

Saturday, 17th February, 1934

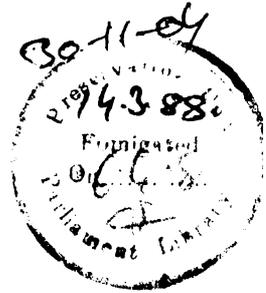
THE  
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

VOLUME I, 1934

*(8th February to 27th April, 1934)*

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SEVENTH SESSION  
OF THE  
THIRD COUNCIL OF STATE, 1934



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## CONTENTS.

### Thursday, 8th February, 1934—

	Pages.
Members Sworn . . . . .	1
Death of Mr. Abdul Hamid . . . . .	1
Questions and Answers . . . . .	2—11
Statements laid on the table . . . . .	11—13
Messages from His Excellency the Governor General . . . . .	13—14
Committee on Petitions . . . . .	14
Resolution <i>re</i> placing on record the deep sympathy of the Council with sufferers in the recent earthquake—Adopted . . . . .	14—19
Governor General's Assent to Bill . . . . .	19
Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	19
Motion for the election of two non-official Muslim Members to the Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz—Adopted . . . . .	19—20
Statement of Business . . . . .	20

### Saturday, 10th February, 1934—

Question and Answer . . . . .	21—22
Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	22
Nominations for the election of two non-official Muslim Members to the Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz . . . . .	22
Resolution <i>re</i> Indianization of the Indian Civil Service—Withdrawn . . . . .	23—35

### Tuesday, 13th February, 1934—

Questions and Answers . . . . .	37—38
Reserve Bank of India Bill—Motion to consider, adjourned . . . . .	38—69

### Wednesday, 14th February, 1934—

Members Sworn . . . . .	71
Questions and Answers . . . . .	71—78
Reserve Bank of India Bill—Motion to consider, adopted . . . . .	79—111

### Thursday, 15th February, 1934—

Reserve Bank of India Bill—Consideration of clauses and Motion to pass, adjourned . . . . .	113—46
---	--------

### Friday, 16th February, 1934—

Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	147
Reserve Bank of India Bill—Passed, as amended . . . . .	147—63
Imperial Bank of India (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	168—65
Statement of Business . . . . .	165

### Saturday, 17th February, 1934—

Question and Answer . . . . .	167—68
Presentation of the Railway Budget for 1934-35 . . . . .	168—73
Motion for the election of two non-official Members to the Standing Committee to advise on subjects other than "Indians Overseas—Emigration" and "Haj Pilgrimage" dealt with in the Department of Education, Health and Lands—Adopted . . . . .	173

	Pages.
<b>Thursday, 29th March, 1934—</b>	
Indian Finance Bill, 1934—Considered and passed . . . . .	609—31
Salt Additional Import Duty (Extending) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	631—35
Statement of Business . . . . .	630
<b>Thursday, 12th April, 1934—</b>	
Members Sworn . . . . .	637
Questions and Answers . . . . .	637—45
Short Notice Question and Answer . . . . .	645—46
Statements laid on the table . . . . .	646—47
Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	647
Motion for the election of six non-official Members to the Central Advisory Council for Railways—Adopted . . . . .	647
Motion for the election of one Muslim non-official Member to the Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz <i>vice</i> the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam, resigned—Adopted . . . . .	648
Indian Trusts (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	648—49
Statement of Business . . . . .	649
<b>Monday, 16th April, 1934—</b>	
Member Sworn . . . . .	651
Short Notice Questions and Answers . . . . .	651—52
Ruling re putting of questions standing in the names of absent Members . . . . .	652—55
Statements laid on the table . . . . .	655—56
Motion for the election of one non-official Member to the Standing Committee on Emigration <i>vice</i> the Honourable Sir Kurma Venkata Reddi—Adopted . . . . .	656
Motion for the election of three non-official Members to the Standing Committee for Roads—Adopted . . . . .	656
Indian States (Protection) Bill—Motion to consider, adopted . . . . .	656—58
Election of one non-official Muslim Member to the Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz . . . . .	658
Nominations for the election of six non-official Members to the Central Advisory Council for Railways . . . . .	658
<b>Tuesday, 17th April, 1934—</b>	
Member Sworn . . . . .	699
Questions and Answers . . . . .	699—700
Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	701
Indian States (Protection) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	701—32
Statement of Business . . . . .	732
<b>Friday, 20th April, 1934—</b>	
Questions and Answers . . . . .	733—45
Statement laid on the table . . . . .	746
Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	747
Election of a non-official Member to the Standing Committee on Emigration <i>vice</i> the Honourable Sir Kurma Venkata Reddi . . . . .	747
Election of three non-official Members to the Standing Committee for Roads . . . . .	747
Election of six non-official Members to the Central Advisory Council for Railways . . . . .	747

**Friday, 20th April, 1934—contd.**

Congratulations to the Honourable Sir Joseph Bore on the successful termination of the Indo-Japanese Agreement . . . . .	748
Indian Tariff (Textile Protection) Amendment Bill—Motion to consider, adjourned . . . . .	748—803
Appendix . . . . .	804—06

**Saturday, 21st April, 1934—**

Questions and Answers . . . . .	807—09
Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table . . . . .	809
Indian Tariff (Textile Protection) Amendment Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	809—27
Resolution re Road Development Fund—Adopted . . . . .	827—35
Statement of Business . . . . .	886
Appendix . . . . .	887—38

**Thursday, 26th April, 1934—**

Question and Answer . . . . .	839
Congratulations to the Honourable Sir Harry Haig on his appointment as Governor of the United Provinces . . . . .	889
Death of Sir Sankaran Nair . . . . .	840—44
Statement laid on the table . . . . .	844—46
Result of the election of six non-official Members to the Central Advisory Council for Railways . . . . .	847
Trade Disputes (Extending) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	847—50
Sugar (Excise Duty) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	851—907
Sugar-cane Bill—Motion to consider, adopted . . . . .	907—30

**Friday, 27th April, 1934—**

Questions and Answers . . . . .	931—34
Death of the Right Honourable Sir Dinshaw Mulla . . . . .	934
Sugar-cane Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	934—55
Matches (Excise Duty) Bill—Considered and passed . . . . .	955—63
Motion re Committee to enquire into and report on the working of and results achieved from the Ottawa Agreement—Consideration adjourned . . . . .	964—68

# COUNCIL OF STATE.

Saturday, 17th February, 1934.

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

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## QUESTION AND ANSWER.

### AVERAGE PERIOD OF SERVICE OF DIFFERENT ARMS OF THE BRITISH ARMY

36. THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA MATHURA PRASAD MEHROTRA (on behalf of the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam): (a) What is the average period of service of different Arms of the British Army with Colours and in Reserve ?

(b) What is the average number of new recruits drafted to India from England each year and what is their average age ?

(c) What was the amount of the capitation charge paid by India for the years 1931-32 and 1932-33 ?

(d) When was the capitation charge last assessed ?

(e) What will be the reduction under each separate recommendation of the Capitation Tribunal in paragraphs 29, 30 and 31 ?

HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF: (a) The periods vary in different branches of the Army, but the average may be taken at about seven years with the Colours and about five years in the Reserve.

(b) The number of men drafted to India this year is 7,648 and their average age is 21 years. This is rather below the figure for the previous year, but it would be impossible without the expenditure of a great deal of time and trouble to arrive at average figures.

(c) and (d). In 1925-26 the capitation payments were fixed provisionally at a lump sum of £1,400,000 for the Army and £111,000 for the Air Force, pending examination of the claims of the Government of India and the counter-claims of the War Office and the Air Ministry as to what the *per capita* rate should be.

(e) I am afraid I cannot give the exact financial effect of the recommendations referred to. The calculations have to be worked out in England and no attempt has been made, so far as I am aware, to assess the result of each of the recommendations separately. The main point, however, is that although an increase in the capitation rate has had to be admitted for the Air Force the claims of the War Office, if accepted, would have come to £2,580,000, whereas the award of the Tribunal has brought the amount to be paid by India to a figure below the provisional sum of £1,400,000 referred to in my answer to parts (c) and (d).

**THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR LALA MATHURA PRASAD MEHROTRA :** With reference to the answer given to part (c) may I ask, Sir, whether the figures for 1931-32 and 1932-33 are not yet available ?

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF :** I do not quite understand what the Honourable Member means, Sir. The capitation payment which was arrived at in 1925-26 was a fixed figure. It had nothing to do with the *per capita* rate. It was an agreed upon figure between the two Governments which would obtain until such time as the result of the appeal to the Tribunal is known.

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### PRESENTATION OF THE RAILWAY BUDGET FOR 1934-35.

**THE HONOURABLE SIR GUTHRIE RUSSELL** (Chief Commissioner of Railways) : Sir, I have the honour to present a statement of the estimated revenue and expenditure of the Governor General in Council for the coming year in respect of Railways. As is customary on this occasion, I shall review the results of the last financial year, the present financial year and the prospects of the year which we are about to enter. I cannot claim that the results of this and last year are all that can be desired from the point of view of the taxpayer, but I hope to be able to prove to the satisfaction of the Council that not only are the results of this year likely to be considerably better than of last year but that the prospects for next year are such as to encourage at least a spirit of restrained optimism. There is little doubt that at the moment the outlook in most parts of the world is more hopeful than it has been for some time past. During the past few months the impression I have had from my talks with business men in India and from abroad is that there are better times ahead. No one was prepared to say that we had completely turned the corner of depression but nearly all were agreed that the turn was at least in sight though there might be some set-backs before true prosperity returned. In view of the prospects of at least some revival in trade, not only in India but throughout the world, I trust the Council will agree that there are reasonable grounds for predicting a further progressive rise in Railway earnings during 1934-35. Whether we are justified in doing this, only time can tell ; for, as I have stressed on previous occasions, not only are our earnings susceptible to a change in world conditions, quite independent of anything which may happen in India, but our working expenses may also be seriously affected by events over which we have no control. This has been very forcefully brought to our notice by the recent disastrous earthquake in India, which, we estimate, has done about one crore of damage to Indian Railways. Then again we have had very serious damage done to the protection works of the Hardinge Bridge by floods in the Ganges, the cost of repairing which may amount to as much as 1½ crores.

2. Our actual gross earnings during 1932-33 were 85·62 crores against 86·50 crores forecasted in our revised budget estimate for the year. The decrease on our forecast was entirely due to taking too optimistic a view of our traffic receipts. Actually our estimate of working expenses was practically correct. Let us assume for a moment that the Railways of India are run by a private company. If this were so, after making full allowance for our depreciation fund charges, our net revenue, or profit, would have amounted to 22·68 crores, and this is the amount which, if we were a Board of Directors, we would have had for distribution to our shareholders, and we

could have declared a dividend of about 3 per cent. on our shares— not a bad result in these times. However, as the Council is aware, we are not in the position of a private company, and we have got the liability of fixed interest charges. The result is that there is a loss in working for the year 1932-33 of 10·23 crores. This loss has been met by a temporary loan from the Depreciation Fund, which leaves a balance of about 12 crores in that fund.

3. In placing the budget estimate for 1933-34 before the Council, I estimated our traffic receipts at 88·25 crores and our working expenses, including appropriation to the Depreciation Fund, at 63·10 crores, giving a profit on the analogy of Company-owned Railways, or net earnings, of 25·15 crores. I may say that, up till two or three weeks ago, we had every hope that our anticipations, both of earnings and working expenses, would prove to be correct. Our weekly returns had shown a steady increase in our gross earnings, as compared with last year, and there seemed to be no reason to anticipate that our working expenses would exceed our estimates. About three weeks ago, however, we had a set-back, and our traffic, as compared with last year, for one week dropped by about 8 lakhs. Admittedly, the returns for the following weeks have shown a welcome revival, but this set-back has been a warning that the barometer of railway earnings is not yet set fair, and we have, therefore, considered it advisable to place our earnings for this financial year at half a crore less than our original estimate. This is actually about 2½ crores more than our earnings for the previous year.

4. The increase in this year's earnings has been entirely under goods, and we now expect the receipts from this traffic to be about 3½ crores, or 6 per cent. better than last year. This increase is general to all commodities and it gives an indication that there are fair prospects of a revival in trade. Unfortunately, our passenger earnings do not show the same upward tendency, and we estimate that they will be about 1 crore, or 4 per cent., less than they were last year. I think it may be taken as a generally accepted fact that goods earnings react quicker to a revival of trade than passenger earnings, and there is every hope that, as trade further improves, our passenger earnings, if they do not increase, will at least not tend to decrease further.

5. So much for our earnings. As regards our working expenses, despite the tragedy of the earthquake and the unforeseen and unforeseeable damage to the protection works of the Hardinge Bridge over the Ganges, which I have already referred to, we do not anticipate that our working expenses will differ to any great extent from our budget forecast. But for these unlooked for disasters, we would have expected our working expenses to be slightly lower than our anticipations. As these disasters will not, we hope, be of a recurrent nature, we have, with the approval of the Standing Finance Committee for Railways, decided to debit the cost of the damage caused by the earthquake and the Ganges floods to, in the first instance, the Depreciation Fund and reimburse the Depreciation Fund by annual instalments from Revenue of 15 lakhs per annum. The debit to Revenue will, therefore, be spread over a period of ten years.

6. As I have said, we now anticipate that our gross earnings will be about half a crore less than our expectations and our working expenses about the same as our budget estimate, so that our profit, or net earnings, should fall short by half a crore of our expectations. This will, however, be neutralized by a fall in our interest charges of about the same amount, our final position, therefore, in respect of our profit and loss account, should be as forecasted 12 months ago, namely, a loss, after paying all charges including interest, of 7½ crores. We thus hope to reduce our loss on the year's working as compared

[Sir Guthrie Russell.]

with last year by about 2½ crores. The loss, as in previous years, will be met by a temporary loan from the Depreciation Fund, which, at the end of this financial year, should stand at 11½ crores.

7. As I mentioned at the commencement of my budget speech, we, after weighing up all known factors and taking into account the undoubtedly brighter trade outlook, have come to the conclusion that we can look forward to the coming year with a certain degree of optimism. We, therefore, propose to budget for an increase of 2½ crores, or about 3 per cent., in our gross earnings. I am afraid, however, that an increase in our working expenses is inevitable. Working expenses may be divided into two parts—those which are dependent on the amount of traffic moved, such as cost of coal, water, oil, wages of the running staff, etc.; these automatically fall as traffic decreases. But the larger portion of working expenses does not necessarily decrease with a fall in traffic, and our endeavour has been to reduce these expenses also to an absolute minimum. The Council is aware of certain of the measures we have taken to achieve this object, such as the investigations being carried out by Mr. Pope and his Committee, to mention only one of them; but, as time goes on, avenues of economy become fewer and fewer, and a time must be reached when it would be unwise, and indeed unsafe, to proceed further if we are to keep our property in good order. I do not say for a moment that no further economies can be effected and I can assure the Council that there will be no slowing down of our endeavours, but I do think that the major retrenchments have been achieved. There is one thing that I am particularly anxious to avoid, and that is the further block retrenchment of staff. The investigations being carried out at present by the Pope Committee will probably make it necessary for Railways to reduce a certain number of staff, but it is hoped that it will be possible to meet most of these reductions by normal wastage and by the additional staff which will be required if our traffic increases, as we hope. We estimate that our working expenses will be increased by about ½ of a crore, but this will be offset by a further reduction in interest charges on account of the average rate of interest being expected to be still lower than it was this year. We should, therefore, get the full benefit of our anticipated increase in gross earnings, and we hope at the end of next financial year that our loss will be reduced to 5½ crores. If we were in the happy position of being a company, with only ordinary shares and no fixed interest charges, we would, if our anticipations in respect of next year's earnings prove to be correct, be in a position to pay a dividend of about 3½ per cent. on our shares. This would mean that our shares would certainly be standing at par, if not at a premium, which can, I think, be said of a few railway concerns throughout the world. It may be of interest to mention to Honourable Members some of the results of Railways in other parts of the world during the past few years. The gross receipts of the four amalgamated British Railways in 1932 amounted to £165 millions, or £15 millions (8%) less than in 1931 and £42½ millions (21%) less than in 1929. The Canadian Pacific Railways in 1932 earned \$122 millions which was \$18 millions (13%) less than in the previous year and \$86 millions (40%) less than in 1929. The Canadian National Railways earned \$161 millions in 1932, or \$59 millions (19%) less than in 1931 and \$107 millions (40%) less than in 1929. The receipts for the principal Railways in the United States of America were \$3,160 millions in 1932. This was 25% less than in 1931 and 50% less than in 1929. For the German State Railways in 1932 the expenses exceeded their earnings, and their earnings fell off 24% as compared with the year 1931 and 36% as compared with the year 1930.

8. A comparison of our operating ratios with some foreign railways may also be of interest. For the year 1932 the operating ratio on the amalgamated British Railways was 85½ per cent., for the Canadian Pacific Railway 84 per cent., for the Canadian National Railways 96 per cent., for the United States of America Railways 77 per cent. and for the German State Railways 102 per cent. It is not clear from the information in our possession whether these operating ratios are merely for ordinary working expenses, or also include allowance for depreciation. Whichever is the case, the operating ratio of Indian Railways appears favourable. If we only include ordinary working expenses, our operating ratio for the year 1932-33 was 57·3 per cent. or if we include the full appropriation to depreciation fund, it becomes 73·4 per cent. It will be seen that even the higher figure gives a better result than the lowest of the figures I have quoted for foreign railways. I think this is a further proof that India has no need to be pessimistic about the position of her Railways. If our anticipations for this year and the coming year are fulfilled, there will be still further improvement on these figures.

9. I have explained that during the current year there has been a very welcome rise in our goods earnings but that our passenger receipts have fallen off. I think the Council will expect me to say something about the steps which are being taken to counteract this falling off in our passenger earnings. Honourable Members will remember that in my Budget speech last year I said that there were only two ways of increasing gross earnings—either by an increase in rates and fares or by a reduction in these with the object of stimulating traffic. I indicated that in times of depression the scope for increasing rates and fares was limited. Now as to the other method, and from the point of view of the public much the more acceptable one, during the year a large number of minor reductions in passenger fares have been made throughout India and, after mature consideration and consultations with Railway Administrations, the Railway Board have decided to make a large scale experiment by reducing all third class fares on the North Western Railway for distances up to about 460 miles. It is too early yet to say what the result is going to be. For the first ten weeks of the experiment there has been an increase in the number of passengers carried, but this has not been sufficient to meet the reduction in fares. We are still hopeful, however, that the travelling public will take more and more advantage of the cheaper travel offered and give us the additional earnings required to justify the decrease. If the experiment fails and we get no increase in traffic, the North Western Railway stands to lose 45 lakhs in one year. If, however, the experiment should prove to be a success, we shall certainly consider similar reductions on other Railways.

There is one other aspect of passenger traffic that I would like to refer to in passing. During the past few years the Railways of India have endeavoured to get their share of the increasing world tourist traffic. With this object Publicity Bureaux have been established in London and New York. Though it is very difficult indeed to get even an approximate estimate of the traffic that these bring to Indian Railways, our returns show that, year by year, travel in India tends to become more popular. In assessing the value of this work, it must be remembered that, apart from the money spent in railway travelling, every tourist leaves a certain amount of money behind in India, which all goes to help trade and industry. It has been estimated that tourists spend at least 60 lakhs in India annually—by no means a small sum in these depressing times.

Further, though our goods earnings have gone up and though we have no reason to think that the present scale of charges is proving a serious handicap

[Sir Guthrie Russell.]

to trade, we have not omitted to examine cases where we have considered that there was a possibility of increasing traffic and stimulating trade by a reduction in goods rates. To mention a few examples of this, the East Indian Railway have reduced their rates for wheat from the Punjab and United Provinces to Calcutta, the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway have reduced their rates for grains from the Punjab *via* Bhatinda, the Bengal Nagpur and Madras and Southern Mahratta Railways have introduced special low rates for rice booked to important consuming centres, and the South Indian Railway have also made appreciable reductions in their rates for rice on their own system and for traffic booked to Ceylon. Though we have been urged by the coal trade to do so, we have not been able to see our way to remove the 15 per cent. surcharge imposed on coal traffic. We estimate that this surcharge has brought us in increased gross earnings of about 65 lakhs during this financial year. There has been a steady increase in our coal traffic in recent months, and during the last few weeks the loading of coal has been exceptionally heavy. It has been suggested that the surcharge has had a serious effect on our long-distance traffic. Such statistics as we have do not quite support this. We are, however, arranging to collect further and more detailed statistics to enable us to make a more comprehensive review of the position. If this indicates that there is some substance in the statements which have been made, we shall certainly seriously consider whether it is possible to relieve our long-distance coal traffic of at least a portion of the surcharge.

10. I shall now turn to our Capital and Depreciation Fund programmes for this year and the coming year. This year's programme can be dismissed in a few words. When we framed our Budget, after allowing for a decrease in stores balances of 1½ crores, we estimated that we would spend 3½ crores capital and 6 crores from the Depreciation Fund. Actually we now expect a decrease in stores balances of 1½ crores and that our net capital expenditure will be 25 lakhs. The main reason for this is that certain assets have been scrapped without renewal, resulting in a credit to capital and a debit to the Depreciation Fund. The expenditure from the Depreciation Fund will be as originally estimated, namely, 6 crores.

During the year the Ava Bridge over the Irrawaddy in Burma has been completed. Good progress has also been made on the re-construction of the Nerbudda Bridge on the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway, as also the Chambal and Sind Bridges on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. It is expected that the latter two works will be entirely completed early in the coming financial year. Other works have made good progress.

11. Our works programme for the coming year is rather more ambitious than that for this year. We expect that we shall require about 14 crores, of which 70 lakhs will be found by a further reduction in stores balances. If these estimates prove correct, our stores balances will come down to 10 crores at the end of 1934-35. I would like to bring specially to the notice of the Council the progressive decrease that has been in stores balances during the past few years. This has meant unremitting watchfulness on the part of all the officers and staff concerned. I know from personal experience how easy it is for stores balances to increase if there is the least lack of supervision, and I consider that Railway Administrations are due special thanks for what they have done in this direction.

Of the sum of approximately 14 crores of rupees which we expect to spend on works, 867 lakhs will be found from the Depreciation Fund.

12. I do not propose to go into this programme in great detail. Honourable Members will have an opportunity of doing this, if they so desire, immediately at the conclusion of my speech, when they will be placed in possession of the Explanatory Memorandum on the Railway Budget. Generally the programme has been designed to carry out the policy we have adopted of only undertaking such works as are necessary for the keeping in good order of our property. Though this year we have been able to spend a little more on what, I believe, are popularly called "passenger amenities", on these works we propose to spend a total of 38.21 lakhs. From a perusal of questions in this House and also in another place it would appear that the provision of raised platforms is considered one of the most desirable of these amenities. On works of this description we propose to spend just over 3½ lakhs. The main items of expenditure are, however, on track and bridge-works, which from the point of view of the travelling public, may not be of very great interest but which are quite essential if we are to keep pace with the times and give the service which the public have a right to demand. On these works we expect to spend just over 5½ crores. The other main item of expenditure is on the renewal of rolling stock, both coaching and goods. Additions form a very small portion of our expenditure. The total under rolling stock is just over 3 crores. All these works will benefit the trade and industry of India and, we hope, help towards the recovery which appears to have begun.

13. Sir, though the results of the year are considerably better than those of last year, these results have only been obtained by the unremitting watchfulness and devotion to duty of the Agents, officers and staff of the Railways of India. Even in times of prosperity the railwayman's task is not a light one. In times of adversity such as we have been passing through, the strain is even greater. I have no hesitation in saying that this additional strain has been borne cheerfully and ungrudgingly by all. Every one has been prepared to do extra work without additional remuneration. If this had not been so, our results would have been very different from what they are. As I have already mentioned we are particularly anxious to avoid further mass reductions of staff. We have at the present moment got certain surpluses on Railways but it is our hope that, with the brighter prospects ahead of us, we shall, with minor exceptions, be able to carry this small remaining surplus till such time as it can be absorbed by the additional work which must follow an increase in traffic. (Applause.)

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**MOTION FOR THE ELECTION OF TWO NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO ADVISE ON SUBJECTS OTHER THAN "INDIANS OVERSEAS—EMIGRATION" AND "HAJ PILGRIMAGE" DEALT WITH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HEALTH AND LANDS.**

**THE HONOURABLE KHAN BAHADUR MIAN SIR FAZL-I-HUSAIN (Education, Health and Lands Member):** Sir, I move :

"That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct, two non-official Members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects other than 'Indians Overseas—Emigration' and 'Haj Pilgrimage' dealt with in the Department of Education, Health and Lands."

The Motion was adopted.

**MOTION FOR THE ELECTION OF FOUR NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMIGRATION.**

**THE HONOURABLE KHAN RAHADUR MIAN SIR FAZL-I-HUSAIN** (Education, Health and Lands Member) : Sir, I move :

“ That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Honourable the President may direct, four non-official Members to sit on the Standing Committee on Emigration. ”

The Motion was adopted.

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT** : With reference to the two Motions which have just been adopted I announce that nominations for the Standing Committee on Emigration and the Standing Committee for the Department of Education, Health and Lands will be received up to 11 A.M. on Tuesday, the 20th February, 1934.

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**ELECTION OF TWO NON-OFFICIAL MUSLIM MEMBERS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PILGRIMAGE TO THE HEJAZ.**

**THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT** : I have also to inform the Council that the Honourable Khan Bahadur Syed Abdul Hafcez has withdrawn his candidature for the election to the Standing Committee on Pilgrimage to the Hejaz. I therefore declare the following Members to be duly elected to that Committee :

The Honourable Khan Bahadur Chaudri Muhammad Din, and  
The Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam.

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The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, the 19th February, 1934.