

Friday, 17th March, 1944

COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

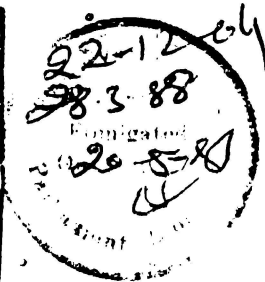
VOLUME I, 1944

(15th February to 6th April, 1944)

SIXTEENTH SESSION

OF THE

FOURTH COUNCIL OF STATE, 1944



PUBLISHED BY THE MANAGER OF PUBLICATIONS, DELHI
PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS, NEW DELHI,
1944

	PAGES		PAGE
Wednesday, 15th March, 1944—		Death of Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan Tiwana	516—517
Questions and Answers	311—319	Standing Committee for the Department of Supply	534
Standing Committee for the Civil Defence Branch of the Defence Department	319—320	Thursday, 30th March, 1944—	
Resolution <i>re</i> Manufacture of broad gauge locomotives—Adopted	320—331	Members Sworn	553
Resolution <i>re</i> Industrial Commission to review existing industrial situation, etc.—Postponed to next session	332—342	Indian Finance Bill— <i>To be continued</i>	553—567, 567—591
Resolution <i>re</i> Import of chemical fertilizers—Withdrawn	342—349	Central Advisory Council for Railways	567
Resolution <i>re</i> Appointment of an Indian as Director General of Archaeology—Negatived	349—358	Friday, 31st March, 1944—	
Thursday, 16th March, 1944—		Indian Finance Bill— <i>concl'd.</i>	593—612
Questions and Answers	359—370	Tuesday, 4th April, 1944—	
Defence Consultative Committee	371	Members Sworn	613
Central Advisory Council for Railways	371	Questions and Answers	613—627
Standing Committee for the Labour Department	371	Information <i>re</i> Questions laid on the table	625—626
Motion <i>re</i> Food situation— <i>To be continued</i>	371—407	Statements, etc., laid on the table	626—627
Friday, 17th March, 1944—		Message from the Legislative Assembly	627
Death of Mr. Ramdas Pantulu	409—410	Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table	627
Motion <i>re</i> Food situation— <i>concluded</i>	411—445	Central Committee of the Tuberculosis Association of India	628
Wednesday, 22nd March, 1944—		Standing Committee for the Department of Commerce	628
Members Sworn	447	Defence Consultative Committee	628
Questions and Answers	447—451	Standing Committee for the Food Department	628
Indian Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	451	Hindu Code, Part II (Marriage) Bill—Referred to Joint Committee	628—636
Resolution <i>re</i> Permanent exchange value of the rupee—Negatived	451—469	Motion <i>re</i> Nomination of Members of the Council of State to the Joint Committee	636
Resolution <i>re</i> Rights of citizenship for Indians in the U. S. A.—Adopted	469—480	Governing Body of the Indian Research Fund Association	636
Resolution <i>re</i> Employment of women in coal mines—Negatived	480—487	Statement of Business	636—637
Statement by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief	487—488	Wednesday, 5th April, 1944—	
Monday, 27th March, 1944—		Central Committee of the Tuberculosis Association of India and Standing Committee for the Commerce Department	639
Members Sworn	489	Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly laid on the table	639
Questions and Answers	489—496	Indian Income-tax (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	639—642
Statements, etc., laid on the table	496—497	Motion <i>re</i> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Agreement— <i>To be continued</i>	642—650
Information <i>re</i> Questions laid on the table	497—500	Statement of Business	650
Standing Committee for the Department of Supply	500	Thursday, 6th April, 1944—	
Standing Committee for the Department of Commerce	500	Members Sworn	651
Central Committee of the Tuberculosis Association of India	500	Questions and Answers	651—654
Governing Body of the Indian Research Fund Association	501	Resolution <i>re</i> Withdrawal of Regulations restricting entry of Indian immigrants into Kenya—Adopted	654—668
Standing Committee for the Department of Food	501	Resolution <i>re</i> Increase of Muslims in the Central Services—Negatived	668—684
Indian Coconut Committee Bill—Considered and passed	501—509	Dolhi Muslim Wakfs (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	684
Statement of Business	509—510	Protective Duties Continuation Bill—Considered and passed	684—685
Wednesday, 29th March, 1944—		Factories (Amendment) Bill—Considered and passed	685—686
Members Sworn	511	Defence Consultative Committee	686
Questions and Answers	511—516	Standing Committee for the Food Department	686
Messages from His Excellency the Governor General	516	Motion <i>re</i> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Agreement—Adopted	686—6
Indian Finance Bill, 1944— <i>To be continued</i>	516, 517—534, 534—552		

COUNCIL OF STATE

Friday, 17th March, 1944.

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

DEATH OF MR. RAMADAS PANTULU.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, before we proceed with the discussion of the motion on the food question, it is with very considerable sorrow that I have to announce the sudden death of one of our colleagues, the Honourable Mr. Ramadas Pantulu. He was for many years a member of this Council and he represented the Congress Party and during the last three or four years he was not able to attend this Council partly owing to ill-health and partly owing to the Congress mandate. But I may inform you, as all members know, he was highly respected, liked and admired by the members of this House. Not only that, but he was one of the ablest members that I have come across during 40 years of my public life. He has rendered very valuable services to this House. Whenever he spoke, he spoke with moderation, fully aware of the accuracy of his facts and his arguments were cogent and unassailable. He also rendered very valuable service in Select Committees. I had the honour of sitting with him in many Select Committees as a co-member and I found his knowledge of law was extensive and the help which he rendered to Select Committees on many important and difficult Bills was of considerable value. We are all grieved to hear of his death. I shall with your permission send a message of our condolence to his bereaved widow and family.

THE HONOURABLE SIR MAHOMED USMAN (Leader of the House): Sir, I beg to associate myself with what you have said. I knew the gentleman very well and I think it is a great loss to the country that he is dead. He was a very fine gentleman. Though he belonged to the Congress Party, he was very very moderate in his views, as you have just now said. I would now request you to convey to the bereaved family our expression of sympathy.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Lands Member): Sir, I wish to pay my personal tribute to the memory of one who rendered very solid service to the cause of co-operation. He was one of the leading co-operators in India and his work in Madras will live. I had the highest respect for him and I wish to be associated with all that you have said about him.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, I wish also to pay my tribute to the late Mr. Ramadas Pantulu. I had known him for more than 30 years. After a very successful career as a vakil in the mofussil he came to Madras and made his mark there. I am not going to speak about his legal success. But as a member of this Council he rendered very good service. I will only mention one thing. When the Indian Companies Act was being considered, he gave very helpful advice and he was complimented by the Law Member, the Honourable Sir N. N. Sircar, on the way in which he helped the Government in introducing a number of amendments and so on which were very much appreciated. It is a very great loss to us. I hope you will convey our deep condolences to the members of his family.

THE HONOURABLE SIR RAMUNNI MENON (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, I should like to associate myself with all that you and the other speakers have said. Mr. Ramadas Pantulu was highly esteemed by all his friends in Madras and was held in the greatest veneration and respect and we all mourn his loss.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL (Bombay: Non-Muhammadian): Sir, I should like to pay my tribute to the memory of the late Mr. Ramadas

[Mr. G. S. Motilal.]

Pantulu. I had the honour of working with him in this House under his leadership for some years and I knew how highly he was respected in this House. His work was solid. He gave his very best attention to the work of this House. It is only on account of his illness during the last two years that he has been unable to come. He has not been able to come for some years because of political reasons but partly on account of his health. Last year I was in communication with him and this year also before coming over here I wrote a letter to him requesting him to come and his answer was that he was unable to move from his bed. He was unwell and therefore he could not come. He, however, wished that I and other members of the Party would attend the Council of State session and we have since been attending it. It is a sad loss. The country is poorer by his death and also this Council is poorer by his death. I join in paying my tribute to him.

*THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, we have all received the news of Mr. Ramadas Pantulu's death with profound regret. Mr. Ramadas Pantulu was known not only in this House but throughout the country as a real student of public affairs. His acquaintance with all the larger public questions in this country was extensive and profound and in the field of co-operation he rendered lasting service not merely to his Province but to the whole of India. We, his colleagues in this House, can bear ample testimony to his thoroughness in dealing with the various measures that came before us. His death is a great loss both to the country and this Council.

THE HONOURABLE MR. C. E. JONES (Finance Secretary): With your permission, Sir, I wish to add my personal tribute to the Honourable Mr. Ramadas Pantulu. I had known him for a number of years in Madras, where for five years I was Finance Secretary, and the peculiar value of Mr. Ramadas Pantulu's efforts in the cause of co-operation in general and of land mortgage banking in particular in that Province is a matter within my personal knowledge. I had known him throughout as a man of broad views, of intense desire to serve the agricultural interests which benefited by the co-operative movement and the land mortgage movement in that Province, while his help was of special value in solving the problem of agricultural indebtedness. It is possibly due largely to his efforts that the land mortgage movement has made more progress in the Madras Province than anywhere else in India. I well know his record of public service, and I should like to add my personal tribute to those which have been offered by other Honourable Members.

*THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO (Nominated Non-Official): It is with feelings of great regret that I have heard of the death of Mr. Ramadas Pantulu. I knew him almost for 40 years. We worked together in the field of agricultural co-operation. He was interested in the welfare of the ryot. At the time when I was unofficially collecting statistics regarding the wages of the ryot he came to me with a band of volunteers to co-operate and assist in my work. The published book *The Village Economics* was partly due to his assistance in working out the statistical portion of it. Though we differed in matters of policy, in matters of procedure, yet I admired his way of disinterested work in which he excelled. Then came indifferences between him and ourselves in political matters and there though we differed radically our social relations were never affected. He was a man who could smile over any differences that might occur for the time being, who could never keep rancour in his mind. To forget and forgive was his policy. He was a gentleman whom we all respected very much and his loss is deeply mourned by his friends and relatives.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, I will convey your message of sympathy and condolence to Mr. Pantulu's family.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: We will now proceed with the discussion of the food situation. I may inform the House that the same time limit which I fixed yesterday applies today also.

*Not corrected by the Honourable Member.

MOTION *Re* FOOD SITUATION—*contd.*

*THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, I listened with great interest and attention to the speech of my Honourable friend Mr. Sen yesterday. He tried to give us a full and complete account of the food situation in the country but I hope that he will not accuse me of being unjust to him when I say that I felt, when he concluded his remarks, that the picture which he had presented was a one-sided one. He disclaimed any intention, by recounting the steps taken by the Central Government and by the Provincial authorities, to handle more efficiently the problems of procurement, distribution and price control. He disclaimed any intention to be complacent or optimistic, yet his speech as a whole created on my mind the impression that Government were rather in an optimistic mood and that they thought that their record was a satisfactory one. I do not know what his standard of comparison was. Perhaps he compared the present activities of the Government with its past unsatisfactory record and then heaved a sigh of relief that the chaos that existed in the country last year had at last become less grave than it was. It is unquestionably true that the situation which exists in this country is abnormal owing to the war but India is not the only country the life of which has been seriously affected by the war. England is one of such countries too, and England has had to alter the normal course of its life to a much greater extent than India. Let us therefore see, if we want to have a proper standard of comparison, what is being done in England to feed the population and keep the home morale high. Sir, England does not, like India, produce almost all that it requires. In peace time, Britain imported two out of every three pounds of food she required. The deficiency was made good by imports from her colonies and dominions and, generally speaking, from Scandinavia and the Low Countries. During the war steps were taken to increase production. I gather from an article entitled "Britain Eats to Fight", which was published in *The Fortune* of April, 1943, that in the first three years of war grass land, parks land gone to seed, etc., had increased Britain's crop land by 50 per cent. But even now it would be true to say that Great Britain produced only half the food which she required. The rest of the food is still being imported, and the necessary transport is being found for it by the British Government. They have not contented themselves with saying that owing to the war the people of England must be prepared to suffer from privations till victory has been achieved. On the contrary, the Government has taken every possible step to feed the population and keep it contented so that that might be one of the surest means of achieving victory.

Now, I would like the House to note how the people of England are being fed at the present time. It is stated in the article to which I have referred that skilled workers who before the war earned about £2 or more weekly were wedded by income and inclination to a diet of fish and chips, meat, bread, boiled potatoes and cabbage. They have had to alter this diet, but they are able to get, in place of the things they were accustomed to, meat, milk, cheese and bacon. In addition, they and their fellow workers have been induced by shortages or Lord Woolton's persuasive radio and press campaign on nutrition to substitute milk, cheese and a variety of vegetables for rationed meat and scarce costly fish. Thus the average Briton currently eats a better balanced diet than he ever did before. In spite of the war and all the difficulties that it has brought in its train, particularly in the matter of transport, the average Briton eats a more balanced diet today than he did four or five years ago.

But, Sir, that is not all that Great Britain has to her credit. There are other steps taken by the authorities in order to keep up the health of the

*Not corrected by the Honourable Member.

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.]

population. Thousands of canteens, I understand, have been established in factories and schools so that industrial workers and children may eat off the ration. That is in addition to the prescribed quantity that they can get. In rural areas "cash and carry" kitchens offer cooked meals that can be taken home. Peregrinating pie wagons sell meat and vegetable pie to field workers, and travelling canteens serving hot food deploy from central kitchens to small villages and to workers in the fields. Altogether there are now more than 13,000 community feeding centres serving more than 46 million meals weekly.

Now, Sir, why is all this being done by the Government of Great Britain? It is being done because the Government is a national Government responsible to the people and interested in their welfare, and because it realises that the fate of the country not merely during the war but subsequently depends to no small extent on the health and vigour of the population. The people of England, we are told, are not fatter, but fitter now. Britain, neither eats to live nor lives to eat, says the author of the article that I have referred to. Britain eats to fight and to survive as a powerful nation.

Let us compare the record of the Government of India with the record of the Government of Great Britain, which is admittedly confronted with much more serious difficulties than the Government of India is. I have already informed the House of the steps taken by the Government of Great Britain to grow more food. We have been hearing for two years of the "Grow More Food" campaign carried on by the Government of India. Yet, when I asked yesterday how much new land had been brought under cultivation and how much of the land under cotton and jute had been diverted to the production of food, all that my Honourable friend the Member for Education, Health and Lands, who deals with Agriculture, could tell me was that no definite information on the subject was available. No figures were available to show how much new land had been brought under cultivation. And as regards the diversion of land from money crops to food crops, he only hoped that a large part of the land which was formerly being used for the production of cotton and jute was now being used for the production of foodgrains. This is all that my Honourable friend could tell me. Could anything provide a more eloquent commentary on the efficiency and the energy with which the Government of India have tackled the most serious problem with which we are faced today, than the reply given by Sir Jogendra Singh to my question yesterday?

Take, again, Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Let me acknowledge the steps taken by the Government of Madras to increase the monthly quota of Malabar from 10,000 to 15,000 tons. It reflects credit both on the Food Adviser and the Board of Revenue. But taking what is popularly called Kanara as a whole while my Honourable friend Mr. Sen could tell us yesterday that steps had been taken by organising transport to increase the quantity of foodstuffs that were being despatched to Cochin and Travancore, his account seemed to me to indicate that the Government of India were unable to relieve the difficulties of the people of Cochin and Travancore to a greater extent because of the transport difficulties—

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN (Nominated Official): May I correct that statement? What I said was not transport difficulties but shortage of rice.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Shortage of rice we all know there is. But the Honourable Member took pains yesterday to point out that the Government of India had tried to make up the shortage in respect of rice by sending substitute grains to the affected areas,—things like wheat and pulses. But let me say, since my Honourable friend denies it, that the problem in respect of South India is that of transport, that when I went to Cochin and Travancore, I was told not merely by people in general but by very responsible persons the authenticity of whose statements the Central Government will not deny, that these two States were unable to receive more foodgrains and more sugar of which there was a great shortage owing to the

transport difficulties. Sir, the public in general is unacquainted with the condition of the people in South India and our Government of India is not responsible to the people. Consequently, they can still trot out the excuse of the war and transport difficulties in order to explain their inability to feed the people. Sir, this year we shall be faced with a serious situation again unless the Government of India take adequate steps to learn from their past mistakes and frankly admit that they stand in need, not merely of public co-operation for which my Honourable friend Mr. Sen appealed yesterday, but also of public criticism.

Sir, before I proceed to deal with the larger questions that must be discussed in connection with the debate in which the House is engaged, I shall refer to the position of the South Kanara district. My Honourable friend Mr. Sen omitted to refer to South Kanara probably because it is popularly regarded as a surplus district. But I understand that the Food Council of South Kanara has been able to convince the authorities that they require more foodgrains. It has received now 2,000 tons from outside but I understand that in its opinion which is backed by that of the Collector of South Kanara, it requires about 18,000 tons more. I hope that my Honourable friend Mr. Sen will look to that. I have no doubt that the Madras Government itself is looking into the problem but perhaps the Madras Government itself will require some help from the Central Government if it is to relieve the difficulties of South Kanara.

I shall now deal briefly with the position in Cochin and Travancore. Sir, my Honourable friend Mr. Sen said yesterday that according to the recommendations of the Central Government the people of Cochin ought to get a ration of one lb. a day but he had to admit that the ration was in practice much less. It is, I believe, not 10 oz. as he said yesterday, but 12 oz. per adult. Shortage of rice was not the only problem which the people had to face. Shortage of sugar was another serious problem. I understand that the Central Government have sent about 500 tons of sugar more and about 2,000 tons of *gur* but the Cochin Government had asked for a much larger quantity and there are no facts connected with the production of sugar or *gur* in the country which can explain the inability of the Central Government to provide Cochin with a much larger quantity of these essential foodstuffs.

I will pass on to Travancore. The White Paper on Food which was distributed among members of the Assembly during the last Assembly contained a statement to the effect that both Cochin and Travancore had rationed not merely urban but also rural areas. Now, my Honourable friend says that in Travancore, extension to the whole State has been undertaken. This shows how well informed the Central Government was in November last. The reason for the delay that has occurred in rationing in the State has been explained on the ground that the Travancore State considered it necessary to build up a food reserve before introducing rationing and that it had therefore scraped and stinted as far as it could without causing actual starvation. I do not know, Sir, on what basis this statement has been made. If the Honourable Member had visited Alleppey as I have done, he would have seen the famine-stricken people being fed there in large numbers, whose condition was in no way different from those of destitutes being fed in other areas.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL (Bombay: Non-Muhammadian): He was afraid of himself being fed like destitutes.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: If he had gone to Travancore and seen things for himself in the coastal areas, he would not have denied that there was starvation. Had he any personal acquaintance with the state of things prevailing in Cochin, he would have known that in the rural areas, in some places—I again am referring to the coastal areas—the people were unable to get more than 4 oz or 6 oz. a day. There is a shortage of sugar there also I understand.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO (Nominated Non-Official): A million and half of the population have gone on military labour on account of not being able to get food there.

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.]

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Recruitment has gone on at a brisk rate both in Cochin and in Travancore and I am indebted to my Honourable friend Sir A. P. Patro for having drawn our attention to this important matter. The position of Cochin and Travancore is not therefore as good as my Honourable friend Mr. Sen tried to make out. There is much in connection with the despatch of food to these areas which yet required to be explained by the Central Government.

Now, Sir, a word about Orissa before I pass on to Bengal. I referred to the case of Orissa last year. My Honourable friend Mr. Sen admitted that Orissa in a difficult position partly because it has lost an income of about 25 lakhs from the remittances which it received from the Oriyas in Burma and partly because 40,000 Oriyas had returned from Burma to Orissa. But in spite of this admission, he refused to admit that any injustice was being done to Orissa. My Honourable friend the Food Member, however, promised to look into the matter and see what steps could be taken to remove any legitimate complaint that might exist in connection with the export of rice from that Province. My Honourable friend Mr. Sen has given us no information on that point. I hope that he will still be able to tell us that something has been done by Government to treat Orissa with greater consideration than in the past. The export of rice from Orissa has been rendered possible only because of the poverty of the people and it is no credit to the Central Government practically to compel the Government of Orissa at the present time to allow the export of food as it did before.

Now, I shall pass on to Bengal which is the principal Province whose condition we must consider today. It is common ground that there is no shortage of rice in the Province as a whole. According to the official estimates, including the statement made by my Honourable friend Mr. Sen last year, the total production of rice in the current year has amounted to 10·3 million tons.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: *Aman* rice?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: *Aman* and *aus* rice both. The harvest of the *aman* rice is expected to amount to about 8½ million tons and that of *aus* rice to about 1·8 million tons. The total production for the whole year is therefore about 10·3 million tons.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: That was the estimate made in November. Since then we have had the final forecast for rice which raises the figure to 11·8 million tons.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: This is even more satisfactory. I am glad to know that the total production of rice now is put down at nearly 12 million tons. We have to add to this the quantity that is being sent by the Central Government in order to feed Greater Calcutta. That would amount according to the broadcast of Sir Thomas Rutherford in October last to about 640,000 tons. Then, notwithstanding the preposterous statement made by the Bengal Government that about 2 million people died last year from starvation and various diseases, this too relieves the difficulties of the Bengal Government to a certain extent. It may well say that Bengal has in effect at its disposal more than 12 million tons of rice. One would have expected in view of this that there should be no shortage of rice in the deficit districts and that the prices would be such as to be within reach of the people. But I am sorry to say that the information at my disposal does not enable me to believe that the position is satisfactory in either of these respects. In the deficit districts, there is still shortage of rice. Take, Sir, such districts as Dacca, Noakhali, Chittagong and Chandpur. When I was there the price of rice ranged between Rs. 17 and Rs. 26. Mr. Rezaï Karim told me yesterday that the price at Dacca was still Rs. 17-8-0 per maund.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. Z. M. REZAI KARIM (East Bengal: Muhamadan): In uncontrolled shops.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Naturally in uncontrolled shops. Controlled shops are no use. Mr. Neogy's mother has written to

him that the unofficial rationing committee has given up the work of rationing rice in Dacca because its quality was so bad that no one was prepared to get it.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. Z. M. REZAI KARIM: That is the complaint of the Government of Bengal also. Very bad rice.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: The Government of Bengal themselves have the means of improving the situation in their own hands. It is their duty to inspect the foodgrains when they are purchased. They cannot lay the blame on the Central Government for that. If the rice that they get is bad it is either due to the want of adequate inspection or to mal-administration for both of which the Bengal Government is responsible.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Sen gave some explanation on that in his speech.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Yes, Mr. Sen's statement on that point was perfectly right according to the information that I received when I was in Bengal a little while ago. The prices may have come down since then. They fluctuate from time to time. But generally speaking they are still very high. I asked one of the Muslim representatives of Chittagong in the Assembly the other day what the price of rice in the rural areas in Chittagong was and he said Rs. 24 a maund. I should like to stress the fact that the price of rice in the deficit districts is generally speaking higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas. If, for instance, rice is selling in Dacca at Rs. 18 a maund, it will sell in the villages of Dacca district at about Rs. 20 a maund. Apart from this, Sir, there is a shortage not merely of rice in Bengal. There is a shortage of all kinds of foodstuffs, of pulses, of sugar, of salt, of oil, and so on. The price of mustard oil towards the end of January last in the districts to which I have referred was about Rs. 1-8-0 a seer. It is clear, therefore, Sir, that notwithstanding the assurances given by the Central Government and notwithstanding there being no actual shortage of rice in the Province as a whole the sufferings of the people in the deficit districts continue. Now, what is this trouble due to? It is due, Sir, to want of transport. My Honourable friend Mr. Sen recounted the steps which were being taken by the Central Government, the War Department and the Local Government, to remedy the situation. He told us that about 10,000 boats, which had been returned by the military authorities, were being reconditioned by the Government of Bengal. I should like to know when this process of reconditioning began? My Honourable friend Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava stated in the Food Debate in the Assembly last year that only 25,000 boats had been taken away by the military authorities and that they had all been released. My Honourable friend now says that about 10,000 boats more are being released. Evidently, the Central Government are still not adequately informed in regard to the vital question of transport.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: May I draw my Honourable friend's attention to the fact that, as I pointed out yesterday, it is not the military authorities who removed these boats. It is the civil authorities who removed the boats under the orders of the military, and these boats were taken to certain points and left in charge of civil authorities.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Well, they could not be released without the permission of the military authorities as they were taken away in pursuance of the Denial policy.

Sir, it is clear that the Government of India should have known in November last what the exact figure of boats removed from the coastal areas in pursuance of the Denial policy was but they do not even now know that and now we are being told that the 10,000 boats that have been received back are now being reconditioned. When did this process of reconditioning begin I should like to ask again? My Honourable friend said that the boats would be all reconditioned by the next rains. What will happen to the people during the next four or five months? He was absolutely silent in regard to that point. He knows, Sir, that the situation is already serious although he has not clearly brought out that fact in his speech. I should be sorry to accuse my friend of misrepresenting facts but I cannot help saying that he has been extremely unfair to the House in not having given it a fuller picture and not having told us the full truth. Sir,

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.]

the responsibility with regard to transport is that of the Central Government with regard to railways, of the War Department with regard to steamers and flats and of the Provincial Government with regard to country boats.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Will you kindly conclude your speech now?

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: The Provincial Government have now bought a large quantity of rice but they have yet been unable to dispatch it in adequate quantities to the deficit districts. Purchase therefore can provide no solace to the suffering millions in the deficit areas.

I should like, Sir, with your permission, to refer generally to the question of public health. It is a matter of common knowledge that the position in respect of small pox and other diseases is still serious, as was well brought out in the address given to the Rotary Club in Dacca the other day by Mr. Arthur Moore. We are told now, Sir, that last year the total extra mortality amounted only to 689,000 and that of this 461,000 is accounted for by cholera, malaria and small pox. Therefore, it appears from this that only about 289,000 people died from other causes. The statement, Sir, is too ridiculous to be taken seriously for a moment.

Again, Sir, I should like to point out that starvation has not been referred to as the cause of death at all. Some time ago the Government of India stated to the Secretary of State that in their opinion the deaths had exceeded one million and Mr. Sen said here that that figure was speculative as the Government of India had not received full information. Now, Sir, the information that we have received is that the Government of India had exaggerated the number of deaths on account of famine last year in Bengal. Sir, from all that I have heard, and I have spoken to very responsible people, both official and non-official—the deaths that occurred in Bengal last year can safely be estimated to have been in the neighbourhood of 2 million. Sir, this is the serious position that exists in Bengal even at the present time and if the Government of India maintain their present attitude one cannot hope that the sufferings of the people will be brought to a speedy termination.

My Honourable friend, Mr. Sen, in the concluding part of his speech—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Please don't go into new matter. You have already taken over 15 minutes.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU:—asked me to cooperate with the Bengal Government not as a favour but as a matter of duty in order to improve the situation there. This was a covert attack on the public men and the Press of Bengal. The Honourable the Food Member deprecated statements telling the true situation in Bengal and called them unnecessarily alarmist. My Honourable friend now, instead of appealing both to the Government and people of Bengal to work together makes a one-sided appeal to the public men of Bengal, thus making out that their agitation in no small measure has been responsible for the sufferings of the Bengalis. I think it will be realised that so long as the facts about the severity of the famine in Bengal were not known to the British public scarcely any help came from the British authorities. They became conscious of the magnitude of the problem only when the truth was allowed to be published in the British papers and such steps as have been taken by the Central Government to bring pressure to bear on the Provincial authorities are due to the pressure of public opinion. They may deprecate public criticism now, but the Central Government had made itself so contemptible that the Provincial Governments would have paid no attention whatsoever to it but for the fact that it was being goaded by public opinion to go forward and to control the Provinces which wanted to follow an individualist policy. Sir, my Honourable friend said yesterday that the Government of India could certainly intervene, but they had to see whether an opportune moment for

12 NOON. intervention had come. Sir, if any Government did anything which conflicted with the prosecution of the war, that Government would be flung aside. Yet, when hundreds and thousands of people have died—millions indeed have died—the Government of India does not think that the time for interven-

tion has come. Sir, I should be very glad if the Provincial Governments discharged their duties adequately; but no theory of provincial autonomy can justify the Government of India in simply looking on while the people are dying like flies. The responsibility not merely for the war but for the lives of the people is that of the Central Government at the present time. War or no war, provincial autonomy or no provincial autonomy, the people must live. If they do not live, the blame will justly be laid at the door of the Central Government.

*THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa: Muhammadan) : Mr. President, I am sorry I want not in my seat when the death of our old colleague Mr. Ramadas Pantulu was referred to. I am sorry for his death, and I express the sympathy of my Party now with his family in their bereavement.

Mr. President, I had no intention of delving into the past and giving a political colour to my speech. But it seems that we are fated by circumstances never to come out of this jungle. Mr. Sen's speech was a lucid, comprehensive and clear statement of facts. Although I have slight differences with him, I find that there are major grounds of common interest and common concern. If the debate had remained on that plane, there would have been no bickering, there would have been no need for using strong words or for having flings at each other. I think Mr. Sen tried to steer clear of the political morass. But in this House we are forced by circumstances to refer to things which are not strictly germane to the situation. I shall therefore endeavour to steer clear as far as possible of the past and concentrate more on the present and the future than on an unprofitable discussion of what happened in the years 1943 and 1942.

Sir, I first of all welcome the report on the progress of the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee which has been made available to us by the Food Department. It is a detailed statement of all the actions which the Government has taken or which it proposes to take, and it gives a good amount of food for thought, if not food for eating. I shall reserve my remarks on that report to the concluding part of my speech.

I should like to congratulate Mr. Sen on his strong statement that they will have to deal drastically with those anti-social persons who for personal gain would not hesitate to see other people die of starvation. That, Sir, is the correct line of action to take. But you should not spend all your force on the poor cultivator. Others too must come under it. Everybody who is anti-social, who wants to make capital out of the starvation of the people, must be dealt with drastically, no matter how high he might stand and what might be his position in public life. Even the press must not be immune. Even the trade must not be immune. Everyone who is acting in an anti-social manner for his personal gain must be drastically proceeded against.

I would like to mention that I had so far understood the policy of the Food Department of the Government of India to be to establish confidence in the present order. My Honourable friend Mr. Kumarsankar Ray Chaudhury referred to a circular of the Bengal Government. I have not seen that circular. I should like it to be placed on the table of the House so that we may know whether the interpretation put on it by Mr. Ray Chaudhury is correct or not. We remember, Sir, how last year too an endeavour was made by the Food Department to rehabilitate confidence and how it was frustrated. Again attempts are being made to encourage people to hoard. The cultivators are being encouraged to hoard, on the plea that they will get higher prices. Every endeavour is being made in the countryside by interested people to make difficulties and to augment existing difficulties. I want the Government of India in its Food Department to state clearly what their policy is. Do they wish to encourage such actions, or do they wish to discourage them? Do they want that there should be no confidence in the officials of the Government and that everybody should try and evade all measures for amelioration and create a panic in the countryside?

*Not corrected by the Honourable Member.

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

Is that the policy of the Government of India? Or is the policy to rehabilitate confidence, to make people understand, to make them do the necessary things willingly and co-operate with the authorities concerned in ameliorating the conditions of the suffering in Bengal?

I welcome the Honourable Member's statement that judgment and discretion should be used in controlling other Provinces. I think he has found the right components. Judgment alone should not be the criterion. Discretion must also be used. And I would rather emphasise the discretion part more than the judgment part. He again referred to the fact that, unlike last year, it was the cultivator and not the trader and the middleman who was hoarding. I welcome this admission on the part of the Government of the share of the trade in the debacle of last year. Last year's debacle was caused largely by the actions of the trade and by the Denial policy of the Government of India, and also by the failure of the transport system—not only war transport, but civilian transport as well, as was evidenced by the statement that 36,000 boats had been requisitioned. People conversant with Bengal can realise what an important part boats play in the carriage of foodstuffs and other necessities of life. Without boats, I think the railways would fail to be of service. The peculiar condition of Bengal is such that we find that in spite of there being a surplus in certain districts, it is not possible to move it because of want of conveyance. Therefore, it is not a small matter that boats should be returned to the fisherman at the earliest possible moment, and in as large a number as can possibly be managed. I would go further and say that Government should not be content with getting back 10,000 boats. They should try and get more boats.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: Could you spare some from Bihar?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: If you were to indent on America, you could get 10,000 boats in one shipment—mass production technique is so efficient there that they can do wonders. I am sure the War Department has got a large number of steel boats. There are a large number of steel boats available in the Defence Department stores. I know of one city in my Province where there are about a thousand boats lying for the military. I am not going to name it because it will be information to the enemy.

Sir, Government are now admitting the fact that to a certain extent traders were also to blame for last year's debacle. I for one would leave the things in the hands of the cultivator where you can always lay your hand on them. If it goes into the hands of the trader it will disappear. It will be beyond your powers to get hold of it. In this connection I should like to refer to a fact which I came to know from a prominent Bengal Hindu member of the Central Legislature who was telling me that much of the rotten and bad stuff now being sold has come out of the hoards of last year from some traders. The gentleman named the trader to me. I am not going to give it but if the Honourable Mr. Sen wants, he can get the name from the member about whom I have referred.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. Z. H. REZAI KARIM. On a point or order, Sir. Is my Honourable friend aware that proceedings are pending?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I am not aware of that. I personally have no special love for the trader class. I would let them live and let me live also. The policy of having a dual system of utilising the trade as well as the Government would be a better policy than complete reliance on the trade or on Government control. We are new in the field. We have no experience. Therefore, to be on the safe side, it is not advisable to take advantage of only one kind of agency. Our agency should be duplicated so that we may see the conditions of both and whichever we find in the long run to be more advantageous we may adopt. We should not be wedded to any one system. I have opposition only to undue prominence being given to trade and depreciation of Government control business. Take, for example, Soviet Russia, where the

thing has been done by the Government and done much better than is done not only in India but even in the United Kingdom.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: There are no zemindaris in Soviet Russia.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I welcome the nationalisation of the land as well as of all industries. Let us have one job. Let not zemindars be singled out alone to be sacrificed for the fattening of the industries.

I was saying, Sir, that these boats should be made available by easy hire purchase system. You should not ask them to pay outright. They are bankrupt. They have exhausted all their resources. It will be hard on them if Government were to demand any cash price from the fishermen. I, therefore, ask the Government to give back these boats to the fishermen either free or on easy hire purchase system. Sir, reference was made by the Honourable Member from Assam to the preserving of wild animals. I think the tamed animals have a better right to preservation than the wild animals. After we have seen to the tamed animals then we might think of the wild animals. I would, therefore, suggest to the Department of Agriculture to take up Assam lands and start a big State farm on the model of Russia, a State farm of, say, 40,000 or 50,000 acres, on a mechanised basis and on scientific lines. It may be said that the land is a Provincial subject. I have no doubt that the Assam Government would consent to placing the land at the disposal of the Centre provided the Centre would agree to give it back after, say, five or seven years, lock, stock and barrel, with all the machinery and plant. In this period of five or seven years the Centre can recoup all its expenditure by means of the produce on it. It should be utilised not only for growing more food on a scientific basis but it should also have dairy production as well. It should raise stocks and it should have also vegetable cultivation. Government are really anxious to grow more food, that is the one place where they can set us an example. After it has been returned by the Central Government I would ask the Provincial Government to let it out on a collective farm basis, not as private property to any single person. No more exploitation of the capitalist.

Sir, I should like to mention one fact which seems to me to have not received the attention which is due to it. I refer, Sir, to the policy of the Government of fixing a price for the whole of India. I think it is initially wrong. The conditions of the different provinces are so different that it would be impossible to fix an effective price for rice and wheat. It would be very hard on a Province which has a low price to pay a higher price. For instance, take Madras. It has been singularly fortunate, in spite of its deficit, to keep down prices. But it will be hard on other Provinces to ask them to reduce their price to the level of Madras and it will be hard on Madras to ask them to pay a higher price merely for the sake of having a theoretical unity in the price of foodstuffs. India is too big a country to have one price prevailing in all parts of it.

THE HONOURABLE SIR RAMUNNI MENON (Nominated Non-Official): What is the pre-war level?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Mr. President, the pre-war level is not to be taken into account because it was a singularly depressed time. If you want to take comparable items, you must go back to 1922—1929 for both industrial production and agricultural production. For instance, Russia's statistics are not published on the basis of the price level in 1917 when they first came into effect or in 1937 which was the last of the second 5-year plan, but on the basis of the price level in 1925 which is taken as the basic year, when the forces of both depression and inflation had come to a sort of equilibrium. Therefore, Sir, I would advocate that the Government should give up the idea of introducing maximum prices. But, if they intend to do so, they must also fix a minimum price below which agricultural prices will not be allowed to go down. Government will be compelled to but at the minimum. They should have a floor and a ceiling price as is done in the case of cotton.

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

You have an effective measures of control established at the moment for cotton. I would have a similar provision for the main food crops, i.e., rice and wheat. I do not mind, Sir, fixation of prices for regions. But may I tell the Honourable Mr. Sen that the fact is that there is a different price within the district itself. Even within the Province itself prices vary in places owing to the failure of transport. Prices are cheaper in my district than they are in Patna, just across the border. There is a difference of price between Patna and Shahabad. You cannot level it without having free intercourse at least in the Province. There should be no restriction on movement of foodgrains within the Province. You can of course place some restriction on border districts. There is the danger of infiltration of supplies to the other Province where there is a higher price. Within the Province there should be free movement. Every officer wherever he may think he is supreme and all powerful, and he behaves in that manner. Control is being abused.

Sir, I should like to enter my strong protests against the ration which has been fixed by the Government; one lb. per person per day is too low. No country has got it at such a low level. Especially the Defence Department with a population of less than half a per cent. is consuming two per cent. of the products of India. It is taking four times its quota. And then does it lie with the Centre to tell us that the people who have got manual labour to do should feed only on one lb. for the whole day. I would not mind if one lb. is fixed for rice and wheat, but other foodgrains must be given to augment it. My personal opinion is that we should have a ration of two lbs. for manual labourers and one and a half lbs. for ordinary citizens. Other foodgrains also should be included in the unit you create. It is no good doing a thing in a half-hearted manner. You should have controlled ration for all the stuff which should include ghee, oil, sugar, kerosene, etc. Everything should be included in it. If you cannot control it, then you are encouraging the black market, you are helping inflation, and adding to the difficulties of the people.

I should like to mention that it is very well for the Food Department to say that they are taking steps. But I have not found a single statement on the nature of the steps taken to make more vegetables, eggs, meat, poultry, available to the public. (*An Honourable Member*: "They should be controlled.") The action taken by one Government is no consolation. The Government is not willing to increase the freight charges because it will have an inflationary effect on the War Transport Department, but they allow Provincial Governments to make huge profits. The United Provinces Government have made a crore out of the control of gur and not a word has been said about the United Provinces Government's money-making activities. Linseed which is a component of oil which used to be Rs. 2-8-0 to Rs. 3 a maund is selling at Rs. 1-8-0 a seer. (*An Honourable Member*: "Rs. 1-12-0 and Rs. 2 sometimes.") Bengal is a deficit area far as mustard is concerned. But Government is doing nothing. They want to reduce the price of agricultural products but our requirements receive no attention from the Government. Our main trouble is get cattle. That is the power by which we cultivate our soil. No endeavour has been made to supply cattle to the deficit areas at the control rate or at a rate which would be in parity with prices. Here I should like to mention that of all the controls that we have the most effective is the textiles control. The price machinery is of the industry itself. It is the industry which fixes its price in consultation with the Government. Here agriculturists have no place in the price fixation. Even the nomination of a member is not made by the Agricultural Department of the Government of India. I should like to enter my strong protest against this policy that the agriculturists are shown a cold shoulder and sometimes find no place among Food Department nominees appointed to decide the fate of agriculturists.

I have tried to steer clear of controversial subjects so far. I wanted to say something on the Foodgrains Report, but I shall just skip through it. I would

like Government to import more tractors and power ploughs if they wish the "Grow More Food" campaign to be a success. If they are going to supply components and parts, they should see that the rice-milling charges are moderate and we are not fleeced by the mills. When the wheat forecast comes, my Honourable friend will find that this year we are going to have the same amount of bumper crop under wheat as we had in rice. I would ask him to concentrate on purchases in India and ships should be used for bringing coal to the West Coast, relieving the railways of this responsibility. If you relieve the railways from carrying coal to the West Coast, including Sind, Madras and Bombay, I think the railways will be able to move a much greater amount of foodgrains from surplus areas to deficit areas. There is mention of the setting up of a Co-ordination Committee consisting of Military Commands, the Food Department and Provincial Governments. We unfortunate people who live in section 93 provinces are unrepresented anywhere and we are not able to voice our opinion. I do not want that you should give us your secrets. But we who are deprived of democratic Government have a right to be heard, if not to say what should be done in our parts. It is not the case of one province alone. There are five provinces which are now suffering under section 93, misrule or rulle.

I will only concentrate on one point which has been left out. I would like Mr. Sen to state publicly the policy of the Food Department towards the Government of Bengal. I regret very much the attack which was made by Pandit Kunzru on the Government of Bengal.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: On the inefficiency of the Bengal Government, not on the Bengal Government.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I would again remind him that when he spoke last March on the Food Debate, he had not a word to say about the deficiency in Bengal. On the 2nd of March we had a debate—

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: There was no food debate in March last.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: We discussed the wheat position and the position of other foodgrains.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS (Nominated Non-Official): Why do you go into past history?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I had wanted to avoid it but nobody knows the real facts about the Government of Bengal on account of the propaganda which has been carried on by the Press and on the platform in Bengal.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: You are all very good boys.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: My Government was then not functioning, Sir. Sir David Devadoss ought to know recent history better.

I am referring, Sir, to the fact that propaganda has been constantly carried on in the Press and on the platform that the present Bengal Government should go. There are people, Sir, who have been urging that even section 93 should be resorted to. I think every Indian should be ashamed who asks for a 93 section Government. No Government can be as bad or as much against the democratic spirit as a section 93 Government.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Don't mix up the question of politics with the food question.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: But attacks have been made on my Government which call for comment.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Your Government. Are you the king?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Mr. President, I am proud of the fact that the present Bengal Government includes an ex-Congress man, who has also been in the Central Legislature in the past under the Swaraj Party, and am surprised that such a Government be dubbed as a non-national Government. A national Government can only be a Government which includes Dr. Shyama-prasad Mookerjee and because of the fact that he did not join the Government it is called a non-national Government—for only that one reason. He was in the

[Mr. Hossain Imam.]

Government up till the time of the resignation of Mr. Fazl-ul-Huq. (*An Honourable Member*: "He was not a member of any Party.") He was in the Subhas Bose's Group, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I think you had better avoid politics in this debate.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: I will avoid, Sir. I desired to say that any one who happens to agree to work with the League Ministry becomes a non-national and every one who works against the Ministry becomes a nationalist. I would like to draw the attention of the Honourable Members coming from Bengal to a strange happening in their own Province where the Leader of a Party resigns from the Ministry and yet the Party goes on supporting the Government. No where have I found an example of that nature and yet it lies in their mouth to call this Government as non-national. It is non-national because you will not join it. You want to dictate your own terms; you want to bring in your own protege, Fazl-ul-Huq.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: What has this to do with the food question?

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Sir, I should like the Food Department to clearly indicate their policy towards the Government of Bengal and state whether they want this propaganda to go on? These tactics of the Press and the platform have, I am glad to see, been to a certain extent either subsided or blacked out.

THE HONOURABLE RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA (Bihar: Non-Muhammadan): I read out to you yesterday the circular letter of the Bengal Government in which they had instructed the Press to refrain from publishing anything about the muddle and inefficiency of the Government.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Well, Mr. President, I think it would serve a better purpose if we concentrate more on the present condition and suggestions for its betterment for the future rather than spend our time on nickerings.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education; Health and Lands Member): Sir, the Honourable Pandit Kunzru began with a comparison between the agricultural conditions in India and England. For the last 20 years, I have been watching the formulation of agricultural policy in England under the leadership of Mr. Elliott, Sir Reginald Dorman Smith and Mr. Hudson. That policy was founded on the demands of the Farmers' Unions, who claimed that a minimum agricultural wage should be fixed, bearing some comparison with the industrial wage. It is thus that the agricultural policy was formulated and agricultural progress was secured under the leadership of these great agriculturists who took such a great interest in land.

Pandit Kunzru again pointed out that England had found it possible to increase the area under food crops during this period of war. He referred to the answer which I gave him yesterday and said that it did not show any increases of new lands under food crops in India. It is true that in England they had grasslands which could be brought under the food crops and all other conditions for growing crops were available. Here, in India any one who is acquainted with agricultural conditions knows that culturable land remains uncultivated because it is thirsty of water. Otherwise the land hunger in India is so great that not a patch of land could remain uncultivated. I would admit that there are lands all over India which could be brought under crops and failing crops we could put trees on them. It could only be attained by a long term programme. It will need capital, science, enterprise, spread over many years before these lands could be reclaimed. The only possible course that was open to the Government of India was to bring lands which were devoted to cash crops and divert them to the food crops and here I am glad to say a great deal of success has been attained. I think I mentioned the areas that have been diverted from cotton and jute to the food crops and these areas are not negligible.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: May I correct my Honourable friend? He did not say in his reply that the area that was no longer under cotton and jute was being actually used for the growing of food crops. All that he said was that it was believed that a large part of this area had been diverted to the production of food crops.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: I think I gave in answer to a question the exact figures of the lands that had been diverted.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I think I have got the Honourable Member's reply before me. If he likes I will read it out to him. Sir, the question was:—

“(i) How much land not cultivated previously has been brought under cultivation as a result of the ‘Grow More Food’ campaign?

(ii) How much of the land under (i) cotton and (ii) jute has been diverted to the production of cereals?”

The answer to the first part of the question was: “No figures are available”. The answer to the second part was: “In comparison with 1941-42 the total reduction in the area under cotton brought about during 1942-43 and 1943-44 amounted to 5,755,000 acres. The area under jute was reduced by 731,000 acres during 1943. It is believed that the bulk of the reduction in the areas under these crops taken by food crops”.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: Well, Sir, the Honourable Member may take it that the area that has been diverted from cotton and jute has gone under food crops.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: Is the Honourable Member aware that there are seasonal crop reports issued by Provinces showing the land under each crop cultivation?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: Yes, and the figures that I have given have been obtained from these seasonal reports.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: Why is the publication of these seasonal reports now discontinued?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: On account of shortage of paper.

THE HONOURABLE SIR A. P. PATRO: Very bad economy. It is important information, and it is not available.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: In any case, Sir, I can claim that the lands that have been diverted from jute and cotton, to which the Honourable Pandit Kunzru just referred, have been put under food crops. And it is not a small area when we come to think of it.

Then the Honourable Pandit Kunzru referred to the normal diet in England. He might just as well compare our normal diet also. There is no comparison between the two countries so far as diet is concerned—the variety of diet that the Englishman uses and the limited variety which we use in India. Perhaps he is aware that the Nutrition Committee has held that cereals must be supported by ingredients such as pulses, vegetables, *gur*, oils, etc., to afford a proper nourishing diet.

Before I pass on to the other points, I would like to deal with the use of lands in Assam for collective farming referred to by the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam. He also drew attention to the need of obtaining more tractors and power ploughs. An attempt has been made to obtain tractors from the United States. The demand was for only about 100 tractors, which are now on order; they may be delivered any day.

The Honourable Pandit Kunzru said that in our statistics no mention was made of starvation deaths. He knows that the *chowkidar* who reports, is only familiar with the reporting of deaths from various causes and evidently he has not reported deaths from starvation separately. The figures published represent statistics collected by the normal agency for the whole province, and that is the only reason why it was not possible to give the starvation figures separately.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Does the Honourable Member say that the *chowkidar* only reports deaths from diseases? Is that all?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: Yes. You cannot credit the *chowkidar* with the discretion to be able to report deaths from causes with which he is not familiar; he is only used to reporting deaths in the ordinary way, as he has always done. The figures which we have taken are taken for the whole of the Province and are as reliable as can at present be obtained.

I should now like to give the House some general account of what has been done in Bengal in the field of medical relief and public health. As the House is aware, the situation in Bengal was greatly aggravated by a severe cholera epidemic, and the reported death rate from this cause rose to over 5,000 a week in early November. Another calamity befell Bengal in the form of a virulent malaria epidemic and in many areas a large proportion of the population was affected. Small-pox also increased. Unfortunately the provincial medical and public health organisations were not equal to the task of providing medical relief for destitutes suffering from malnutrition or starvation and of bringing the epidemics under control, and the Military authorities had to be called upon for assistance. In spite of the Army's own heavy requirements, the Commander-in-Chief speedily made available for civil duties medical personnel and equipment and medical officers trained in public health work. There are at present in the field 16 military hospitals varying from 100 to 300 beds stationed in ten districts. There are also 54 mobile treatment centres which carry medical relief to the villages, using jeeps and water transport to reach outlying places. On the public health side there are 56 military medical officers working as sub-divisional health officers, supervised by eight military hygiene specialists. Reports which have reached us, both from the Bengal Government and other sources, testify to the invaluable work done by the military personnel. Kind treatment in clean, well-equipped and efficiently run hospitals has to a considerable extent broken down the villagers' traditional reluctance to enter hospital. Nearly 600,000 cases had been treated by military medical personnel up to the 15th February. Over 600,000 anti-cholera inoculations and over 400,000 vaccinations have been performed. I think the House will join with me in paying a tribute to the invaluable assistance given by the Army at this critical juncture. They have rendered a very great service indeed to Bengal.

The Government of India have of course no large medical cadre from which they could give substantial assistance to the Bengal Government. They have, however, lent the services of an experienced I. M. S. public health officer for employment as Director of Public Health and they have also made available to the Bengal Government the advice of their experts, the Director General, Indian Medical Service, the Public Health Commissioner, the Director, Malaria Institute of India, the Director, Nutrition Research Laboratories, and the Director of the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health. By the production of a suitable injection for starvation cases in a state of collapse the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health has enabled a 90 per cent. death rate to be converted into a 90 per cent. cure rate. A clinical research unit appointed by the Indian Research Fund Association has also provided valuable guidance for medical staff in the treatment of starvation cases. Assistance has been given to the Bengal Government where necessary in the procurement of special drugs. One million halibut liver oil capsules were flown out by air from the United Kingdom and special emergency supplies of vitamin tablets and other drugs have been obtained. 89,000 lbs. of quinine, 24,000 lbs. of febrifuge and over 9 million tablets of atabrin, sufficient for the treatment of some 12 million malaria cases, have been allotted to the Provincial Government.

Owing to depleted provincial medical cadres most Provincial Governments have not been able to render assistance to Bengal, but the United Provinces Government gave substantial help by the recruitment of sweepers who were badly needed in the Bengal civil hospitals.

The situation generally has now greatly improved. Cholera mortality has fallen to about 600 a week and malaria incidence has declined. Small-pox continues to increase but a vaccination campaign is being carried on by the civil and military staffs. The Provincial Government have recruited 1,000 non-medical assistants for inoculation and anti-cholera work. 484 civil hospitals, mostly of 20 beds each, have been opened in the districts and over 60,000 cases have been treated. In spite of the general improvement, however, much still remains to be done. The military personnel cannot be allowed to remain indefinitely and an adequate civil organisation to take its place has still to be established. There is also no doubt that there is still much room for improvement in the civil medical institutions and public health services. These are matters which the Bengal Government has under consideration and we shall continue to render them all the assistance in our power.

The situation, however, is not free from anxiety. A great deal depends on the population being able to obtain a well balanced ration, containing ingredients such as pulses, fats, vegetables, sugar, etc., which are essential for proper nourishment and which ought to be within the reach of all the people. All I can say is that so far as agricultural production is concerned, we are working within limits set by nature and it is not possible to increase or bring larger areas under cultivation in the near future. On the public health side, a good deal of work has been done which I have mentioned to you. But I cannot lay too great emphasis on the procurement of a proper well-balanced ration for the people if they are to protect themselves from these diseases.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR (Central Provinces: General): Sir, I have listened carefully to the points raised by my Honourable friend Mr. Sen yesterday in his speech and though the Government of India have framed certain policies about the food administration in India, I am constrained to say that they have not taken proper care to see that the schemes they have enunciated have been carried out by the various Provincial Administrations. It is a matter of some satisfaction that we do not hear of deaths of so many destitutes from starvation on the footpaths and pavements in Calcutta. We know also that there is some improvement in the medical relief that is being meted out to the poor sufferers of Bengal. We congratulate the military for giving a helping hand to the authorities in the matter of distribution and medical relief. But I cannot, on the reports that I have received from my friends—reliable reports—take an optimistic view of the situation. But I hope and pray God that the situation of last year should not be repeated again. Sir, we know that the rural areas of Bengal, especially the deficit areas, are not getting sufficient foodgrains at a reasonable price. I am told by my Bengal friends that in rural areas the price of rice has gone up as high as Rs 1-12-0 per seer and in Calcutta sometimes it has gone up to Rs. 2.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: Is that per seer?

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: Yes.

THE HONOURABLE MR. B. R. SEN: Rs. 80 per maund.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: It was just now told to me by my Honourable friend.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Better make sure of your facts.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: You may contradict those facts, but the fact remains that the prices are higher in rural deficit areas in Bengal. The prices that have just been told to me by my Honourable friend Mr. Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhury may not be true. But the information that I have received is that in rural areas, especially in deficit areas, prices are much higher than in the urban areas. That is a point to be taken into consideration. You may say that the statement issued by the Honourable Pandit Kunzru is alarmist. But I am going to show to the House that the policy that has been followed in Bengal, has not yet relieved the situation and people have not come to the conclusion that the same past mistakes of last year will not be repeated. There are still complaints coming to us that there is no equitable distribution.

[Mr. V. V. Kalikar.]

of foodgrains to the deficit areas in Bengal. I want to know whether the Government of India have changed their policy now and have given this work over to the Provincial Government or whether they think it an all-India policy and that in the interests of the lives of so many millions of people they are responsible for carrying out their own policy. I want to know whether they have got an all-India policy or one policy in black and white on paper and another policy in the Provinces? If surplus provinces are made to despatch foodgrains to Bengal and if there is maladministration in Bengal in the distribution of food, then you cannot take shelter under the plea of provincial autonomy. I am equally jealous about provincial autonomy; I am more jealous than my Honourable friend Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava about provincial autonomy. But, Sir, I want to ask whether, when the question of the lives of millions of people is concerned, he should try to close our mouths by saying that because provincial autonomy exists in Bengal, therefore the Central Government cannot take any measures?

My next point is that if the Central Government cannot adopt an all-India policy, if the Central Government cannot control the distribution of food in Bengal, you have no right to take away food from our Provinces and to put us to inconvenience. Whatever sacrifices the surplus provinces are making, they are making with a view that their countrymen in other provinces should be relieved of some of their troubles. Here the Central Government instead of becoming stronger day by day is becoming weaker. During last year's debate I had specially put a question to the Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava. I ask for the indulgence of the House for a moment to point it out.

THE HONOURABLE MR. KUMARSANKAR RAY CHAUDHURY (East Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): On a point of personal explanation, I did not make any statement like the one referred to by my friend.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: I did not say you made it. I said Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhury.

Last time I asked the Honourable the Food Member "You have sent foodgrains to Bengal. Have you ensured that those foodgrains have been equitably distributed?" And his answer was: "That is a very difficult question for me to answer. As my Honourable friend knows, that is the business of the Provincial Government". Now, I want to know from my friend whether the Provincial Government have discharged their responsibility properly or not? If the Provincial Government has not discharged its responsibility—whether it be a League Government, a Hindu Mahasabha Government or Congress Government—when so many people die of starvation, it is not a point to be looked at by sitting in an easy chair. You have to fight and take strong action against those Provincial Governments which are not following your policy. If Provincial Governments are not following your policy, then you must take strong and stringent action against them. If you are not taking strong and stringent action against them, then you are of no use at the Centre. The Government of India should absolve themselves of the responsibility of administration of the food problem in India. Let Provincial Governments manage the business. What is the use of taking shelter under the legal point and saying that provincial autonomy exists in those Provinces and therefore you cannot do it? We were shown here samples of foodgrains which were brought by a responsible friend of mine and I have verified that the foodgrains which were purchased last year were kept uncovered, uncared for, and the foodgrains had so much deteriorated that they were unfit even for cattle consumption. Do you think that the people of Bengal have to suffer and die simply because of the maladministration of a particular Government? Why are you here? Why is the Government of India here? Sir, it pains me much to see that the Government of India is not strong enough to take the action. The Government of India is strong only in taking food from those Provinces which fortunately grow some more food than is required by them and you are bringing those Provinces to

trouble unnecessarily. I find from the figures that my own Province has despatched to other Provinces 146,655 tons more than the quota you had fixed under even the revised basic plan for my Province.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Very good.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: It is no use saying "Very good". My foodgrains must reach those people and save their lives. If you cannot see to it, if you cannot save the lives of the people of Bengal, then do not deprive my Province of its foodgrains. I plead on behalf of all the surplus Provinces that if these Provincial Governments mismange things, you must put your foot down and see that they carry out your policy. Sir, you are taking food from cultivators. As regards your procurement policy, under the pretext of voluntary requisition in many districts zealous officials take forcibly foodgrains at a low price from the cultivator. We make a sacrifice. We are ready to make a sacrifice to save our countrymen in Bengal. Sir, you have fixed ceiling prices, statutory prices. I am not going into a detailed discussion of that because it has already taken place. But you must also take into consideration the necessities of the surplus Provinces. After all Indian agriculture depends upon the vagaries of nature. You know, Sir, that in my Province it is the custom of the agriculturist to hold on to a good crop for two years in order to ensure against any mishap that may happen to his crop later. But that crop also is being taken away, and taken away for what? For supplying these deficit Provinces. The result is that foodgrains are being wasted in such a way that they do not reach the mouth of the hungry. Hunger does not know discrimination. Hunger does not care for which party is ruling. The hungry man wants food, and if you cannot give him food, you are unfit to be here. We know that the Government of India is powerless in this matter. But I must press on the Government of India to bring pressure on the higher powers to amend the Act if necessary to see that their policy is carried out by Provincial Governments. Already the Act is amended. There is already section 126A in the new Government of India Act. You must take strong action. You must take courage in your hands. Otherwise wash away your hands from this food administration; leave the food administration to the Provinces; let them do what they like. Do not force surplus Provinces to give their foodgrains to deficit Provinces and let the surplus Provinces have some food for future adverse circumstances.

Sir, I have stated the situation in Bengal. The situation in Cochin and Travancore has been already stated by my Honourable friend Pandit Kunzru and my friends from Madras. My Province, so far as food is concerned, is not a surplus Province. It is a self-sufficient Province, but I am ready to make sacrifice for my countrymen in other Provinces provided that the food-grain reaches the mouth of the hungry people there and is not wasted or used by profiteers who profit themselves at the cost of the lives of the people in those deficit Provinces.

Sir, one word more about the agriculturist and I have finished. I fully agree with my friend Mr Hossain Imam on one point and that is that the agriculturist must get sufficient price for his foodgrains because he has to pay three or four times more for getting his necessities of life in these days. You cannot fix the prices of foodgrains without taking into consideration the necessities of the agriculturist, I mean the cultivator, who provides the food and who has to pay four times over the pre-war prices of his bullocks, etc. So my submission is that, whatever your economists may say, you fix the price in such a way that it will not hurt the agriculturist so that the agriculturist will allow the land to lie fallow or will convert that land to commercial crops. If you fix prices at a lower level than the agriculturist is bound in order to meet the cost of his necessities of life to convert the land to the production of commercial crops. Your "Grow More Food" campaign and all these tractors and fertilisers would not be of any use to the agriculturist if you fix the price of foodgrains at a lower level and procure by force from him his foodgrains at that low price.

[Mr. V. V. Kalikar.]

Sir, I have nothing further to say on this point. I only want to impress upon the Government of India that in this matter they are responsible to the people of India and they must take on themselves the responsibility of feeding the hungry people in the deficit Provinces. From the replies given by my Honourable friend Mr. Sen to the questions asked it seems that they are changing their policy. They say their policy is only to superintend and control and leave everything to the Provincial Government. If so, why so much expenditure of the taxpayers' money for superintendence and control? Appoint a Superintendent in the Province and let the Superintendent control it and superintend the affairs of the Provincial Government. It is no use having a Food Department and such a big paraphernalia and at the same time depriving the surplus Provinces of their food. If you really want that you must save Bengal, Travancore, Cochin or Malabar from future catastrophe, then you must see that your policy is carried out by those Governments and if it is not carried out you must take strong action against the Governments concerned.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SATYENDRA NATH ROY (War Transport Secretary):
Sir, when we were students we read Pope's lines:—

“For forms of government
Let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administered
Is best”

I myself have often thought that there was a great deal of truth in these lines, but in my experience it is only the bureaucrats who have supported this doctrine. It is very refreshing to get support of this doctrine from a tribune of the people. I will not pursue this at the moment because I have really intervened to answer certain points which have arisen in the course of the debate in regard to transport. I shall be very brief, but I think that in view of what has been stated I ought to try and explain, however briefly, the difficult situation in which transport is placed at the present time. We have never contended that transport has been able to move whatever it was necessary to move. In fact, we have found transport getting tighter and tighter as months have gone by. When it is remembered that goods traffic today is more than 25 per cent. more in ton mileage than before the war, when it is remembered that this figure does not include the vast quantities of military traffic that have to be moved now, when it is also remembered that there is necessarily a considerable absorption of wagons at depots and ports it is not difficult to appreciate what a tremendous burden transport is called upon to bear. It was to try to solve difficulties that have arisen, that the Priority Organisation of the War Transport Department was set up about two years ago. I am sure my Honourable friends opposite will sympathise with those who have to work this organisation in their invidious task of having to decide from day to day what should and what should not move on the railways. The criterion that we adopt for coming to a decision is the essentiality of a commodity and of its movement for the needs of the country. It does not follow that what we do not regard as essential does not also serve India's economy, but it does happen, that often we cannot move them when required and that they have to wait until the transport situation gets easier. I am also aware of complaints that certain commodities cannot move at all. We have on the Priority side tried to improve transport in various ways. We have tried zoning areas from which certain things should move to certain other areas. We have tried to stop cross movements of traffic and to put distance limits on certain forms of traffic in an endeavour to avoid waste of transport. All this is naturally bound to create a certain amount of dislocation of ordinary trade channels. People who are accustomed to trade in a certain way have had to alter their ways. They have complained and I have every sympathy with them. The only answer that I can give them is that the situation being so tight there is no help. The war effort and the country's economy have got to be maintained within the limits of the transport available. As there is not sufficient transport to go round certain people have to make sacrifices or to make changes in the methods of business to which they have been accustomed.

That is with regard to traffic generally. But so far as foodgrains are concerned, I think we can claim that by and large we have moved the requirements of the Food Department. In this matter we are agents of the Food Department. They tell us what are the quantities to be moved, and we try to move them. Complaints were made about three areas—about Travancore and Cochin, about Orissa, and about Bengal. Well, so far as Travancore-Cochin is concerned, it is true that rail transport to these areas is not easy. If wheat has to be moved from a surplus area in Sind or the Punjab all the way down by rail, over various gauges and two or three different systems of railways, obviously it must mean taking up a tremendous capacity which necessarily reacts on the movement of other commodities. The natural movement from Karachi is by sea. For some time, in spite of shipping being scarce, we have tried to remedy the situation by pressing for increased shipping. We have succeeded to a certain extent, and though we have not got as much shipping as we would have liked, we are now moving a great deal more grain by ships from Karachi than we did, say, eight or ten months ago. We are, however, not sitting back; we are pressing for more shipping, and we hope that we shall succeed in getting it; within what time I cannot predict, but I think we shall probably achieve, if not the whole of our aim, at least a very great part of it.

But in actual fact I am not aware that the requirements of Travancore have not been met for lack of transport. So far as I know, most of the wheat and wheat products that we were required to move from Sind have been either moved or have programmed to move, and I am not aware of any serious difficulties which have arisen. These movements are being made mainly by sea. Under the basic plan, we were required to move between the 10th July, 1943, and 31st March, 1944, 39,470 tons of wheat and wheat products. This has since been stepped up by another 20,000 tons. I am not sure that all of it is coming from Karachi; some part of it, I think, is coming from overseas. Against that original 39,470 tons, up to the end of January we had actually moved 26,348 tons, which is about 70 per cent. And if I am correct in supposing—my Honourable friend Mr. Sen will correct me if I am wrong—that some part of this is coming from overseas, we have moved a fairly substantial proportion of what we were asked to do. In regard to gram, against a quota of 6,773 tons, we actually moved 6,696 tons, which is pretty nearly 100 per cent. Rice of course cannot come from overseas; it must come from Sind or the Central Provinces or Madras. Between the 1st December 1943, and the 31st October, 1944, we are expected to move 156,534 tons of rice. That gives a proportionate tonnage up to the end of January of 30,000 tons. We have moved, against that, 29,000 tons. That is not a bad performance. As regards millets, the proportionate quota for that particular period was 7,000 tons; as against that, we have moved 4,200 tons. That is not quite so satisfactory; but I understand that there is some difficulty about millets being acceptable. The situation has shown a considerable improvement in the past three months.

As regards Travancore we have brought in large quantities of foodstuffs into Cochin port, but there has been some difficulty in distribution from Cochin onwards. The usual method of distribution from Cochin harbour for Travancore areas is by *vellams*. These are small boats which ply in the backwaters. We have been in correspondence with the Travancore Government with the object of getting more *vellams* in use, and we recently put on three small ships to clear the stuff from Cochin to ports of Travancore—Alleppey and other places. There are still about 20,000 to 25,000 tons waiting at Cochin, but I hope all this will be cleared in the course of the next two months. These ships are plying a sort of shuttle service between Cochin and the Travancore ports. Large ships, as Honourable Members will realise, cannot be used in the open roadsteads of Travancore. Although, as I have said, we do not claim that transport is doing all that is required of it, we can claim to have done substantially well so far as the requirements of Cochin and Travancore are concerned.

[Sir Satyendra Nath Roy.]

Then, Sir, I come to Bengal. Here there are certain difficulties peculiar to the Province which I think I ought to explain. My Honourable friend mentioned Noakhali and Dacca. The districts of Eastern Bengal are extremely badly served by rail. They are dependent mainly upon water transport; and unless this form of transport can be restored, they will certainly with the best will in the world, fail to get all that they require. Rail transport is possible up to Goalundo or Khulna but transport onwards must be by river. The only all-rail route is *via* Santahar and Teestamukh Ghat, which involves transshipment from broad gauge to metre gauge at Santahar and then a ferry crossing. This particular route is very heavily engaged in military traffic. Honourable Members would not expect me to go into details which it would be undesirable to give publicity to. But the fact has to be accepted that this particular route is very full with military traffic. It is not that it is entirely used for military traffic. We are all the time pressing for the fullest quantity of civil traffic which the two Governments of Bengal and Assam consider as their essential minimum, to be passed over this route. Private trade requirements necessarily get pushed out unless they are backed by the two Governments as essential. Everything on the route must be programmed either by or through the two Governments if they are to have a chance of moving at all. A quota for civil traffic is fixed at the beginning of any month in consultation with the military and every attempt is made to get this quota through. I may add that I have been in touch with both the Bengal Government and with General Wakely, who, as Honourable Members know, was specially deputed there to look after the transport situation. I am glad to say that they are on the whole satisfied with the "excellent" assistance that they have received from the Priority Organisation. When they say "excellent" I do not want Honourable Members to go away with the impression that they are getting all that they want, because they are not, but taking into account military requirements, the capacity of the line, the capacities of the transshipment points, etc., they are satisfied that the best possible is being done to help them. In this connection Honourable Members will realise that when there is very intense traffic, one of the most important things is, that wagons or flats, must be unloaded and sent back quickly. Otherwise, you are going to get into a jam. The mobility of wagons and flats must be retained if the traffic quota is to be carried. The delay in unloading flats and wagons has been a source of some controversy between us and the Bengal Government at various times. For example we laid on rail transport for 600 tons a day *via* Khulna but not more than 480 tons could be dealt with because there are not enough boats, enough warehouses and so on. We have, therefore, cut transport down to 480 tons a day. But, if the need is great, we can always step up to a certain extent but we can only do so if those who are responsible for unloading wagons or flats carry out their jobs quickly. A great improvement has been secured in this respect, in recent months but even taking into account all that we have been able to achieve it is, I am afraid, true that all the essential requirements of certain Eastern Bengal districts have not been met. These requirements must be met either by boat traffic or partly by rail and partly by boat.

With regard to internal rail movements in Bengal, we have allotted 95 broad gauge and 51 metre gauge wagons daily. This is my most recent information.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT, HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: How many wagons were required normally, say a couple of years ago?

THE HONOURABLE SIR SATYENDRA NATH ROY: I am afraid that is more than I can say. I daresay I can find out, but I have not got the information here, and I doubt if a comparison would be relevant in present conditions.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. Z. M. REZAI KARIM: May I interrupt the Honourable Member for a minute on a point of information? I want to know whether in making his statement today, the Honourable Member is taking into consideration the inland steam navigation trade and the flats, steamers,

the large number of motor launches and other things which are also covered by some kind of private ownership.

THE HONOURABLE SIR SATYENDRA NATH ROY: I am aware that there are touring craft which can be made use of and I believe every attempt is being made to utilise them, but the larger flats and steamers belonging to the steamer companies are already fully utilised over the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, the latter being a part of the Assam line of communications. These steamers and flats carry not merely military but also civil traffic in accordance with the quotas to which I referred earlier. There are only two routes to Assam, one by the Brahmaputra river and the other by the broad gauge to Santahar and metre gauge onwards. The problem is rather a difficult one. But, as I have been trying to point out, we do feel that we have, by and large, been able to meet the most essential requirements. I know that Honourable Members can easily retort: "Is it not a fact that certain mills have closed down or is it not a fact that coal has been scarce in Dacca?" That is perfectly true. These things have happened and they will continue to happen until our efforts at getting a larger number of wagons and locomotives are successful. I was perhaps wrong in saying that. The wagons and locomotives we get will help us over the railway situation as a whole but over this particular area they won't help very much because of the bottle neck in the line capacity.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Is there no hope for Bengal then?

THE HONOURABLE SIR SATYENDRA NATH ROY: The hope for Eastern Bengal lies in securing a greater quantity of boat traffic.

THE HONOURABLE MR. A. Z. M. REZAI KARIM: In that case, is the Honourable Member prepared, when the railway wagons and locomotives are available, to release at least the steam boats and motor launches and other things and place them at the disposal of the people for their supplies?

THE HONOURABLE SIR SATYENDRA NATH ROY: We are all the time studying the problem. I cannot give a general answer as to what we can do because it is mixed up with other questions. It is a question of stretching what we have got to meet a very large quantity of essential demands. But we do of course recognise the need for increasing capacity in whatever way that may be possible.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Why not get more?

THE HONOURABLE SIR SATYENDRA NATH ROY: Why does the Honourable Member assume that we are not trying to get more? We are trying to do our best, but I should be wrong if I were to say that the situation is satisfactory. It is not. We recognise that. But we are trying to carry on and meet the requirements as best we can and to expand our resources.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: I think I must adjourn the House at this stage, because there are two or three more speakers and then the Honourable the Food Member will reply. Mr. Sen may also wish to reply.

The Council then adjourned for Lunch till Three of the Clock.

The Council reassembled after Lunch at Three of the Clock, the Honourable the President in the Chair.

THE HONOURABLE MR. V. V. KALIKAR: Sir, I owe an explanation for quoting a wrong figure about the price of rice in Calcutta and Bengal. My Honourable friends Mr. Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhury and Mr. Hossain Imam were speaking about the rates of mustard oil. I thought that they were speaking about rice and therefore I quoted the figure of Rs. 1-8-0 and Rs. 2.

THE HONOURABLE COLONEL SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR (Nominated Non-Official): Mr. President, Sir, I have listened with great interest to the most lucid and illuminating speech of the Honourable the Food Secretary, giving a vivid picture of the steps already taken and proposed to be taken by the Government of India, for the solution of the food problem. There is not the least doubt that the authorities have been more active and vigilant, and the pros and

[Sir Hissamuddin Bahadur.]

cons of the problem have been considered and every possible precaution taken to ease the situation.

The "Grow More Food" campaign is the only effective way of increasing production. Government are doing their best but it is up to the public to give their whole-hearted co-operation to help Government to make it a real success.

I must say that if the Provincial Governments and the States had assessed their yearly produce and the quantities required for annual consumption beforehand and the distribution had been regularised, simplified and equalised, the difficulties confronted by them would be negligible. I must say of my own Province, the N. W. F. P. Government, which has not raised its voice that we are suffering so badly like certain other Provinces—especially like Bengal, which is at the mercy of other Provinces due to its own political differences. Whose fault? Surely their own! They ought to have foreseen things for themselves. There must be some reason, of course, which may have been unavoidable but it could not have been so serious as is witnessed by the world at large. I can cite the example of Bhopal State. The timely rationing system and price control exercised in Bhopal State has worked marvellously well. If an arrangement on similar lines had been devised by the Food Department on an all-India basis the result would have been remarkably good. His Highness the Ruler of Bhopal had made elaborate arrangements before the harvest and the people there are enjoying the cheapest foodgrains and essential commodities of daily life.

Now, Sir, I would strongly commend to the Government of India some practicable proposals for their consideration and adoption, of course, with any modifications that they may deem necessary to meet the situation according to prevalent circumstances.

That a separate department, with staff, should be established and organized in each and every Province, solely for the purpose of encouraging the "Grow More Food" campaign under the charge of an Adviser. The land which is lying idle should be best utilised by means of giving *taqavi* loans at reduced interest and Government should consider the possibility of developing land by giving special facility to the ryot without revenue, if possible, for the duration of the war. The zamindars should be given foodgrains out of the total produce of their respective lands, for their annual consumption according to the number of family members and incidental requirements of guests, etc., plus the quantity required for sowing the next crop. The surplus should be bought by the Government on very reasonable price keeping in view the comparatively high prices of agricultural implements and essential commodities of daily life.

The organisation of a separate Department for the purpose is suggested for the obvious reason that the district authorities and the Revenue Commissioners are already so over-worked with their routine duties and other war efforts that they have very little or no time to devote exclusively for this vital task of "Grow More Food" campaign. The Department in question shall also maintain a list of zamindars of the districts concerned, the amount of land, how much wheat, jowar, bajra and maize, etc., have been sown in *rabi* and *kharif*, etc.

All this, of course, is a provincial affair and should be organised by the Provincial Governments but should be under the supreme control of the Central Government. Each Province should intimate its surplus after assessing its yearly produce and annual consumption, to the Central Government, who should in turn buy it for providing to the deficit areas and the army requirements.

I am absolutely certain that if proper constructive arrangements are made on an all-India basis India herself will be able to produce so much foodgrains for her requirements both for her population and the army that there will be no need possibly for importing from foreign countries—and there would be no extra strain on the shipping which is required for more important war purposes.

Much has also been said that railway transport for the distribution of foodgrains from one Province to another has not been forthcoming. Sir, if railway wagons are not available in the desired number I must ask how the Railway Department can produce extra locomotives and wagons in a day or in a month

or even months? We are aware that no effort is being spared by the Transport Department to meet the demands as far as is feasible, and arrangements for manufacturing and importing more locomotives are well in hand.

An Honourable Member had suggested that road transport should be improved from village to village. I do not know how it could be feasible with the shortage of petrol for such purposes?

Complaints have been hurled on the Government but we should not forget that unless every individual and zamindar will effectively help for the "Grow More Food" campaign, it is well nigh impossible for the Government to achieve and exhibit the desired results. Our own countrymen are hoarding thousands of maunds of foodgrains and not bringing it to the market, with a view to making monetary profits, when they know their own countrymen are dying of hunger and famine.

I had a letter from Lieut.-General Sir John Colderidge, late Northern Commander, telling me that the people in England are greatly perturbed about the famine in India. He says "We are getting some more information about the famine and I must say that what I hear makes me feel unhappy as to the future of India. To me it seems to be particularly bad that men should make huge fortunes out of other peoples starvation".

It is the primary responsibility of a Government to see that its people are properly fed, clothed and sheltered but this can be achieved only with the willing co-operation of the people themselves.

The House will agree with me that India is not the only country to suffer the difficulties about foodgrains and essential commodities of daily life. In Europe they are suffering much more than us. As compared with Europe, we are having a more luxurious and gay life.

My Honourable friend Sir David Devadoss had complained that very high prices are being charged for vegetables. I entirely agree it has gone very high but vegetables are not exported from India. The reason for the high prices is that the people are making more money in business and salaries nowadays and they pay whatever is demanded of them for their essential requirements. I strongly urge that the Government should also control the prices of vegetables effectively. My Honourable friend had also suggested that the Army should grow its own vegetables. The Army is doing it as far as is practicable as explained by the Honourable Sir Jogendera Singh yesterday. I know in Hazara district of the N. W. F. P. Mr. Wakefield is running a big farm under the military authorities and supplying vegetables to the Army. But it must be borne in mind that the Army at present is busy with its modern warfare, jungle warfare, etc., and it is very hard on them to expect to grow vegetables for their requirements.

To sum up the whole position I must say that greater improvement is visible now all round and the people are much relieved and contented with the enforced price control and the rationing being implemented; and that the Government are taking all necessary steps to mitigate the sufferings and to see that foodgrains are within the purchasable power of the people.

With these words, Sir, I once again congratulate the Honourable the Food Member, who has been doing his utmost under great strain of war.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR (Madras Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, I had not intended to participate in this debate, particularly for the reason that after the Report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee the Government of India had got a policy with regard to food administration, and we have heard from the Honourable Mr. Sen a lucid account of the steps taken by the Government of India to implement that policy. It is a matter for gratification that the Gregory Committee made a report in such terms that their recommendations could be translated into action almost at once. It is also a matter for gratification that the Government of India have accepted practically all the recommendations that that Committee made for tackling the food problem in this country. Now, Sir, the main thing that was debated on the last occasion that this House had seisin of this matter was the Bengal situation. I cannot

[Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar.]

speak with any personal knowledge of conditions in Bengal but we have in this House an Honourable Member who has taken more than ordinary trouble in acquainting himself with conditions in Bengal and his account of the state of things in that Province as disclosed by him to the Press gave cause for considerable anxiety. The Honourable Mr. Sen's speech gave us information on certain points connected with the situation in Bengal. But, Sir, it seems to me that the fact being admitted that there is no shortage of rice in Bengal the main problem that faces that Province in bringing about a proper distribution of the rice that is available there relates to transport. I must say, Sir, that after listening to the Honourable Sir Satyendra Nath Roy this morning, it seems to me that the Government themselves are doubtful of their ability to meet the situation adequately in certain districts of Eastern Bengal, at any rate with regard to transport. It was, I think, admitted by Sir Satyendra Nath Roy that the railways cannot manage the transport that is needed. He gave us the impression that unless we could improve boat transport in those areas the conditions in those districts were bound to continue to be unsatisfactory. If I have understood him correctly, then, Sir, I consider it is the duty of the Government to remedy this defect as soon as possible. We have passed through several months since this situation was brought to the notice of the Government of India and it was up to them to have made the arrangements necessary for providing adequate boat transport in the areas which needed that transport badly. I am not sure that adequate efforts have been made in this direction. I think, Sir, that in this connection we are faced with the problem of competition between military needs and the needs of civilian consumption.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Civilian lives, not consumption.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR: I accept that correction.

In one passage in the report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee they deal with this matter, and I believe I drew attention to this when I last spoke on this subject. It is contained in paragraph 2 on page 128 of the Report. It says:—

"It is incorrect to say that next to the war the food problem is the most serious issue which faces this country. This is wrong. The food problem is a part of the war effort. Its settlement is as urgent as any that confronts the country in military terms".

I appeal to the Government of India to place the provision of adequate boat transport in respect of these districts on the same footing as the provision of adequate transport for military needs in that area. Unless they do it, I am afraid that the fears which they entertain might materialise and bring about a situation which they will find it difficult to tackle after a few months.

Then, Sir, in the course of the debate references have been made to the responsibility of the Central Government and of the Provincial Governments as regards efficient food administration in this country. As regards this, Sir, nobody can take exception to the general formula that the Honourable Mr. Sen gave expression to yesterday. I quite understand that the major portion of the field of food administration is within the sphere of the Provinces. But the Government of India have accepted the position that this whole thing should be regulated on the basis of an all-India food policy. They have undertaken to give assistance to the Provinces in various ways, and I think it is up to them to make it a condition of giving that assistance that the administration of this policy in the different Provinces must reach an adequate standard of efficiency. Here again, Sir, I would quote, for the information of the House, what the Gregory Committee themselves have said:—

"The solution of the food problem does not consist merely in finding an adequate policy. Bad policy may be neutralized to some extent at least by adequate administration. Bad administration will wreck any policy however good. And good administration in this connection calls not only for the normal qualities of assiduity and conscientiousness but for something else; it calls for a realization of the fact that the lives of humble men and women and children who cannot help themselves are at stake".

That, Sir, is the over-riding consideration, and if the Government of India find that any particular Province does not reach an adequate standard of efficiency, I think they should use all the powers they possess for enforcing that standard.

I must, however, express my agreement with the Honourable Mr. Sen when he said that the intervention of the Government of India in this connection must be characterised by discretion and judgment. There are Provinces which perhaps would be all the better for the minimum of intervention from the Government of India. The Government of India have got to pick and choose amongst the Provinces in deciding what amount of intervention they will make in food administration in any particular Province. In this connection I would refer to a matter which my Honourable friend Mr. Hossain Imam touched upon in the course of his speech. When he was speaking about statutory price control, he warned the Government of India against trying to establish a uniformity of prices all over India. I think that warning has not been administered too soon. We have not yet reached the stage of a uniform price level all over the country; and before the Government of India, in pursuance of their acceptance of the recommendation of the Gregory Committee, proceed to bring about any such uniformity, I think they should take full account of this warning. Prices, especially in the matter of foodstuffs, vary from Province to Province; they vary from district to district. I know in my own Province there are districts in which prices vary from taluka to taluka. There are adequate reasons for these variations. While I believe in statutory control, and have been complaining against the Government of Madras for not travelling beyond the policy of ceiling prices to an adoption of the policy of statutory price maxima, I do think that any attempt on the part of a Provincial Government either to step up its prices or to step down its prices to the level of some imaginary uniform price level in the whole of India would be a step fraught with considerable risks. It has been mentioned in the course of this debate that Madras has been able to maintain a lower price level for its foodstuffs than other Provinces in India. It has been asked how this has come about. It has come about because the Government of Madras tried to conserve the food resources of the Province primarily for the people of the Province. They prohibited export from the Province. In fact, they prohibited export from one district to another. There has been some talk of free trade as between district and district within the same Province. But my experience of what has happened in my own Province inclines me to the view that so long as we believe in controls for the purpose of ensuring a fair price to the consumer, we should also retain controls wherever necessary between one area and another even within the same Province. In Madras, for instance, to mention one instance, the great rice-producing areas are the Tanjore district in the south and the Godavaris in the north. The prices ruling in these two areas were not the same before the war or even after the war. The result of trying to bring about a uniform policy with regard to price administration has been that the lower prices that prevailed in one area have been stepped up to the higher prices in the other area. It has been good no doubt for the producers in the former area, but the consumers have not been grateful to the Government for having brought this about. That is the grievance amongst consumers in the Province.

Now, to proceed to what has been stated about Malabar on the one side and Cochin and Travancore on the other, I shall say little about the two latter States; I believe my Honourable friend Pandit Kunzru has dealt with them adequately. Those two States are the liability of the Government of India. They have got to find the whole of the deficiency which those States are in now with regard to their food supply. Malabar is a Madras liability. I believe the Government of Madras are quite willing to shoulder the whole of that liability. Conditions in Malabar have not been quite as satisfactory as in other districts of the Province. There was a considerable amount of dissatisfaction during December and January; I think it was more due to the miscalculation of local officers as to what the new harvests might bring on to the market and the Madras Government have taken

[Sir Gopaldaswami Ayyangar.]

adequate steps to increase the quantity that should be supplied to Malabar every month. It is about six weeks since I left Madras and I have not heard that conditions have grown worse in that area. But I should look confidently to the Madras Government solving this problem for themselves.

There is one thing, Sir, connected with food administration which I should advise the Government of India to insist on in every Province. Food administration touches the life of the people very intimately and unless any administration—even an autonomous administration—tries to seek advice and help from people in the different localities in all the various stages of food administration, I do not think as much success will be achieved in ensuring efficient administration as one ought to expect in such a connection. Madras, I think, has set an example in this respect. In fact, it is a policy which has since been recommended by the Gregory Committee and which, I think, the Government of India have blessed. Very early last year people belonging to the different political parties, Congressmen, Communists, Justices and Muslim Leaguers, all gathered together by themselves and tried to find out what would be the best method of ensuring satisfaction to the people, and they suggested to the Provincial Government to establish a Provincial Food Council and a Food Committee for each district, a sort of Vigilance Committee in each area and so on. The Madras Government have implemented all these. We have a Provincial Food Council there which meets every month and deals with all the various detailed aspects of food administration. The Government supply this Council monthly with information as to what quantities are sent to the deficit districts from the surplus districts during the previous month and which foodgrains or other foodstuffs are in defect in any particular area; also information with regard to manures, cattle, kerosene oil, sugar and all kinds of things which enter into the life of the common man in every district; and if there is more satisfaction—perhaps less dissatisfaction—with food administration in the Madras Province than there is elsewhere, it is because the Government—a section Government—have seen the wisdom of associating people in the various localities with the detailed administration of their food policy. I believe this also is a matter which the Honourable Mr. Hossain Imam referred to.

With regard to the "Grow More Food" campaign, I must frankly confess that I do not look forward to any very great addition to production of foodstuffs in this country as a result of this campaign. Personally it seems to me that it is essentially a long-term affair, and while diversion from commercial crops to food crops might yield a little more acreage under food crops and perhaps a little extension of cultivation,—a few acres in this village or a few acres in the other village might be added to the area under food crops,—the substantial addition which is necessary if we are to get out of our condition of deficiency in food supply in this country cannot, I am afraid, be had unless we wait for some years. I am afraid that piece-meal things like increasing the amount given in the way of agricultural loans from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 lakhs in each Province or perhaps saying that we won't collect assessment for the first two or three years, are not going to give us any very great help. I personally think that the problem of the supply of this deficiency in our food supply being immediate, Government should concentrate essentially on the importation of the deficiency from abroad in an adequate manner. I think, Sir, that they should not only import quantities sufficient to supply this deficiency but they should import sufficient quantities for the building up of reserves, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, which will make us fully secure with regard to our food supply. I do not want to take up too much of the time of the House but there is one point with regard to rationing which I think deserves the attention of the Government of India. We have now embarked upon a policy of introducing rationing in the cities and towns of the country. But this policy, unless it is accompanied by other measures, will probably, in the near future, transfer the problem we have got to tackle from the towns to the countryside.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: What are the other measures?

THE HONOURABLE SIE GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR: I am just about to mention, Sir.

Every system of rationing implies a system of effective price control. The consumer in the cities certainly gets an adequate ration at a reasonable price. But we do not extend this control beyond the city limits to the countryside. For instance, if we take rationing in my Province, it is certainly conducted quite efficiently; Madras city is almost a model in that respect with regard to rice. But you will be surprised to hear that towards the end of January or the beginning of February, while the price of rice in Madras was somewhere about $2\frac{1}{2}$ measures per rupee, 40 miles away, at the town of Conjeeveram where rationing had not then been introduced, and in the villages round about, it was something like 4 measures to the rupee.

THE HONOURABLE LT.-COL. SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR: How much is a measure?

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: If it is rice it is about 3 lbs.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR: Now, a discrepancy of that sort between the price in Madras city and in villages within a radius of 40 miles from it shows that there is something wrong in our system. The real trouble is this. In Madras city Government have undertaken the responsibility for procurement of stocks. These stocks are purchased in surplus districts, subject to ceiling prices, and imported into the city. The whole lot of wholesale merchants in rice have been eliminated and Government store all this rice in about half a dozen godowns in the city and issue it to retail dealers in the city. The retail price is also controlled. But outside this area, even in the surplus districts where purchases have to be made there is no effective control over the prices that are paid for quantities which are purchased by whose dealers not for export to Madras city or elsewhere—exports being controlled by transport permits—but for consumption in the district itself. They buy at prices sometimes less than what is paid to the grain purchasing officer, sometimes perhaps a little more than is paid to the grain purchasing officer. They sell to retail merchants at their sweet will and pleasure. There is no control over the prices at which a wholesale buyer in a district can sell to a retailer in the same district, while there is a price limit to what he could sell at in the deficit district to which he may be allowed to take the stuff. This is partial price control. I personally think, Sir, that a great deal of difficulty has been created in this country by partial, half-hearted price control measures in the past. If we are controlling the price of a single commodity we have got to control it wherever it is sold and bought. Not only that, we have got to control the price of such commodities as are analogous to it, as are derivatives from it, as are consumed by those who produce that commodity.

Now, rural areas will be a big problem in the future and I should advise the Government of India to take this problem in hand. There is of course the difficulty of whether we shall be able to introduce rationing in rural areas in a country of the size of India. It is a very big problem indeed. But I should command for consideration what the Gregory Committee themselves have said. viz

“As regards rural areas where there may also be serious malnutrition and shortage, general rationing is perhaps impossible, but in famine or semi-famine areas distribution cannot be left to the normal channels of trade and Government action is absolutely imperative”.

From what I have been able to gather as regards conditions in rural Bengal from the Honourable Members who have spoken upon this subject, I am afraid that a situation is developing in rural Bengal which more or less is on the lines indicated by the Committee and somebody has got to take that problem in hand and tackle it with efficiency.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: It exists even in cities in the deficit districts of Bengal.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR: That shows perhaps that procurement for those cities is not on the right lines. It is our experience in Madras that when the Madras Government relied entirely upon wholesale dealers for procurement purposes for Madras city the system was full of defects; it did not satisfy anybody. The Peoples Food Committee had to press on the Government the need for their eliminating wholesale dealers altogether and take over the procurement into their own hands. They did so and you have the present state of things which has elicited the approbation of everybody who has gone and seen it. Perhaps in Bengal they still leave procurement in the hands of those they call Government agents—

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: There are four chief agencies.

THE HONOURABLE SIR GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR. I think in a matter like that which is so essential a part of the food policy the Government of India should insist upon something more adequate than this. Of course it may not be possible to introduce rationing in rural areas on the same lines as in the cities. But the problem in rural areas is not of the same dimensions. The producers there have got their own stocks. The labourers on the land in very many places get their wages in kind, or if they do not, even if they get paid in cash, that cash they can insist on being converted into the old quantum of grain they used to get from their employers. But there are large sections of the population living in rural areas and in the smaller towns who are not dependent upon land, who are not working on the land, who have got to buy their foodstuffs. In their case it is necessary, I think, that Provincial Governments should be urged to undertake the task of opening Government shops in suitable areas for the purpose of selling foodgrains at reasonable prices. I have little more to say, Sir.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA (Food Member): Sir, I had no intention of taking part in this debate. The Director General of Food, Mr. Sen, has made a full statement of what the Government has been doing in connection with the food problem since the last debate in this Council and I thought that would have satisfied many of the members of the House. I find, however, that there are some misunderstandings and misconceptions and I would endeavour to remove them as far as I can. Sir, I will repeat that we have an all-India policy and we are working to that policy. This policy was introduced for the first time last September, I think it was, and we have done everything in our power to implement that policy. His Excellency the Viceroy in his various public utterances has made it plain that there is an all-India policy for food and the Government has every intention of working up to it. Sir, some of the speakers seemed to have been still in doubt as to whether the Centre means real business in this respect. I repeat that we take the fullest responsibility for the food problem of the country. But at the same time I would like the House to realise that there are autonomous Governments functioning in the Provinces, especially those Provinces where there is a Ministry. It is true that the Centre has accepted ultimate responsibility for the success of the food administration throughout India. In the discharge of that responsibility we exercise a close watch over the proceedings of Provincial Governments within their jurisdictions at every stage. Superintendence and control, however, must be exercised with judgment and discretion. We could not ride roughshod over every Provincial Government. We cannot be expected to assume direct responsibility for the details of the day-to-day administration in every Province. Whenever difficulties arise on policy or method or defect in the administration manifests itself, we have to consider, firstly, whether our active intervention is essential; secondly, what manner of intervention is most suitable and likely to achieve the purpose in view; thirdly, the extent to which it must be pressed. In a constitution of a federal nature, the constituent units, especially where a popular Ministry is functioning, must be allowed due scope in the exercise of the responsibilities with which they are charged. It must be remembered also that we

depend on the administration of the Provinces—the administrative machinery which the Provinces possess. This machinery we do not possess and so it is not physically possible for us to undertake the day-to-day administration of food in the Provinces. There have been occasions, Sir, when we have felt bound to press our views to the extent of issuing a direction and there have been and will doubtless be others in which, though not fully satisfied we have not felt justified in pressing our opinion to such lengths. Sir, the House is aware that in certain vital cases the Food Department has not hesitated to issue directions.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: What is the Government of India's policy in regard to Indian States? You have told us about the Provincial Governments.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Well, I will come to that in a minute, Sir. In the matter of directions, Sir, I know they are very unpalatable to the Province. They do not like them and in some cases, as the House is aware, I have come in for a great deal of criticism. But, Sir, I want to assure the House that these directions are issued only when we are satisfied that the other course which the Province proposes is not in the best interests of the country and so I would like to stress the fact that directions are a necessary concomitant of the all-India policy.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: The less the better?

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: The more the better!

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Sir, you have asked me as regards the Indian States. There we have no direct authority. We can only proceed by persuasion and I am glad to say, Sir, that most of the Indian States have fully co-operated with us in our policy. Almost every State has done so. There have been surplus States and there have been deficit States. Both of them have accepted our policy and carried it out.

I hope, Sir, I have made it plain to what extent the Centre can go in the exercise of its powers of supervision and control in the carrying out of an all-India policy. Sir, what are the main pillars of this all-India policy of ours? These have been given out before. In October last, when I was speaking in this House I gave seven major points. Judging from the way some members have spoken, I feel these points will bear repetition. These are:—

- (1) Stoppage of exports.
- (2) Procurement of imports.
- (3) Association of the public with our policy.
- (4) Extension of urban rationing.
- (5) Rigid enforcement of the Foodgrains Control Order.
- (6) Improvement of the procurement machinery.
- (7) Price control.

Sir, I have never heard any effective or serious challenge of these points.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What about transportation, Sir?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Well, that goes without saying.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: That is of no importance whatsoever!

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: It is of importance. I do not mean that, but it is not a cardinal pillar of our policy.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Whether food reaches the people or not, is not that a matter of cardinal importance?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Will the Honourable Member please let me proceed? He has had his chance.

I have never heard any effective or serious challenge of these points from any responsible quarter. On the contrary, I have been immensely gratified to see that these cardinal points have been advocated by quarters like the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce. If Honourable Members would look at the Resolution passed by the last meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. They will find that that body of responsible industrialists has advocated the adoption of exactly these points of policy.

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

Sir, the House might well ask how far have we implemented them? It is not for me to say that we have succeeded to a large measure. I think the country knows it. Our policy has been accepted publicly by all the

4 P.M. Provincial Governments and the Indian States and is being carried out by them. We have stopped the export of foodgrains; there are no more foodgrains going out of the country. We have already imported more than the annual requirements of foodgrains of non-Indian troops in India. We have incessantly pressed and will continue to press upon His Majesty's Government the necessity for substantial imports for civil consumption in India and to enable us to establish a reserve. The basis of our demand in this respect has been the Foodgrains Policy Committee's Report. As I have already said elsewhere 133 towns and 25 million people are now rationed in India, and we are pressing all Administrations to extend and perfect their organisation for this purpose. We have exercised constant pressure on Provincial Governments to improve the enforcement of the Foodgrains Control Order, and improvements in the Order itself are under constant and continual examination. There can be no finality in these things. We have likewise done all that we could to assist Provincial and State Administrations to improve their procurement machinery and we are now calling on them to examine what is necessary to enable them to go over to monopoly purchase when necessary. As the House knows, our ultimate objective is monopoly purchase of foodgrains.

I need not remind the House of the steps which we have taken in the matter of price control. The principle of statutory price control is now accepted throughout India. Even the Punjab has come into line. Although we have not yet reached the stage at which it has been possible to establish all-India prices for all foodgrains at the levels which we desire, we are constantly and consistently working towards that end. As you heard, a Price Advisory Committee has been formed, and it held its first meeting two days ago.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What is its personnel?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I am sorry I have not got the list of members here. It is a committee presided over by the Economic Adviser to the Government of India, Sir Theodore Gregory. It is the committee which was recommended by the Gregory Committee to determine the prices of foodgrains.

Sir, in the matter of association of the public with our work, I have been most anxious to do everything in my power. I receive every day numerous useful suggestions from people all over the country, and I can assure the House that every one of these receives our consideration. I have never objected or demurred to food debates, which have now become regular features of the Legislature here. As Honourable Members know, we agreed to allot a day for this debate here—

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What about the Assembly?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA:—but I did not object to the debate being extended to another day, busy though we are. Sir, I have not received any agreed request yet from the Assembly Parties. I believe some Parties want some day set apart, but there are others who do not want it. There is no agreement amongst Parties on this question. I shall have no hesitation, provided of course time can be found in the midst of other business, in acceding to their request.

I referred in my last speech here to the fact that I had decided to set up a Food Advisory Council. We have done this; we have issued invitations to 33 people, amongst whom two are ladies. We have not yet received the acceptances, but we hope that we shall soon have this Council going. The Council would be composed of leaders of public thought who are interested in the question of food. This Council will be a joint Council for my Department and for the Department of Education, Health and Lands, and will be presided

over by me. I hope to secure the co-operation of many top-rank leaders in our work through this Council. So far as association of the public goes, I think no blame can be levelled at us that we have not done our utmost. We have pressed on the Provincial Governments also to set up food Councils in accordance with the needs of each Province.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: How many have done it?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I believe seven have done so. There are some which have not yet done so, and I am still pressing them.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: Have you invited any members of the Legislature to be on the Advisory Council?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I am glad you have put me the question, Sir. There are one or two, but they are not there as members of the Legislature. We have a Standing Committee consisting of 15 members of the two Houses, and I consider that Committee to be the body through which members of the Legislature should advise us.

Sir, I am not looking for any bouquets, but I venture to think that the Food Department has, since last August, played a very important part in this country in relieving the food situation. Nobody regrets more than I do the appalling loss of life which has taken place in Bengal. But I am quite sure, Sir, that if the Food Department had not done what it did do, this loss of life would have been far greater and Bengal would have been faced with a bigger disaster. The Honourable Member from Bengal, Mr. Rezai Karim, mentioned yesterday that the Centre had undertaken to supply 793,000 tons of foodstuffs and up to the month of May or June had supplied only 73,000 tons. Sir, I am not able to say whether the figure of 73,000 tons is correct or not. But I can assure the House that during the last year we supplied Bengal with more than the basic plan quota. We supplied, I think, something over 800,000 tons of foodgrains so that Bengal can have no real cause for grouse against the Centre or against the surplus Provinces.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: But not at the psychological time.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Well, Sir, it was not the psychological time. That is my point. In the month of May they ought to have had their own crop. I do not think they had exhausted all their crop by May. That was not the psychological time, to my mind.

Now, Sir, I want to turn to Bengal. The period of the famine in Bengal was, as the House knows, from August to December and, as I have said a minute ago, it was the supreme effort made by the Centre during this period which saved Bengal from a still greater disaster.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: From August to December, Sir?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Yes, August to December. They were alright up to August.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: August to the present time?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: That may be the opinion of my Honourable friend. That is not mine.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: That is the opinion of the people who are suffering.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: It started much earlier, Sir,

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Sir, whatever may have been the case last year, conditions this year are entirely different. Whereas last year they had a comparatively poor crop, this year they have what is known beyond doubt to be—my Honourable friend Mr. Kunzru ought to know—a very large crop indeed. The second feature which is new is that in spite of the fact that this large crop exists, yet we have agreed to continue to import into Bengal a quantity of foodgrains equivalent to the whole of Calcutta's uptake for the year. We have done this in order to relieve the pressure on the Bengal districts

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

thereby restoring confidence and facilitating the success of the Bengal Government's *aman* procurement scheme. With the largest crop for years past the Bengal districts have only themselves to feed. The third new feature is that the City of Calcutta has been rationed. The Central Government and the rest of India have done, and are doing, all that could be reasonably asked of them and more. But they have done so because they know that what the Bengal Government have to face is in a sense a psychological problem among their own people. The food is there in plenty, the conditions for success have been created and the world and the rest of India will place a heavy share of responsibility on the Government and the people of Bengal if they fail to feed themselves this year. As I have said, Sir, whatever may have been the case last year, this year there is no shortage of foodgrain in Bengal. As it is, it is there in abundance—millions of tons of it. Our information, Sir, is that in Bengal the bulk of the grain is still with the producer. He, at any rate, has no doubt that it is there and there is nothing to prevent him keeping enough for himself and still providing amply for the deficit areas. If the producer holds it, it will, in my view, not be a case of any natural or excusable fear of future shortage. His chief motive will, I am afraid, be nothing else than greed for gain. I do not know whether my Honourable friends would describe that as hoarding or how they would describe it. But it is something against which it is the duty of every responsible citizen and of all who claim to lead representative opinion in India, particularly in Bengal, to set his face and use his influence.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What about those who encourage this habit?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Well, I have made my appeal to them. Honourable Members have rightly emphasised from time to time that confidence is the key to the problem, confidence not only that Government realise the extent or the limitations of their resources but also the magnitude of the administrative task involved. The public may be confident also that the Government now realise how many people stand to gain and make capital out of food and the distress of the common people. They know to their cost how far many are still prepared to go in the exploitation of the powerful human motives of fear and greed. For, it is these motives more than any actual shortage of food with which we are obliged to deal. We do not receive any notable help from the multitude of Miss Mayos and Governments are not aided in restoring the necessary confidence by being told in season and out of season that they are idle, incompetent and corrupt by persons who possess the power or ought to have the power to influence public opinion. I feel bound to add that Governments themselves do not add to their prestige by quarrelling among themselves or abusing their neighbours and those who are trying to assist them and bring order out of the chaos of vested local interests. I therefore, Sir, appeal to everybody to give us a hand in this very difficult task. It is no use, Sir, opening up every kind of stinking drain. This is time for work and it is only by united work that we can overcome the monster of famine.

Sir, I would like to say one word about transport as it has been mentioned by several speakers. An authoritative statement of the position has been made by the Secretary for War Transport, Sir Surendra Nath Roy. But I want Honourable Members to realise that there are many competing claimants for transport not only in Bengal but all over India. In the Eastern Region the fact that we are fighting the Japanese on a front of 1,500 miles long in some of the most difficult country in the world as well as supplying the great Republic of China must inevitably have its effects. A Committee under the auspices of the War Transport Department has been set up in the Eastern Region and it reviews at short periods the total transport available by road, by rail, by river and sea and allocates it according to the demands of the different competing claimants. The Provincial Governments and its needs are represented on this Committee by the Regional Controller of Priorities who is in daily, almost hourly, touch with the Movements Officer, Bengal Civil Supplies Department,

an experienced Major-General, with a large military staff whose main duty it is to plan for the steady and continuous movement of food and other commodities that are necessary to keep the civil population going according to a detailed and pre-arranged scheme. It is the constant concern of the Central Government to ensure that the needs of the Civil Supplies Department, for transport, and especially for food, are fully met.

Sir, I would like to refer to another matter in which the House may be interested. The Government of India appointed a Commission to enquire into the cost of milling the wheat supplied by the Provincial Government to the millers in Bengal and the prices at which the resultant products should be sold to the public. That Commission made its report and its report is now being considered by the Government of India in consultation with the Provincial Government. The Commission made certain recommendations regarding prices which were immediately put into effect by the Government of Bengal in advance of the full consideration of the report and the public has for some time past been enjoying the benefits of the resultant reductions.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: What is the reduction?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Cheaper flour.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: How much cheaper?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Flour is being sold now at Rs. 10-7-0.

I have already referred to the Calcutta Rationing Scheme. It is, I am glad to say, functioning fairly smoothly in spite of the teething troubles that it had. The two major points of criticism against it are the uneven quality of grains supplied through the rationing shops and the size of the ration. There have also been indications that the number of shops might with advantage be increased or that the number of persons registered with individual shops should be increased. The situation as to this is being closely watched by the Provincial Government and it can be hoped that they will take whatever steps are necessary to prevent undue delay in ration-card-holders procuring their supplies.

Now, Sir, as to the quality of the rice supplied, that must depend on the quality which is in the possession of the Government of Bengal. The Bengal Government acquired rice in the past from so many different sources but they did not exercise sufficient check on the quality. Some of that rice is now reported to be of inferior quality. We have under consideration a scheme under which in future the trouble of variations of quality will be got over. For the present we are doing our best to improve the quality which is being supplied to Calcutta ration-card-holders.

Sir, just one word about Travancore and Cochin and I have finished. Sir, I was not present in the House unfortunately when I believe my friend Pandit Kunzru made certain remarks about the position in Travancore and Cochin. Sir, we read a statement which Pandit Kunzru made after his visit to Travancore and Cochin. I think it was some time last January. We were surprised by that statement. As it was at variance with facts as we knew them we issued a contradiction, but after we had issued this contradiction we received a telegram from Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Dewan of Travancore, which reads as follows:—

"I have read with surprise Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru's statement regarding the food situation in Travancore and Cochin and also the Press note from Delhi, with which I wholly agree. Stop. The two States are greatly indebted to the Government of India for their solicitude and consider that Pandit Kunzru's opinion formed and published after a very hurried and imperfect survey of conditions in the States is panicky and exaggerated".

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Will the Honourable Member allow me to offer one word of explanation as soon as he has finished?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Well, let me finish.

The Dewan authorised us to publish this telegram but I did not want to do so as I do not believe in these controversies. Since we have again been challenged on the floor of this House I have been constrained to read this telegram and I have got other material here which contradicts in every detail the statement made by Pandit Kunzru.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Will the Honourable Member now give way?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: - Yes, I am ready to give way.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Sir, the statement that I made with regard to Travancore—that is, the inability of the Government of India to send there all the food that was needed and the consequent distress—is borne out by the speeches made by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar himself in the Food Conference that was held here in October. I have seen those speeches because they were sent to a friend of mine for me by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar himself. Besides when I had the pleasure of seeing him in Trivandrum he said again that he was well aware of the position in the State but that he was helpless because the Government of India could not supply adequate quantities of food.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: This certainly does not appear to be the case from the telegram that I have received.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: What is the date of this telegram?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: That was dated the 27th of January. I have three or four telegrams, one dated 7th of January, another dated 7th of February and so on, and if Pandit Kunzru would like to see them I would be very glad to show them to him. He has gone into details to show that Pandit Kunzru's facts were wrong.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I shall be glad if the Honourable Member will place the speeches of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar to which I have referred, before the House.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: This is what as a responsible man he says.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Place it on the table of the House.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Together with his speeches.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Just to give an indication, I shall read another telegram in which Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar has said:—

"Both the Dewan of Cochin and myself wish to record our great indebtedness to the Government of India for having come to our help at a very difficult juncture".

He then explains how Pandit Kunzru has gone wrong.

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: May I ask one more question? Did Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar also make a statement in the Committee here that the Government of India were not giving them supplies which they needed? Pandit Kunzru has referred to certain speeches. Are you aware of those speeches?

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Pandit Kunzru must have misread the speeches, because at the Conference I presided on he did not accuse us of any such thing. He has realised that whatever we have been able to do has been the maximum that was possible and he was very grateful for it.

THE HONOURABLE SIR DAVID DEVADOSS: He might have been thankful for small mercies, but the question is: Did he get enough? If I understand the controversy what Pandit Kunzru seems to have said is that they did not get enough. What Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar says is that he has got a lot.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Place his speeches on the table of the House. That will settle the matter.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Well, I do not want to raise a controversy. It has never been my intention to raise a controversy, Sir. I think this is an instance where we make statements which far from doing any good do a lot of harm

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: They are perfectly true.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: and I would beg every member of this House, including Pandit Kunzru, not to make the position more difficult at this stage.

THE HONOURABLE PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: Well, I cannot be a party to the suppression of facts.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Pandit Kunzru and every other member of the House is always welcome to come and tell me of any defects which he may find in the working of the food administration, but when without coming to me, without even meeting the officials, someone goes and makes a statement to the Press which undermines confidence, I ask you, Sir, is it rendering a service to the country at a time like this?*

Sir, I do not wish to criticise Pandit Kunzru. I do not doubt his bona fides but I make a request to him and I think he would be assisting not only the Treasury Benches, for whom he may have no regard, but he would be helping the country by resisting the temptation for undue publicity.

Sir, I have nothing more to say. I wish to thank the members of the House for the great moderation which they have shown in debating this question of food. I shall be glad to consider all the various suggestions that have been made and I shall do all that lies in my power to improve the situation. (Applause.)

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: There is one question which I would like to ask, Sir. The Government of India have gone to the aid of the Provincial Government of Bengal by taking over the responsibility for the supply of food to Calcutta. Now, as the Food Member probably knows—

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: You are not going to make a second speech?

THE HONOURABLE MR. G. S. MOTILAL: No, Sir. I am putting forward the point that there has been a lot of hoarding in Calcutta and also corruption. Will the Government of India also take over the responsibility with regard to the anti-hoarding measures in Calcutta or leave it to the Government of Bengal which has not been able to eliminate corruption and hoarding that prevailed.

THE HONOURABLE MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: Sir, I protest against the insinuation.

THE HONOURABLE SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: That is a controversial point: obviously two Honourable Members sitting close to each other do not seem to agree.

THE HONOURABLE THE PRESIDENT: The members themselves differ on this matter.

This concludes the debate on the food situation in India.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, the 22nd March, 1944.