

23rd February 1943

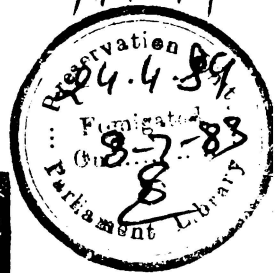
# THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

## Official Report

Volumes I to II, 1943

(10th February to 2nd April, 1943)

## SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1943



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 23rd February, 1943.

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber of the Council House at Eleven of the Clock, Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) in the Chair.

## MEMBERS SWORN:

Mr. K. G. Ambegaonkar, M.L.A. (Government of India: Nominated Official);

Mr. M. D. Bhansali, M.L.A. (Government of India: Nominated Official).

## STARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

### (a) ORAL ANSWERS.

#### RECOGNITION OF RAILWAYMEN'S UNIONS ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

166. \*Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

- (a) how many Railwaymen's Unions on the North Western Railway have been recognised by the Administration;
- (b) if more than one, whether their activities embrace different departments of the railway, or they are confined to different areas;
- (c) if the reply to the first portion of part (b) above be in the affirmative, what is the policy formulated by the Railway Board for the recognition of more than one union on a railway system; what conditions a union is required to satisfy to have itself recognised; and
- (d) if no such policy or rules exist, whether Government propose to frame such rules to regularise recognition of more than one trade union on each railway? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) Three.

(b) The Unions are not confined either to separate departments or to separate areas.

(c) The recognition of Unions on Railways is a matter primarily within the discretion of the Railway Administrations. As regards the second part, the conditions precedent to recognition of Unions are contained in Part C of Appendix XIII of the State Railways Establishment Code, Volume I, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

(d) No, because Government consider it in the best interests of all to leave Railway Administrations with the discretion.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: If there are no rules actually, are there any instructions or orders to the General Managers to recommend the recognition of these trade unions?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: It is entirely a matter within the discretion of the railway administrations, having regard to the conditions precedent to the recognition of unions set out in the State Railway Establishment Code.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I therefore know that the discretion is used by the different General Managers of the railways differently?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Naturally, according to the different conditions which prevail on different railways.

#### DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AGAINST NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

167. \*Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

- (a) how many employees on the North Western Railway have been dealt with under Government Servants Conduct Rule 17, during the calendar year 1942, for connection with the Press;
- (b) what were the circumstances of each case;

- (c) if railway employees who are officials of registered Trade Unions, are subjected to the provisions of Conduct Rule 17, when they act in their capacity of Trade Union officials;
- (d) whether any enquiries are made to establish that the information published in the Press by employees as Union officials came to their possession in the course of their official duties, if not, on what other grounds railwaymen have been penalised as referred to in part (a) above; and
- (e) what the policy of the Railway Board is in regard to publication of staff grievances by railway employees as officials of trade unions; and
- (f) if no such policy has been laid down, whether it is proposed to do so now; if not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) One.

(b) A railway servant admitted having furnished material for an article which appeared in one newspaper.

(c) Yes.

(d) As regards the first part, when action has to be taken, enquiries adequate to each case are made. As regards the second part, I am enquiring from the Railway Administration.

(e) As far as employees of State-managed Railways are concerned, the Railway Servant Conduct Rules apply in respect of any communications from them to the Press.

(f) Does not arise.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Have they been restricted from making contributions of a particular nature or any contribution at all to the Press?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** There is no objection to their making technical contributions to technical papers, provided they are not giving away confidential matter.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** What does the Honourable Member mean by technical? Supposing they have got some grievances are they allowed to send their grievances to the Press or not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** No.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** May I know if communication with a Member of the Legislative Assembly falls within this rule 17 of the Government Servants Conduct Rules?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Members of the Assembly are not members of the Press.

#### NON-CONFIRMATION OF OFFICIATING NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

**168. \*Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether it is a fact that several employees on the North Western Railway are continuously officiating in their posts for long terms ranging from five to seven years? If so, why are they not confirmed? Does any one else hold a lien on each of these posts?

(b) Is it a fact that officiating and temporary employees are deprived of several privileges attached to the permanent post, for instance, leave and leave allowance, as compared with the scale admissible to confirmed hands?

(c) Is it a fact that great discontent prevails amongst the railwaymen on the North Western Railway at the policy of keeping employees officiating or temporary for long periods?

(d) Has the Railway Board issued any orders in regard to confirmation, even provisionally, of persons officiating or working temporarily for long periods, when they have completed some maximum period of service in that post, or when it is known that the permanent incumbent is not likely to return for a long time? If so, does the Honourable Member propose to lay a copy of the same on the table of the House? If no orders have been issued, why? Is it proposed to issue some orders on the point now?

(e) Will the Honourable Member please refer to the provisions of Fundamental Rule 14(b) regarding suspension of lien of permanent incumbents when they are likely to be absent for a certain period and state if this is freely done on the North Western Railway to allow officiating men to be confirmed? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) I am informed that some employees have been officiating for long periods. As regards the second and third parts, the reasons are that some are working against temporary posts; others have to wait for their turn for permanent promotion where such promotion is from the inferior service to the subordinate service in which case communal reservations apply; and a few are working in posts on which other employees hold a lien.

(b) Yes.

(c) I am informed that the Railway has seen no indication of any such discontent.

(d) As regards the first part, para. 2008 (b) of the State Railway Establishment Code, Volume II, provides for the suspension of the lien of a permanent railway servant and the provisional confirmation of another railway servant in his post under stated conditions. The Railway Board have drawn the attention of Railways to this rule in respect of posts vacated by railway servants proceeding on war work. As regards the second part, no, as I have already given the contents of the orders. The third and fourth parts do not arise.

(e) I am informed that the Railway is generally following the provisions of Fundamental Rule 14(b)—which is the same as para. 2008(b) of the State Railway Establishment Code—but I would point out that action under this rule is discretionary. I am also informed that the attention of the competent authorities has recently been drawn to this rule. The second part does not arise.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** If a person has officiated for a period of three years and the post is still vacant and it is not known whether the permanent incumbent will return, is it the rule to appoint the officiating person in that vacancy or not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** That, I think, is contained in the paragraph of the State Railway Establishment Code to which I have referred. I understand that there is no hard and fast rule, but that there is discretion in the matter.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** When the Honourable Member says that there are many persons who have waited as officiating, will he consider their case and find out some way of making them permanent?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I said there were some, not many. These cases are constantly under review, and I am not altogether convinced that any further review by the Railway Department is necessary.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Has the Railway Board or the Honourable Member reviewed their case? It is not a question for the General Manager.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The Railway Board does not examine every individual case; that is a matter for the railway administration.

**Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim):** The Honourable Member is merely arguing now.

#### SAFEGUARDING OF PAYMENT OF ADEQUATE WAGES TO EMPLOYEES OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS.

169. **\*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Supply Member be pleased to state whether in contracts entered into by his Department, a clause safeguarding the payment of adequate wages to the employees of the contractor is inserted?

(b) Is the Honourable Member aware that the Government of India have accepted the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Indian Labour suggesting the necessity for the insertion of such a clause?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** (a) No.

(b) Yes, but the recommendation refers only to Public Works contracts.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** May I ask whether the recommendation of the Royal Commission was restricted to the Public Works Department?

**Mr. O. M. Trivedi:** Yes.

#### CANCELLATION OF HOLIDAYS BY RAILWAY AUTHORITIES.

170. **\*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state whether the Railway authorities can cancel any holidays granted under the Negotiable Instruments Act?

(b) Were any such holidays cancelled during 1942? If so, why?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) No; but the fact that a day is a public holiday within the meaning of the Negotiable Instruments Act does not preclude the railway authorities from requiring staff to work on that day, if the public interest so demands.

(b) There can be no question of a public holiday declared under the Negotiable Instruments Act having been cancelled by railway authorities; but if the Honourable Member will supply me with details of what he has in mind, I will be glad to make inquiries.

#### EXTENSIONS OF SERVICE TO OFFICERS IN RAILWAY TECHNICAL DEPARTMENTS

171. **\*Mr. N. M. Joshi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state whether Government are aware that, by granting extensions of service to officers who are due to retire, young qualified men have to go without employment even in Technical Departments?

(b) Are Government aware that vacancies caused by transfer or death of officers, Anglo-Indian subordinates are promoted to officiate and these arrangements continue year after year?

(c) What measures do Government propose to take to remedy the situation?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Yes. It must be remembered however that recruitment to the Superior Services is now on a temporary basis. However well qualified the young men may be they lack the experience of the senior men to whom extensions are granted.

(b) No.

(c) Government see no reason to take any special steps.

#### INCREASING OF PERCENTAGE FOR DIRECT RECRUITMENT IN INTERMEDIATE GRADES ON RAILWAYS.

172. **\*Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait** (on behalf of **Mr. H. M. Abdullah**) : Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state:

(a) whether Government have arrived at any final decision in connection with their memorandum No. 24/1/39-Ests.(S), dated the 6th June, 1939, issued to the various Departments of the Government about the increase of percentage for direct recruitment in the intermediate grades;

(b) if it is a fact that the North Western Railway Administration in 1940, after full investigation, recommended to the Railway Board a large number of posts in which direct recruitment for the intermediate grades was considered feasible; and

(c) if the reply to (b) above be in the affirmative, whether the recommendations of the North Western Railway Administration have been accepted; if not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) The question should have been addressed to the Honourable the Home Member.

(b) I am unable to trace any such communication.

(c) Does not arise.

**INCREASING OF RECRUITING PERCENTAGES FOR LEDGER-KEEPERS AND APPRENTICE SUB-STOREKEEPERS ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.**

**173. \*Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait** (on behalf of **Mr. H. M. Abdullah**) : Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state:

- (a) if it is a fact that it is laid down in Section 51 of the rules for the recruitment and training of non-gazetted staff, except apprentice mechanics, trade apprentices, labourers and inferior staff on the State-managed Railways issued by the Railway Board, that for the initial recruitment to the grades of ledger-keepers and apprentice sub-storekeepers the percentage will be fixed by each railway according to its requirements;
- (b) if the reply to (a) above be in the affirmative, whether these instructions are followed by the North Western Railway; and
- (c) if he proposes to consider the desirability of issuing instructions to the North Western Railway to carry out these instructions at the time of filling future posts in these two categories?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Yes, in Rule 53 and not Rule 51.

(b) I have no reason to believe that the N. W. R. are not following the rule.

(c) I do not consider any such orders are necessary but I shall send a copy of this question and reply to the administration.

**REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS IN ESTABLISHMENT SECTIONS OF NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.**

**174. \*Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait** (on behalf of **Mr. H. M. Abdullah**) :

(a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state what instructions the Railway Board have issued from time to time to the North Western Railway in connection with the representation of Muslims in the Establishment Sections?

(b) What has been the effect of the issue of these instructions as regards increase in the representation of Muslims in the clerical cadre, and in the posts of Head Clerks?

(c) Is it a fact that Muslims in the Establishment Sections are put on duties of preparation of bills, issue of passes, etc., and not on the actual duties of dealing with staff matters?

(d) Does the Honourable Member propose to issue instructions that the periodical returns about the representation of Muslims in the Establishment Sections should give information separately regarding the staff dealing with personnel matters, preparation of bills, issue of passes and receipt and despatch work?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) I would refer the Honourable Member to my reply to part (a) of his starred question No. 84 asked on 28rd September, 1942. Since then instructions have issued on the recommendations in Mr. D'Souza's Report in Railway Board's letter No. E40CM182(24) dated 22nd October, 1942, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, and I would refer the Honourable Member to para. 2(d) of these instructions.

(b) Government have no information later than that contained in Appendices O, Q, S and U of Mr. D'Souza's Report.

(c) Government have no information.

(d) No.

**OFFICERS OFFICIATING IN LOWER GAZETTED SERVICE ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.**

**175. \*Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait** (on behalf of **Mr. H. M. Abdullah**) : Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state community-wise the number of officers officiating in the Lower Gazetted Service on the North Western Railway on the 31st January, 1943, against vacancies of more than six months' duration in the Engineering, Stores, Accounts, Mechanical, Commercial, Operating, Medical and Personnel Departments?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I lay on the table of the House a statement which gives the required information.

*Statement showing community-wise the number of officers officiating in the L. G. S. on 31st January, 1943, against vacancies of more than six months, duration in the various departments of the N. W. Railway.*

Department.	Europeans and Anglo-Indians.	Hindus.	Muslims.	Sikhs.	Indian Christians.	Jews.	Total.	Remarks.
Civil Engineering	6	6	3	2	...	1	18	
Stores	1	...	1	...	...	...	2	
Accounts	...	2	...	...	...	...	2	
Transportation (Power) and Mechanical	8	...	...	...	...	...	8	
Transportation (Traffic) and Commercial	13	2	1	1	1	...	18	
Medical	...	1	...	...	1	...	2	†
Personnel	...	1	...	...	1	...	2	
Total	28	12	5	3	3	1	52	

\* Officiating as Assistant Accounts Officers in Railway Services, Class II.

† Officiating as Assistant Medical Officers in Railway Services, Class II.

#### PAUCITY OF INDIAN MUNITION OFFICERS AT KANCHRAPARA WORKS.

176. \***Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state:

- if it is a fact that in the Kanchrapara Works out of the five Muniton Officers only one is an Indian and there is not a single Indian Foreman in the whole works;
- whether Government propose to promote a few Indian Assistant Foremen and Chargemen to the rank of Foreman; and
- whether the Foremen and Chargemen of the Ordnance Factories are entitled to overtime allowance; if so, why the same privilege has not been extended to the Foremen of the railway workshops who are doing munition works?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) There are only four munition officers of whom one is an Indian, there are three Indian Foremen.

(b) Promotions are not made on communal considerations.

(c) I have no information concerning the first part; as regards the second part Foremen and Chargemen in Railway workshops being supervisory staff are not entitled to overtime, but I would add that such staff in railway workshops are, for the time being, granted an allowance equal to ten per cent. of pay or Rs. 50 whichever is less if they work more than an average of 54 hours per week.

#### PROMOTION OF SENIOR SUBORDINATES OF RAILWAY MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT.

177. \***Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam:** Will the Honourable the Railway Member please state how many senior subordinates of the Mechanical Department have been promoted to the rank of officers and how many of them are Indians (excluding Anglo-Indians)?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** The Honourable Member has not specified the Railway or the period for which he desires the information. During the current financial year, on State-managed Railways seven senior subordinates of the Mechanical Department were promoted to the L. G. S. and none of them was an Indian other than an Anglo-Indian.

#### UNSTARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

##### APPLICATION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES (MAINTENANCE) ORDINANCE TO RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

31. **Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether the railway employees are subjected to the provisions of the Essential Services (Maintenance) Ordinance of 1941?

(b) If the reply to above be in the affirmative, has any compensation by way of increase in their basic wages or by payment of allowances been given for conscription of their services? If not, why not?

\* Answer to this question laid on the table, the questioner being absent.

(c) Has any machinery been set up to regulate the wages of railway employees under Section 6 of the Ordinance? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) Yes.

(b) The reply to the first part is in the negative. As regards the second part, Government do not consider that any such action as referred to by the Honourable Member is necessary. It should be remembered however that a number of concessions (including a dearness allowance) have been granted to meet the present abnormal conditions which rendered the Ordinance necessary.

(c) No, it is not considered necessary as the Railway Board have the necessary authority.

#### APPLICATION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES (MAINTENANCE) ORDINANCE TO RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

**32. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether the Railway Board or any other authority, have issued instructions to the railway officers specifying the nature of reasons which should be accepted as reasonable when employees subjected to the Essential Services (Maintenance) Ordinance of 1941, resign their services?

(b) Do these instructions make provision for acceptance of resignation when an employee gets better wages or expects better prospects elsewhere which the Railway Administration is unable to offer him? If the instructions make no such provision, why?

(c) If no instructions have been issued, is it proposed to do so now for the purpose of having uniformity on all railways or a railway system? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, it is not considered necessary.

#### PASSES FOR WIDOW-MOTHERS OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

**33. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether free passes for widow-mothers are allowed to railway employees on the North Western Railway?

(b) Are such passes allowed to retired employees as well? If not, why not?

(c) Is it a fact that under Rule 43 (4) of the North Western Railway Pass Manual, passes are allowed to motherless children of an employee to see their grand-mothers?

(d) Is it proposed to extend the privilege of passes to widow-mother of a retired widower employee, whose children are looked after by the grand-mother and who obtains no passes for his wife? If not, why not?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) and (c). The reply is in the affirmative.

(b) No. There does not appear to be sufficient justification for extending this privilege to retired employees.

(d) No, as it is considered the existing pass rules are sufficiently generous.

#### LIST OF INADMISSIBLE DEBITS ON RAILWAYS.

**34. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state if any further list of inadmissible debits has been issued subsequent to the Railway Board's Circular letter to Railway Administrations bearing No. E39AT816, dated the 9th July 1941? If so, does he propose to lay a copy of the same on the table of the House?

(b) Do the Indian-State-owned and managed Railways abide by the decisions of the Railway Board in these matters?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) No. The second part does not arise.

(b) Government have no reason to believe that they do not.



**OFFICERS' POSTS ON THE BOMBAY, BARODA AND CENTRAL INDIA RAILWAY.**

**35. Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state :-

- (a) how many posts of officers were created during the last two years (and this year) on the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway;
- (b) how they were filled, i.e., by direct recruitment or by promoting subordinates; and
- (c) how many of these were filled by promoting subordinates, and of the promoted subordinates how many were Indians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) 14.

(b) One post was filled by direct recruitment, seven by transfer of other officers, and six by the officiating promotion of subordinates.

(c) Six; two Indians, two Anglo-Indians and two Europeans.

**FILLING OF HIGHER VACANCIES IN ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT OF BOMBAY, BARODA AND CENTRAL INDIA RAILWAY.**

**36. Mr. N. M. Joshi:** (a) Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state whether it is a fact that in the Accounts Department of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway, higher vacancies (Rs. 160 and over) are filled only by Anglo-Indians and non-Indians?

(b) How many Indians and Anglo-Indians were promoted to grades of Rs. 160 and over during the last five years in the Accounts Department and by transfer to other Departments?

(c) Were any grades of Rs. 160 and over adjusted from one section to another to enable the promotion of Anglo-Indians?

(d) What was the allotment of grades of Rs. 160 and over in 1937 by sections in the Accounts Department and what is the percentage allotments in 1942?

(e) Is it a fact that grades of Rs. 160 and over have been abolished?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** (a) to (e). Government have no information and it is regretted cannot undertake, under present conditions, to compile data relating to considerable periods of time. They will, however, obtain from the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway such information as is readily available, which will be laid on the table of the House in due course.

**MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.**

**PUBLICATION OF A REVIEW OF CONGRESS RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISTURBANCES.**

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Order, order. I have received notice of an adjournment motion from Sardar Sant Singh, in which he wishes to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the publication, at a time when Mahatma Gandhi is passing through a crisis in life, of a review of Congress responsibility for disturbances, 1942-43, thereby displaying unprecedented callousness, impropriety and lack of all sense of responsibility in the discharge of what Government considers to be its duty.

But this pamphlet purports to be a review of the facts which have been published from time to time. In this very House various speeches have been made, especially on behalf of the Government, reciting all those facts in answer to motions moved by Honourable Members. I do not see how it can be said to be an urgent matter of public importance.

**Sardar Sant Singh** (West Punjab: Sikh): The review has been published.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I know. I have seen a short summary in the papers.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** Yes, and the review has been circulated to some gentlemen. The main point is this. Mahatma Gandhi's condition on the 21st, as reported in the Press, was of a very grave and serious nature, and they timed this publication when he was passing through a crisis in his life—I am not bringing in a discussion on the merits of the publication.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Then the Honourable Member will realise that if there be a discussion like that, Government will be obliged to put forward their case and that will not improve anybody's condition.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** I just want to censure Government on that point.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): It is not an urgent matter according to our rules and practice.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi** (Nominated Non-Official): May I ask whether the Government of India will supply copies of the review to the Members of the House.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I rule that the motion is out of order.

#### ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have to inform the Assembly that up to 12 Noon on Thursday, the 18th February, 1943, the time fixed for receiving nominations for the Standing Committee for the Department of Information and Broadcasting seven nominations were received. Subsequently two candidates withdrew their candidature. As the number of remaining candidates is equal to the number of vacancies I declare the following Members to be duly elected:

Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon;  
Mr. Lalchand Navalrai;  
Mr. C. P. Lawson;  
Mr. M. Ghiasuddin; and  
Shams-ul-Ulema Kamaluddin Ahmad.

#### THE RAILWAY BUDGET—LIST OF DEMANDS. SECOND STAGE.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The House will now discuss the Railway Budget Second Stage, that is to say, Demands for Grants for Railways. But before the House proceeds with the Demands for Grants in respect of the Railway Budget, the Chair would like to inform Honourable Members that an arrangement has been arrived at among the various Parties of the House as regards the time which should be allotted to each Party and the order in which the cut motions relating to these Demands will be taken up in the Assembly.

According to that arrangement, the Nationalists have been allotted time up to 2-50 P.M. today, and the following cut motions will be moved by them: Cut motions Nos. 19, 21, 22 and 23 on the Consolidated List.

The European Group will occupy the time of the House from 2-50 P.M. to 4-40 P.M. today and they will move cut motion No. 25 on the Consolidated List.

The Unattached Members, who have been given time from 4-40 P.M. to 5 P.M., today and up to 12-40 P.M. tomorrow, will move cut motion No. 7 on the Consolidated List.

The Muslim League, who have been allotted time from 12-40 P.M. to 5 P.M. on Wednesday, the 24th February, will move the following cut motions: Cut motions Nos. 49 and 26 on the Consolidated List. Cut motions Nos. 4 and 5 on the Supplementary List No. 1.

As regards the time-limit for speeches, the usual practice has been for the Mover of the cut motions to take 15 minutes and the other speakers also to take 15 minutes and the Government Member replying will have 20 minutes. I suppose this will suit Honourable Members.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee** (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): There is a slight change in the number of the first motion allotted to us. It will be, not 19 but 17.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Very well.

**Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait** (West Coast and Nilgiris: Muhammadan): Motion No. 26 allotted to the Muslim League will come last. That is to say,

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the order of motions will be, 49 on the Consolidated List, Nos. 4 and 5 on the Supplementary List No. 1, and No. 26 on the Consolidated List.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** There is another further change which I may bring to your notice. Instead of No. 21, we want to take up No. 41.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Is there any objection on the part of the Government?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall** (Member for Railways and War Transport): No objection.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Then the Honourable Member might move the Demand relating to cut motion No. 17.

#### DEMAND No. 1—RAILWAY BOARD.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Sir, I move:

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 13,27,000 be granted to the Governor General in Council to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1944, in respect of 'Railway Board'."

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Motion moved:

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 13,27,000 be granted to the Governor General in Council to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1944, in respect of 'Railway Board'."

#### *Policy of Wagon Allotment and Distribution.*

**Mr. K. C. Neogy** (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I move:

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

My object is to invite the House to discuss the policy of wagon allotment and distribution. Due to the stress of war, goods traffic for civilian purposes has had to be considerably curtailed. The question now is whether the curtailment has not gone beyond the minimum permissible limit. From statistics supplied to me in reply to certain questions, it appears that there was a considerable reduction in the number of wagons loaded from the 1st of April 1942 to the 20th January 1943, the period for which statistics was available, as compared with the corresponding periods of the previous years. The drop is noticeable in respect of food grains and pulses. It is, however, explained that there has been a progressive increase in the wagon load, so that the reduction in the number of wagons actually loaded does not fully reflect the quantity of goods intended for civilian consumption actually carried. Now, Sir, this result may have been achieved by what is called wagon economy, including discouragement of hooking of small loads; but this may well have led to maldistribution, at least in definite localities. It is not again clear whether the figures for food grains and pulses also include the quantities of these stuffs carried for consumption by the armed forces in the country. Then again, as is well known, there has been a considerable shrinkage in the coastal traffic; and the railways should normally have been expected to carry a considerably larger bulk of these goods that used to be handled by the coastal traffic, and in the absence of any substantial increase in the volume of goods carried by the railways as shown by these figures, the actual volume of commodities transported for civilian requirements is probably less than the figures indicate.

Coming now to coal, I had occasion to deal with this aspect of the question in connection with the debate on the food position. The Honourable Member in charge stated in his budget speech that the smaller loading of coal, which is a lower-rated commodity, has meant that a larger quantity of higher-rated commodities has been moved. He took care to add that this was not a matter of gratification to the railways, since movement of coal was a matter of first importance. From statistics supplied in reply to some questions which I put on the subject, it appears that the total number of wagons available for coal loading went down in 1942 to 9½ lakhs from 11 lakhs in 1941. Or, in other words, the number of wagons available for coal loading in 1942 was about 500 less per day than in 1941. But the total number of wagons allotted for war priorities went up from 39,861 in 1941 to 1,89,085 in 1942, representing an increase of nearly five times. Again in the case of coal booked under other priority classes,

a considerable increase is recorded when we compare the figures in 1941 and 1942. When we come to the number of wagons allotted for loading public coal, however, we find that the total number of wagons (taking "up" and "down" together) allotted for 1942 was less than one-fourth of the total for 1941. The public supply in 1942 approximately worked out at 248 wagons a day, or 9.5 per cent. of the total available coal wagons, which is considered to be an unjustifiably low percentage, and has fallen far short of the legitimate demands of the public in respect of the supplies of domestic fuel as well as the demands of the smaller industries which do not enjoy any priority, such as rice mills, flour mills, oil mills, etc. The Provincial Quota System introduced with effect from the 1st of January of this year virtually seeks to stabilise this unsatisfactory position, inasmuch as the number of wagons allotted as a monthly quota is about the same as was allotted for public supply in the year 1942, and works out at 245 wagons a day. Unless the allotments are increased, the situation that will arise in respect of public supply of coal is likely to be very serious. Apart from the allotments of wagons supply for public coal, the Provincial Quota System in its practical working has so far proved to be extremely defective and unsatisfactory. In the interest of the smaller industries as well as the public at large, the quota system deserves to be immediately reconsidered.

The Honourable Member may have received a telegram from the Indian Mining Federation in which it is pointed out how a new fangled idea of the Government of Bengal is interfering with the normal trade channels through which domestic fuel used to be distributed in the past. I have no desire to dilate upon this question because it will not be strictly in order on this occasion.

As regards war priority, it was at first understood that only those industries that supply at least 50 per cent. of their products for war purposes, would be entitled to war priority in the matter of allotment of wagons for coal. It is believed, however, that this standard does no longer operate and that the inclusion of an industry in the war priority category is not regulated by any fixed standard today. This requires to be immediately looked into, so that any undeserving concern cannot, by clever manoeuvring, get the advantage of the war priority system. The general feeling is that it is because of the laxity in the working of war priority system that very little wagon accommodation is left for the carriage of domestic fuel and of coal for the smaller concerns producing food articles for the public. The present policy of unduly restricting the supply of allotment of wagons for public supply has hit the smaller collieries which produce second class coal and some of them may have to close down very shortly as a result of this difficulty. A telegram which has been addressed to some Members of the Assembly, as also perhaps to the Honourable Member in charge, by the Mining Federation of Calcutta, draws pointed attention to the perilous condition in which the smaller collieries find themselves at present due to this policy. I will give a few quotations from this telegram. They say that the shortage of supply of wagons in 1942 has resulted in over 36 lakhs tons of less coal despatch in that year. 36 lakhs tons less coal has been despatched as a result of the restriction in the supply of wagons for the public supply. "Coal wagon position", it continues, "still worse. Current months reacting adversely on large number small collieries. Committee strongly urges Government to take immediate steps to increase number of available wagons for coal loading and also to ear-mark daily before other allotments at least 300 wagons for loading domestic fuel and coal for small industries not on war works, such as, flour, oil, rice mills etc., supplied mostly by second class collieries. Coal output already dangerously low. Committee apprehends if steps not taken at once further drop would necessarily follow with disastrous results due to forced restriction of output and closing down large number second class collieries for non-supply of wagons resulting coal production much below country's requirements". As I pointed out before, the output of coal has already gone down and

[Mr. K. C. Neogy.]

a further drop would be disastrous to the country at large. It would incidentally complicate the labour position and I trust that the Honourable Member for Labour would interest himself in this matter from that point of view.

Even though a particular allotment may be made per month in respect of public supply, the Honourable Member in charge admitted in reply to a question of mine that no definite guarantee could be given that the supply of wagons would be made in full in spite of a specific allotment having been made. Then he added that actual supply depends on the day-to-day wagon position and the operating conditions prevailing on the railways. It therefore seems to me that the figures of the allotment may prove altogether mythical in practice if there be absolutely no guarantee as to whether they would be available.

Now, Sir, it appears that the public supply under the old system was stopped before the Monthly Quota System could be put in actual force, and further that the monthly allotments during the first fortnight of January were very much below the quantities actually stated to be allotted in respect of the different provinces. My suggestion, in this connection, is that having regard to the seriousness of the situation and the misunderstanding that can easily arise in a vital matter like that of the supply of necessities of life, in so far as it depends upon the adequate supply of railway wagons, the Honourable Member should appoint a small Committee representing the consumers as well as the trade to examine the practical working of the policy of priority, allotment and distribution of wagons for the carriage of all civilian goods. As regards the distribution of coal wagons, I make the further suggestion that the Controller of Coal Supply should have a Standing Committee representing the trade and the consumers, which he should regularly consult. These two specific suggestions I make in the interests of the efficiency of the working of the policy, and also to reassure the public mind that in regard to the wagon supply, on which depends the adequate distribution of the necessities of life, the Government are anxious to take the public fully into confidence.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Cut motion moved: "That the demand under the head 'Railway Board' be reduced by Rs. 100."

**Mr. N. M. Joshi** (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, I would like to say a word on this motion in order to bring to the notice of the House, the difficulties which are being experienced by the workers engaged in the bangle industry in Ferozabad in the United Provinces. Sir, Ferozabad is a town well known for the bangle industry. A very large part of the population of that city is engaged in this industry and most of them are workers dependent upon the wages for their livelihood.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee**: It is a very ancient industry.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi**: Yes, it is a very ancient industry. For some time the Government of India is not providing adequate number of wagons to that industry. I may say they are hardly supplying any wagons for that town with the result, that there is very great distress among the people, especially among the working classes of that town. The industry wants coal, soda and some other essential articles. The Local Government does not seem to be very watchful about the interests of this town. It is said that the bangle industry is not a war industry and therefore that industry cannot receive any priority. I am prepared to agree that by no stretch of imagination I can describe bangles as a part of war industry. But what we have to consider in this case is this, whether there is going to be a great distress among the people of that town? If the bangle industry had been a very small part of the industry of that town, the people of that town could somehow maintain the unemployed people in this industry, but here is a town which almost solely depends upon this industry. The Government of India gives priority to the carriage of foodgrains. Of what use is this priority to the people in the Ferozabad if you do not enable them to make money. I am sure the Government of India is not going to distribute

foodgrains free to the people in Ferozabad. If they propose to do so during the period of the war, I shall not ask them to spare any wagons for the carriage of coal to that town. But so long as the Government of India does not undertake and so long as the Provincial Government of the United Provinces does not undertake to maintain the unemployed people in Ferozabad, their need for coal and other essential requirements of this industry is as great as the need of certain towns and provinces for foodgrains. You cannot have foodgrains without money, unless the Government undertakes to distribute foodgrains free. I, therefore, feel that the Government of India should take into consideration the special circumstances of this town which is solely dependent upon this industry.

Now, Sir, besides this it has come to my notice that in many towns in the Province of Bombay, where there are textile mills and factories, these have to stop for some months for want of coal. Employers are making huge profits and out of those profits a large part goes to Government by way of the excess profits tax, with the result that the employers are not anxious whether the factory is closed for two, three, four or five months, they make their money in six months. As a large part of their profits goes to Government they are not interested whether factories always run or not. The people who are really interested in the factories not being closed are workers who are engaged in that industry. If the workers engaged in an industry do not get employment for three or four months in a year, how are they to live? Employers live well; they can enjoy comfortable life, if the factories work only for four months or five or six months which brings them huge profits. But how can the workers live? We have in this country no scheme for unemployment insurance. Workers are unemployed for months together in small towns like Amalner and one or two others in the Khandesh part of the Bombay Presidency I would like the Honourable Member to consider these things also. If the Government of India provided for unemployment insurance scheme, I can understand it. So long as Government do not provide unemployment insurance scheme, they have got to keep the industry going on which the working classes depend for their maintenance. I would like the Govt. of India to consider this aspect of the question very seriously in deciding upon their policy for distributing wagons.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** It would perhaps be best for me to start by replying to the question which Mr. Joshi has just raised, because in the example of the bangle industry he has chosen a classic example, if I may say so, which illustrates the whole war transport problem. Mr. Joshi agrees that nobody can possibly argue that the bangle industry helps the war: at the same time, of course, we fully recognize that failure to supply the bangle industry with its raw materials is bound to cause unemployment and in consequence distress.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Coal and other raw materials.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Well, as I say therein lies our whole problem.

In the United Kingdom and other countries such as the United States this problem has been dealt with most drastically. In those highly industrialized countries industries which are not of prime necessity to the war, i.e., luxury industries, have been simply wiped out.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** That is the consideration there—men get employment.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Sir, in the United Kingdom or in countries where there is a total industrial effort directed solely towards winning the war, no consideration of the interest of any particular industry has been allowed to stand in the way of the war effort.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** But there you have simpler industrial conditions to deal with.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** There it is possible to transfer workers from one industry to another. Mr. Joshi correctly says that the whole system of that country is highly organized. But here in this country we have to face

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the facts. Workers of one industry cannot easily be transferred to another industry. As Honourable Members are aware we in the War Transport Department are facing continuously the question of what industries can be kept supplied with coal or with other raw materials. Every body knows that we have a demand for more traffic than the transport system of the country can bear. There is no escaping that fact. We are not running away from it. And so we have all the time to keep a consistent watch on the position of every minor industry with a view to trying to see, whether we can supply a little quantity of coal to keep the industry going in addition to keeping the total war effort going.

Now, Sir, obviously the bangle industry must come behind other demands for coal. That does not mean we have no sympathy with the industrialists engaged in that industry or with the workers of that industry. We have very great sympathy. Indeed, we had tried to keep that industry and other small industries going as far as possible. I can assure Mr. Joshi that the example of this industry is constantly before us. We are watching the position and if necessary we are prepared to make further enquiries as to the hardship which has actually been incurred in that area.

Mr. Neogy first of all pointed out that there had been a general decrease in the number of wagons loaded. It is perfectly true. As I endeavoured to point out in my previous speeches during this Session that does not necessarily show inefficiency but on the contrary it indicates an increase in efficiency. As regards the quantity of goods loaded into a particular wagon—I do not think I gave the figure to the House before—the average tonnage loaded into a broad gauge wagon has been raised between June 1941 and June 1942 from 12.9 tons to 14.6. Although a smaller number of wagons was loaded, each wagon contained more goods and that is what enabled us to move with smaller number of wagons practically the same ton mileage. Then Mr. Neogy spoke of the question of wagons for food grains. He enquired whether in the figures which I gave him in reply to his question food grains for the armed forces had been included. I should be correct in saying, I think, that they have not been included if those foodgrains and pulses were on the direct account of the Army, but that if they were passing through civilian hands or the Supply Department and ultimately came into the hands of the Army Department by repurchase or for any other reason, then they would be included in the figures. He indicated also that we were handicapped, that is the way he put it, by the absence of coastal traffic. That of course is the case. We were dependent before the war very much for our food supplies, for rice supplies, on coastal shipping from Burma and also for various movements of country products by coastal traffic. Those from Burma have naturally entirely ceased. I think I am correct in saying that very little foodstuffs move by coastal steamer now. But the Honourable Member will observe from the Press that we are making the strongest efforts to get the country craft organised so that food stuffs and other materials may move, to the greatest extent possible and at whatever sacrifice to the railways, by coastal boat rather than over the railways. I think in my Budget speech I pointed out that in the first half of last year, we had in fact moved the same quantity of foodstuffs and raw materials as in the same period of the preceding year. We have not got up-to-date statistics since, but I should be inclined to think from what we know of the grain trade that in the latter half of the year we have not moved the same quantity of foodstuffs. But that is not because we have not been willing to give priority to the movement of foodstuffs because ever since August foodstuffs have been given an extremely high priority, and if it is the case that movements of foodgrains have fallen off, it is due to foodstuffs not being offered for transport.

On the subject of coal wagons, I made a statement on this point also in the general discussion. It is of course wrapped up very much with our total problem of wagon movements in this country. Forty per cent. of our ton mileage

in the country is represented by coal, there was a higher figure the year before the last, 46 per cent. That figure shows what an enormously important bearing coal traffic has upon our general wagon problem, so that when you come to consider the coal wagon position, you cannot consider it in vacuo. You have to consider it also in conjunction with the military traffic problem, the food problem, iron and steel and every other commodity which is to be moved round the country. But of course the provision of coal wagons is very much in the forefront of our minds at all times, if only for two reasons; the first reason I have just given, that it bears such a large proportion to our total wagon ton mileage, and the second is that coal is the lifeblood of the country and that industry, and the war effort and the comfort of millions depend upon its movement. For that reason, we have appointed a Controller of Coal Distribution specially to handle this problem, apart altogether from the general Priorities organisation which deals with the movement of traffic as a whole. The problem is so large and important that we have chosen a very capable and able officer who has earned the appreciation of every branch of the coal trade.

Mr. Neogy also complained that the coal wagons for "public" supply are much too short. I made a statement in the House on the debate on food and the necessaries of life the other day. The Indian Mining Federation in their telegram which Mr. Neogy just read out asked for 300 wagons per day. Our calculation is that that is an excessive number. We have calculated,—when I say, we, we are acting largely on the advice of the Controller of Coal Distribution,—we have calculated that a very considerably smaller number of wagons would meet the legitimate "public" demands. I think if we could supply the total number of wagons to the Bengal and Bihar collieries which we aim to supply, then five per cent. of those wagons would in fact meet the legitimate "public" demand. To meet the shortage which undoubtedly does exist, and I am afraid will continue to exist, we have introduced the provincial quota system. I think that generally speaking the system has the blessing of the trade. I know there have been serious criticisms of it, but those criticisms as Mr. Neogy himself indicated in his speech are partly questions for Provincial Governments and not entirely questions for the Central Administration. I know there have been delays in bringing this into being, but I have maintained, and I maintain today, that the scheme is a sound one and all that it needs is vigorous handling. I believe it is correct—I said this the other day and was challenged, but I am informed again this morning—that coal can now be obtained in Delhi at Rs. 1-8-0 a maund and soft coke at Rs. 1-9-0 a maund. If that is correct, that is a very great improvement.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Yesterday, I could not get coke at all.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I think the Honourable Member must have been unlucky, because I was enquiring this morning from a poor person and he told me that he found it quite possible to get it.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Since when?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Since the last few days. I submit that that does show that given a reasonable chance the Provincial Coal Quota System will work and does work.

Mr. Neogy then asked that there should be a small Committee of consumers. I have forgotten exactly what the terms of reference were. He suggested that it was to examine the whole system.

**Mr. K. O. Neogy:** Examine the working of the priority system.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Well, Sir, the priority system is growing every day. Time does not permit me, I am afraid to give the House a detailed description of the working of the Central Priority Committee which consists of representatives of the Departments of the Government particularly concerned, or of the Controller of Railway Priorities, the Regional Priority Controllers in the different Provinces and the Boards of Transport which exist in the different Provinces to advise the railways on priority movements. Nor can I



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go into the whole question of priority certificates which at the present moment is under examination with a view to a very material improvement in procedure. It is a very large and constantly altering organisation designed to meet the varying conditions which arise throughout the country. I think myself that it is a system which, taking into account the great difficulties with which we are faced in the War Transport and Railway Departments, is working well. I personally do not think that a committee of consumers or others is necessary at the present time.

Mr. Neogy also suggested an Advisory Committee to give advice to the Controller of Coal Distribution. Khan Bahadur Faruque, the

12 Noon.

Controller of Coal Distribution, is an officer who appreciates, if anybody does, the desirability and the necessity of close contact with the trade. As I mentioned before, his relations with the trade are, I believe, admirable and he never fails to see anybody who calls upon him. One of the difficulties which existed prior to our setting up this organization was the inability of the different branches of the coal trade to reach agreement. I think, there was, in fact, a committee at one time designed to try to reach agreement on these questions, but it is found by experience that the good offices of Khan Bahadur Faruque have resulted in a better measure of agreement being found, and I do not think that any benefit would come from setting up a special Advisory Committee. I can assure Mr. Neogy that the Controller of Coal Distribution will continue to keep in the closest touch both with the producing organizations and with the consumers throughout the country.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

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

The motion was adopted.

*Reduction in Rates and Fares.*

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai** (Sind: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I move:

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

Sir, the rates and fares have been increased from time to time and the object of this cut motion is to ask the Government to reduce the rates and fares as, I feel, that the time has arrived when they can afford to do so. When these rates and fares have been raised from time to time, there have been two reasons for it: Firstly, whenever the Railway showed a deficit budget and, secondly, after the commencement of the war the Government wanted money they raised the rates and fares by an extra one anna surcharge. And this has resulted in large surplus and there is no reason why a good turn should not now be done to the travelling public by reducing the rates and fares. It is only fair that when there are surpluses they should not be diverted in a manner which will exclude giving any concessions to the travelling public. But this is what happens, and I will show that the diversion of the surplus, which is proposed by the Honourable Member-in-charge, is not properly made, and some money could be saved for this help to the travelling public.

It cannot be denied that the rates from time to time have been raised. I will illustrate this by giving figures: Before the war it was 2½ pies per mile uniform system. Later on, the fares were raised to 3 pies per mile for the first two or three hundred miles and 2½ pies per mile for additional distances. Then after some time the fares were raised to 3½ pies per mile for the first 50 miles and 3 pies from 51 to 150 miles and 2½ pies from 151 to 300 miles, and 2 pies per mile beyond 301 miles. The third class passengers at present pay 3½ pies per mile for the first 300 miles and 2½ pies per mile for additional distance. Intermediate, second and first class fares were also raised, and thus the Railways earned considerably from the travelling public. Over and above these increases from time to time the latest increase was the imposition of a surcharge of one anna per rupee. As and when the rates have been increased, the public have been bringing to the notice of the Railways that these increases in

rates and fares, and especially with regard to goods, were a very great burden on them, but all the same they did not seriously oppose it because of deficit budget and war. But now that the earnings of the Railways have increased and they have got such a large surplus I see no reason why there should be no reduction in the rates and fares. The imposition of surcharge has brought the Railways about ten crores of rupees. That is the help which the travelling public have given to the railways at the time of need and now if I can show that there are very large surpluses then in that case, it will be only reasonable that the rates and fares should be reduced to a reasonable extent—I don't say they should be reduced too much—in view of the surpluses which have accrued.

The first reason I advance is this: The figure of surplus given in the budget for 1942-43 is "Rs. 36.28 crores", and the estimated figure of surplus for 1943-44 is Rs. 36.4 crores.

The gross income of the railways was usually Rs. 100 crores, but now it is Rs. 50 crores more. The increase is due to the carriage of military traffic, both goods and passengers, as well as from upper class passengers, and also from the increased fares for inter and third class passengers. I am particularly asking for the reduction in the fares in respect of third class and intermediate class passengers.

Then there is the question of basic increase in rates for parcels and goods, in addition to the levy of a surcharge. Sir, the total surplus this year is Rs. 36.28 crores. Now, let us see how they are going to dispose of this sum. I think the House will agree that it would be only reasonable not to divert all this surplus in the manner in which it is proposed to be done. What is proposed is this: Rs. 17.76 crores are being given under the Convention to general revenue and Rs. 16.8 crores in repayment of loan to depreciation fund. Very good. This means that the loans are discharged. There is nothing due to the Government under the Convention that has been going on up to this time. But then there is yet a balance of 2.36 crores, and how is the Railway Member going to dispose of that? Why not use it in the manner in which I am asking? If, on the other hand, Rs. 2.36 crores is going to be given to general revenues as a gift, it would require the sanction of this House. Therefore, I am requesting the House to consider this point seriously. It will come up in due course of time to this House as to whether this should be given to general revenues as an extra-conventional amount? Why should that be? With regard to that, we shall have to consider whether the amount should be given away as a gift. This point was raised before the Railway Finance Committee, of which I am also a Member, and the question was left open and it was agreed that it should be discussed in this House. I am therefore taking advantage of it and requesting the House to consider this very seriously. When, according to the Convention, you are giving to the very pie to Central revenues, why should you make a gift of this amount? That means that you are not giving any help to the persons whose income has raised all this money? Since you have a balance, why should not that balance come to the rescue of those poor men who are paying more? Therefore, Sir, I submit that it will not be right that this Rs. 2.36 crores should go to Central revenues. Where there is a will, there is way! If the Honourable Member feels pity on these people in these hard days, days when the cost of food has risen and people are suffering even otherwise from poverty, and if he gives them this help, it will be most welcome. Therefore, the right way of giving help to these poor ratepayers is to give them aid from the surpluses that you have. Do not divert your surplus. You can afford to give less amount due to Central revenues. You have always given less and made up the balance by and by. Next year you will have an increase and from that increase you will be able to give away up to the last pie. Therefore, Sir, very full consideration should be given to this suggestion. The Honourable Member-in-charge should consider the case of the poor people also

[Mr. Lalchand Navalrai.]

Consider sympathetically the plight of those people who are helping the Government at this particular time of stress and need. Sir, I move:

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Cut motion moved:

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

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman** (Patna and Chota Nagpur *cum* Orissa: Muhammadan): Sir, I support the resolution which the Honourable Member from Sind has just moved about rates and fares. I need not repeat those figures which he has given; and he has convinced the House that from time to time the railway administration has been increasing the rates on the plea of deficit and then a new plea has been found to be "war". There was a good justification when it was a plea of deficit, because the Government has always taken the stand that the railways are a commercial concern and a national asset worth about Rs. 900 crores. Now when the good time has come, and when that commercial concern is earning a huge profit, naturally the people who do deserve to get advantage from that profit are the sharers. And who are the sharers of that commercial concern or the national asset of Rs. 900 crores?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall**: The Government.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman**: The Government? That is again the same bureaucratic reply, which I should not have expected from an unofficial Member like Sir Edward Benthall.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall**: It is a fact, Sir.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman**: We claim that it is the national asset of the Indians. We claim that the railways are ours, and to say that it is a government concern or government property is a misnomer, so long as Government is not a responsible Government of this country. Now, I want to say that the real people who deserve to get a share of profit out of it are those who have contributed in bringing up this concern or are the real owners. They are the Indians and particularly the clientele of that commercial concern, I mean the travelling public, and that public which is contributing in the shape of freight for the movement of their stuffs. What has been the position? The position has been that even last year, in spite of the boom profit in 1941-42, they increased the rates. Return tickets for first and second classes were abolished which meant an extra cost to those class of passengers of about 33 per cent. For example, the first class fare between Patna and Howrah used to be Rs. 38—it is now the same—and the return ticket did cost only Rs. 56 but now the return ticket is costing Rs. 76 as the return ticket concession has been abolished. You have raised the rates indirectly, placing a burden on your clients, the passengers and those who claim that it is their national asset. In addition you have deteriorated in giving them the necessary facilities and amenities. The compartments are in a dilapidated condition and even the light arrangements are not good: sometimes I found the electric fans and lights in such a condition that people got shocks when they touched the switches. What ground have you for increasing the rates, when you are having a period of best profits?

I need not dwell on the division of the surplus, as the Honourable the Mover of the cut motion has already dealt with it; but I want to know whether it was more necessary that the contribution of 17-78-crores should have been made to the general revenues at the cost of the clients or shareholders, that is, the passengers and the people, without giving them any sort of amenities or facilities. The argument was sometimes advanced that unless we contributed to the general revenues, the general public would have to meet the deficit in the general budget by some form of taxation. But again that argument does not hold good because when the amendment of the Railway Act was brought for ticketless travelling and when we argued that putting such a statute on the Statute book of the country would be a degradation of the people, the

Government advanced the argument that a commercial concern cannot afford to lose this amount. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot argue just to suit your convenience. The Government of India changes its position as it suits them. Do they accept that this is a commercial concern which should be run on commercial lines? Or, do they accept the position that it is the property of the Government of India and it will be run on such lines as will suit the Government, which probably is now working in the mind of the Honourable Member for Transport when he said that it belongs to the Government of India. We do not accept that position, and we have definitely rejected it.

There is not much more to be said except this, that the Government of India should reconsider the situation and try to give some relief to the passengers and to the commercial people who are the real clients of this commercial concern. With these few remarks, I resume my seat.

**Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya** (Burdwan Division: Non-Muhamadan Rural): Sir, I rise to support the motion of Mr. Lalchand Nayahrai. The war condition has undoubtedly given a great stimulus to the railway which has earned a very good surplus: this surplus is earned by the people themselves who have used the railways as passengers or merchants and others and by those who have worked the Railway. This surplus should not be utilised for any other purpose, except for the benefit of those who gave the money. That should be the principle. Public utility services like the Railways and Post Offices should not be used as commercial bodies for profiteering. Therein lies the difference between a private company and the Government: they should also consider whether any money should be earned in surplus out of proportion without consideration of the difficulties of those who give them that money. Government may claim to keep portion of the surplus in the reserve; a depreciation fund should no doubt be created. But the amount given to general revenues should have been curtailed a great deal. We are entitled to request the Honourable Member to see that hereafter the rates and freights might be reduced so that there would be more traffic and the whole thing would be properly balanced. By raising the rates and freights, the traffic in passengers and goods must have diminished; but if the rates are lowered, there will be an increase in traffic in all railways and therefore there cannot be any loss. Out of this surplus the railways can make many improvements. The conveniences of the passengers may be increased manifold. Amenities even in the higher classes in the N. W. R. are absent. Taps and lights are not properly kept and even the cushions are not good. In the lower classes, of course, there are no cushions at all. With this surplus the inconveniences, which are now many can be minimised to a great extent. Surpluses should not be allowed to run to such an extent as to make it impossible for us to support the Honourable the Railway Member in his attempt to go on increasing his profits. He must consider the inconveniences really caused to the passengers, particularly third class passengers, who have an eternal complaint against the negligence of the Government towards their conveniences. At the present time the trains are running in a smaller number and are not running to time as they did previously. So, overcrowding in the railways is a matter which requires special consideration of the Transport Member. It will be better if he could coolly consider, apart from the troubles which he has been feeling with regard to war necessities—if he could consider how he can manage to bring the freights and rates down so that without losing the required surplus he can benefit the passengers and the general traffic. With these words I support the motion.

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani** (Tirhut Division: Muhammadan): I shall be very brief. A case has been made out by previous speakers for a decrease in rates and freights. It will be seen that the earnings from passengers is estimated to be Rs. 42 crores and 71 lakhs in 1943-44, while it was Rs. 38 crores and 46 lakhs in 1941-42; that is, it has increased by six crores, though it is said that they are not going to increase the rates and freights. By what means are

[Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani.]

they going to get these six crores more from the passengers? If we estimate the total receipts from the passengers, it comes up to 28.47 per cent. of the whole income of the railways. It has been said that there is a net saving and I have just pointed out that there is an increase of six crores from the fares chargeable from the passengers. So, it is right time that the fares should be decreased. It has been just said that it is a Government concern, it is Government property. Taking it for granted, is it proper that the Railway Department should issue so many free passes, especially for the railway employees? Crores of rupees are wasted over this; not only that, but high officials of the railways, for instance, the General Manager, the Traffic Manager and others, after retirement get silver pass. If it be a Government concern, then Government officials of other Departments should also get such passes and particularly the Executive Councillors must get a golden pass by which throughout their life they and their family can travel in the first class free of charge. Is it proper?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Thoroughly improper.

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** It is done these days. There are twelve kinds of passes granted to railway officials in these days. Notwithstanding that, they have put a restriction on the rights of the passenger to carry luggage. Whatever exemption was made in the case of luggage has been withdrawn. Even a single umbrella, a stick or bedding, is weighed. On the contrary, first class free pass holders and their servants are allowed a free allowance of three maunds of luggage per head. Is it proper? Is it just? As regards overcrowding the crew or the ticket examiner comes in and finds lots of people in each compartment; sometimes people holding third class tickets travel inter class and second class. But the railway crews or ticket examiners never care for the overcrowding; they never ask passengers to go out. They simply grant excess fare receipts and go away.

**Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad** (United Provinces Southern Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): Does the Honourable Member propose that freights should be charged by weighing both the passengers and the luggage together?

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** The charges concerning rates and fares are going up day by day whereas the facilities and amenities hitherto allowed to passengers are being curtailed at every stage. With these observations I support the motion.

**Sir Hugh Raper** (Government of India: Nominated Official): This cut motion, as shown on the order paper, deals with a reduction in rates and fares. But we have heard rather more about the surplus and how that should be utilised than we have of the difficulties that the existing level of rates and fares may have caused. Had I been entirely a layman, I would have turned to page 78 of the Explanatory Memorandum which has been distributed to everybody, and there it will be seen that the railway reserve fund is in this particular year 56 lakhs, that is, 8 lakhs only over what it was in 1939-40 and the previous years. So, it would appear looking at it as a layman, again, that asking for this surplus to be utilised for the purpose of reducing rates and fares would be to ask that the reserve fund be utilised before it has been actually built up. But there is the point, which has been touched upon by several Honourable Members, and that is overcrowding. The Honourable the mover apparently seriously suggested that we should reduce fares. Overcrowding is due to the fact that there are more passengers wanting to travel than we can accommodate in our restricted train services. If we were to reduce the fares, still more passengers would want to travel and conditions would be even more difficult than, I regret to say, they are at present.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman:** Is it by way of protective duty or something like that?

**Sir Hugh Raper:** We have thought of all the normal ways by which we can restrict travel. We have come to no conclusion which would be effective.

because we believe that none of them would be effective. The only way to stop travel seems to be, in India, to run no trains. When we have curtailed the train service and asked the people not to travel, it has not had the slightest effect but India is not alone in that. The number of passengers travelling in India has gone up considerably and the fact appears to be that more people have got money to spend on travelling and they wish to do it. The point that was raised by my Honourable friend, Mr. Chattopadhyaya, was that if you reduced rates and fares you get more people to travel and you get more goods despatched, but that is the very thing we want to avoid. Unfortunately, it seems that the thing that we should do to ease the existing situation, is to put up our rates and fares. The Honourable Member for War Transport in his speech stated that no general increases were contemplated. These are his actual words: "but we are not contemplating any general change in existing fares and freights next year" and we rather felt that that statement would bring a certain amount of pleasure to the House and we understood that it did give some satisfaction, but as things are it is impossible to contemplate any reduction. It is true, as my Honourable friend, Mr. Lalchand Navalrai, has stated that there have been increases in the past in fares and in freights. When you refer to an increase, you make a definite statement that the scale of fares, for example, has been increased. The proper method by which to judge the matter is to consider the actual effect in operation and that is something very different, as any Honourable Member would see by reference to the Railway Board's statistics, and I would ask my Honourable friend, Dr. Banerjee, to believe that in this case the statistics are accurate and can be relied upon. In regard to the third class fares, I have here a statement showing the average rate charged per passenger from the year 1935-36 up to the present time. In 1935-36—I have not gone to the period of the first war—the average was three pies and in 1940-41 it was 3.05. So, over that period of nearly seven years, there has only been an increase of .05 pie per passenger per mile, which is extremely small. This year, 1941-42, it has certainly gone up. It is now 3.18 but we have very good reason for that. With great regret, we have had to abolish a number of reduced fares that were in operation. Railways, as the House is aware, quoted reduced fares in competition with motor transport. Those have all been taken off, in the hope that passengers will use the other form of transport. That was done in the general interest but it has not given us, I regret to say, the relief we would like. But even so, the fare has gone up only from 3.05 to 3.18. That is not a very great increase.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman:** In the case of the first and second class passengers on the E. I. R., is it not a fact that the fare has gone up by 33 per cent., when you take into consideration the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  return tickets and the full two tickets?

**Sir Hugh Raper:** That would be one of the concessions to which I have just referred. We have had to withdraw them.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman:** But on the North Western Railway, you are continuing them.

**Sir Hugh Raper:** That is just the type of question in regard to which, in other circumstances, I should like to ask for notice but I believe that is not a fact. Generally speaking, concessions such as these have been withdrawn but now that you have brought this to our notice about the North Western Railway, I will certainly make a note of it.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Sir, I object to that. It should not be reduced.

**Sir Hugh Raper:** The Honourable Member referred to first class fares. I have here a similar statement regarding first class fares. In 1935-36, the average fare charged per mile per passenger was 17.8 pies. In 1941, it was 15.8. At first sight, it looks as though we have increased the fares for the third class passengers and reduced them for the first class but that is not so. There has not been any specific change but there is an arrangement with the Army by

[Sir Hugh Raper.]

which we charge Army officers, on production of a certificate, a fare lower than the normal fare. It has been in operation for many years and we do not propose to withdraw it. The number of army officers who travel is increasing and the lower fares charged to them has brought down the average.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman:** Does it mean that it is a strategic railway and not a public utility concern?

**Sir Hugh Raper:** I do not quite understand the connection. Then, Sir, my Honourable friend, Mr. Abdul Ghani, stated rather positively that General Managers after retirement received silver passes. That is quite incorrect. They do not get gold passes either. If they have had a certain length of service, not only they but other members of the staff likewise are eligible for privilege passes after retirement—a certain number per year. That applies to all staff.

**Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani:** What is the period for which it is granted?

**Sir Hugh Raper:** That you will find in the Code, but if you want to know that in more detail, may I suggest that a question be put in?

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** With regard to the 2.36 crores which are being given to the Central Revenues, may I know why should that be given?

**Sir Hugh Raper:** That is not exactly a matter connected with the reduction of rates and fares. I believe there will be another opportunity for you to discuss that particular problem. There is a Resolution to be moved. (Interruption.) My Honourable friend, Mr. Abdul Ghani, referred to the deterioration in the matter of accommodation, so far as I could hear him. I think he referred to the first class. That is very liable to happen in war time. We cannot get the material that we used to get and, I am afraid, we must expect that deterioration to increase. We hope it won't get too bad and we shall do our utmost to prevent that.

I have not yet touched on rates. We have been told that rates have been increased but here again we have to see how the increases actually work out in practice. The average charges for coal have diminished since 1935-36. In 1935-36 the charge per ton per mile was 3.5 pies; in 1941-42 it was 3.09. So there is a reduction. Grains and oil seeds are another traffic of considerable consequence. The charge in 1935-36 was 7.89 pies per ton; in the year 1941-42 it was 7.41. So, although in actual scale there may appear to be an increase, in actual practice it does not work out like that. For other commodities, there has, very definitely, been an increase. These are commodities of general kind, all other than coal and grains and oil seeds, and certainly the increase which has been imposed of 2 annas per rupee is reflected actually in the results. But, strangely enough, the average charges were higher in 1940-41 than in 1941-42. The increases such as those during the war time and for the purpose for which they have been made are not, I submit, in themselves excessive. If we were to reduce rates, if we are to reduce fares, if we are to reduce the charge for parcels, it would mean more traffic and we simply cannot carry it. So, on that ground, if for no other, I must definitely oppose this cut motion.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Sir, I do not wish to make a long speech, but I wish to point out that the Government of India is following a very crude, if I may say so, and a very unfair method of reducing the traffic by keeping higher charges. Travelling is as much necessary to a poor man, a man of smaller means, as it is necessary to a man with greater resources. To some extent, at least, a man with money undertakes travelling merely for luxury. Lot of people go to Kashmir from Bombay or Madras and overcrowd the trains. A journey undertaken for that purpose, certainly comes under the category of luxury. I, therefore, feel that the Government is very unfair in resorting to the method of reducing the traffic by charging higher rates and fares. The railways are maintained by the tax-payers of this country as a public utility concern, and they should be available not only to the rich and people with

greater and larger financial resources, but to the poorest men, and I would like the Government of India to consider this aspect of the problem. The public utility services are maintained by the tax-payer and they must be available to the poor people as much as they are available to the rich people. The method which the Government of India has adopted is unfair and very crude, if I may say so. I would like the Government of India, if the travelling facilities are limited, to find out some other method. . .

**Mr. E. L. O. Gwilt** (Bombay: European): What is the alternative?

**Mr. N. M. Joshi**: The alternative is to find out why people are going to Kashmir and tell them they won't get the tickets to Kashmir. You should inquire into the object of the man's travelling and if a man is going to leave Delhi or Calcutta or some other place because it is hot, you need not allow him to undertake that journey. I know even now, Race Specials are being run between Poona and Bombay and people go from Bombay to Poona and Poona to Bombay just to take part in the races. You can tell them that they cannot get a ticket if they want to go to Poona or Bombay merely for the purpose of races. You can stop them. The Government of India must find out a better method of reducing the travelling than the method of charging higher fares and I would like the Government of India to realise that it is a very unfair method.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall**: Sir, I feel that I should rise to correct my Honourable friend. I was not, of course, a Member of the Government in past years and at short notice I cannot be absolutely certain of my facts. But I think I am correct in saying that the Government has not adopted the policy of putting up fares in order to discourage passenger traffic except with the particular object of trying to pass passenger traffic off the rail-roads on to the buses. We have been asked to use every possible means of transport in this country and one of the obvious things to do was to try and get passengers off the railways and on to the buses. That is a policy which, I think, has proved very popular with the bus services and not unpopular with the passengers. It is, of course, a fact that everything in these days has to be subordinated to moving the essential traffic of the war. I think, again I am pretty certain of my facts, that there are no Race Specials running to Poona today and certainly we have some time ago taken steps to see that the long distance transport of race horses should come to an end. All these things are being watched and I can assure my Honourable friend that we shall continue to do so.

I should perhaps make one other general remark, in response to my friend, Mr. Muhammad Nauman. He asks whether the profits of the railways should go, I think he said, to the clients or the sharers. The answer, I think, is really perfectly simple, namely, that it is this House which is deciding now whether the profits should go to the general revenues or to the railways, and

1 P.M. that is the very reason why Mr. Muhammad Nauman is speaking on the cut motion

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is: "That the demand under the head 'Railway Board' be reduced by Rs. 100."

The Assembly divided:

AYES—20.

Abdul Ghani, Maulvi Muhammad.  
Azhar Ali, Mr. Muhammad.  
Banerjee, Dr. P. N.  
Bhutto, Mr. Nabi Baksh Illahi Baksh.  
Chattopadhyaya, Mr. Amarendra Nath.  
Choudhury, Mr. Abdur Rasheed.  
Deshmukh, Mr. Govind V.  
Essak Sait, Mr. H. A. Sathar H.  
Ghiasuddin, Mr. M.  
Joshi, Mr. N. M.  
Kazmi, Qazi Muhammad Ahmad.

Lalchand Navalrai, Mr.  
Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawabzada Muham-  
mad.  
Maitra, Pandit Lakshmi Kanta.  
Nauman, Mr. Muhammad.  
Neogy, Mr. K. C.  
Parma Nand, Bhai.  
Sant, Singh, Sardar.  
Siddique Ali Khan, Nawab.  
Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana.



## NOES—38.

Abdul Hamid, Khan Bahadur Sir.  
 Ahmad Nawaz Khan, Major Nawab Sir.  
 Aiyar, Mr. T. S. Sankara.  
 Ambedkar, The Honourable Dr. B. R.  
 Ambegaonkar, Mr. K. G.  
 Benthall, The Honourable Sir Edward.  
 Bhagchand Soni, Rai Bahadur Seth.  
 Bhansaly, Mr. M. D.  
 Caroe, Mr. O. K.  
 Chapman-Mortimer, Mr. T.  
 Daga, Seth Sunder Lall.  
 Dalal, Dr. Sir Batanji Dinshaw.  
 Dalpat Singh, Sardar Bahadur Captain.  
 Gray, Mr. B. L.  
 Griffiths, Mr. P. J.  
 Gwilt, Mr. E. L. C.  
 Haider, Khan Bahadur Shamsuddin.  
 Imam, Mr. Saiyid Haider.  
 Ismaiel Alikhan, Kunwar Hajee.  
 Jawahar Singh, Sardar Bahadur Sardar Sir.

The motion was negatived.

Kamaluddin Ahmad, Shams-ul-Ulema.  
 Lawson, Mr. C. P.  
 Mackeown, Mr. J. A.  
 Noon, The Honourable Malik Sir Feroz Khan.  
 Pai, Mr. A. V.  
 Pillay, Mr. T. S.  
 Raisman, The Honourable Sir Jeremy.  
 Raper, Sir Hugh.  
 Richardson, Sir Henry.  
 Sahay, Mr. V.  
 Shahban, Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir Muhammad.  
 Spear, Dr. T. G. P.  
 Spence, Sir George.  
 Stokes, Mr. H. G.  
 Sultan Ahmed, The Honourable Sir.  
 Thakur Singh, Major.  
 Trivedi, Mr. C. M.  
 Tyson, Mr. J. D.

*Curtailment of Passenger Trains.*

**Sardar Sant Singh** (West Punjab: Sikh); Sir, I beg to move:

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

The passenger services trains have been reduced almost on all lines throughout British India, with the result that while passenger traffic has increased considerably, the services have been reduced. By a reference to the report on the Indian Railways and on comparison of two years 1941-42 and 1938-39—a period just when the war broke out, with the present day conditions, I find that the number of first class passengers have increased from 2,69,700 to 4,42,200 and second class passengers have increased from 32,40,700 to 44,84,800. Intermediate class passengers have increased from 94,26,200 to 1,24,43,900 and third class from 3,12,37,800 to 3,79,31,33,500 from 1938-39 to 1941-42. This increase is tremendous. The result is that this increase has resulted in over-crowding as it is clear from the facts given about passenger miles. The passenger miles have increased from 2,424 millions and 29 thousand to 4,050 millions and 239 thousand. This is an enormous increase. Without even looking at the figures as reported in the official report, but only referring to the personal experience that each traveller has on Indian railways, we find that the upper class compartments are more crowded than their capacity permits. Similarly, when we come to the inter class and third class passengers, we find them almost in every train standing with the doors of the carriages open and mostly on the foot-boards. With this, I need hardly say that the convenience which the third class passengers were given or were conceded, after a long struggle and after much agitation that we carried on on the floor of the House has disappeared altogether. Not only this, that the conveniences have gone, but at the same time, we find that the accidents have increased on the railways. I particularly refer to those accidents which are due to the falling of passengers from running trains. It is now high time that we should look into this matter and examine the situation more seriously.

Before I proceed further on this point, I may refer to the punctuality of the trains. The percentage given in 1940-41 is 84.2 and it has been reduced to 77.7 per cent. in 1941-42. This too requires looking into.

I now come to the main point of my cut motion. No doubt the Government will come forward with the plea that on account of war, the rolling stock is not available, locomotives are not to be had and, therefore, passenger traffic had to be restricted. There is much force in that argument, and this side of the House does appreciate that argument. But, I may remind the Honourable Member that since 1924, this House has been passing cut motions and

tabling cut motions drawing the attention of the Railway Board to the necessity of manufacturing locomotives in the country. But the Railway Board has been consistently ignoring the demand of the Opposition, on that point. Today, they are wiser. They discovered that they could not get locomotives from abroad.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The House will now adjourn for lunch. The Honourable Member can continue his speech after lunch.

The Assembly then adjourned for Lunch till Half Past Two of the Clock.

The Assembly re-assembled after Lunch at Half Past Two of the Clock, Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang (one of the Panel of Chairmen) in the Chair.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** Sir, before we dispersed for lunch, I was submitting for the consideration of the House that the Government might say that the curtailment in the passenger services in the country has been due to lack of adequate numbers of carriages and locomotives in the Railways. No doubt this is true, but is this shortage in equipment due to the policy of the Railway Board which they have pursued consistently during the last ten or fifteen years? The Opposition Benches have been consistently agitating for arrangements to be made in the country for the manufacture of locomotives and for facilities to be granted for the manufacture of carriages and wagons, but the Government had never responded to the appeal till lately, when they started manufacturing locomotives in Ajmere Workshops. But that work had to be stopped again due to the war and that workshop was handed over for the manufacture of munitions and other weapons of the war. May I submit, Sir, that the Government will admit now, or will they not admit, that their policy has not been what it ought to have been and it has not promoted the interest of the country so far, and that they have lacked that imagination and vision which goes to make wise statesmen and good Governors? I only remind them of this so that they should realize the folly in which they have been indulging in by the conditions which the war has brought about in this country. The reason why we want that this hardship in the transport system should be reduced at any rate, if not done away with entirely, is that it is for them to examine the situation and it is for the Railway Board to find out ways and means. They must realize that the public is suffering on account of this. The slogan which the Railway Board have adopted since the war began "Travel When You Must" is a poor comfort to the traveller when he finds himself surrounded by inconvenience and hardship all-round. They cannot sit idle and say that we tell you not to travel and if you travel you must undergo the hardships. This is no logic and no argument for the hardships that the public has to undergo after investing such large sums in the Railways of this country. It was said, Sir, that we are keeping up the high railway fares with charges and sur-charges over the railway ticket because we do not want to discourage travelling.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Sir, I thought I had dealt with that point.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** I will only make a passing reference and then proceed on. I will say that this too is not a convincing argument. Therefore, I will request the Railway Member—and I must remind him that he is not an official, he is a non-official; his right place should have been on this side of the House and when he has gone on that side of the House he represents the non-officials, and as such his sympathies will be with the views of the non-officials more than with the views of the officials—and, therefore, I appeal to you to find out a solution of this difficulty.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali** (Lucknow and Fyzabad Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): But he can do nothing.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** I think he can. He was taken as a non-official on account of the sympathies which he has for the non-official views and for that purpose we cannot say that he has got bad surroundings or vicious surroundings and, therefore, he cannot do anything. He has to rise above these surroundings and find out a solution for the difficulty which is facing the country today.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Whose salt is he eating?

**Sardar Sant Singh:** Country's salt; tax-payers' salt and not the employers' salt. Therefore when I move this motion, I do not want to censure the Government but I want to concentrate their attention on the question that the public is very keenly feeling the hardship.

The second point to which I particularly want to draw his attention is the punctuality of the trains. The trains do not come at right time on the stations, with the result that more often than not the connections with the main line are lost and people have to wait for over 24 hours in order to get the next suitable connection.

**Mr. Chairman** (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): Honourable Member's time is up.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** Therefore, Sir, I will submit that the Railway Board should seriously consider this question and do something for the relief of the people.

**Mr. Chairman** (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): Cut motion moved:

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

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** Sir, in supporting this motion, I will make a few brief observations. I entirely agree with the view taken by the Government that in war time there must be some restrictions in passenger train facilities. But such restrictions should be in the interest of war transport. We find, however, that there has been a very drastic curtailment of passenger trains and this has been done after the sabotage. Now that that trouble is over I would request the Honourable the Member for War Transport to restore the position which existed before the sabotage. Whatever restriction is necessary in the interest of war transport should be maintained but it is not necessary to continue all the restrictions which have been imposed since the 9th of August, 1942.

I should like to make a few further suggestions. On the East Indian Railway there are Parcels Express Trains. I have often found that many of the compartments of the Parcels Express Trains are empty, but the general public is not allowed to board these trains between Mughalsarai and Howrah. This restriction should be done away with on two conditions: In the first place, you may say that provided there is accommodation the general public will be able to board these trains and, secondly, you may have another condition that no reservation of berths or seats will be made. Then the second suggestion which I wish to make is that there should be a continuous passenger train from Howrah to Delhi and another from Delhi to Howrah. If that is done, the congestion in the upper classes would be greatly removed and the congestion in the third class compartment of the mail and express trains will also be greatly reduced. The third suggestion which I wish to make is that the Government should consider the speeding up of trains to some extent now. After the sabotage the trains were slowed down because there was real necessity for such slowing down. But now that that necessity has disappeared, I do hope we will go back to the position which existed before the sabotage. These are the three important points and I hope they will meet the consideration of the Honourable the War Transport Member.

**Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali:** Sir, I rise to support this motion inasmuch as I have seen it with my own eyes, and I would refer to the Honourable Members here who have been travelling in their own constituencies and in other places. They must have seen the congestion and realized that the public are undoubtedly in very great trouble, especially the third class passengers, in getting seats in trains. Sir, I have seen with my own eyes women, men, and children hanging

on to trains when they have left from one station to another. Accidents, too, have occurred, and the cause for all this is the war and the consequent stoppage of passenger trains. Sir, with one stroke of the pen it is absolutely possible for you to effect a remedy and you can do it. You have stopped passenger trains, but what have you done for the accommodation of these people who have become accustomed, now for a century, under British Rule of moving about in trains.

Sir, I will curtail my speech and say that there is no favourable condition created by the Government for the poor people to travel. It may be very easy for the rich to travel from here to Bombay or Calcutta, but what arrangements have you made for the poor? I ask the Government to reply to this. Even the condition on the roads is not good. There is no petrol. There are no other transportable facilities in the country. Now, if petrol is not obtainable; if automobiles are not allowed to be constructed, I ask, what have the Government done during all these days for the convenience of the people, and especially the third class passengers?

My friend, Dr. Banerjee, wants that I should curtail my speech, and so I shall conclude.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee** (Calcutta Suburbs Non-Muhammadan Urban): Yes. The Honourable Member wants to reply.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I can assure the Honourable the Mover and his supporters that we in the Railway Department have the greatest sympathy with passengers. The reason why they travel in discomfort is not of our making. We have to deal with the situation as we find it. We also travel, and not nowadays in saloons. We ourselves travel and see the conditions in which passengers are travelling, and I can assure you that it gives us no satisfaction.

There is no question, of course, about the overcrowding. There are two ways of meeting it either by putting on more trains or having less passengers. I think sufficient has been said in this House since these debates began to show what extreme difficulty we have in moving all the traffic that has to be moved. We have tried the other expedient of endeavouring to persuade passengers to travel less. We are, in fact, in an impasse between those two methods of correcting the present position, because neither can we put on more trains nor can we persuade passengers to travel less.

We have, however, gone very slowly about this process of reducing passenger trains. Right from the beginning of the war plans were made for a 25 per cent. reduction, but the action taken in reducing the passenger services has been very gradual and we have taken whatever steps are possible, e.g., cutting off restaurant cars from trains and putting on extra lower class compartments, to attempt to meet the hard conditions of the lower class passengers. But try as we will, it is almost impossible to rectify the position in the present state of the war.

I should perhaps say one or two things as regards this shortage of wagons and locomotives. We hear much of this shortage, and indeed there is a shortage. But it comes not so much from an absolute shortage of locomotives and wagons as from an excess of traffic, which has arisen out of the war. I think we can say, roughly speaking, that prior to the war the wagons and locomotives were adequate for peace time traffic. I do not personally think they were quite adequate, but generally speaking they were reasonably adequate for pre-war conditions, and the shortage has arisen now entirely owing to the war.

**Maulana Zafar Ali Khan** (East Central Punjab: Muhammadan): Is the shortage of wagons due to paucity of funds, or want of materials or the want of will?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** To a certain extent shortage of materials: not to shortage of funds nor to lack of will. I should also correct. I think for the second time today the statement that wagons have not been made in the country. They have, of course, been made in this country for very many years out of indigenous materials.

**Sardar Sant Singh:** In the beginning they started it and then they stopped the orders locally and again renewed them.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I think the iron and steel were required for other purposes.

In conclusion I should say that it is almost impossible for us to improve the lot of passengers at the present time. I said so frankly in my Budget speech. Once you get behind, once there are arrears of traffic, arrears caused by cyclones, by the rebellion, by recent incidents in Calcutta, and so on, it is extraordinarily difficult to catch up, and, I am afraid, that these restrictions will have to be maintained; but I will say this, that I will inquire most carefully into those areas where the curtailment of passenger traffic is causing the most inconvenience to passengers, and I will also look into the case mentioned by Dr. Banerjee regarding the Parcel Expresses; but I think he will find that the carriages to which he refers are carriages which are not put on at all for passenger service but which are returning to other parts of the country for operational purposes. I must oppose the motion.

**Mr. Chairman (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang):** Now, it is the turn of the European Group to move their motion.

*Post-War Reconstruction.*

**Sir F. E. James (Madras: European):** Sir, I beg to move:

‘That the demand under the head ‘Railway Board’ be reduced by Rs. 100.’

I make no apology for returning to this question of reconstruction after the war. I was very much impressed when I attended a meeting of the Indian Railways Conference Association by a speech delivered by the President, Mr. Laughton, and also by the reply to that speech given by the Honourable Member. In that speech, Mr. Laughton stressed the utmost importance now of considering post-war reconstruction with regard to three matters, (1) rationalisation of transport, (2) rolling stock, and (3) what he described as staff welfare. I am going to put to my Honourable friend, the Railway Member, a four-point programme, and I shall deal with two points, leaving my colleague Mr. Stokes to deal with the other two: (1) the rationalisation of transport, (2) the reconstruction and betterment of railways, (3) a comprehensive housing programme for labour, and (4) the question of the future control and management of railways.

In his reply to Mr. Laughton, the Honourable the Member for War Transport—not for Railways, let me remind the House, but for war transport, which means the successor during the war of the old Communications Department, covering all forms of transport at present on the ground,—shall I say—he seemed to indicate that it was not possible to do much about these matters during war time. He threw back Mr. Laughton’s proposals at the General Managers and said that what they should do would be to write letters to the War Transport Member in their odd spare moments, making any kind of suggestions, that they saw fit—when in restaurants, railway cars, travelling on their bicycles, to and from their offices,—in their spare moments; and he concluded his speech with an unusually rhetorical passage when he said that the ball was at their feet. As I want to prevent that ball eventually being kicked into the wastepaper basket, I want to carry this question a stage further. Let me deal with rationalisation of transport and the future control and management of railways. I admit that it is difficult now to anticipate post-war conditions; but there are certain facts which stare us in the face today. One is that 33 per cent. of all the cavalry and infantry units have been trained to a trade and that a very large number of these have been trained to the operation of mechanical transport. Therefore, after the war there will be enormous numbers of transport vehicles and trained drivers and mechanics available. What are you going to do with them? The problem which will confront the country and in particular the railways can be dealt with by one of two ways. The first way would be to leave them alone and allow conflicting interests to fight it out. The

second way would be to begin to plan for it now, and that is the method I suggest. Surely, the experience which has been gained during war time by the War Transport Department itself in the rationalisation of road, rail and water communications should not be discarded. I realise that this means close co-operation between the Centre and the Provinces; but I suggest that provinces should now be asked to prepare extensive road construction and betterment programmes ready to be put into effect after the war. Heaven knows such a programme is badly needed. As long ago as 1928, the Development Committee reported that the development of railways had outstripped that of roads; and I saw some calculation recently to the effect that, assuming that all earth roads and cart roads are made navigable in all weathers, in British India there would still only be one mile of road to three square miles of area; whereas in the United States, where the number of roads is not enormous under modern conditions, there is one mile of road to every one square mile of area. Now, it may be asked by my Honourable friend, what has this to do with railways? It has everything to do with the railways. Both roads and railways are national assets; therefore they really ought to grow together; they are complementary, one to the other. The roads should really feed the railways, and not deprive them of their just traffic. Similarly the railways should serve the roads and not do their best to drive motor transport off them. Thus at the Centre, my Honourable friend's Department has a vital interest in the road programmes of the provinces. What does he know about them? Are any being prepared? If they are being prepared, are they being studied by his department? How are they going to finance them? What about a rupee loan for the development of India's transport, both road and rail, after the war? I understand that, before the war a little over six crores a year were being spent on roads. When I see railway finances and look at their depreciation fund of 94 crores and their reserve fund of 9½ crores, I wonder where is the depreciation fund and where is the reserve fund for the roads, all of which are suffering almost equal deterioration with the railways today. After the war, therefore, not only should there be money available for the restoration of the railways, but there should be money available, from the centre if necessary, for the restoration of the roads and for a really comprehensive forward capital programme of road construction. Road and rail are the two limbs of a single national transport system, which is as essential to the agriculturist in peace time as it is to the defence of the country in war time. That is a problem which the Railway Board and the War Transport Department should be studying now; and it will not wait until after the war.

The second point I wish to touch on is the future control and management of the Railways. Although the Federal provisions of the Government of India Act are technically in suspense, we are informed on no less authorities than the Muslim League and the Congress, that they are in fact as dead as Queen Anne or Cleopatra. Presumably the same applies to the Federal Railway Authority which has never been established, and to the provisions relating to that body. I should like to ask whether the Railway Board have any idea as to whether it will ever be established. During the last few years they have acquired a number of railways previously operated by companies. What is the future organisation of the Railways to be? India has built up an enormous State enterprise. Consolidation and State management obviously have certain advantages but there is such a thing as the "penalty of being big". Bureaucracy never ran a business efficiently in its life, never can and never will. Railways are a big business whose motto, we are told, is service rather than profits. Service itself depends upon efficiency. The Railways should maintain their identity and their competitive character. But, how to achieve that, when they are controlled by the State? Perhaps the best method would be through the establishment of a statutory body under legislative control as to principle and policy but free to operate as a business organisation supported by the resources

[Sir F. E. James.]

of the State; as a public utility company, whose object is not profit for its shareholders but cheap and efficient transport for its citizens and their trade and commerce. What is to be the relation of the Railways to the Legislature of the future? I suggested last year that the question of a wholesale revision of the Convention of 1924 might well be undertaken now or, at any rate, preparations might be made for that inquiry. In my view, quite apart from the financial provisions of that Convention which are bound to come before the House in a few days time, there is need for reconsideration of the other provisions. The Railways are related to the Legislature through two statutory bodies, the Standing Finance Committee for Railways and the Central Advisory Council. I have very little quarrel with the Standing Finance Committee, which is the watch-dog of the Legislature; but I have always felt that the Central Advisory Council for Railways performs very little service indeed. It consists of Members of the Legislature, but it cannot and does not commit the Legislature. What, I suggest, is needed is a Council consisting mainly of representatives of commercial, industrial and rural interests and of the travelling public, which, in a sense, would be a counterpart of the Local Advisory Committees in the provinces. That was indeed the recommendation of the Acworth Committee which somehow went off the rails when the matter came before this House some years ago. Such a body might meet twice a year, not during the hustle and bustle of a legislative session.

**Mr. Chairman** (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): The Honourable Member's time is up.

**Sir F. E. James:** Such a body would be far more useful than the Central Advisory Council whose activity only seems to reach its peak at the time when the question of the election of its members to Local Advisory Committees come up before them.

These are parts of a plan which will now be, I hope, filled in by my Honourable Colleague. I suggest that if some effort is not made now to prepare that plan the Railways and the War Transport Department will find themselves in a very difficult position when victory does come. The energies and experience stored up now will be wasted and chances of reconstruction lost. Sir, I move.

**Mr. Chairman** (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): Cut motion moved:

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

**Mr. Muhammad Ashar Ali:** I wish to say something about this question of reconstruction. I entirely agree with my friend, Sir F. E. James, that we should consider something about reconstruction after the war. One does not know when the war will end. One does not know whether at the end of the war we shall be able to carry on our Railways and its management as we are doing at present. The Railways have been the greatest concern of the Government of India from the very beginning and it is still the greatest concern of the Government of India not only for war purposes but also as a business concern. The step-motherly treatment which has been given to the Roads and waterways is a matter, which, I hope, will be taken up when the reconstruction scheme is presented to the country. It is said that the Railways are a great asset. The Federal Railway scheme and the Federation have gone into the limbo. We cannot discuss them today and to discuss them would be absolutely futile. In Europe, of course, they are trying to bring out schemes of reconstruction but one cannot be sure here what will happen today and tomorrow but I think that if the Government really takes it up, as Sir F. E. James has suggested, then funds will be available to carry out this reconstruction scheme when the time for it arrives. But, Sir, I would say that talk of it at present is simply putting the cart before the horse. You have, first of all, as you say, to win the war. Then you have to provide and keep your finances intact that you may be able to spend more and more. Of course, I know that from year to year there is no deficit, but rather a surplus in the railways. We must thank



not only the War Department that our finances have become so enriched, but we should congratulate the whole of the Indian public that have subscribed to this result. Whatever schemes are produced by Government or by other Members on this side, to prognosticate about the future would be a difficult task, but I support this reconstruction scheme, but though I should say that it will simply be a matter which depends on what happens in the future.

**Mr. H. G. Stokes** (Bombay: European): My Honourable friend and colleague, Sir Frederick James, has dealt very ably with two of the points which seem to us to arise out of the problems of post-war reconstruction, and it now remains for me to say something about rolling stock and about housing labour. By rolling stock I mean what I may term the material reconstruction of the railways after the war. I propose firstly to say something about track. It is obviously of primary importance. You may have ample rolling stock for your needs and ample locomotives but the service you can render is governed by your track capacity. I suggest that the war must have revealed many bottle necks in the various systems where line duplication would solve great congestion and difficulties, many cases where siding accommodation is deficient and many marshalling yards which are antiquated. Again, when track is relaid I suggest that the long view be taken and that an ample margin be provided for post-war industrial development. That this development will be on a great scale cannot be doubted if one can judge by the last war, and Railways as the servant of industry should be ready to play their part. I suggest too that the strategic lines will require reconsideration in view of the changed situation after the war.

I would also say a word about electrification. Most Honourable Members must have admired, and in the case of Calcutta Members, envied the electric services in Bombay and in Madras. I think it is reasonable to say that they have revolutionised life in those cities by enabling the class, whom in England we call the black coated worker, to move out of the congested city into the healthy country. Is it too much to hope that we may some day see such developments in Calcutta where the need is less acute?

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra** (Presidency Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): All these people sitting at present on the Treasury Benches have no imagination.

**Mr. H. G. Stokes:** A net work of suburban lines radiating from central Calcutta would open up new suburban areas in outer Calcutta and solve what is one of the most pressing problems of the worker, that of rent. The Madras suburban services, I believe, pay the Railway very well, and though the initial expense in Calcutta would be high, I do not see why the capital should earn an unattractive interest. It may be argued that there is no hydro-electric power available in or near Calcutta. That is so, but I think I am correct in saying that in Madras the power is steam-generated.

Then there is rolling stock wagons and coaching stock. The wagon supply problem is difficult not only in war but also in peace. India is a land of seasonal crops, and so, of seasonal heavy demands upon transport. If you have a supply of wagons sufficient to meet the peak of demand you may have a surplus for another part of the year. I suggest a mean between surplus and deficiency, an extension, if it is needed, of the present wagon pool and measures to make sure that the percentage of sick wagons is kept low. The Wedgewood Commission, I think, set five per cent. sick at one time as a suitable target. Then there is the question of wagon design which I regard as most important. I believe there are a number of standard designs, but if one can judge by what one sees, there must be a lot of such designs. If they can be reduced, expense will be saved by mass production and interchangeability between Railways will be facilitated. I imagine too that the war will have taught designers a great deal in respect of weight reduction.

I believe that there is already a standard third class coach, but to judge from the Honourable Member's remarks it is far from perfect.



[Mr. H. G. Stokes.]

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** We have not seen it. Where is it?

**Mr. H. G. Stokes:** I believe, before I had the honour of sitting in this House a standard coach was brought to Delhi for exhibition.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Sample coach?

**Mr. H. G. Stokes:** Yes.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** It has remained a sample, and it is kept perhaps as a curio by the Railway Department there.

**Mr. H. G. Stokes:** It surely should be possible for the experts of the Railway Board, even though we are told that perfection is unattainable, to evolve a design or designs of body suitable for all Railways and all conditions varying though they are. If such bodies are then mass produced, some of the saving in expense which results can be applied to the provision of yet more amenities for the lower class passenger.

For the upper class I plead for an extension of air-conditioning. I think one can justly claim that air-conditioning has come to stay and that it is past the experimental stage.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** For you people. We have water-conditioned carriages. Water drips from the top of these carriages.

**Mr. H. G. Stokes:** It gives you comfort, cleanliness and freedom from noise, and it gives, so I believe, to the Railways, an excellent return on their outlay. Locomotives I understand have an economic life of about 30 years and there must be many now in use which are much older. Heavy replacements will be needed. As in the case of wagons, I suggest as much of standardisation as is possible, and I suggest too that design is of the very greatest importance. We have heard with much pleasure the Honourable the War Transport Member's assurance that the manufacture of locos in this country will go ahead and the greater the measure of standardization, the more efficient will be the work. Boilers, I believe, have always been a difficulty and we should like to hear if it will be possible to manufacture them in this country.

With regard to loco design, here again I suggest the greatest possible measure of standardisation and that every care be taken to secure the best advice wherever it may be available before any design is finally accepted. The war should bring a big advance in loco engineering and we should like to be sure that India will share fully in the benefit of the lessons learned.

Now, Sir, I come to housing and by that I mean not just quarters, but all that should go with quarters—water supply, medical facilities and so on. We in this Group are as anxious as anyone that the Railway worker who has given such good service should benefit from the post-war reconstruction. Dearness allowance is, however, only a temporary measure of relief whilst wages increases given in the good times may prove too heavy a burden for an undertaking in bad times. But good times or bad, we do feel that quarters on a reasonable scale are an amenity which should not be lacking for the lower paid employee. Big building schemes have been initiated in the past decade but progress has been slow and we should like to see it speeded up as part of post-war reconstruction. I mentioned medical facilities as in our view coming under housing and I would like especially to refer to anti-malarial measures. Before I retired from active business, I was closely associated with the Tea Industry in North East India. About ten years ago, we initiated such measures on a group of our estates in a very unhealthy locality. Their results have exceeded all our anticipations. Malaria has not been stamped out altogether, but it has been so reduced that it has quite ceased to be a scourge. I may mention that the Assam Bengal Railway, as it was then, co-operated with us in these successful experiments and I would like to see measures taken on the Railways wherever malaria is prevalent.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Ask them to drive out malaria from the Imperial capital first.

**Mr. H. G. Stokes:** I think they are trying in that direction. With modern methods, I believe, success is a certainty and as I have said I speak from experience.

In conclusion we realise that the ideas roughly outlined will cost money—a great deal of money and I should like to reiterate the plea already made by my Honourable friend and colleague, Mr. Chapman-Mortimer, that in these good years the Railway Reserve Fund should be built up by generous allocations.

I support the motion.

**Mr. Muhammad Nauman:** Sir, I would like to support the cut motion which is before the House. It is a subject which is more abstract than concrete and, as my Honourable friend, Mr. Azhar Ali, remarked, it is not so easy to give any concrete suggestion on an abstract subject except that we have got to have a wider imagination and a wider outlook for putting our house in order when the war ends. When we talk of this, we can take into consideration the factors of developments which will come all the world over after this war. We will have to keep pace with the scientific developments in the various spheres and particularly in the channels of transport including railways. It will be better if we try to find out a scheme or make inquiries about a scheme for the electrification of the railways in the country on a larger scale than we have at the moment. The Honourable Member who preceded me has already stressed this point and I hope the Railway Board will take into consideration all the methods of developments that they can adopt in this direction after the war and also consider how they are placed now and how they may be placed after the war.

Next, we have got to take into consideration the automobile competition which will become more intense after the war than what it was when the Motor Vehicles Act was brought into operation to stifle the bus service and to give facilities to the railways. With the flow of petrol and probably a cheaper automobile being available in this country if we at all develop the motor industry here, probably the Motor Vehicles Act as it is today will not be able to save the railways from those losses which it might envisage by competition. That is also a subject for serious consideration and these things should be taken into consideration with wider outlook and broader imagination. Then, there is a feeling in the country and in the responsible quarters that after the war the aerial service may develop and may become a great competitor of the railways so far as the higher class passenger service is concerned. That situation has also got to be taken into consideration and full inquiries made on those lines so that after the war the Honourable Member in charge of the Railways may not come before the House and say that they were not prepared for these contingencies. This has always been the case during this time when the Railway Board came out with plea that they never thought that a situation will arise when they will have difficulties of transport or difficulty of locomotives and so on and so forth. We want to warn the Honourable Member for transport and to tell him that this is also a factor which should be given a serious consideration. With the development of science and the aerial development all the world over, probably India also will have to face that situation. Unless the Railway Board is prepared to take these factors into consideration and try to evolve a scheme which will be able to meet that situation, I am afraid, we may again have a series of deficits worse than what we had in the year 1936-37. We will not then be able, I am afraid, even to get as much as to pay our interest charges.

Then, Sir, I do not want to dilate on the points of housing and other things which have been touched by other Members. I have only tried to give a picture of the things that we may have to face when the post-war period comes and the Railway Board ought to be prepared to meet all conceivable contingencies.

Certainly it does involve immediately the question of better amenities for the people concerned and better facilities for travelling on more economic lines.

[Mr. Muhammad Nauman.]

Naturally, when investigations are made these factors will have to be considered, so I need not dilate on what particular facilities should be introduced in the first class and second class and Inter and third class and how many trains should be made to run. I am just trying to hint what may be the position and that the Railway Board should consider all these points seriously.

There is another factor which I should like to point, and it is this: by abolishing some lines and by removing even line rails here and there on railways, Government have reduced their capacity and I hope after the war they will think of re-establishing their net work and they should rather try to bring it to a far more better position than what it had been. The greatest consideration which a passenger may have is that he may reach a certain destination without much inconvenience or without change involving disturbance during night time particularly. If on these small lines connections are not established, the result will be that automobile transport and road service will be again preferred and will probably carry more passengers, affording more facilities to them than the railways, which may leave them at a certain place where they will have to wait on for hours and hours. These are the few points which I wanted to bring to the notice of this House and the Railway Board. With these few observations I support the motion.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** Mr. Chairman, I am sorry I could not be present in this House when this motion was moved. I have missed the speech made by my Honourable friend the mover. As I can see it now, it must have aroused the imaginative faculties of Honourable Members with wild dreams of the future. From the remarkable speech was made by Mr. Stokes, I had a glowing picture of the future system of railways before me with air-conditioning all round, with big building programmes, speeding up of construction,—I do not know whether he meant sky-scrapers—by big buildings,—electrification of suburban railways near about Calcutta, granting of better facilities of travel on the lines of Madras and Bombay systems, to whom, I do not know; greater allowances to railway workers—by railway workers, I do not know what he meant, what category of human beings, black or brown? Sir, all these things we have heard. The tragedy of the thing is that we have not taken a realistic view of the position. He has been at pains to discuss the post-war reconstruction of Railways in this country. But is all this going to be done by this rotten bureaucracy ruling today? Or, is it going to be done by a system of Government which is broad-based on the will of people? Who knows? It is not in our hands. Is there going to be a national Government which will take up all this programme? Nobody can say what is in store for the country. We are in the midst of a devastating war—a war which has already run more than three years and the full cycle has yet to run. What will be the conditions of this country after the war, we do not know. You are speaking of some fresher and more comfortable systems to be adopted by the public utility services, but you have nothing to say about the safeguarding of the national interests of this country. Certainly, people who have the interest of their country at heart, patriotic people fired with imagination and national ideals for service of this country can achieve a lot. As I do not see before me even the dim vision of a change in this rotten and tottering system of administration, all this talk of reconstruction, so far as I am concerned, is of no use. Read the whole history of the railway administration in this country, take a dispassionate view, you will find considerable volume of opinion of economists in this country that the Indian railways are overcapitalised. My Honourable friend, Mr. Chapman-Mortimer quietly shakes his head. Is he prepared to tell me that it is not overcapitalised?

**Mr. T. Chapman-Mortimer** (Bengal: European): Yes.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** I hope he will make a speech and convince me. If he is prepared to give me that assurance I will immediately resume my seat. Look at the Railway Stations of Lucknow, Cawnpore and Poona.

All these have been built up by hundreds of thousands of rupees. But look at the condition of the third class passengers' shelters. My Honourable friend, Mr. Chapman-Mortimer, has never had the misfortune of entering the third class waiting hall. Look at the hardships and inconveniences which a third class passenger has to face at the third class counter in railway stations. Has there been any improvement in the third class counters so far? Look at the rest rooms for the big people in these big stations and look at the waiting halls meant for passengers travelling in third class and inter class. We have been putting questions after questions about the grievances of third class passengers; we have been moving, year after year in this Assembly, cut motions for greater amenities and better facilities to the third class passengers who are the real customers of Railways and who keep their lines going. We were given to understand that a new and improved type of third class carriage would be introduced in this country which would remove our main ground for agitation against the railways. I am told that one such bogey or carriage has been manufactured and put up for show. I hope Sir Edward Benthall will create a Railway Museum out of the huge profits earned by the railways during the first year of his office and preserve this coach as a piece of curio to be admired and cherished by his successors in the Railway Administration.

Again, take the question of catering to the passengers. Look at any decent train, the Frontier Mail, the Delhi Mail, the Delhi Express, there are excellent Restaurant Cars provided in these trains which are used only by the higher class passengers like my Honourable friends, Mr. Stokes, Mr. Griffiths and also perhaps by some Indians who are sufficiently civilised and anglicised. But look at the thousands of people travelling in third class. Look at the tyranny to which they are subjected at the hands of the vendors at all stations. You make complaints, you cry hoarse, but the thing is going on. The Government simply say, our reports are all right. A nose-gay or a rose in the button-hole is all that must please you. If that will not please you, then you are a perverse lot, you have no aesthetic sense. You take any aspect of the railway administration, the same thing is there. Of course, you have today that omnibus excuse, the war. So, all sins of omission and commission are covered by this war pretext. But the war came only four years ago. We have had our own experience of the railway administrations before this period. I, for myself, have nothing before me to encourage the hope that so long as this body of persons govern this country or this system of administration continues even a fraction of these schemes or even a fringe of that dream is going to be realised. Yes, I do realise that occasionally it is necessary, it is refreshing to launch out into imaginative flights. Do that by all means as a relief from the grim distress through which we are passing. But if you mean business, let us not have this tall talk when you have not a word to say about the future governance of this country. I see no hope for the future of my country. We have tried these people, but we have found them wanting. We have tried to bring them to their senses, we have tried now and then to make them understand the national view-point, but we have failed. It is not once that we pleaded before them for the construction of locomotives in the country. Year after year, we passed Resolutions drawing the attention of the Government to the locomotive position of the country. "Oh! no, they cannot be manufactured in India"—was the usual reply. Today this trouble in transport is entirely due to lack of replacements. My Honourable friend, Mr. Stokes, comforted us by saying that the construction of locomotives was going ahead; yes, so far ahead that you cannot even dimly visualise when your locomotives will be turned out from Ajmer or Kancharapara workshops, notwithstanding the reports made by experts. What is the use of drawing such a rosy or glowing picture? You made systematic default in every respect. You have deliberately ignored our advice. It is not at all surprising that you should come to grief today.

[Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra.]

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, while I sympathise with my friends in their poetic phantasies and fanciful pictures, I regret I can not be enthusiastic about this motion. If I do not directly oppose it, certainly I can not support this motion.

**Maulana Zafar Ali Khan:** Sir, this problem has been discussed from various angles of view. Most speakers have tried to peep into the future. I am afraid, they have not been able to lift the veil. My Honourable friend, Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra who spoke just now is very despondent. He struck a pessimistic note and I am afraid, I will have to join with him. What the future will be, we do not know. Those who signed the Atlantic Charter assured the world that after this war was over and the democratic countries won the final victory, this world would be a place worth living. For whom? For the people of Europe, for Poland, for France, for Yugo-Slovia, for Greece and for all the smaller countries in Europe which are now under the heels of Hitlerism. But will India be allowed to take a share in that pleasurable life? I am afraid, no definite answer has been given to this question up to this time, although individual Americans and Englishmen have occasionally assured us that after the war was over, India will have her place in the sun. From that part of the House, from the European Group, my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, reminds us of the promise he made on the floor of the House definitely that at least after the war, if the British Government do not concede the right of self-determination for India, he will be the first to raise the standard of revolt, and yesterday when I again reminded him of this promise, he said, "I am going to renew my promise". So after this war is over, what will be the condition of India; that we do not know.

So far as the Railway Department and the amenities of third class passengers are concerned, for the past 40 years, we have been watching the lot of third class passengers with feelings of great disappointment. Our Railway Department has been assuring the country that they were going to do something for the poor third class prisoners, I mean third class passengers. I think I was right when I said prisoners. There was a time when third class passengers were supposed not to have the capacity to answer calls of nature while they were travelling. There was no lavatory. There was a time when third class passengers were supposed to travel each in a space three feet square, even for a journey covering a distance of 2,000 miles. All this time, the poor third class passenger was supposed not to go to sleep. Even now, railway trains are packed like sardines. I have seen passengers hanging on to railway foot boards and some of them fall down and accidents occur. The third class passenger, if he is interested in the future, expects the Railway Member to do something for him. The question of questions is whether the third class passenger who pays crores and crores of rupees to fill the coffers of the Railway Department, is going to get further amenities or not? That is the question of the future. The future will take care of itself. We must talk of realities, talk of the present. At the present moment our plight, so far as travel is concerned, is very miserable. My Honourable friend, Mr. Muhammad Nauman, while making his speech, pointed out that after this war was over, a new world will be shaped and in that new world, the railways will have very little space. There would be aeroplanes and people would be travelling by aeroplanes. He is right to a certain extent. After the war is over, the big magnates, the rich people who are now travelling in first and second classes will have small aeroplanes of their own for going from place to place and the railways will be left only to third class passengers. It is for the present administrators of the Railway Department to see to it that after the war, if not now, something will be done for the third class passenger for which we shall thank them. With these few words, I cannot say whether I support the motion or I want it to be talked

out, but still I have some sympathy with those who are optimistic enough to think that after the war is over this world will be a place worth living.

**Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** Sir, I was engaged in the work of "reconstruction of India" in some other conference, but I thought that this cut motion is more practical than the general talk on the reconstruction of India after the war.

As far as the Railways are concerned, I think, this is just the time when we ought to make a definite plan for its future working. My Honourable friend, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, said that the Railways will have very little part in the transport system of the country compared with aeroplanes and other forms of transport which will come into existence. Never mind. Whatever the position of aircraft may be, the Railways will always hold their own, and they will always occupy a very prominent place in the economic life of the country. I think, it is very desirable that we should now discuss not only a cut motion but by means of committees, conferences and resolutions, whatever future plans about running the Indian Railways will be. What will be the position of Railways in the competition that will become more complicated later on on account of the appearance of aircraft? We have one competitor now in automobile; we will have a second competitor in the form of aeroplanes. But in spite of that I think the Railways will hold their own, and we should try to make these Railways efficient and really useful to the country and make it a transport of public utility.

In the first place I would like to mention that though we have separated the railway finance from the general finance, this separation ought to go still further. What we have got at present is not sufficient; the separation must be taken a little bit further, and though it is not very desirable to discuss the old hackneyed question of "railway authority", but those are very convenient words and I would like to use them though the connotation will be very different. I think we ought to make a small group of people, which you might call for the present "a railway authority", which should be appointed by the Indian Legislature which will be responsible to the Legislature, and, I think, it is not fair to include this Railway Administration in the Act of the Parliament. The Parliament may lay down certain broad principles of administration, but the details of the administration of Railways ought to be left to this country. So, I think, we ought to make a definite plan for our Railways to adopt as soon as the war is over, and the first thing we ought to decide is the constitution of the body which will govern the Indian Railways and I am very keen that it should be a small statutory body created by the Indian Legislature and which should be responsible to the Indian Legislature for all the work so that the Legislature may be relieved from the day to day administration. What we discuss on the floor of the House are small matters; for instance, about the case of one man who was called Allah Baksh when he was first appointed but after 18 years it was found that his name was not Allah Baksh but Allah Baks (that is, with "seen", not "sheen") and then he was dismissed on the ground of false personation. And I pointed out to Sir Andrew Clow that when he first came to join as Magistrate he was called "Hazur Magistrate Kallu Sahib", but later on he became Sir Andrew Clow (Clow when written in Urdu script also reads Kallu). But that is not false personation. I related this small incident to show that these are the small matters which we discuss on the floor of the House about appointments, pay, dismissal, etc. of personnel, whereas these small matters ought to be discussed elsewhere and this Legislature should only discuss and decide broad questions of policy and see that the Railways really do useful work in the country.

The other thing on which the Legislature must keep a proper control is rates and fares. This is a very important question. Our Railway Administration has got no definite principles. On one fine morning the predecessor of my Honourable friend came up here and said he had raised the rates and fares by two annas per rupee, but for what reason and for what justification was not

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mentioned on the floor of the House. This is a very important thing which the Legislature must keep in its own hands, that is, the question of rates and fares and it cannot be left to any other authority. That is one control which the Legislature must always have in the interest of the people and in the interest of the trade.

The other thing in which we are interested is that we do not want to have so many different units. There are 13 first class railways, and so many second class railways: Over 300 different administrations and a very elaborate system of account-keeping. One-third of the persons are employed to keep accounts, one-third are employed to check those accounts and only one-third are engaged on administrative work. This kind of division should be avoided and we should run the whole Indian Railway system as a single unit. Some people may argue that this is a very big unit, but may I point out that the total mileage of the Indian Railways is approximately the same as the total mileage of Germany, but in that case it is a smaller country whereas India is a bigger country. But it can be managed. See what is happening in America. That is a much bigger country. We can run it as a single unit, administered by a statutory body which ought to be created by the Indian Legislature. If some kind of unit is to be adopted on account of the vastness of the country, we can do it in four units, as it is done for the Army, namely, Southern Command, Eastern Command, Western Command and Northern Command. We can divide into four units and appoint four General Managers.

The other point you have to consider is that as soon as the last railway has been purchased, which will be in 1951, we should make all these railways form part of one solid unit, and the present division and sub-division should be abolished altogether. That is one improvement which we should make and we must plan for this administration now. This is the time when we ought to work on it. At present we have got three organizations, namely, the Railway Board, the General Manager's organization, and the Divisional organization. The last one is a third wheel to the coach. I think, we should have two bodies to run the administration: A central body with full responsibility and divisional system; or put the entire power in the hands of the General Managers, and under them we should have the divisional organization. In any case, we should not have three authorities; two are indispensable, one to lay down the policy and the other to administer it. But we have got at present three bodies in which there is a very great conflict of division and duplication of work. This should be considered carefully now so that as soon as the war is over, we should revise the entire machinery and in place of three bodies have only two.

The next point we have to decide is the administration of workshops and the manufacture of rolling stock. The experience of the present war has taught us that we cannot always rely on foreign countries. It is very desirable that we should get materials from other places, and I wish that every country should specialize in producing those articles for which the country is best qualified by virtue of raw materials. But since war conditions may arise at any moment, it is very desirable that we should be as much self-supporting as possible. Of course, this House has been pressing for years that we ought to manufacture engines in this country. We now realise that it was a mistake to

4 P.M. have postponed that idea indefinitely, and I think it is now time that we should think out a plan for manufacturing all the items and all the parts which are necessary for the construction of engines, coaches and wagons. We can make a plan at present for the improvement of workshops.

The next thing which still requires consideration, and the time is not very fit for it, because we cannot, at present, possibly give effect to it, is the question of gauges. There is an enormous economic waste in this. We have four or five gauges in India, and this is not very desirable. Take the broad gauge. The breadth of the coach is not broad enough for the gauge we allow.

I think the present width is quite sufficient for the English and American gauges. If we have the American gauge that is really good enough for the width which we have got. I think the present wastage is very substantial. This is one of the problems which we ought to consider and discuss when we have got leisure to do it, and give effect to it as soon as the war is over.

The next thing which we ought to consider is whether we should have first, second, intermediate, and third class carriages. Why not have two simple classes: the upper class and the lower class. Of course, many other countries have tried this experiment. I know some of the Continental countries have four classes. In England we have only three.

**Dr. P. N. Banerjee:** On some railways only two.

**Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad:** Only on those railways which have connections with the Continental trains are there first, second and third. Otherwise there are only two classes—first and third. What is the difference? A new carriage is called first class. If that becomes three years old it is converted into a third class carriage. So there is really no difference in comfort. One is a new carriage and the other an old one. The point I want to emphasize is that we should think out how to simplify the various classes and see if we cannot have only two.

We should also consider the question of foreign and local booking. We have a Tariff Board and I challenge my friend the Financial Commissioner to produce a person from the Railway Board before me and I will see whether he will be able to answer correctly questions on coaching tariff on the different railways. They are so complicated that one and the same article is put under nine different categories by the different railways. Therefore, we should simplify our coaching tariff also, and when we unify all the railways, this question of foreign traffic and local traffic will not arise.

• The next question is that of finance. I think this is a very important question. I think we have queer ideas of the finances of the Indian railways. I am of opinion that our Indian railways must be viewed from the point of view of a business concern, and as such they must keep a reserve. I think that the amount of reserve which they must build up, whenever the conditions are favourable, should be equivalent to one year's expenditure, viz., Rs. 75 crores. This is the reserve which they ought to put down. The Railway Finance Committee recommended Rs. 50 crores. I thought it was too small. Even Rs. 100 crores would not be too much. But I think Rs. 75 crores should be the very minimum which we should set apart for the reserve fund, and after providing for the reserve fund we ought not to set aside a very large amount under the false name of Depreciation Reserve Fund. I am not going to discuss this further because the question will come up for discussion in connection with the Convention of 1924.

I should like to say that our funds should not be mixed up with the Government of India finances. I think the funds of the Railways ought to be separated from general revenues, not only in book-keeping but actually they should be separate, like any other business. Suppose anything happens to the finances of the Government of India! Then the finances of the railways will be separate from the finances of the Government of India; at present though on paper we are separate, in practice we are not, and I propose that we ought to separate them, not only on paper but also in practice. So this financial policy also requires consideration.

These are points on which we can think very closely now, and if any committee is appointed by the Honourable the Railway Member now to consider the reconstruction of Indian railways after the war is over, I am sure that it will be exceedingly useful and we can give effect to them as soon as the war is over; because there will be a great rush then. We shall have to construct many railways on account of the great demand and we should be ready.



**Mr. Chairman** (Syed Ghulam Bhik Nairang): The Honourable Member's time is up.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall**: Sir, I accept the gentle rebuke of my Honourable friend, Sir Frederick James, who indicated that when the Chairman of the Indian Railways Conference Association put forward some proposals, I put the ball back at his feet. I did, Sir, but that does not mean that the Railway Department have not taken, and are not taking, any action. Indeed, at the time I said that some work had been done in the Railway Board. But I also added that without help we cannot possibly tackle the whole problem without detriment to the war effort. That is the position still today. In the Railway Department we are extremely pressed for staff, staff for direct war purposes, and it is not easy to find railway experts to study post-war problems in addition to that. It is true that the qualities required for the two tasks are perhaps a little different, but nevertheless it is extremely difficult to find the men to undertake the work which Sir Frederick James would ask us to do. However, I welcome his motion and I can assure him that the spirit is willing even though the flesh may be a little weak. Everything in the Railway Department nowadays has a tendency to be marked immediate or priority, and when it comes to post-war planning one must confess that there is a tendency to put it behind the immediate and priority papers.

I am sure, Sir, that the Honourable the Mover, on a cunct motion on the Budget at short notice does not expect me to give a considered opinion or to make a pronouncement of Government policy. But I will try and tell him some of the ideas which are passing through my head and that of the Railway Department.

Railway reconstruction after the war is of course part of a larger problem. Reconstruction is indeed not only a Government of India problem, but it is a problem which is exercising the minds of the whole world; and, therefore, we cannot solve it in isolation and we have to co-ordinate our railway plans with the plans of other Departments of Government. Government have set up a Reconstruction Committee—I believe they met last week—and I think that the general impetus for planning of post-war reconstruction on railways and elsewhere must largely come from that committee or from any other organisation which may be set up to deal with it. In saying this, I am not trying to evade the responsibility of the railways within their own sphere. Far from it. I am merely trying to indicate that the railway problems are very much linked up with all sorts of other problems of demobilisation, reconstruction and so forth. The railways are alive to the need for work on this subject; but as I said just now, the war must be our first care. Whatever we do, we must not so divert our energies as to let down the war effort; but subject to that I entirely agree with the Honourable the Mover that the subject under discussion, in spite of what some of the speakers on the other side have said about airy visions, is not an abstract subject but one of vital practical importance to the railways and to the country as a whole, and the Railway Department cannot afford to let it go by default.

On the subject of rationalisation, Mr. Nauman and other speakers mentioned the air. He is perfectly correct. It is, I think, quite reasonable to suppose that in the post-war period upper class passengers and postal services may take more to the air. But there exists one consolation. If that is so, there is likely to be in aerial matters a high degree of organisation, and it will probably be possible to co-ordinate air and railways more easily than it will road and rail. I would not rule out the possibility of the railways themselves becoming owners of air services. I do not know what my Honourable Colleague for Posts and Air will say to that as I have not discussed it with him. It is possible that he might consider that the air should take over the railways.

On the question of provincial road policies, I am personally in entire agreement with the Honourable the Mover, and those who supported him. It is, of course, a subject primarily for the provinces themselves. It is a tremendous responsibility which they are facing after the war. They will have to find work for hundreds of thousands of returned soldiers, as the Honourable Mover has said trained in mechanical vehicles, and the probability is that a great many of them will wish to take to the roads. There are also large numbers of motor vehicles, as far as one can see, releasable from the army, which can be put on those roads. If that is so, a large responsibility rests on the provinces both with regard to the demobilisation and placing in work of those men, and also in the development of provincial road policy. I myself fully agree that such a policy ought to be put in hand.

I was asked whether I knew what stage provincial plans had reached. I do not know in detail. Road development is not in the War Transport Department, but I am aware of the fact that certain provinces have schemes in hand and we are very anxious from the railway point of view to co-ordinate with those provinces. From the point of view of the railways, the co-ordination of road and rail is a matter of vital importance. It must be viewed, not from the selfish point of view of the railways for the purpose of seeing how much we can preserve for the railways, although the railway interest must be taken fully into account. We must look at this problem from the widest point of view, the point of view of the public benefit arising from a proper co-ordination of road and rail.

The railways in any such planning must, however, be regarded as a national asset, as indeed they are; and it is in the public interest to see that that asset is properly fostered, if only because government revenues are vitally interested. This matter is largely one for the Governments of the future, but it is duty of us, who occupy these Benches today, to prepare schemes for the future, and I can assure the House that we will faithfully attend to that duty.

As regards the various phases of rationalisation of road and rail, the House will recall that the Railway Inquiry Committee of 1937, the Wedgewood Committee, advocated railway participation in road services. I think myself that this is one of the most promising features of road-rail development. One thing is quite certain. The experience which we have gained in the way of co-ordinating rail and road transport must be utilised in the immediate post-war period, and I also feel that during the transition period when conditions in this country are bound to be very uncertain and disturbed, the probability is that there will need to be a continuance of priority control, at least for a period after the war in order that road and rail may return to normal in an orderly manner.

As regards railway ownership, which I touched on just now, there is in existence an extremely interesting experiment in road rail co-ordination on the North Western Railway. They have formed a partnership with an experienced motor operator to work a transport company which owns half the licensed vehicles on a road of some 48 miles, the other half of the vehicles are owned by the local motor owners' union which voluntarily agrees to let their vehicles be managed by a joint staff under the control of the transport company. In the case of the company, 60 per cent. of the capital is provided by the Governor General through the General Manager of the N. W. R., the earnings are pooled and distributed weekly on the number of trips performed by each permit-holders' vehicle. The same fares are charged by the company and by the permit-holders. There is no written agreement between the company and the permit-holders and each party has the right to call a meeting by giving a week's notice to ventilate any grievances. This experiment runs successfully; and this sort of thing augurs well for the future. Although it is one experiment out of many, and others have failed, it is the sort of thing which I think we should look forward to in the future. In

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other provinces attempts have been made to inaugurate similar schemes. In Madras there was a very promising scheme which failed to materialise owing to the Provincial Government's desire to encourage local bodies to participate in road transport which obviously vitiated the possibilities of the railway which was willing to co-operate with the local motor owners.

[At this stage, Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) resumed the Chair.]

I think developments of that sort are the sort of development to which railway authorities should give their minds, and I see no reason why such ideas should not be very extensively developed.

Reference was made to the Statutory Authority. I have no time to dwell on this at the moment. I was hoping when Pandit Maitra started off with his opening remarks calling for wide imagination and so forth, that he would have some constructive ideas such as indeed Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad put forward at a later stage, but I was exceedingly disappointed, I must confess. The only recommendation that I could understand to come from Pandit Maitra was a condemnation of the existing Government. I did hope that the Pandit and others would be able to put forward constructive ideas for the future, because, as I said at the Railway Conference Association, the nature of the railway administration is indeed a matter for the attention of India's political thinkers as much as the purely political problem. This is one of many administrative problems which need solution and which India must review.

As regards the revision of the Convention, I do not propose to dwell on that as time does not permit. I would only say that some of the points, such as reconsideration of the Central Advisory Council's and the Standing Finance Committee's functions, may well be reviewed when the time comes for a permanent revision of the Convention. When that time comes, whenever it does, we will place the views of the Government before the House and hope that the House will freely express its own views as to what this machinery should be. In the meantime, we will consider the functions of the Central Advisory Council and see if they can be improved.

On the subject of reconstruction and betterment, as I mentioned at the beginning, the Railway Board have not been idle. After the last war, as the House would be well aware, it was decided as a result of the Acworth Committee's report, to spend Rs. 150 crores from general revenues for the rehabilitation of the railways over a quinquennium of 1922—1927. Not all that was spent by any means; in fact, more was spent annually in 1927—30 than in the first five years, but that shows the amount of expenditure which was necessary at that time when there was no depreciation fund and no reserve to fall back upon. We have gone into the question of how many locomotives, rolling stock, rails and so forth are necessary in the immediate post-war period which is before us. In the case of broad gauge locomotives, working on a 35-year life basis, annual renewals should be 150 broad gauge locomotives, and in addition to that, there are, of course, arrears of renewals. That figure of 150 broad gauge locomotives annually enters, of course, into our calculation for the locomotive shops which are going to be constructed. The total value of those broad gauge locomotives is something like Rs. 6½ crores, and when you add to it metre gauge locomotives, coaching stock, and goods stock, when you in addition add some 162,000 tons of rails per annum, sleepers for those rails, and the buildings which will be necessary, we come to a programme of something like Rs. 19 crores per annum which might well be expected to be spent by the railways immediately after the war. I should not like the House to take those figures too seriously, not by any means as a programme. I have simply mentioned them as giving an indication of the sort of expenditure which we have been reviewing and which we have in mind may have to be spent after the war.

On the question of standardisation raised by Mr. Stokes, I need only say that for some time we have had the Standards Office in operation and that they have been concentrating on the standardisation of wagons, locomotives and so forth. I think I am correct in saying that about 75 per cent. of our stock is interchangeable between railways to-day. Standardisation will, of course, also be applied to the locomotives which will be constructed.

As regards the locomotive shops people are still saying that Government have no plan and blaming the Government for what they did not do some years ago. This plan is going forward, and yesterday in the Council of State I made quite a long statement showing exactly what the position is. I do not, Sir, propose to repeat that to-day, but I have said enough on the question of rolling stock, rails, and so forth, and on the question of locomotive shops, to show that Government are not idle and are not without plans for post war development and are indeed well ahead in this particular sphere.

On the question of housing I am fully in accord with what my Honourable friend, Mr. Stokes, said. We have plans worked out by the different railways for better housing for railway staff. At the moment those plans are in abeyance for the reason, not that we have any wish to hold them in abeyance, but that we find it difficult to get steel, cement and other materials to start construction. Those materials are being used in priority for war work. But we are extremely conscious of the need for a policy of staff housing and medical and other arrangements, and I can assure Honourable Members that this very important aspect will not be lost sight of.

My Honourable friend, Mr. Stokes, mentioned the electrification of suburban railways in Calcutta. This subject has been under consideration for a number of years and the last time that I can trace a reference to it was in 1939. The matter was then raised by the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce on the 31st July, 1939. It was pointed out by the railway representative that the estimate for the electrification of suburban railways in Calcutta was about Rs. 13½ crores and the estimated return was just over half a per cent. The officer reporting said that he did not feel justified in recommending to the Government that the scheme should be undertaken, and the Committee agreed that their proposal was not feasible. The electrification scheme was based on an assumed series of annual increases of traffic. I dare say the time will come again very shortly when we should re-examine that whole question. In the meantime, on the basis of the last examination, I think the House will probably agree that the scheme hardly seems justified financially.

I think I have covered the main points of the Honourable the Mover's four point programme. I hope I have said enough to show that the Railway and War Transport Departments are willing to undertake the responsibility of turning themselves into a Peace Communications Department and indeed that we are, in the stress of war, doing what we can to foresee the conditions and plan for the post-war period. I cannot satisfy him that we have in hand a staff engaged purely on this work but, as I say, if we can find that staff and get financial authority, which I do not doubt will be forthcoming, then I should have no hesitation in going ahead with them. Indeed, we will seek to find that staff and to respond in every way that we can to the Honourable the Mover's demand for urgent action because, as I said at the beginning, I do regard it as a matter of supreme importance, provided always that it does not interfere with the war effort.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** May I ask one question of the Honourable Member? The Honourable Member early in his speech said that a committee of reconstruction had already been set up and that it had been working and, if so, is that committee charged with the duty of reconstructing railways after the war or the whole economic structure of the country after the war? Who brought this committee into being—the Governor General or the Governor General in Council and, if so, why was this Assembly not taken into confidence in this matter. Nothing was heard about it.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** It is under the Commerce Department and as regards the rest of the questions, I should require notice, as I was not present in the country when the decision was made.

**Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra:** When was this committee set up?

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I think 18 months ago or a year at least.

**Sir F. E. James:** Sir, I beg leave of the House to withdraw the motion. The motion was, by leave of the Assembly, withdrawn.

*Grievances of Railwaymen re Conditions of Service.*

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Sir, I beg to move:

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

My object in giving notice of this motion was to draw the attention of the Government of India and this House to the grievances of the workers on the Indian Railways. I do not wish on this occasion to refer to the various grievances from which the railwaymen suffer except one grievance, and that is regarding the insufficiency of the wages or the dearness allowance paid to them. I feel that the Government of India had shown utter indifference to the difficulties which the railwaymen had to suffer since the beginning of the war. The prices had begun to rise soon after the war and the cost of living was also increasing and the Government of India took no steps to increase wages or pay dearness allowance till March, 1941. In March, 1941, they started paying some dearness allowance when the cost of living had already gone up very considerably. The proposals which they made for the payment of dearness allowance, were inadequate; and on behalf of the railwaymen in India, protests were made that the proposals of the Government of India, were very inadequate. Then the prices began to go up with great strides. Then, the Government of India again took some inadequate steps to increase the dearness allowance. Again, in August last, the Government of India revised their proposals and increased the dearness allowance. In the scheme of the Government of India, there are certain defects. In the first place, they paid dearness allowance only to those people who got wages or salaries up to a certain limit. I am not saying that they should give allowance to the whole staff engaged on the railways, but the limit which was fixed by the Government of India, was inadequate. In their original proposals, they confined the advantage of the dearness allowance to people getting Rs. 60 in Calcutta and Bombay, in the case of employees in the smaller cities to those getting Rs. 50 and in other areas Rs. 30. Then, Sir, protests were made and in the case of Bombay and Calcutta, they raised the limit to 70, in other cities from 50 to 60 and in other areas from 30 to 35. Again, in their last proposals, they increased this limit also. In the larger cities, they increased the limit from 70 to 120. In smaller cities, they raised the limit from 60 to 90 and in other areas from 35 to 60. I feel, that this limit fixed by the Government of India for the eligibility of dearness allowance, should be raised to at least 200 or 250. The present limit is too small.

Then, Sir, I do not like that the system which has been introduced by the Government of India of making three different zones is really necessary at the present time. Therefore, this system should be done away with and they should give dearness allowance at equal rate to all the employees. This is the second point which I would suggest to the Government that they should bear in mind.

Then, Sir, the scheme lacks in having a really proper relation between the increase in the cost of living and the dearness allowance paid. You know, Sir, that the cost of living for the working classes in Bombay, as determined by the Bombay Labour Office, has risen from about 100 or 105 to 203 or a little more. That is, the cost of living has gone up by 100 per cent. The dearness allowances paid by the Government of India are really too small if you compare the rise in the cost of living and the allowances paid. I would suggest to the Government of India that they must fix some financial relationship between the rise in the cost of living and the allowances paid. Then, the other difficulty of their scheme is, that there is no really automatic machinery by which the

allowances will increase as the cost of living increases. Every time the Railwaymen's Federation and the Railwaymen's Unions have to make a row and hold meetings and make agitation and then the Government of India becomes awake and do something. I think that is a very wrong method of dealing with the question of the conditions work of the working classes. I would, therefore, suggest to the Government of India, to have some automatic machinery. As a matter of fact, the Committee over which the Honourable Sir B. N. Rau presided, had suggested that there should be an automatic allowance paid for certain degrees of increase in the rise. The Rau Committee suggested that for every five points of rise in prices, they should pay Rs. 1-8-0 as dearness allowance. The Government of India have not given effect to this recommendation of the Rau Committee. At present there is a very great discontent among the railwaymen because the prices have gone up and the cost of living index number has gone up very considerably and the Government of India have taken no steps yet to increase the dearness allowance paid. The Railwaymen's Federation had asked for a flat rate of Rs. 30 as dearness allowance to those who receive a salary of Rs. 200. I do not exactly remember the figure.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Rs. 250.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** Then, they also want some automatic machinery for dealing with the further rise. I would like the Government of India to deal with this subject very promptly. The Honourable Member in dealing with this subject some time ago in this House, had pointed out certain difficulties. In his speech, he was good enough to pay a compliment to the staff on Indian railways, regarding their loyalty and regarding the good work which they had done and regarding their share in the prosperity of the Indian railways. I am very grateful to the Honourable Member for the recognition of the services of the staff of the Indian railways. The Indian railwaymen value the high praise which he has given to them, but they will value more a substantial addition to the dearness allowance which is being paid to them. The Honourable Member pointed out certain difficulties. He said he has to consult the Provincial Governments and the other departments of the Government of India, because any proposals which he makes or any allowances which he pays, may have some repercussion on the other departments and also may have some repercussion on the Provincial Governments. I do not wish to deal with that subject. I have no doubt that if dearness allowance is paid to workers in one industry, the other people will certainly ask for it, but the Honourable Member does not realise that if the Government of India deals with all workers together without delay, we have no objection. But they must be prompt. While considering the effect of the dearness allowance paid to railwaymen upon the postmen and upon the employees of the other Governments, the Government of India will have also to consider the effect of the dearness allowance paid to workers in other industries. The dearness allowance paid by the Government of India to the railway workers as compared with the dearness allowance paid to the textile workers in Bombay is hardly half of what the textile workers get. I am not against a joint and co-ordinated proposal being made, but it is not practicable. It is useless talking about that being done because if you begin to have co-ordination in all the industries, in all the provinces and in all the departments, you will take unnecessary time. You can go on solving the difficulties of the people who want their difficulties to be solved immediately and bring about co-ordination in the meanwhile, when the next step is due. But when the step has become due, the Government of India begin to consider the question. I know there is a grave discontent among the railwaymen on this question and I have received several telegrams. I won't read them except one which is from the railwaymen of Bombay. This is what it says:

"Bombay railwaymen's Rally under Railway Union's Joint Committee resolved indignation Boards attitude towards dearness allowance. Manifesto in Budget railwaymen's condition breaking point. Serious situation may spread throughout railways. Demand thirty rupees dearness allowance with automatic increase plus adequate grain facilities."

It appears that the Honourable Member is considering some scheme by which, instead of paying cash dearness allowance, he proposes to fix the prices

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of articles which are to be supplied to railwaymen. There are some economists and there are some people in the Finance Department of the Government of India who consider that if you pay a little larger wages to the working classes, there will be inflation and the financial system will be upset. I am not a Professor of Economics, but I know this that the effect on the inflation of currency by the payment of the dearness allowances to a small number of people will be very small indeed. There are about 7 lakhs of railwaymen and all the organised workers taken together to whom increased allowances are paid or bonuses are paid will not be more than 20 lakhs or 25 lakhs out of a population of 40 crores.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Honourable Member's time is up.

**Mr. N. M. Joshi:** I won't deal with that subject because it may come up again for discussion, but I can say this that the inflation which is taking place in this country is due to the wrong currency policy of the Government of India and not to the payment of dearness allowances. I hope the Government of India will accept my motion and increase the dearness allowances paid to the railwaymen and also introduce a proper automatic system for further payment of dearness allowances when the cost of living increases.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Cut motion moved:

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

**Mr. Lalchand Navai:** Sir, I will continue from where my friend, Mr. Joshi, has left. Sir, this question of dearness allowance is disturbing the mind of employees so much that we have not only been receiving telegrams and representations during the day time but the telegraph people come even at night, when we are fast asleep, to deliver such telegrams. I think similar things must have been happening with the Honourable Member-in-charge of Railways too. The Honourable Member for Railways has been telling us that the question was receiving Governments' serious consideration. How long is he going to consider the claim of deserving people? They are getting impatient, and there is extreme discontent among the railway employees. The consequences will be very bad. Therefore, earlier the Honourable the Railway Member decides this question and complies with their demands the better it would be for the railways themselves. Now, Sir, the cost of living has increased by over 100 per cent. I need not go into the figures of the cost of living index which have been given by Provincial Government as regards the average increase which has been registered in all provinces. Present wages of railway workers are not sufficient to meet the extra cost of living. The Rau Court Report puts it lucidly and it should be considered by the Honourable the Railway Member. There is not much time at my disposal to read out the whole thing. I would only say that there should be no discontent among the railway employees. This is what Rau Court said:—

"Railway people are engaged on vital service meant for transportation and some of them are employed on work which is even more directly connected with the war. In the case of such men, we venture to think, that it would be a mistake to reduce their standard to an extent which might tell heavily upon their health and efficiency, although they may have been content with this low standard twenty, ten or five years ago."

Now, taking into consideration the present circumstances, I think the present rate at which the allowance is being given is inadequate. It has been considered inadequate and the railway men have put forward their reasons for it. The All-India Railwaymen's Federation has demanded a flat rate of Rs. 30 on pay up to Rs. 250 in rural and urban areas as well as cities. The relief which the Honourable Member contemplates to give them is not the one which they like. They said it is inadequate. The Railway Board has provided rupees three crores for the provision shops for the railway personnel of about 8 lakhs, who will be entitled to purchase from those shops. It also includes the cost of personnel of the Supply Department. Thus the Relief

would work out Rs. 3 per mensem per employee. The scheme relates to the supply of one or two commodities only. The Railways have not been regular so far in their supply. At Karachi, only one supply of wheat was arranged and that also was arranged when there was a light strike. Actually, there has not been regular supply of wheat at Karachi to railway employees. There has been no supply in Delhi Division specially at Meerut city. There has been only partial supply in Delhi area. Sir, there are thousands of railway employees scattered all over the country. Large establishment will be required for distribution of supplies and there will be so much loss of time and energy. Railways propose for the present to give only wheat, rice and sugar. No discretion is left with the purchasers as to the quality and quantity of each commodity. Sir, at some places it has been so found that the Railway supplies contained other materials such as sand and dust. This kind of supply will not help them at all. It will create so many difficulties. Stations are very far away. Even the Paymasters who go to disburse salaries every month do not also reach in time to give them their salaries for two or three weeks. In some cases salaries are not paid even for two or three months.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Where?

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** Paymasters on the North Western Railway are not regular at all in paying salaries in time. They come after weeks.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** Can the Honourable Member give some instances?

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** I cannot give instances, but I know they are complaining that at some stations at least some people are not given their salaries on the first or second day or even the fifth day.

**The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall:** I hope the Honourable Member will substantiate the facts so that we may be able to look into the question.

**Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** I will. Sir, I submit there will be difficulty in supplying these people with their food which they require every month. I hope distribution of food will not follow the payment of salaries. I do not know how many shops the Honourable the Railway Member is going to open at small railway stations, or he is going to open such shops only at Karachi and other big cities. If Railways are not going to open shops at small stations, it will be very difficult for men at such places to go to take their food regularly from big cities where it is contemplated to open shops. Sir, this system of relief is very much disliked by the railwaymen. I think, this scheme is not workable and if it is so, then in that case it should be left to these men whether or not to stick to their service. Ordinances should not be invoked against those people who will have to leave their service for want of food. Essential Services (Maintenance) Ordinance of 1941 and the Technical Services Ordinance, 1940, have been promulgated. Let the employees alone, if you are not complying with their reasonable wishes. It will be wise on the part of railways to see that all these schemes are revised from time to time with the help of some people who have practical knowledge of the distribution of foodstuffs on the railways. These schemes should be revised in such a manner as to meet with the wishes of the railwaymen who are for the time being very much discontented. If Government is not prepared to employ so many men for carrying out the work relating to the distribution of foodstuffs on each and every railway station, I think, it will be wise on their part to increase the rate of dearness allowance. I, therefore, submit that Government should give Rs. 30 per month or as much as would be reasonable and also raise the limit of pay from Rs. 120 to Rs. 250 a month for admissibility of such allowance.

**Mr. President** (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member can continue his speech tomorrow.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday 11, 24th February, 1948.



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