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The Honourable Member is attempting to make a second speech.

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS : Only a minute, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT : The Honourable Member knows quite well that at this stage, having once made a speech, he can only offer a personal explanation. It does not seem to me that he is attempting to do that. Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY : Sir, I desire only to point out that the Honourable Member has taken up a most incompatible and indefensible position. (*The Honourable Seth Govind Das* : "Question.") He has also said that he is disappointed with the increase. I will just refresh

his memory with a few small figures. In 1927-28, the railway surplus over the expenditure, or in other words, the net gain was 12½ crores. In 1928-29, the railway earnings were 10½ crores and if the expectations of the Railway Administration prove correct, the railway earnings for 1929-30 will be about 11½ crores.

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS : Read the mileage also.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MANECKJI DADABHOY : In matters like this we can only take about three years' average. The total earnings during these three years have been 33½ crores, giving us an average figure of 11½ crores. I want my friend to point out to me any undertaking in any part of the world as a parallel to our Railway Administration. If my friend was acquainted with the history of the Railway Administrations of other countries he would not have made the observations which he has made to-day. I know it has been the fashion to attack the Railway Administration of Government. I remember in my early Parliamentary life I used to hear so often that ever since the Railways were being constructed in this country, the railway policy of the Government of India was wasteful and extravagant and that expenditure on sanitary works and education was starved (*The Honourable Seth Govind Das* : "Even to-day it is right.") and money was diverted to the Railways. My friend ought to know what an examination of the figures shows to-day. We have capital assets of Rs. 700 crores to-day which are equal to about £500,000,000, and on this we receive this income. Not only that. We have not spent all the 700 crores. We have not raised on loans entirely all these 700 crores. During the last five years we have provided capital expenditure from our earnings, and in the early years of the railway policy and programme we raised loans at 3½ and 4 per cent. and we have built up a fine system of railways in India which is giving to-day, even according to my friend's lowest figure, an income of 5.39. Sir, this is not a small matter to be depreciated, and I have not the slightest doubt that the railway policy which has been steadily pursued is one which is an absolutely wise one, and I congratulate the Railway Member and the Chief Commissioner of Railways and Mr. Parsons, the Financial Commissioner, on the great achievements which they have been able to obtain.

Sir, in this connection I will briefly refer to the question of reserves. We have already built up with the end of this financial year a reserve of 19½ crores. If the expectations of the Honourable the Commerce Member prove true, by the end of the next financial year we shall have built up a reserve of Rs. 22½ crores. I am fully aware that the primary object of building up this reserve is for the purpose of making sure our payment of the fixed charge under the Convention to the general revenues. That was really the main and primary object of the reserve. I entirely agree that every possible endeavour should be made to build up and maintain a good and substantial reserve, but I wish to ask the Railway Administration to consider at this stage and see whether this policy of building up reserves is to be indefinitely pursued or to be brought to a standstill when a proper figure is reached which will ensure us against all difficulties and which will enable us regularly to pay up the fixed charge to the general revenues. Sir, my examination and my study of the Railway Budgets for the last five years have convinced me that these reserves are becoming somewhat unduly high. I thoroughly appreciate the anxiety of the Government of India to build up a substantial reserve, but I think that when the reserve has attained and accumulated to a figure of about Rs. 30 crores, it would be time to halt for the simple reason that during the last five

[Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy.]

years it was only on one single isolated occasion that we had to withdraw money from this Reserve Fund. If my memory is correct, it was in 1926-27 that we withdrew the paltry sum of Rs. 7 lakhs only to make up the fixed charge which was due to the general revenues on that occasion. On no other occasion have we drawn any sums from the Reserve Fund, and I feel that further increases in these reserves mean further delay in making suitable reforms and in reducing rates and fares as are essentially necessary for the more popular working of our Railways. I hope my Honourable friend the Commerce Member will understand that, in making these observations, I do not deprecate their efforts in any way. I fully realize that it is an insurance against straitened or unfavourable financial circumstances in the future. But, at the same time, I think that as the Committee is now sitting to consider whether the Convention needs any alteration or not, it is time for the Government of India to give this matter their very careful consideration. Sir, in this connection I have only one word to say about the loss on strategic railways. I shall not raise to-day the question whether our losses on strategic railways should be wholly borne by the Indian exchequer, but as we are losing about Rs. 1,75,00,000 annually on these railways, I would request the Honourable Member to ascertain if no further economies can be made in the working of these strategic lines, because it is essential that India should be protected against this heavy perennial loss. I realize that these lines are absolutely necessary for safety and for maintaining peace all over India, but, at the same time, I consider that the expenditure on these lines should be strictly restrained and economies practised as far as possible.

Sir, I congratulate the Railway Board on the reduction in coal freights. It is a belated measure of concession, but, at the same time, I feel it will be very highly appreciated by the country at large. The last reduction in coal freights was made in the year 1926 and very welcome and substantial reductions have now been made. My argument is that these reductions will not affect railway revenues in any way. In 1926, after the reduction was made, taking the case of the East Indian Railway for instance, the tonnage carried in 1927-28 increased by 31 per cent. and the earnings of that Railway from coal increased by 33 per cent. I am sanguine that similar results will follow the reductions now made. Though, as pointed out by Sir George Rainy, there will be an initial loss on account of the reduction of coal freights of 53 lakhs, I have not the slightest doubt that my Honourable friend the Railway Member will tell a different tale next year.

Sir, with regard to general reductions in rates and fares, I also appreciate the work which has been done in the past by the Railway Administration. In order to restore general solvency to the Railways, it was found necessary some years ago to raise considerably the rates and fares to a much higher level. The result of that was an all-round decided increase in our revenues. The time has now come when a further substantial reduction is necessary. We must endeavour with the increase of Railway rates to go back as near as possible to the pre-war rates and fares—the increase still varies from 30 to 60 per cent. on different Railways which is undoubtedly high. Unlike my friend Seth Govind Das, I shall even be satisfied if the Railways only yield a revenue of 5 per cent. You cannot in the case of a sound commercial undertaking look forward to huge and speculative dividends. You can expect a huge speculative dividend only in the case of a speculative concern in which you are just as liable to lose money. In the case of a commercial undertaking like our Railways, if they give us a return of only 5 per cent., it will be a matter for congratulation, not

only to the administration, but the country at large. I shall welcome at further reduction in third class fares and also for short distances. Reductions in the rates for parcels and luggage must be also considered and effected. In this connection I would raise an important point, and in doing so I do not wish to do any injustice to the Railway Member and his brilliant staff of Railway officers who have done such wonderful work and who have done their best in considering the diverse claims for reduction in rates and fares ; but I think it would conduce to the smoother working of the railway machine and would restore confidence in the Assembly and the opposition party if some statutory provision like the Railway Act of 1921 in England is introduced in this country. What I mean is that we ought by Statute to fix the limits to which Railway Administrations can raise rates and fares. This has been done successfully in Great Britain. The circumstances there are a little different, and there may be in India no necessity for such legislation in the case of our State-managed Railways, but we must not forget that, besides the four State-managed Railways in this country, there are many railways which are owned and managed by Companies and there are also railways owned by District Boards. It is, therefore, essential that there should be some statutory provision restraining Railway Administrations from the imposition of arbitrary and excessive rates and fares. This matter is worthy of consideration, and I trust the Government of India will take into consideration at an early date the enactment of legislation of this kind.

Sir, I wish to say a few words in connection with the appointment of a fifth Member of the Railway Board, and, disagreeing again with my friend Seth Govind Das, I congratulate the Railway Administration on their frankness and courage in coming forward before this House and the Assembly and asking for the appointment of a fifth Member, and confessing at the same time that the present administration of the Railway Board is not in a position to meet its future obligations and responsibilities with efficiency. Sir George Rainy has made out an unanswerable case in his speech in the other House in which he has referred to the difficulties he has to contend with. I will not go into the details of the question, but will only read out a passage from Sir George Rainy's speech which ought to convince every Honourable Member here of the necessity and importance of this new appointment. He said :

"For the last two years the work of the Railway Board has been under my close observation and what I have said reproduces the impression left in my mind by what I have seen. It has become more and more clear to me that the general Member is being asked to perform impossibilities, and that it is idle to expect that any one man should possess all the qualifications required for dealing with the various aspects of his work."

This is quite enough for me. I would accept Sir George Rainy's statement with implicit faith in a matter of this character. Sir George Rainy has proved during the two years that he has held this office that he has not been wanting in keeping a constant eye and supervision in regard to all matters where economy could possibly be effected, and when he comes before this House and implores us for the appointment of an additional Member on the ground that his Department, as at present constituted, is not in a position to cope with the work, I consider it simply foolish on the part of anyone of us to object to the appointment of this new Member. (*The Honourable Seth Govind Das* : "Question".) My friend says that this is going to involve us in an expenditure of about Rs. 6,000 a month. I know it is going to involve us in an expenditure of Rs. 75,000 a year. I quite admit that. What is Rs. 75,000 when you consider the great advantage and the efficiency of the Railway Administration ? I believe that if we agree to the appointment of a new Member, the Railway

[Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy.]

Administration will be carried on in such a way as will bring us increased revenue, it will be a source of strength to the Railway Administration, and I therefore cannot understand why, for a paltry sum of Rs. 75,000, we should turn down a proposal which has been deliberately made and put forward before this Council after due deliberation, not only by the Railway Member, but by the Government of India who have also accepted the recommendation. Sir, it is said that the new Member will be entrusted with numerous railway problems which have arisen of late. It is perfectly true that in the past three years labour problems have amazingly grown in number, importance and complexity. I quite understand and I appreciate the difficulty of the Railway Board. We all know that during the last twelve months strikes on the Bengal Nagpur Railway, strikes at Jamshedpur, strikes lasting for nearly six months in Bombay and discontent among the low-paid employees of the Railways have entailed a great deal of anxiety and personal work and trouble on the Railway Administration, and if we can help to alleviate that trouble to a certain extent and obtain more efficiency and greater despatch in the disposal of railway questions, I think it would be a reasonable thing for us to agree to such a proposal. (*The Honourable Seth Govind Das* : "One more Member will be the panacea for all ills!") Sir, if the scheme materialises—and I hope it will materialise and I hope the Assembly will have the good sense to accept this proposal, though the Standing Finance Committee for Railways have refused to accept it, I hope it will be accepted—in that case I urge and pray that the best available man with competent knowledge of Indian labour conditions and with a good intellectual and moral backing will be selected. I am decidedly in favour of the best man being selected for this work, but, at the same time, I would request the Railway Administration that if an Indian gentleman of such qualifications and ability is obtainable in this instance, he will be appointed on the Railway Board. I have no doubt that in the various Railway Departments of Government there are some distinguished and fully qualified Indians now serving who have given great satisfaction, and, provided all things are equal, provided a man with such suitable qualifications is obtainable, I again do hope and pray that he will be appointed. That will be quite in consonance with the wishes of the Assembly who have times out of number asked for the appointment of an Indian Railway Member; but, at the same time, I must warn the Government, I hope they will not be weak enough to appoint an Indian politician on this Board. We do not want politics to be imported into a big commercial undertaking like the Railway Administration. We want the Railway Administration to be free from politics altogether. We do not want a man from outside, from the public life of India with political bias to occupy such a post, import his political bias into the commercial business of the country and thus ruin and disorganise a well-arranged and well-conducted department as it is existing to-day. It will be a fatal error for Government to make.

Sir, I will not weary the Council with any further remarks. I will only ask my friend Sir George Rainy to enlighten this Council about the promise that was made some years ago regarding the use of contractors for the purpose of carrying out railway construction works in India, to what extent it has been fulfilled and has materialised. I personally believe that railway construction work can be done more economically by the appointment and delegation of such work to contractors than departmentally. There is a certain amount of waste connected with departmental working, and I hope this policy will be strictly enforced in all future works of new construction. I should also like to have from him a little information on another point. Two years ago they had employed nine men from engineering colleges and eight from those who had gone

to England for their training in the Railway Department. I wish to know how far that experiment has proved a success. I am anxious that the Railway Board should carry out the decision of Government, based on the recommendation of the Lee Commission, so as to permit of recruitment of 75 per cent. of vacancies in India. Sir, I shall not detain the Council any longer. I shall only, in conclusion, say that I whole-heartedly join in paying my tribute to a band of loyal and indefatigably hard-working officers of the Railway Board who have contributed to the success of this Budget.

THE HONOURABLE MR. KUMAR SANKAR RAY CHAUDHURY (East Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, the principal topic for discussion in this year's Railway Budget, if I may say so, is the addition of a Member to the Railway Board. That labour needs personal interest and looking after, as has been expressed by His Excellency the Governor General, and that the existence of a Department is necessary for it need not be questioned. But is there no such Department as Labour under the charge of the Honourable Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra? If so, what is the need for the creation of a separate Department for the Railway Board? Moreover, will not the creation of such a Department under the Railway Board cause an overlapping and clash of jurisdiction between the technical, general and the proposed establishment Member of the Railway Board, for under everyone of them there will be employed a large number of subordinate staff, whom the Government do not certainly propose to place under the control and supervision of the establishment Member independently of the particular Members concerned? Even if it be necessary to create a separate Department under the Railway Board for railway establishment, I do not find any justification for the provision of a separate Member for this Department. The office of the Chief Commissioner of the Railway Board is a sinecure post. As the term Board suggests, he is the *primus inter pares* among the Members of the Railway Board, so that he is not their head, and although his superior the Commerce Member and His Excellency the Governor General and the Prime Minister of England are all in charge of some Departments or other, he is in charge of no Department. He is merely "the recognised adviser of Government in all railway questions", different branches of which are in charge of more competent Members of the Board of almost equal status and with special training. I therefore think that he should be placed in special charge of either the General or the proposed Establishment Department instead of a new Member being added to the Railway Board.

I shall now briefly deal with some other aspects of the Railway Budget. The Railway Budget for the year now ending discloses a gloomy state of things so far as the condition of the country is concerned. No doubt the traffic in grains and ground-nuts has somewhat increased, but this, I think, is due to the failure of crops in certain parts of India and the consequent necessity for carrying food crops to those parts; and that the traffic in ground-nuts has largely increased indicates that the people have been forced to live more upon them than upon proper foodstuffs. Although the export of coal shows no falling off, the internal traffic in coal and kerosene, two of the necessities of life with the people, has fallen off. People employed in the coal trade have been crying themselves hoarse over the freight policy on coal, but the Government have been making a very tardy and belated response to it. The coal purchase policy of the Government Railways is also without any principle. Where private and Indian enterprise is largely existent in the country, as in the case of the coal trade, the Government do not hesitate to compete with them by opening railway collieries of their own, but where no such enterprise exists in the country as in the case of steamer communication, it will not do so, simply

[Mr. Kumar Sankar Ray Chaudhury.]

because it would interfere with the interests of big steamship combines of foreign countries, although every civilised country is trying its best to prevent the creation of such combines for the exploitation of the people. The partiality in this respect is all the more invidious in this country because the Government here are committed to a policy of nationalisation of the communications, unlike in England where Railways are almost wholly run by private enterprise. As regards the purchase of stores, on the contrary we find the policy is well defined and whatever the principle might be, partly through the policy of purchasing stores in this country and partly through doing it in England, the actual practice has always been to purchase British goods, whatever the cost might be, instead of creating the field for their production in this country. The wagon industry scandal some time ago has amply exposed such policy and so also that of the production of locomotives and bridge-building materials. The Government no doubt show that a large quantity of stores is purchased in India, but that most of it is raw material admits of no doubt and would, if possible, have been purchased in England instead of in this country, but that the former is not possible, and so the latter cannot be avoided. The construction of carriages for third class passengers does not stand favourable comparison with that for higher class passengers, nor is ample provision made for the amenities of such passengers.

I shall now deal with some of the grievances of that part of the country which I have the honour to represent, namely, East and North Bengal. We are all grateful to the railway authorities for the reduction of third class passenger fares on the Eastern Bengal Railway. But the fact that no reduction is being made in short distance fares will greatly take away from the effect of such reduction as people in Bengal, especially the poorer classes, are not in the habit of making long distance journeys. The fish trade has brought in a large amount of profit and the rate of its freight ought to be reduced. The electrification of the suburban railway at Calcutta is still under consideration ; so also the Pabna-Sadhuiganj Railway, and these questions ought to be settled at an early date. More attention has been paid to the carriage of goods traffic by the provision of more wagons, but they are mostly of the metre gauge type, and the broad gauge type which comes more in competition with the steamers is being neglected. The construction of a line between Jessore and some station on the new Kalukhali Kamarkharti Bhatiapara line would shorten the distance between Calcutta and Goalundo by about 40 miles ; but the Government do not contemplate the construction of this line, nor do they, I believe, contemplate the extension of this line to Khulna so as to connect this place with East Bengal. If the Government do not propose to establish steamer lines in connection with their railway system in East Bengal, I fail to realise the necessity of retaining a Marine Superintendent as one of the district officers.

I shall now conclude my remarks with some suggestions about the supply of some information to us. In the Explanatory Memorandum, the average cost of repairs of various kinds of railway carriages for different railway systems have been given, but no comparative table has been supplied to us about the cost of the same kind of repairs and coal consumption of the different railways to enable us to judge whether they are being economically carried on in all the Railways. This is all the more necessary because we find the Eastern Bengal Railway and the Assam Bengal Railway, which were hitherto unremunerative, recently show greater profits, while the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway is being run at a loss.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS (Punjab : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I congratulate the Honourable the Railway Member, the Honourable the Chief Commissioner, and the Honourable Mr. Parsons and his colleagues, on the surplus Budget that they have presented us this year. In the papers before us I find that 180 lakhs are being provided to meet the loss on the strategic railways. Some years back, I moved in this Honourable House that the accounts for commercial lines be kept separate from strategic lines. The Government very kindly agreed to this and now we get two separate statements, but I should like to know from Government whether this loss incurred on strategic lines is debited to the military Budget or not. In my opinion, Sir, it ought to be debited to the military Budget so that the country should know that in every year the total military expenditure is such and such. I also find, Sir, that the railway reserve at the close of this year will amount to 19.30 crores and it is expected to increase to 22½ crores in the coming year. I agree with my Honourable friend Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy and I therefore wish to state that there should be a halt to the additions to these reserves. In my opinion 20 crores is a reasonable figure at which we should stop, and then any income over and above that ought to be spent in the way of reduction of railway fares and freights. The Honourable Sir Austen Hadow, in this speech delivered in this House the other day, said :

“Turning now to our Capital Budget, I explained twelve months ago the arrangement we had been following, under which each Railway was allowed to include in its approved programme works involving expenditure during the year somewhat in excess of what we expected they would spend.”

I beg to say in this connection that only a couple of months ago, even important works in progress on the North-Western Railway, and probably on other Railways, were all of a sudden stopped. Of course the people were giving different meanings to this sudden cut on behalf of the Railway although provision for the estimated expenditure existed in the Budget. I should like the Honourable the Railway Member kindly to say what were the facts which brought about this sudden cut.

I also, Sir, take this opportunity to express the great loss that the Railway Board has suffered in the premature death of Mr. J. Kaul, a promising and able officer of the Railway Board, who for some time officiated as Secretary. In him we have lost a rising and a useful officer.

As regards the profit of 10.71 lakhs made in the railway earnings, I beg to say that a sufficient sum has not been spent on facilities for the travelling public in the shape of raised platforms, waiting sheds and shelters, staff quarters and increase in salaries and re-shuffling of grades for the lower paid staff, etc. The provision made in the Budget I consider is too small.

The speech of the Chief Commissioner of Railways does not give any indication as to the decision of the Railway Board on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. On this point, Sir, I should like the Honourable the Railway Member kindly to throw some light.

We welcome the reduction in fares and freights made. I agree with my colleagues in saying that the reduction of third class fares for long distances does not materially benefit the third class traveller who on an average travels about 33 miles,

Reduction has been made on coal freights for long distances, but liquid fuel and crude oil have been totally ignored. In these days of internal combustion engines a certain number of boilers are consuming liquid fuel which,

[Lala Ram Saran Das.]

as far as I know, burns only one-third as compared to coal, and in case a corresponding reduction is made on this industrial material, I think it will be of great benefit to industry and agriculture.

As regards the additional appointment of a Railway Member, I agree with my friend Sir Maneckji Dadabhoj that in a business concern like a Railway Board, the responsibilities of which are increasing every year by increase of mileage, for the sake of efficiency we ought not to grudge the appointment of another Member. In the other House the Honourable the Commerce Member said yesterday that the Government intended to appoint Mr. Hayman as an additional Member of the Board and that they were contemplating appointing Mr. Rau in place of Mr. Parsons who is shortly going on leave. Both these officers, and particularly Mr. Hayman, are gifted officers, and I think their appointment will add certainly to efficiency.

Last year, during the discussion of the Railway Budget, I represented that wherever electric current is available, electric fans be installed in third and intermediate class waiting halls at railway stations. This matter, as far as I remember, was brought for consideration before the various local Advisory Committees of the Railways, but owing to policy this has been refused. On the one hand, Sir, we are spending large sums of money in publicity in India and abroad, which means that we are trying to get more passenger and goods traffic ; but on the other hand we are refusing facilities and inducements to the passengers who are at our doors. The expenditure is trifling, and I hope the Railways will agree to give this little facility to the passengers at least in places where we have extremes of heat.

In the new Budget, Sir, I find that provision has been made for additional goods rolling stock to the extent of 87½ lakhs. I should like to ask, Sir, whether the surplus stock of 30,000 wagons has been absorbed by the increased trade demand. Last year I represented that the proceedings of the Railway Advisory Committees in India be placed before both the Houses of the Indian Legislature with a report as to what proposals were adopted and what proposals were rejected and, in the case of rejected proposals, what were the reasons for those rejections. I got no reply to this suggestion last year, but I hope I will be fortunate enough to get some reply this time. As regards the Advisory Committees, Sir, I beg to say that as there are no detailed orders on the subject, the Agents of the various Railway Administrations, who are *ex-officio* Chairmen of such local Advisory Committees, use their discretion in allowing or disallowing proposals. Some take a sympathetic view, while others perhaps consider the Advisory Committees a nuisance. I should like the Railway Board to intervene in this matter and issue clear instructions on the subject so that the Advisory Committees may be more useful than they are proving at present. All the questions which concern the travelling public or trade according to the Acworth Committee's Report are to be put before the Advisory Committees, but my experience shows that this is not always done. Sometimes very important proposals affecting the public are not placed before the Committee. I will not take much of the Council's time on this matter, but will illustrate what I say by an example. On the North-Western Railway the Pattoki station and yard were to be remodelled. The Local Advisory Committee was not taken into confidence in regard to the location of the overbridge and the level-crossing and of the booking and goods offices. That resulted in great trouble and inconvenience to the Pattoki Mandi people who approached many members of the Committee. I drew the attention of the Committee to the

important points of the position of the overbridge and of the railway crossing. I proved to the satisfaction, as far as I could gather, of the Chairman of the Committee that a change in the positions of the overbridge and of the crossing was necessary. The crossing was eventually changed, but as the removal of the bridge would have been more expensive and perhaps would have proved that it had been wrongly placed in the first instance, the foot bridge was not moved. If this matter had been placed before the Advisory Committee beforehand this inconvenience to the traders would not have been caused. When I asked why no reference was made to the Advisory Committee I was told that under the rules the local district authorities were to be consulted and they, I was told, were consulted. Then, Sir, I find that four dining cars have been provided for in the Budget for the North-Western Railway. I should like to ask whether any of these will be Indian dining cars. This question has been considered by the North-Western Railway Advisory Committee and all the Indian non-official members were unanimously of opinion that an Indian dining car for higher class passengers was necessary. The Chairman of the Committee was kind enough to get designs prepared, discussed and approved by the Committee, but I do not know how far the scheme of construction has matured and whether any Indian dining cars have been included in the present year's programme.

One anomaly, Sir, exists on Railways, and that is that the civil engineers have not got the option of a provident fund, unlike all the other superior establishments of the Railways. This point, Sir, is rather surprising, and I should like to know why this singular exception has been made in the case of civil engineers. There is another grievance which some engineers feel in regard to the matter of their domicile. The engineers who have qualified themselves from Indian colleges, and particularly from Roorkee, and who have put in long years of good service are now being deprived of the Lee Commission benefits purely on the point of domicile. In that connection I want to say that, as far as I can gather, the question of domicile is being decided by the declaration that those students gave when they joined the Roorkee or other colleges. There have been instances, Sir, of certain students who passed so low on the list of the Indian colleges that they could not secure appointments but upon qualifying themselves in English colleges came out and were appointed as senior to those who had passed out higher on the list from the Indian colleges and got the Lee Commission concessions. This, Sir, is not just and I would request the Railway Board kindly to consider this question. I myself think that when these students, who are now officers in the Railway Engineering Department, joined the Indian colleges and gave their declaration of domicile they were minors at the time, and I do not know whether that declaration can be held to be valid in law. In my opinion the declaration ought to have been taken from their parents who were more competent to state whether they were of Indian domicile or not. Apart from that it is not reasonable to expect that people should look 20 or 30 years ahead when making a declaration of this nature. They were not at that time aware of all the implications of the declaration they were asked to make. Engineers who passed out after 1917 are, I believe, being refused the Lee concessions, while those who passed out before that date are not barred.

Sir, I would refer to what I think is a distinct change in policy in answering questions concerning Railways in this House and in the other place. Some time back really satisfactory answers were given to Members, but of late a change has taken place and the answers that we generally get are the stereotyped sort of answers that the question has been referred to the Agent of the Railway concerned because he is competent to deal with the matter.

[Lala Ram Saran Das.]

I do not think this House deserves that sort of treatment, and I hope that the Government will revert to its former policy and give that consideration to both Houses of the Legislature which they deserve.

The question of literate apprentices, Sir, has been my pet subject in Railway Budget discussions. I am sorry to say that the pledge which the late Chief Commissioner of Railways gave in this House as to the employment of the mechanical apprentices deputed by the North Western Railway for training to the MacLagan College has not been fully fulfilled. The Railway Board, as one can guess, must have asked the North Western Railway Administration to fulfil the conditions of agreements ; but what has actually happened ? The actual result of this representation is that the form of agreement of employment is changed and the condition in which it was stipulated that after satisfactory results and satisfactory reports the apprentices would be confirmed, has been taken away and now a new clause has been inserted that after five years' training the boys would be thrown on the open market and they could do whatever they liked. On the other hand, Sir, before I made these representations in this House there used to be no cadre for these qualified apprentices. The evil result of my representation, I am sorry to say, has been that a cadre has now been fixed and only a few vacancies will be offered to the apprentices who are to pass out in the near future. Owing to unemployment in the country, Sir, I suggested last year that more and more posts should be thrown open to literate persons in the Mechanical Department, and I hope, Sir, that the Railways will kindly move fast in that matter. But one thing, which is a very important one and which I think the Railway Board already knows because one of the Members of the Railway Board was discussing the subject with me, is that the present *mistris*, foremen and shedmen are prejudiced against these literate apprentices ; I am sorry to say that even in examination papers this prejudice does exist. I talked this matter over with Mr. Wrench and drew his pointed attention to it. I said that on the one side we are introducing a new opening but on the other side anti-forces are working to spoil it. If I rightly remember, I suggested that a specially educated foreman should be put in charge of training these apprentices and their papers should be sent to independent persons who have not given them training for seeing and marking the examination papers. I make these suggestions, Sir, in the interests of literate people taking a turn towards the mechanical line, which I am glad they are now gladly taking.

The supply of drinking water is the burning question in the burning heat of Upper India. Of late Seva Samitis and other bodies who were meeting the public demand for the supply of drinking water at various stations have been disallowed. I am no advocate of these public bodies so far as these affairs are concerned. In case the railway people consider that outside interference in this direction is not proper, let them adequately add to their staff. Although it is said that adequate additional staff has been provided for the supply of drinking water, I can assure this House that it is not so. In case these bodies are not to be employed any further, additional adequate provision for the supply of drinking water must be made.

One more point I want to touch upon, and that is, for many years past Seva Samitis and Mahabir Dals have rendered great assistance to the public in social gatherings. Railway concessions are given to scouts and to various other bodies who do such charitable work but these concessions are refused to Seva Samitis and Mahabir Dals. I would earnestly and strongly request

the Railways kindly to include these bodies in the list of their concessions. At the last Kurukshetra Fair and at the last Kumbh Fair at Hardwar both these institutions rendered unparalleled services and at the coming Kumbh Mela at Allahabad preparations are being made from even now by these social workers to send volunteers in still larger numbers.

One more point, Sir, and I shall finish, and that is lower scale of pay of the staff on the Bengal and North Western Railway. The position on that Railway is now becoming intolerable, and I would urge the Government to terminate the contract of this Railway in 1932 when it expires. So far as I learn, Sir, from the memorial that was submitted by the various employees of the Bengal and North Western Railway to the Agent, the reply given was because the cost of living on the area which that Railway traversed was lower, therefore they did not give a higher salary as was in force on the East Indian Railway. But I might say, Sir, that the Bengal and North Western Railway generally runs parallel to the East Indian Railway and sometimes traverses it and so, Sir, that reply of the Agent of the Bengal and North Western Railway is, in my opinion, not just and proper, and I wish that the Railway Board will intervene and get justice done, and see that that Railway, which is making now over 19 per cent. as dividend, is not allowed to treat so shabbily their staff which is instrumental in bringing that big return.

THE HONOURABLE RAO SAHIB DR. U. RAMA RAU (Madras : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, the prosperity of a Railway Budget is measured not by its surpluses, but by the contentment of the Railway staff and the comforts and conveniences afforded to the travelling and the trading public. Judged from these standpoints, it must be said, that failure is writ large on the face of the Government Railway Administration in India. We have, throughout the railway systems in this country, a poorly-paid, discontented subordinate staff, on whose fidelity, honesty and integrity depend not only the safety of the travelling public but also the success of the Railway Administration. The provision in the Budget for the year 1929-30 of Rs. 28 lakhs, 10 under Administration and 18 under Operation, for improving the service conditions of the lower paid employees is quite insufficient to meet ever-increasing demand for better living wages. I wish the Railway Administration would provide more funds for this purpose. It is most unfortunate that of late strikes and lock-outs have become the order of the day. These are naturally followed by mischief and violence on the part of the strikers and repression and oppression on the part of the Government, resulting in loss of lives and damage to property on either side. It has often been said in defence of the Railway Administrations that the subordinate employees are a set of illiterate and uneducated voiceless people who have been roused to action and excesses only by agitators and but for whose interference they would end their life-time in the service of the Railways with the pittance they get and would not dare to raise their little finger and clamour for more pay and better prospects. This plea connotes a misreading of the world's history and a misconception of the realities. The great European War has awakened a democratic consciousness throughout the world, white, black, brown or yellow, and the so-called illiterate and uneducated masses in India cannot be said to have escaped its influence. The Railway Administration in India have failed to diagnose the disease properly and apply timely and suitable remedies. Their policy of "reduction and retrenchment" in the railway workshops recently and their blind adherence to the principle of "demand and supply", which made them turn a deaf ear to the legitimate demands of the subordinate staff for better pay and prospects, are in the main responsible for the deplorable occurrences which we have witnessed at Khargpur on the

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Bengal Nagpur Railway two years ago, and recently on the South Indian Railway. This reminds me of the story of an American doctor, who knows only how to bring on and cure fits. Whenever any patient went to him, he would give a pill which would bring on fits. He knows how to cure fits. He never cared to understand the real malady of the patient nor administered the right kind of relief. In some such position the Government of India stand to-day. The prices of food-stuffs have risen considerably after the War, and there has been growing unemployment in the land, and the Railway Companies never thought of raising the pay of their subordinate staff on the score that more men are available for less wages, while in all other departments of Government, including their Railway Department, the prospects of the employees have been substantially improved. There is naturally some discontent among the staff, and instead of diagnosing the disease and trying to allay their feeling, by kind words and petty concessions, the Government have created fits in them like the American doctor, by wholesale reduction and retrenchment for which they have an effective remedy in prosecution and persecution. Sir, I am one of those who condemn strikes as a means of redressing wrongs. They are no doubt dangerous weapons in the hands of the illiterate. But if strikes are inevitable, there must be some means of averting them. I have always advocated the appointment of conciliatory or arbitration boards to hear the grievances of railway employees and settle their disputes. The psychology of human beings, especially of Indians, is such that, differ however much they may among themselves, when a third party sits to arbitrate, much of the estrangement, much of the ill-feeling gradually vanishes and the parties bow to its decision, good or bad, favourable or unfavourable. The Honourable Sir George Rainy, the Railway Member, assured me sometime ago that he has no objection to set up arbitration boards, whenever there is a threatened strike. In the case of the South Indian Railway strike, this assurance was never translated into action and things were left to drift for themselves. The late Sir George Paddison, who was Labour Commissioner in Madras, openly expressed on the floor of the other House of which he was a distinguished Member for some time, that his first duty lay as a Labour Commissioner in setting differences among employers and employees and always averting a strike and its horrible consequences. But his successor played the part of a Nero fiddling in the Northern Circars when Rome was burning and the strike situation on the South Indian Railway was getting worse and worse. If the Government want the Railways to thrive in India, they must first try to keep their employees happy and contented. Repression and oppression will only drive discontent underground. I would suggest, therefore, that a permanent Arbitration Board be set up preferably from among the members of the Central Advisory Council for Railways, and all disputes referred to that body for disposal in the future.

I now come to the question of fares and freights. My friend Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy said it was not possible to reduce third class fares and at the same time show an increased income. This is not true. Last year, when third class fares were reduced, the income went up by a crore of rupees. The third class fares on some of the Railways, especially the Company-managed ones, are still heavy. Up to 1—50 miles, where the traffic is heaviest, there is no palpable change in fares. The result is that the suburban railway traffic has been practically besieged by the motor-bus. Especially in Madras, whose suburban traffic is largely served by that slow, indifferent Railway, the South Indian Railway, the motor-bus has been a formidable rival. The fares for season tickets must be reduced and the train service accelerated in speed and number. The doubling of the railway line is no doubt assured us within the stipulated

time—a year and a half from now. But the progress so far made is not promising and the suburban passengers are in the meanwhile put to a good deal of trouble and inconvenience. The Company requires screwing up a bit and should be asked to expedite the works. The provision of intermediate class on all passenger trains on the South Indian Railway and the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway where they do not exist is a desideratum. To try to copy the English model by lessening the number of classes in trains is ill-suited to Indian conditions where the greater part of the population is immersed in poverty. The intermediate class will serve the middle class population admirably, and instead of huddling them with the illiterate masses in third class compartments, to provide them with more decent accommodation would be a boon. I hope the Government will not overlook this matter.

With regard to railway freights, I have to cite two instances of hardship and ask for redress. The first is about the railway freight imposed on medicines. Imported and indigenous medicines are subjected to a very heavy railway freight, while being transported from place to place in India. There are eight classifications for general goods. The charges vary from .38 pies per maund to 1.04 pies per maund. Medicines are classified under class 8, and charged at the maximum freight, 1.04 pies per maund. This rate is nearly three times that of rice and twice that of other foodstuffs. People must first live to consume food, and when people die in large numbers for want of cheap medicines, during illness, of what avail is cheap food for them? I know from my experience of over 30 years as a general practitioner in Madras, patients taking only one course of medicine or two at the outset, and when they find slight improvement suddenly stopping without taking a further course of treatment which would give them a perfect cure and prevent a relapse. This is undoubtedly due to the dearth of medicine and the costliness of treatment. About two crores of medicines are annually imported into India and half as much is manufactured in India. The imported medicines arrive in all the chief ports of the country and have to find their way into the interior and the heavy railway freight together with the retail dealer's profits, augments their price. Country drugs have been classified under class 4 and are liable to be charged less. But the railway authorities interpret them as crude drugs only, such as herbs and roots, and contend that finished products, which are subject to heavy freight, do not come under this category. The Railway Rates Committee take no heed of any representations made to them on the subject. The Alembic Chemical Works, Bombay, for instance, drew the pointed attention of the Rates Committee recently to this freight question but they declined to interfere. I fail to see why such a high freight is imposed on medicines. Is it a toll levied by the Government on the sick and the suffering, as if the toll taken by death is not sufficient? I cannot conceive of any enlightened Government indirectly taxing the sick by taxing medicines. Last year, the Honourable Member for Commerce announced a reduction in freights on horses, dogs and motor cars, thus helping the races, shows and aristocrats! I appeal to him to have a soft corner in his heart for suffering humanity as well.

Next, there is the question of railway freight on manganese. Manganese mining was once a flourishing industry in the Madras Presidency, but is undergoing a great crisis at present owing to competition from Brazil and South Africa. In the Bellary District alone there are about half a dozen mines. The railway freight has been uniform more or less from all the railway stations to the harbour. It was about 0.4-6 per maund more or less when the market conditions were favourable. Merchants did not grudge to pay this freight. But the freight has been enhanced to 0.5-8 per maund or so, while the market price per manganese itself has gone down from 23*d.* c. i. f. in 1927 to 8*d.* per unit

[Rao Sahib Dr. U. Rama Rau.]

in 1928. If to the killing foreign competition is added a crushing railway freight, where is the chance for nascent indigenous industries in India to thrive ? It behoves the Government, therefore, to take immediate steps to reduce the freight in this case and thus give protection to this industry.

Let me now pass on to the comforts of passengers. I understand and am subject to correction that on the South Indian Railway, free licences were issued hitherto to vendors of eatables at railway stations, but now they are made to pay licence fees, which come to a heavy sum especially at first and second class stations. I do not know what is done with these fees. They naturally raise the cost price of eatables, etc., and throw an additional burden on the poor third class passengers. Apart from the wisdom or otherwise of levying those licence fees, I consider that its entire appropriation by the Railway Company is altogether unjustifiable. There must be a corresponding return to the passengers who pay them indirectly by good, fresh, unadulterated edibles being sold and their quality ensured by inspection and certification by qualified food inspectors. I am told only one or two such food inspectors have been appointed recently, but they are unqualified men and their number is totally inadequate. More qualified food inspectors must be entertained and the station master must not be entrusted with this task. The Catering Department newly opened by the South Indian Railway earns enormous profits and these profits should be utilised to cheapen the messing charges and to provide nourishing meals. Again, the sanitary condition of latrines in third class compartments and the floors is anything but desirable. When through trains take two or three days to arrive at their destinations, it is necessary that the compartments should be well swept and kept clean and the latrines cleaned twice or three times daily. There should be a medical and sanitary subordinate travelling in the train with a sufficient number of sweepers, who should be held responsible not only for the sanitary condition of the trains, but should also render medical aid to passengers in the event of any accident or mishap. While on this subject of medical relief, I am constrained to observe that medical relief to the subordinates is poor and scanty and the medical staff on all the Railways, especially on both the South Indian Railway and the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway, should be strengthened. At present, Sir, on all the different Railways in India, only 45 lakhs of rupees are spent on medical administration to look after the comforts of thousands of sick people. This amount is very inadequate to give proper medical relief. More hospitals and dispensaries must be provided at convenient centres. These proposals, if carried out, will undoubtedly add to the comfort of the passengers. In the Railway Budget every year, a certain sum is provided for the comfort of third class passengers. In this year's Budget also, under the heading "Amenities for passengers", over 1½ crores of rupees have been provided for 1929-30 for expenditure on the various facilities for passengers. When I went into the details I saw that 1,32 lakhs have been provided for additions and betterment to lower class passengers, but there is no knowing how it is distributed among the various Railway Administrations and how the latter expend their respective allotments. A more detailed explanation in the Budgets of the various Railway Administrations in this direction will be useful.

Lastly, there is the vexed question of the Indianization of the railway services. This is going on now at a snail's pace. The cry that one Indian at least should be admitted into the Railway Board has been ignored in the past. My friends have already mentioned about the additional Member for the Railway Board. Now there is a demand for an additional Member for the Railway

Board at an additional cost of nearly a lakh of rupees. The Standing Finance Committee for Railways has rightly disapproved of the proposal. Now it has been placed before the Assembly for sanction and the Commerce Member has mentioned the names of the persons who are likely to be appointed. So far as we are concerned, we do not mind who is appointed to the posts. But in spite of the Standing Finance Committee's disapproval, if the Assembly passes the grant for an additional Member of the Railway Board, I hope the Government will not fail to appoint an Indian to the newly created post. I trust that the Government will pay greater attention to the subject of Indianization of railway services in the future than they have done in the past, and thus disabuse the minds of the public of any sinister motive on their part.

Sir, the Honourable the Chief Commissioner, in his speech, under the heading "Actuals for 1927-28" said :

"Our actual total receipts from commercial lines amounted to nearly 104½ crores of rupees, about half a crore more than the revised estimate figures, while our working expenses were in excess by ½th of a crore as we had not allowed sufficiently for the cost of moving a traffic so much higher than our original estimate, and certain unexpected adjustments had also to be made."

I should like to know what those unexpected adjustments are. With these few remarks, Sir, I resume my seat.

THE HONOURABLE MR. MAHENDRA PRASAD (Bihar and Orissa : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, we people of the poor province of Bihar are generally thankful for small mercies and I will certainly be thankful to the Railway Member and the Chief Commissioner for the small reductions that they have thought fit to make this year in fares, freights and rates. No doubt long distance passengers will get some relief, but I believe the poorer people will not be very much benefited. Unless the rates for short distances are reduced it will not do much good to the poorer people of my province. From my province a large number of people have to go to Eastern Bengal and other places and they have to cover long distances by the Bengal and North Western Railway ; but this Railway Company does not in the least care for the convenience of the passengers who travel by that railway. They have to cover only a small distance by the Eastern Bengal Railway and by other Railways, so this concession will not very much help them. I would very strongly suggest that a reduction should be made even for small distances. As the Bengal and North Western Railway is managed not by the State but by a Company. I think nothing can be done unless there is some fixed maximum for freights and fares. It has been very well said by the Honourable Sir Maneckji Dada-bhoj that, unless we fix a maximum for freights and fares, it will not be possible for the Railways that are managed by Companies to give concessions to the passengers and to goods traffic. Therefore its fixation is, I think, very essential. No doubt some reduction in fares and freights has been made, but I think that even after that, the Railway has not shown much decrease in its earnings. I believe that by reducing fares and freights we will not certainly reduce the income as well. When the Honourable Seth Govind Das said that it was possible to reduce the rate and still give a fair return on the amount invested he meant that Railways have now taken a longer mileage, and have a larger amount of capital invested, and over all this expenses have to be distributed, which were before distributed over less mileage and capital. I believe the income would not decrease, and at the same time that the rate can be brought down. These two things are not incompatible.

[Mr. Mahendra Prasad.]

I am glad that some provision has been made for improving the pay of employees and for making better arrangements for their housing. But nothing like that is being done by the Bengal and North Western Railway. I am glad that Rai Bahadur Ram Saran Das has drawn the attention of the House to that fact. On the Bengal and North Western Railway the servants are so ill-paid that I think some of the clerks get only Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 a month and they have such wretched "quarters" to live in that it is simply impossible for a man with a family to live in them." If the people of Bihar and Orissa, who are served mainly by the Bengal and North Western Railway, are to be helped by these reductions in freights and fares, I think the only way to do it is to take over the Bengal and North Western Railway from the Company and place it under the management of the State. The chief business of the Company is to earn very high dividends. They do not care in the least for the convenience of their passengers or for anything else. They do not even care for their employees. It is impossible to make them do anything in the matter of reductions of fares or in providing amenities for passengers. Now that the time has come the State will take over the management from the Company and this will help the people of the province of Bihar to a very great extent. I believe the people of Bihar and Orissa have a claim on Sir George Rainy as he has spent a large portion of his service in that province, and they confidently expect that he will look to their interests in this matter. We are not asking for special concessions but only for bare justice.

Then, Sir, I have come to learn that the Chief Auditor on the North Western Railway has issued a circular or some other instruction directing the stoppage of the recruitment of Hindus in the offices under his control, and only non-Hindus are to be appointed to posts under him. This will create great irritation in the minds of the people of the Punjab, and I would like to draw the attention of the Honourable Member for Railways to that matter. The Eastern Bengal Railway authorities have also issued a circular making some differentiation between Indians and Anglo-Indians in the matter of appointments. That is also a matter which ought to be looked into by the Honourable Member in charge, as Government have said that the term "Indians" includes "Anglo-Indians" as well. So far as Indianization generally is concerned, I am afraid that if it is proceeding at all it is proceeding at a very slow rate. I am told that when Mr. Parsons goes on leave Mr. Rau will be temporarily taken in his place. But that does not suffice. There ought to be a permanent Member on the Board if the Resolution of the Assembly is to be given effect to and if the wishes of the people are taken into consideration. This is a matter which is overdue and there should be no more delay in the appointment of an Indian Member on the Railway Board.

Turning again to the Bengal and North Western Railway, the position there is that even officers of comparatively high rank are at the mercy of their superiors. Any man who incurs the displeasure of his superior, even unjustly, has to suffer, and there is nothing like a Public Service Commission to which he can appeal. In the interests of the railway service there ought to be some arrangement like the one which prevails in State Railways, so that the men may be safeguarded against the unjust displeasure of their superior officers. I do not want to take up any more of the time of the House, and will only say that in the interests of the people served by the Bengal and North Western Railway, if passengers are to be given the facilities which they enjoy on other Railways, and if the employees are to have the same treatment as they receive on other Railways, the only way in which the Government can do these

things is to take over the Bengal and North Western Railway, and until they do that they will be doing us the greatest possible injustice.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GEORGE RAINY (Member for Commerce and Railways): Mr. President, I have listened with the greatest interest to the discussion which has taken place to-day in this House regarding the Railway Budget and I have to thank various Members, and particularly my Honourable friend Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy, for the very kindly way they have spoken about the Railway Department and about myself. I cannot find it in my heart to believe that in reality my friend Seth Govind Das really regards us as so impossible as in his speech he rather was inclined to suggest. It is true he credited me personally with good intentions, but the sort of picture of myself that seemed to be impressed on his mind was that of a "beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain". The first point taken by my Honourable friend was that the Railways were not doing well because whereas we had in the year 1924-25 surplus profits amounting to 5·85 per cent. upon the capital at charge, we had now got down to a figure of only 5·39 per cent. upon the capital at charge. I have two replies to that. One of them is that, if our surplus profits had remained as high as 5·85 per cent. this House would have had grave reason to complain of us, because that is an unnecessarily high percentage. When we find that we have reached that level, we take steps by reductions in rates and fares to bring down the percentage to a reasonable level. This year we are making some reductions even though our profits are at a lower figure. In the second place, he said that the average return per mile of railway in operation had gone down. I would like to point out to him that when you build a number of new lines in the hope and expectation that they will be remunerative, it is quite possible that for the first two or three years they will not be remunerative because the traffic takes time to develop. In any case the return you get from these new lines cannot approach the scale of the return you get on your older lines. That is in the nature of the case. Therefore, at a time when a vigorous policy of construction of new lines is in operation, I should expect to see some small decline in the average return per mile of line operated.

My Honourable friend criticised the steps Government proposed to take for the appointment of an additional Member of the Railway Board and he complained that we had seated him on the sharp horns of a dilemma. For his consolation I may point out that the Members of the

1 P.M. Assembly have even sharper horns to sit upon, as that House will have to vote on the proposal, while the Honourable Member in this House is relieved of that obligation, and need do no more than express an opinion about it. The general opinion of the Members who have spoken is, I think, in favour of the Government proposals. I do not want to speak at length on this subject to-day, because in another place to-morrow, or possibly on Monday, I shall have to deal with it fully. Some of the Members of this House have no doubt heard already of the announcement as to the personnel that I made in the Assembly yesterday, but in case there are other Members who have not heard about it—I do not think my Honourable friend Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy had done so—I should like to repeat that, if the new appointment comes into existence, it is the intention of the Government of India that Mr. Hayman should be appointed to the new Membership and that Mr. Rau, Director of Finance, should act for Mr. Parsons when he goes on leave (*The Honourable Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy*: "Hear, hear").

[Sir George Rainy.]

My Honourable friend had a good deal to say about third class fares and nearly all the Members who spoke pointed out that the average distance travelled by a third class passenger was very short and that it was not possible to do much for them unless we saw our way to make a reduction in third class fares. My Honourable friend, Seth Govind Das, went a little further than that. He said that the financial condition of the Railways was so prosperous that he thought we were in a position now to make that reduction. I do not think he was very consistent in taking up that position, because if the falling off in the return on the capital at charge was so serious as he said, then clearly we are not in a prosperous condition. Sir, I do not think that there is any difference of opinion in this House, or in the other House, as to what we should like to do. If we saw our way to make a general reduction in third class fares, it would certainly give great satisfaction to the Government of India and to the Railway Board, as I am sure it would to the Members of the Legislature, but in these matters we cannot do everything that we want to do at the same time, and sooner or later the Government of India and the Legislature will have to choose whether it is more desirable, in the interests of the country, that there should be biggish reductions in third class fares, or whether more money should be spent in trying to raise the standard of life of our railway employees, or again whether we should spend a great deal of money in providing further amenities for third class passengers. I do not say that it is not possible to combine all these different things to a certain extent, but what I do say is that you cannot do a great deal at the same time in any one of these directions without to some extent sacrificing the others. No doubt the House will appreciate the importance of that and the kind of difficulty with which the Government are faced when they have to decide what it is best to do.

My Honourable friend Seth Govind Das had one small point about the rates on forest produce on the East Indian Railway. As he will have seen from the Budget Memorandum, we are making reductions on two of the State-managed Railways, and I said yesterday at another place that I was quite prepared to write to the various Railway Administrations drawing their attention to what was being done on the Great Indian Peninsula and Eastern Bengal Railways in order to see whether anything similar could be done on these Railways. What the result may be I do not know. However, we will draw their attention to the point.

My Honourable friend Sir Maneckji Dadabhoy, as well as one or two other Members, referred to the Reserve Fund and to the very large sum to which it has now accumulated. That, Mr. President, is a matter which must necessarily be examined by the Committee which has been appointed to review the Convention for the separation of railway finance. It is a very important matter and it certainly will be considered, but I do not think it would be right for me to express any views on the subject until I have had the advantage of hearing what the non-official members of that Committee think, and indeed until the Government of India have fully considered these views and have made up their mind. Similarly, I think the question how the loss on strategic lines should be dealt with is very likely to come before that Committee. On a very small point of fact perhaps I may make a correction. My Honourable friend said he believed we had once made a small withdrawal of Rs. 7 lakhs from the balance of the Reserve Fund. The actual fact is this, that Sir Charles Innes expected that that would be necessary and made provision accordingly in the revised estimates for the year 1926-27, but actually the results of the

year turned out to be rather better than was expected, and instead of a withdrawal from the Reserve Fund in that year there was an actual addition to it.

My Honourable friend mentioned the policy that has been adopted of making larger use of contractors in the case of big railway works instead of constructing them departmentally. I have not got full information here, but there has certainly been no change of policy since Sir Charles Innes announced that it was the intention of the Railway Board to make larger use of contractors for big works than had been the practice in the past. I have got here a list of some of the important works which have been constructed by contractors in recent years and it includes the Kala Bagh bridge now under construction and bridges over the Jhelum and the Chenab on one of the Railways of the Punjab. On the South Indian Railway a big contract has been given for all bridges constructed, and perhaps the biggest of all the contracts is the construction of the tunnels on the realignment of the Boreghat section of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. There is no intention to change our policy in that respect. The actual number of big contracts we give out in a year obviously depends on the amount of work we undertake in that year, and if you examine the figures, there might be ups and downs in a particular year. We might in one year give out a very big contract, work on which would go on for two or more years.

My Honourable friend Mr. Kumar Sankar Ray Chaudhury made one remark that surprised me a great deal when he said that the Chief Commissioner of Railways had a sinecure post. I only regret that my friend Sir Austen Hadow cannot reply to that particular criticism, but I can certainly testify from my own experience that his post is anything but a sinecure, and one of the advantages which I hope will result from the appointment of an additional Member is that it will give some relief to the Chief Commissioner who must, as things are at present, frequently come to the rescue of the other Members and in order to relieve them take a considerable share of the work which ought naturally to go to them in the first instance. I can assure the House that, if they are under the impression that there are any sinecure appointments in the Railway Board, they are deceiving themselves on that point. There are no such appointments.

Another remark my Honourable friend made was that the coal purchase policy of the Railway Board seemed to be directed against Indians, whereas the steamer service policy was rather designed in favour of Europeans. I am very interested to hear that our coal purchase policy is directed against Indians, because the Bengal Chamber of Commerce seem to have a very different view on that subject seeing that they have in the past rather considered that it was they who were the principal sufferers. But I can assure the House on this question, as regards the coal purchase policy of the Government of India, that it is not directed against any section of the community. All that we are endeavouring to do is to see that the Railways are adequately provided with the means of obtaining their own coal from their own mines to this extent that, should prices again threaten to rise to an exorbitant level, to a level approaching the level at which they stood not so very long ago, then the Railways will be in a better position to protect themselves than they were then. It is not our object to push on a very active programme of development so as to diminish our purchases in the open market, and Honourable Members will see from the Memorandum that in the coming year we expect that our production from our own mines will be rather lower and our purchases in the open market rather higher than they have been this year.

[Sir George Rainy.]

My Honourable friend Lala Ram Saran Das had a number of points to which he drew attention. It will not be possible for me to deal at length with all his points, or indeed with many of the points raised by him and by the speakers who spoke subsequently. To some of them I am not in a position at the moment to give a detailed reply, and in others I think it is perhaps better that I should examine what has been said at leisure and see whether there is anything that can be done to give effect to the wishes expressed by Honourable Members. There are, however, a few points which I think I might notice. One of the points raised by my Honourable friend was that he wanted to know what action the Railway Board had taken to give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. Well, I can give him some information about that. One of these recommendations was that Railways should review the possibility of giving further concessions for fertilisers. In this particular matter, the Railway Board got ahead of the Royal Commission. Before the Report was published they had reduced their rates on manures and oil cakes on all the principal Railways. They have reduced the rates for manures to the absolute minimum, that is to one-tenth of a pie per maund. In that matter, as I say, we got ahead of the Commission. Then, there was the recommendation that railway freights on agricultural machinery and implements should be examined and where possible concessions given. We have already revised the classification of machinery used for agricultural purposes not worked by their own power. We have reduced them from fourth class at railway risk and second class at owner's risk to first class at owner's risk, or at railway risk, if packed, and to third class at railway risk, if unpacked. That is a substantial reduction in the rates. Another recommendation was that rates for wood charcoal and coal should be examined. As the House knows, we have reduced the rates of long distance coal and on two Railways the rates for wood and charcoal are being brought down. The other recommendations are for a reduction of the rate on fodder, to the removal of a certain anomaly in the rates for agricultural implements and the carriage of livestock, and the provision of facilities for rapid transport. These have been referred to the Indian Railway Conference Association because concerted action by the Railways is necessary. We will certainly take steps to see that no undue delay occurs in the consideration of these matters. Another point my Honourable friend raised was, that he wanted some sort of annual statement as to the work done by the local Advisory Committee. Yesterday I undertook in another place, in response to a request made there, that every year we would prepare a short pamphlet giving a summary of what has been done in the various Committees, and either circulate it with the Budget papers or else circulate it to Members somewhat earlier in the Session. Naturally if this is done in the case of the Legislative Assembly it will also be done in the case of the Council of State.

My Honourable friend drew attention to a case on the North Western Railway where the remodelling of a station yard, I think it was, had not been referred to the local Advisory Committee with the result apparently that the manner in which it was actually constructed was not the best from the point of view of the public. To my mind that is a matter on which it is very desirable that the local Advisory Committee should be consulted. We will look into the matter, and if it seems advisable we will write to Agents on the subject. Quite clearly, a case of that kind is one where everyone must desire to meet the convenience of the merchants and the other persons who have to use the yard, and therefore it is common sense that every step should be taken to find out beforehand what their views are on the subject.

I am afraid I must leave over most of the other points taken by my Honourable friend, but I would like to let him know that quite recently we have issued orders extending to the Seva Samiti the same concessions on State-managed Railways which are already enjoyed by the boy scouts, and that we have written to the Company-managed Railways to suggest that they should take similar action.

I heard my Honourable friend Dr. Rama Rau's speech rather imperfectly, and I think that I had better not attempt to reply in detail to what he said, but I can assure him that, as soon as the proceedings of this meeting are published, I will read his speech and see what can be done to deal with the points to which he attaches importance. Finally, I think the only other matter to which I need refer to-day is the question of the purchase of the Bengal and North Western Railway. If the decision to purchase is taken, then we shall have to take over the line in 1932. The date is coming near when we shall have to come to a decision on the subject, but it has not yet actually arrived, and in fact the Government of India have not yet taken up the matter for consideration with a view to a decision. They will, however, of course attach great weight to all that may be said in either House of the Legislature on that subject. I should like in bringing my speech to a close, Mr. President, to thank Members once more for the very kindly tone of their speeches.

THE HONOURABLE SETH GOVIND DAS : With your permission, Sir, I should like to know from the Honourable the Commerce Member what he proposes to do in regard to the new projects for the Central Provinces to which I referred in my speech.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GEORGE RAINY : I am afraid it is hardly possible. That is exactly the kind of question on which it is very difficult without previous notice to attempt to give a detailed explanation ; but as I know my Honourable friend is specially interested in that matter, I think it ought to be possible, if he could come round to the Railway Board's office some day, for them to inform him how these matters stand.

STATEMENT OF BUSINESS.

THE HONOURABLE KHAN BAHADUR SIR MUHAMMAD HABIBULLAH (Leader of the House) : Sir, as Honourable Members are aware, on Monday, the 25th, and Wednesday, the 27th the Council will meet to transact non-official business. As, however, there is no official business on Tuesday, the 26th, there will be no meeting on that date. On Thursday, the 28th February, the Council will meet at 5 P.M. when the General Budget will be presented.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, the 25th February, 1929.