

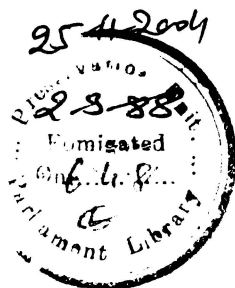
THE
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

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SIXTH SESSION

OF THE
SECOND COUNCIL OF STATE, 1929



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COUNCIL OF STATE.

Wednesday, 13th 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.

RESOLUTION *RE* DEVELOPMENT OF WATERWAYS.

THE HONOURABLE RAO SAHIB DR. U. RAMA RAU (Madras : Non-Muhammadan) : Mr. President, I beg to move the following Resolution which stands in my name :

“ This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that, inasmuch as the Royal Commission on Agriculture have not dealt in their report with the question of the development of waterways in India as a means of transport of agriculture and other produce, he should forthwith appoint a Committee including Members of both Houses of the Central Legislature to examine the possibility and desirability of developing such means of communication and to suggest ways and means to effect such development.”

Sir, when, on the 14th of September, 1927, I moved a similar Resolution on the subject of transport through waterways, the Honourable Mr. McWatters from the other side told us that the Agricultural Commission might perhaps take us nearer to the millennium and asked us to rest content till then. The Commission has come and gone. Their Report is out and nothing is mentioned therein about the development of waterways in India as a means of transport of agricultural and other produce. Beyond the laconic statement that “ waterways are a valuable and extensively used means of communication in north-eastern India and Burma ” the Report contains no hint as to the possibilities of their development. “ All is well with the waterways ” was the impression that the Commission evidently carried away with them in the absence of any definite representation made to them with regard to their development. The only complaint they had to hear and deal with was about the spread of water hyacinth in Assam, Bengal and Burma and the havoc it plays with the waterway traffic. Water hyacinth is certainly a subject quite within their jurisdiction and competency to inquire into and report on. But with regard to the development of waterways, the terms of reference perhaps precluded the Commission from making any inquiries. There can be no spontaneous representations from the public, for they also are tied down and restricted to answering merely the several items on the questionnaire. The cumulative effect of these limitations and restrictions is found in the absence of any reference to a subject “ of very great importance for India ”, to use the words of the Honourable Mr. McWatters himself. This explains the need for this motion.

In the first place, it is contended that this is a purely local question and provincial authorities are already taking a lively interest in the matter and the Central Government need not therefore bother their head about it. Similarly, Sir, roads and their development are local matters, but the Central Government did step in. They appointed a Roads Committee and found

[Rao Sahib Dr. U. Rama Rau.]

ways and means to supplement provincial finance and did everything they could to co-ordinate their activities with those of Provincial Governments. The importance of the subject and the responsibility of the Central Government in the matter cannot be brought home more ably and more forcibly than in the following observations of my friend, an *ex-Member* of the Legislative Assembly, in his speech on the Railway Budget on the 22nd February 1926. He then said :

"There is another matter which I wish to mention—a matter of great importance. The Acworth Committee pointedly drew attention to the necessity for the creation of an office in the Government of India, namely, a Member for Transport. Transport does not consist merely in maintaining Railways. The time has come when we should look round and see whether waterways should not be taken in hand at once. Now that we have taken sufficient steps in safeguarding our Railways we should take up our waterways hand in hand with the Railways. They have been neglected in the past and the time has come when we should take up this question of waterways, and I hope that the Honourable the Member for Commerce before he lays down his office will add to the items to his credit this item of waterways and see that it is started in his Department, in order to take charge of the coastal traffic and to see that Ports give all facilities for developing coastal traffic in this country and also inland water traffic. We cannot depend upon Railways entirely for traffic. It is too costly for the people ; it is not suited to the poor people of this country ; waterways are best suited to them and we have got ample natural facilities in that direction. We have got an abundant coastal line and we have got abundant rivers which judiciously manipulated will yield good results."

These were the remarks made by Mr. Rangachariar. My Honourable colleague Sir Haroon Jaffer had moved a similar Resolution in this Council some years ago and has exhausted the subject so thoroughly that I do not want to weary the House with a repetition of the arguments. The Honourable Mr. McWatters in his reply to my Resolution in September, 1927 agreed that.

"Nature has provided natural waterways and where they can be kept up at reasonable expense they are probably the cheapest form of transport, and even in these days with the development of motor transport and railways, there is still a great field in India for the preservation and development of waterways."

He went on to say :

"But the subject before the House is whether the time is now ripe for the appointment of a Central Committee to deal with waterways."

But Mr. Rangachariar, than whom no more level-headed politician and no greater confidant of the Government of India can be found to-day, holds the opposite view. He says that "the time has come for the Government of India to take up the waterways also and develop them." With the Railways rapidly progressing now under the ægis of the Government of India, with the roads about to be taken over under the protective wing of the Central Government, with Mr. Haji's Coastal Traffic Bill on the legislative anvil, promising a great future for India's maritime coastal trade, and with the development of inland waterways, which bids fair to be a boon to the poor in its cheapness and accessibility, the betterment of the lot of the agricultural population in India can be said to be insured.

Secondly, with regard to the existing waterways I must say that the attention paid to the subject by the Local Governments is very tardy and inadequate. Though it is now 18 months since my first Resolution was moved on the subject, the Buckingham Canal in my Presidency is repeating its old gruesome tale of neglect and inattention.

Thirdly and lastly, there is the possibility of the appointment of a Member (is it too soon to say Minister ?) for Transport in the Central Government. If such a contingency arises, and the Acworth Committee have already fore-shadowed it, it will be in the fitness of things that the way should be cleared for his advent, so that when he comes he may take charge of the complete Communications Department—the Railways, Roads, the Coastal Traffic and Inland Waterways.

For these reasons, Sir, I wish a Committee to be appointed forthwith to go into the question of waterways and to suggest ways and means to develop them.

Sir, I move.

THE HONOURABLE MR. KUMAR SANKAR RAY CHAUDHURY (East Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I rise to support the Resolution moved by my Honourable friend Dr. Rama Rau. Neither the Royal Commission on Agriculture nor the Roads Development Committee have given sufficient attention to the development of the waterways of India as a means of communication from one place to another, although the irrigation canals and the natural rivers have brought water to the very doors of the inhabitants of India. But neither of these bodies can be blamed for this neglect, inasmuch as the development of waterways was not strictly speaking within the scope of their investigation. The apathy of the Government is solely responsible for this, and they can even be charged with having destroyed the natural waterways of the country by their shortsighted policy of diverting the water from the rivers solely for irrigation purposes without at the same time providing facilities for transport over their canals.

The result has been harmful in a double way. In Upper India the rivers have been dried up by the diversion of water from them causing directly the destruction of all means of transport by water; while in the lower provinces of Bengal, although there are no canals to cause diversion, the diversion of water from the rivers in Upper India has caused loss of strength in the current so that most rivers are getting choked up with silt. The irrigation policy of the Government has also been responsible for rendering the country malarious and unhealthy by raising the water level in Upper India and causing stagnation of the drainage system in the lower provinces. It has thus become necessary to adopt prompt measures to change the present policy of the Government so as to afford facilities for water transport and to prevent the drying or silting up of the rivers in the country. That transport by water is much less costly than transport over land by railway or other means no one can, I think, question. The Chamber of Commerce at Calcutta, I believe, had some time ago to admit that traffic by country boats still offers a great competition to the steamer services in Bengal. I do not know how far this is correct. My questions on this subject elicited no reply from the Government during the last Simla Session, but there is no doubt that, just as in the case of railways in Europe and recently even in some parts of India, the discovery of petrol and other cheap sources of motive power will enable small motor boats to successfully compete with steam vessels, and already such boats have begun to offer such competition in some of the rivers in East Bengal. There is still another direction in which transport by water offers a great advantage over transport by land. I mean the use of hydro-electric power. Some time ago the Government held an investigation about the prospect of generating hydro-electric power in the country, and their Committee came to the conclusion that such power could be generated in the submontane districts, but so long as the country

[Mr. Kumar Sankar Ray Chaudhury .]

remained industrially undeveloped to a greater extent there was not much use for the generation of such power. They were not concerned, however, with transport by water at the time and so they did not apply their minds to the question whether such power could be utilised for this purpose, and I think there is ample scope for utilising electric power generated in this way. Recently a gentleman in the Punjab has been utilising hydro-electric power for purposes of agriculture also, and his experiment has been highly spoken of, I believe, in the Report of the Agricultural Commission.

As regards parts other than the submontane tracts of India, on account of its flatness, the hydro-electric Committee made, so far as I remember, an unfavourable report; but I do not know, and being a layman I can only offer my suggestion with diffidence, whether they considered the feasibility of generating hydro-electricity there by the erection not of dams in the rivers, but by the creation of narrow gorges or artificial whirlpools therein which might serve the purpose without even creating a bar to traffic.

Moreover, where there are high banks on both sides of the river, as is the case with most rivers in North Bengal, I do not know whether they considered the feasibility of erecting artificial barriers from bank to bank so as to create water-falls strong enough to generate electricity. President Hoover in one of his recent utterances has laid great stress upon all these subjects, and I would earnestly recommend that the Government of India should similarly proceed to hold an investigation upon as wide a scope as possible.

*THE HONOURABLE SIR EBRAHIM HAROON JAFFER (Bombay Presidency : Muhammadan) : Sir, I had the honour to move a similar Resolution on the 25th February, 1925. At that time my Resolution was negatived. I now strongly support the Resolution moved by my friend the Honourable Dr. Rama Rau.

I am sorry that the Agricultural Commission have not dealt with this important question in their Report. To my mind what is wanted is a careful study of the whole situation with the ultimate object of so draining the rivers and so dredging their courses as to make navigation quite possible. We are assured on very good authority that such a thing is very practicable and it would very materially lighten the burden of poverty and misery which India has to bear through flood havocs, and would at the same time result in inestimable benefits in the direction of removing water shortage, inadequate transport, insufficient facilities, bad drainage and disappearance of land from erosion, giving India in return extensive acquisition of new land, improved public health and above all unlimited electric power over those areas. America and Canada are just beginning to awake to the enormous possibilities of this kind of inland constructive work and both countries are contemplating the expenditure of millions of dollars on such schemes in the near future. Shall India lag behind these other countries, especially when our need is not merely acquisition of land, wealth and mechanical power, but the consolidation of land that has been washed away, prevention of floods, which are exacting a heavy toll of life every year, and solving of some of the most acute transport problems with which the nation has to deal? I hope, Sir, that this Resolution of my friend will be accepted, and I support it.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA RAM SARAN DAS (Punjab : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I rise to support the Resolution which has been moved by my Honourable friend, Dr. Rama Rau. I do not want to add much

* Speech not corrected by the Honourable Member.

to what has already been said by the Members who have spoken before me. I want to add, Sir, that in places where waterways can be developed from the business point of view, a move in that direction will be quite justified. Railways have proved a great boon for the development of the country, and wherever it is difficult to make a railway a paying concern, it is quite possible that a waterway may be the right substitute for it. In India many canals are navigable, and since sometime past some of these canals have been closed for water traffic. The reasons are not quite known to me, but I am sure that the companies who gave up navigation did it for want of Government attention to keep the channels free from silt and fit for proper navigation. In places which are sandy and where road transport is difficult, I think the waterways which do exist there and which can easily be developed for navigation should be developed.

With these words, Sir, I give my support to the Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. C. McWATTERS (Industries and Labour Secretary): Sir, the Honourable Mover of this Resolution was no doubt quite correct in saying that when the debate on this subject was not pursued 18 months ago it was because we were awaiting the Report of the Agricultural Commission. But, if I may say so, both he and the other Honourable Members who have so far spoken to-day have done less than justice to the Royal Commission on Agriculture. It is true that their Report is a somewhat bulky volume and that may account for Honourable Members not having been able to find their way about in it. As a matter of fact, the Agricultural Commission did deal with this subject. They have made no less than three important recommendations in connection with it.

I would invite the attention of the House first of all to paragraph 292 and following paragraphs which deal at length with this question in connection with Bengal where it is of course a very important question indeed. They point out that one of the difficulties which has had to be met with in Bengal is that the existing Department of Irrigation in that province has not really had time or been competent to deal with the cognate questions of navigation and drainage, and their first recommendation is that the Department should be divided and that there should be constituted in Bengal a separate Department to be called the Waterways and Navigation Department. They then continue at length to examine the technical aspects of this question in Bengal. They point out the analogies from other countries where there are similar river systems, as in America, and they make an extremely important recommendation. They say:

"We accordingly recommend to the earnest consideration of the Bengal Government the desirability of appointing a committee of experts, which would include among its members at least one who is familiar with the management of the deltas of large rivers in other countries, such as for example that of the Mississippi, and we would suggest that one of the specific directions to such a committee should be to consider and report upon the advisability of setting up a Provincial Waterways Board."

We have there a recommendation for an expert committee. It is true they do not recommend a committee of Members of the Central Legislature. They do recommend, however, a committee, and a committee of experts, and one of the specific directions was that that committee should consider the appointment of a permanent body, a Provincial Waterways Board, which would continuously consider these important questions in Bengal. Then again, in paragraph 318, which had been seen by the Honourable Mover of the Resolution, they deal with the particular question of the clogging of the waterways of India by the water hyacinth, and their recommendation there was that—

"further research was urgently needed, and we consider that the formation of permanent work of this character should be one of the first questions to be taken up by the Council of Agricultural Research."

[Mr. A. C. McWatters.]

If, therefore, as a result of this Commission's recommendations, a Council of Agricultural Research is instituted one of the Council's first subjects of inquiry will be the improvement of waterways by research in order to eradicate the water hyacinth. I think then it is scarcely fair to the Royal Commission to suggest that they have not considered this question of waterways.

Since the Honourable Mover moved a similar Resolution in this House 18 months ago, the Government of India have carefully considered the subject as a result of that Resolution and as a result of consideration of the Agricultural Commission's Report, and they hold the view that the development of waterways is primarily a matter for the provinces. They hold also that it is a subject with which provinces are competent to deal. In order to develop this aspect of my reply, which is really my main reply to the Resolution, I may have to traverse a little of the ground which I covered 18 months ago when I replied to the Honourable Member's previous Resolution, but I will try to avoid repeating what I said then.

The principal areas in India where internal water transport is extremely important are three. First of all, there is north-eastern India, mainly Bengal. The subject was considered mainly in connection with Bengal in the years 1920-21, and the correspondence with the Secretary of State at that time has been laid on the table of this House. The recommendations at that time were opposed to the formation of a Central Waterways Board for India as a whole, and indeed at that time it was not considered desirable to recommend a local Waterways Board, but it was recommended that the Waterways Committee, which even at that time existed in Bengal, should be expanded and developed and that opportunity should be taken to enlist upon it representatives from other adjoining provinces where subjects came under discussion in which more than one province was interested. As I have said just now, the Agricultural Commission has recommended that this question of a Permanent Waterways Board for Bengal should be reconsidered as the result of an enquiry by an expert committee, and I have no doubt that the Government of Bengal will take that recommendation into their serious consideration. In Bengal of course one of the most important questions affecting waterways is the Grand Trunk Canal, and that question, as the House knows, was referred by the Local Government to a committee which I understand reported to the Local Government not long ago. We have not yet heard from the Local Government their final views on the report of that committee, but it is a matter which is of great local importance and arouses intense local interest; it is a matter primarily for the Local Government to consider and to proceed, if they choose, with this great project on which they have already spent a considerable amount of money.

The second area where waterways are extremely important is Burma. Now, in Burma, since the year 1923, there has been in existence a Board of Communications, and to that Board is attached a separate Waterways Committee. As I told the House 18 months ago, up to that time this Committee had dealt with no less than 33 different schemes affecting waterways, and in every case their recommendations had been accepted by the Local Government, with the result that new schemes totalling some 42 lakhs had been carried out in addition to improvements of existing waterways totalling 16 lakhs, while 3½ lakhs had been spent on research in connection with the water hyacinth. In addition a large number of further schemes involving large sums of money were under consideration. I have reason to believe that, since that time, this Waterways Committee has been actively functioning and I do not

think that the Burma Government really requires any help from us in dealing with the question of waterways. It has been dealing with it most actively and most efficiently.

The third area in India which is important in connection with waterways is the Honourable Mover's province of Madras. The Honourable Mover drew a rather pathetic picture of the state of the Buckingham Canal. He said it was repeating its "gruesome tale of neglect and inattention", or rather, I presume, the Government was. As a matter of fact, 18 months ago, I told the Honourable Member that I had information from Madras that schemes for improving the Buckingham Canal were then under consideration, and I have received information only a few days ago from Madras that a scheme costing approximately two lakhs has been sanctioned for this purpose and that work is actually in progress. And further as regards the canal system on the west coast, we have information that a considerable sum is at present being spent on removing silt and improving the condition of these west coast canals. Of course, in Madras, which is a province where motor transport and light railways have progressed further perhaps than in any other, it is probable that development of water transport will be mainly in the direction of improving the existing facilities rather than the launching of new schemes, because it has been found that internal transport arrangements by motor and light railway have been exceedingly successful in that part of the country. I think from what I have said it is fairly clear that Local Governments have not been inactive in those areas where waterways are most important.

The Honourable the Mover mentioned the appointment of a Central Committee to deal with roads. I suggest that this is really not at all an exact parallel. The development of roads in one province has an intimate connection with the development of roads in other provinces. The arterial communications cannot be developed in one province and neglected in another without affecting the value of the whole scheme, and therefore there is, as regards roads, a strong case for co-ordination. In the second place, in connection with roads there is an extra problem due to the development of motor transport and the still greater developments which we expect in the future. It was felt desirable that these users of the roads, these users-up of the roads I might almost say, should be made to pay something more than they do at present towards their upkeep. One of the suggestions which was obviously for consideration was that this extra taxation on the users of roads should be made through the means of the petrol excise. That is an item of central taxation, and therefore it is essential that the Central Government should come into the picture. In the case of waterways the position is different. They are practically confined to provincial areas. For instance, the navigable portion of the Indus falls entirely within one province and similarly with most of the main rivers. There is, as far as I know, only one link between adjoining provinces, namely, the Hijli Tidal and Orissa coast canal system, which joins Bengal to Orissa. But the Orissa Flood Committee reporting only the other day said that in the first place this canal system is very little used, and, in the second place, that it is a danger to the country because it holds up the flood water which otherwise would escape to the sea, and they have recommended that this particular canal system should be abandoned. Therefore, Sir, I think we may take it that in the case of waterways the problem does not present exactly the same features as the problem which is presented by roads. What the House is really being asked to do is to appoint a Central Committee to inquire into the efficiency of the administration by Local Governments of a provincial subject, and I think that unless very strong reason is shown why such an inquiry should be made, we ought to leave Local Governments to manage their own business,

[Mr. A. C. McWatters.]

appointing, if they choose, expert committees to advise them, and that we should not appoint a Central Committee to tour the whole country.

Before I sit down I should just like to say that if this is the view of the Government of India, it is not because they are in any way blind to the importance of the development of waterways. It is a subject which has been debated not merely twice but three times in this House, and I may say that the father of the subject is my friend the Honourable Sir Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer who moved a Resolution in somewhat similar terms in the year 1925. But I hope that he too will be satisfied that the attitude which the Government is now adopting is really the most practical attitude for dealing with this question. It is perfectly true that there is competition between different types of transport and that there is competition to some extent between railways and waterways. For instance, when there was no railway between Madras and Calcutta along the East Coast, it is obvious that other forms of transport had to be developed; but once the East Coast Railway came into existence it was inevitable that there should be a certain amount of competition between that Railway and, for instance, the Buckingham Canal which is now used mainly for bringing local produce from upcountry into Madras. I want to emphasise quite clearly that the Government of India are as anxious as any Member of this House that this subject should be properly considered. But they do consider that it should be left to Local Governments to deal with, with the help of expert committees to be appointed by them wherever they consider it necessary. I hope, therefore, that in view of the explanation I have given, the Honourable Mover will not think it necessary to press his Resolution.

*THE HONOURABLE SIR GEORGE GODFREY (Bengal Chamber of Commerce): Sir, I am in sympathy with the purpose underlying the Honourable Mover's Resolution, but I am sorry that I cannot support it, because I do not think that the Committee he proposes would provide effective machinery. If he had proposed that there should be created a Central Ministry of Transport to take charge of Railways, Roads and Inland Waterways I might possibly have welcomed it because I do consider that the maintenance and development of inland water traffic is of the greatest importance to the country. It is greatly to be deplored that many of the old natural waterways are fast dying out. For instance, in the North-East province there is a deterioration, to which the Honourable Mr. McWatters has just referred, of the Sunderbans routes from Calcutta to Assam. Those rivers are silting up and a recent report based on expert evidence is to the effect that the routes cannot possibly be kept open for large inland steamers for more than a few years. The position is so serious that it has recently been up before a special committee in Calcutta, and the Committee of the Chamber of Commerce have urged the Government of Bengal without any loss of time to take into consideration again the Grand Canal scheme to which the Honourable Mr. McWatters referred. Unfortunately, however, the Government of Bengal is in such a financial condition that there seems very little prospect of their being able to undertake that scheme in the near future. Therefore, although this has been dealt with as a provincial subject, it seems to me that the Government of Bengal is faced with a rapid deterioration of the existing routes and the impossibility of raising money to construct the new route. If there had been a Central Ministry

* Speech not corrected by the Honourable Member.

of Transport, upon whom fell the duty of taking charge of all means of transportation, namely, Railways, Roads and Waterways, one cannot but help thinking that such a Ministry would have faced the situation and would have said that the problem is of national importance, because it is of national importance—a great deal more than provincial—feeding as these do the great port of Calcutta. As I say, I feel that a Ministry of Transport would have taken upon itself to come forward with financial schemes, causing neighbouring provinces to co-operate and bringing about co-operation between the Central Government finances and provincial finances.

In regard to new waterways, I entirely agree with the views expressed by the Honourable Mr. McWatters on behalf of Government. The policy should mainly be directed towards improving existing waterways, not towards spending vast sums of money on canals for inland water navigation unless, as in the case of the Grand Canal scheme, there are to be alternatives or substitutes for drying waterways. He referred to the Orissa coast canal. That is an instance where a tremendous sum of money was spent many years ago. 30 years ago one could see that canal being used frequently by boats carrying crops up and down the country, but now it is dead. As he pointed out, the natural consequence of the railway coming in parallel was to kill this canal. But in regard to the development and improvement of existing waterways to enable them to hold their traffic, if a Provincial Government cannot take that in charge and cannot finance it, I consider it is the duty of the Central Government. But we cannot expect that unless there is some form of Ministry upon whom the duty will lie.

With these remarks I have to express my regret that I cannot support the Mover of the Resolution and I think that he would be well advised to realize that a Committee drawn from these two Houses would not be an expert committee and could not possibly deal with the subject satisfactorily.

THE HONOURABLE RAO SAHIB DR. U. RAMA RAU: Sir, the subject-matter of my Resolution is very important. That is accepted by the Member on the other side and also by the Agricultural Commission. The mere fact that this particular Resolution has been brought before this Council three times itself shows that the subject is of a very important nature. In the other House also my friend Mr. T. Rangachariar has pointedly drawn the attention of the Government to this matter. The last speaker remarked that he did not approve of a Committee like the one proposed going into the question and he would like to have a Member for Transport to tackle the question. I only wish that this Committee should sit and find out ways and means and make suggestions for a Department to administer it. I do not want it to manage the Department at all. The Committee can examine any experts they may wish to and after recording the evidence of experts formulate a scheme under which a Minister for Transport could carry on the work. The mere fact that the Agricultural Commission have drawn the attention of the Punjab and Burma Governments to the badly kept condition of the canals itself shows that there is every need to take this question into consideration.

Then again, Sir, so far as Madras is concerned, till the East Coast Railway was established the Buckingham Canal was kept in very good condition. When the railway extension from Madras to Bengal was established the canal was entirely neglected. Money was no longer spent to keep the canal in order and so for the last 15 years the canal has silted up and even ordinary boats with a draught of two or three feet cannot pass through it. That is because

[Rao Sahib Dr. U. Rama Rau.]

there is now the vested interests of the Railway. If the canal were kept in a good condition, transport over it being cheaper it would compete with the Railway. That is one reason why Government is not prepared to accept this Resolution.

My friend Mr. McWatters said that this was a local question whereas roads are an inter-provincial matter. As for that, Sir, in Cochin and Travancore where they have extensive canals, the canal system is not under the British Government at all, and unless the Central Government come to our rescue those canals cannot be kept in proper order and this means of transport cannot be kept going without the Central Government's intervention. There is further the question of coastal traffic which has to be considered by this Committee. I am not therefore at all satisfied with the reply given by the Government and will press the Resolution to a division.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The question is :

“ That the following Resolution be adopted, namely :

‘ This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that, inasmuch as the Royal Commission on Agriculture have not dealt in their Report with the question of the development of waterways in India as a means of transport of agriculture and other produce, he should forthwith appoint a Committee including Members of both Houses of the Central Legislature to examine the possibility and desirability of developing such means of communication and to suggest ways and means to effect such development ’.”

The Council divided :

AYES—10.

Jaffer, The Honourable Sir Ebrahim Haroon.	Rama Rau, The Honourable Rao Sahib Dr. U.
Khaparde, The Honourable Mr. G. S.	Ray Chaudhury, The Honourable Mr. Kumar Sankar.
Mehr Shah, The Honourable Nawab Sahibzada Saiyad Mohamad.	Sinha, The Honourable Mr. Anugraha Narayan.
Mukherjee. The Honourable Srijut Lokesh.	Suhrawardy, The Honourable Mr. Mahmood.
Ram Saran Das, The Honourable Rai Bahadur Lala.	Umar Hayat Khan, The Honourable Colonel Nawab Sir.

NOES—20.

Akram Husain Bahadur, The Honourable Prince A. M. M.	Harnam Singh, The Honourable Raja Sir.
Basu, The Honourable Rai Bahadur Suresh Chandra.	Harper, The Honourable Mr. K. B.
Braidwood, The Honourable Mr. H. L.	Irving, The Honourable Mr. M.
Burdon, The Honourable Mr. E.	Maqbul Husain, The Honourable Khan Bahadur Sheikh.
Charanjit Singh, The Honourable Sardar.	McWatters, The Honourable Mr. A. C.
Clayton, The Honourable Mr. H. B.	Mitter, The Honourable Sir Brojendra.
Corbett, The Honourable Sir Geoffrey.	Natesan, The Honourable Mr. G. A.
Godfrey, The Honourable Sir George.	Symons, The Honourable Major-General T. H.
Habibullah, The Honourable Khan Bahadur Sir Muhammad.	Thompson, The Honourable Sir John.
Haig, The Honourable Mr. H. G.	Weston, The Honourable Mr. D.

The motion was negatived.

RESOLUTION *RE* ESTABLISHMENT OF STEAMER SERVICES IN CONJUNCTION WITH STATE RAILWAYS.

THE HONOURABLE MR. KUMAR SANKAR RAY CHAUDHURY (East Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, after the discussion that has taken place on the last Resolution I do not think there remains much for me to say upon my Resolution, which reads as follows :

" This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that he should take steps to establish steamer services in conjunction with State Railway systems wherever feasible."

The scope of this Resolution, Sir, is a very narrow one and there is no need for investigation, for steamers are already plying on many rivers in the country for a pretty long time with great success and competing favourably with State Railway systems. This is amply borne out by the recent disclosures made by the Government that the income derived from goods traffic on the Eastern Bengal Railway is less than the income derived from third class passengers, and I fail to understand why the State Railways should be conducted at a sacrifice of the interests of the country by allowing private companies to divert the goods traffic from these Railways. I therefore commend my Resolution to the acceptance of the House.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GEOFFREY CORBETT (Commerce Secretary) : I should like first, Sir, on behalf of the State Railways to acknowledge the compliment that has been paid to them by the Honourable Mover for their efficiency and solicitude for the public welfare—perhaps, Sir, an involuntary compliment and by implication, but none the less sincere on that account and none the less appreciated—and I should like on behalf of the Railway Board to acknowledge the public confidence in them which this Resolution implies, public confidence in a body which is sometimes in this House unfairly criticised.

Of course there is no objection in principle to steamer services being run by State Railways. In fact, I daresay the Honourable Mover is aware that 40 years ago there were a certain number of services run by the Railways in Bengal; the most important, I think, were Goalundo to Narayanganj and Goalundo to Sirajganj; and the last of these was finally withdrawn in 1895. I think it might be worth while for this House to consider the reasons for this withdrawal, because in those reasons they might find the objections to reviving that practice. The reasons for withdrawal were, first of all, that they were found not to be required by the public which were sufficiently provided for by the private companies; and secondly, the services provided by the Railways in competition with the private companies were found to be unremunerative and so became a charge on the general tax-payer.

As I said, I think these reasons may suggest the objections to this Resolution. The first objection is in the nature of a legal objection, in that it is opposed to the law. Section 51 (e) of the Indian Railways Act permits a railway, with the sanction of the Governor General in Council, to " provide and maintain any means of transport which may be required for the reasonable convenience of passengers, animals or goods carried or to be carried on its railway "; that is, the railway is only permitted by law to carry goods and passengers to or from a railway system, that is, as part of a journey, where it is required; and it is only permitted to do so when the reasonable convenience of the public requires it; that is, if sufficient services are provided from other sources, it would not be justifiable under the Railway Act for the Governor

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General in Council to sanction the provision of services by a railway company. Now, this is not a mere legal quibble ; but the law, I think, sets definite and deliberate limits on the activities of railways for very good reasons. Let me put it this way. A railway system is essentially a monopoly which is created with the assistance and by the action of the State. It operates on its own permanent way and has the exclusive use of its permanent way. And for this reason it may be desirable, in the interests of the public, that a railway should be operated by the State ; that is, this monopoly which inevitably exists should be exercised by the State under the control of the Legislature. But there are other forms of transport run on public highways, motor transport on roads, steamers on rivers and sea-going ships on the high seas, and these public highways are accessible to everyone alike. Now, if the State Railways were permitted to extend their activities over these public highways, they would, in their own interests and to get a return on the money invested, be forced into severe competition with private enterprise and they might ultimately, with all the resources of the State behind them, destroy private enterprise. Now, it is of course a familiar socialistic conception that all means of transport should be controlled and operated by the State. I am not going to enter into the *pros* and *cons* of this conception. We have to deal with the situation as it now stands and with the law as it now stands ; and, as I have said, the law definitely restricts the activities of railways by these two specific limitations,—that is, firstly, any other means of transport operated by a railway must definitely be required for the reasonable conveyance of passengers and goods, and, secondly, they can only operate for the benefit of goods carried or to be carried on its railway. And of course as the Honourable Member is well aware, in the waterways of Bengal goods and passengers travel from one part to another without having been carried and without going to be carried on a railway. I think this House will agree with me that it is quite impossible for the Government to accept a Resolution which is opposed not only to the letter of the law, but also to its spirit and its intention and the policy which underlies it.

The second objection is a financial objection. As I said before, the river steamer services previously worked by the railway were withdrawn, and one of the reasons for the withdrawal was they were unremunerative. Now, it is not very easy for us—this House is probably aware—to raise all the money we require for railway developments if we are going to keep pace with the country's needs. Our railway programme may be restricted by our

12 NOON. borrowing capacity ; and in India, situated as we are, the State has to find all the capital which is required for railway developments. None is found by private companies, or practically none. So that it is very undesirable that we should limit private enterprise in other forms of transport, and make further drains upon State resources for the development of river transport. Now, perhaps the Honourable Member does not quite appreciate what a vast and costly undertaking these river steamer services are. It is not merely the purchasing of the steamers, it is not merely the provision of landing places. The river must be surveyed, there must be a pilot service, you must put up navigation marks by day and night. All these are provided now by the companies which are operating on the river. But if the State Railways are to enter into competition, it is quite clear that they would have to provide these services, and in addition there would have to be many workshops and whole staffs of employees. It would be a very big undertaking requiring very large capital ; just as the existing river companies are large enterprises with a large capital. My point is that, as we are compelled by the nature of the case to provide all the capital for railway development, it is very

important that we should encourage private enterprise to provide the capital for the development of other forms of transport, and we should not take any action which would discourage and even kill private enterprise in these directions. But in any case, apart from all that, we simply cannot afford to dissipate our restricted resources in duplicating or replacing existing services, which may not be perfect but which on the whole, I think, do, in the words of the Railway Act, provide for the requirements and for the reasonable convenience of passengers and goods.

My two objections to the Resolution can then be summed up as follows. In the first place, it is contrary to the existing law, which places a definite restriction on the activities of railways; and secondly, it is financially unwise and would indeed retard the development of communications in India as a whole, which is dependent on the limited amount of money available; and to that extent it would retard the economic development of the country.

For these reasons, Sir, I oppose this Resolution.

THE HONOURABLE MR. KUMAR SANKAR RAY CHAUDHURY: Sir, various objections have been raised on behalf of the Government against my Resolution. I shall deal with some of them. The first objection raised is a legal one. With regard to that, my submission is that, if the Government is so minded, the law can be changed easily and that objection may be removed. As regards the financial ground, my submission is this. The Government cannot both blow hot and cold. When they say that they have failed in competing with private enterprise and they have therefore given up their steamer services, it does not lie in their mouth to say that private enterprise should not be crushed by the State competing with it. Besides, I do not want the Government to monopolise the waterways of the country. I want them to run steamer services along with private companies, and I do not understand why, if they can carry on such services with profit, the Government are unable to compete with them.

Then, as regards cost, my Honourable friend says the cost would be exorbitant. I do not know whether, compared with the railway system, the cost for the steamer services would be still greater, and I would like very much my learned friend to enlighten me on the subject. He mentioned the pilot service and navigation marks. Do the Government not maintain such services for the railways as well? I do not see why the Government should not undertake steamer services as well where railway service is impossible on account of intervening rivers.

I therefore commend this Resolution to the acceptance of the House.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GEOFFREY CORBETT: I think I need only deal very briefly, Sir, with the points raised by the Honourable the Mover in reply. The first is the legal point. I think I made it sufficiently clear in my first speech that it was not a legal quibble which could be removed at will by the Government; but that it was the expression of a deliberate policy of limiting the activities of railways, and that the deliberate policy, the established policy of Government, expressed by law, the law of the Legislature, the law of the land, could not be set aside at will and disregarded in reply to a Resolution.

I understand that the Honourable Mover's second point is this, that the steamship companies are in competition with the railways and are limiting

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their profits, and therefore the railways should enter into competition with them and destroy them and extend their monopoly over the waterways as well as the railways. I will merely put it to the House: Is that in the public interest?

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The question is:

“ That the following Resolution be adopted, namely:

‘ This Council recommends to the Governor General in Council that he should take steps to establish steamer services in conjunction with State Railway systems wherever feasible ’. ”

The motion was negatived.

ELECTION OF TWO MEMBERS TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL OF STATE ON THE COURT OF THE DELHI UNIVERSITY.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Before I adjourn the Council, I would remind Honourable Members, that is to say, the elected Members of this House, that they have been asked this morning to elect two of their number to represent the Council on the Court of the Delhi University. Under the Delhi University Act, No. VIII of 1922, section 18, and the Statutes of the University made under that section, two Members of this House, elected by the elected Members, sit on the Court of the Delhi University for three years, and the terms of office of Mr. Anugraha Narayan Sinha and Mr. Mahmood Suhrawardy are about to expire. I would suggest that it would be convenient for Honourable Members if, after I adjourn the House, they continue to sit in this Chamber and dispose of the business before them.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, the 18th February, 1929.
