

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

Official Report

Volume IV, 1943

(8th to 19th November, 1943)

NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1943



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Mr. N. M. JOSHI, M.L.A.

CONTENTS

Volume IV—8th to 19th November, 1943.

	PAGES.		PAGES.
MONDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 1943—		lection of Members to the Standing Com-	
Members Sworn	1	mittee for the Food Department	190—95
Starred Questions and Answers	1—22	Election of a Member to the Council of the	
Unstarred Question and Answer	22	Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	195—96
Statements laid on the Table	22—26	Motion re the Food Situation—Discussion	
Message from His Excellency the Governor		not concluded	196—224
General	26	SATURDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER, 1943—	
Statement re method of taking votes by		Starred Questions and Answers	225—48
division	26—27	Unstarred Questions and Answers	248—49
Motion for Adjournment re Non-official		Motions for Adjournment re—	
Delegation to Great Britain and United		Arrest of Mr. Pardiwalla, Barrister of	
States of America to speak on India's War		Lahore—Ruled out of Order	250
Effort—Adopted	27—28	Alleged inhuman Treatment to Mr. Jal-	
H. E. the Governor General's Assent to Bills	28	prakash Narain—Ruled out of Order	250—51
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succes-		The Victoria Memorial (Amendment) Bill—	
sion)—Petitions laid on the Table	29	Passed	251—52
Amendments to the British Baluchistan		The Code of Criminal Procedure (Second	
Motor Vehicles Rules	29	Amendment) Bill—Passed	252
The Hindu Code Part I, (Intestate Succes-		The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill	
sion)—Presentation of the Report of the		—Circulated	252—78
Joint Committee	30	The Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—	
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amend-		Passed as amended	278
ment) Bill—Presentation of the Report of	30	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment)	
the Select Committee		Bill (Amendment of section 503, etc.)—	
The Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill—		Passed as amended	278—79
Presentation of the Report of the Select	30	MONDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER 1943—	
Committee		Member sworn	281
The Indian Tea Control (Second Amendment)		Starred Questions and Answers	281—96
Bill—Introduced	30	Unstarred Question and Answer	297
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Second		Declarations of Exemption and Notification	
Amendment) Bill—Introduced	30	under the Registration of Foreigners	
The Victoria Memorial (Amendment) Bill—		Act	297—99
Introduced	30	Motion re The Food Situation—not concluded	299—343
The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill		TUESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER, 1943—	
—Introduced	80	Member sworn	345
The Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—		Starred Questions and Answers	345—58
Introduced	31	Unstarred Questions and Answers	358—59
Election of Members to the Delhi University		Motion for Adjournment re Failure to imple-	
Court	31	ment their Guarantee of Independence to	
TUESDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 1943—		Lebanon by the British Government—	
Member Sworn	47	Ruled out of Order	359
Starred Questions and Answers	47—80	Reconstitution of the House Committee	359
Unstarred Questions and Answers	80—82	Motion re the Food Situation—Discussion not	
Motions for Adjournment re—		concluded	359—401
Banning Publication of Bengal Governor's		Statement of Business	401
Order against the <i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>		WEDNESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 1943—	
—Ruled out of Order	83—84	Member Sworn	403
Failure to give Publicity to Mortality due		Starred Questions and Answers	403—38
to Starvation in Bengal—Not moved	84	Unstarred Questions and Answers	438—40
Failure to take Timely Action for prevent-		Point of Order re Motion proposing com-	
ing Acute Food Crisis in Bengal—Dis-	84	munication of formal address to H. E. the	
allowed		Governor General	440—41
Failure to consult the Legislature re Agree-		Election of Members to the Delhi University	
ment for United Nations Relief and		Court	441
Rehabilitation Administration—Ruled		Statements laid on the Table	441—42
out of Order	84—85	The Indian Tea Control (Second Amendment)	
Hunger-strike of Political Prisoners in		Bill—Passed	442—43
Bhagalpore Camp Jail—Ruled out of		The Indian Companies (Amendment) Bill—	
Order	86	Passed	443—44
Continuance of Central Government's		The Central Excise Bill—Referred to Select	
Subsidy to Sind—Ruled out of Order	86	Committee	444—45
Nomination of the Panel of Chairmen	86—87	The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succes-	
Resolution re Stabilization of Prices—Adopt-		sion)—Circulated	445—46
ed as amended	87—105	Motion re the Food Situation—Discussion not	
Statement of Business	105—06	concluded	446—73
WEDNESDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 1943—		THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 1943—	
Starred Questions and Answers	107—37	Starred Questions and Answers	475—93
Unstarred Questions and Answers	138—39	Unstarred Questions and Answers	493—94
Committee on Petitions	139	Motions for Adjournment re—	
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intestate Succes-		Conviction of Mr. P. E. Pathur under the	
sion)—Petitions laid on the Table	139	'Pegging Act in Durban—Ruled out of	
The Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment)		Order	494
Bill—(Amendment of section 100)—Motion		Ill-treatment meted out to Maulana Hussain	
to continue adopted	140	Ahmad Madni and other Muslim Secu-	
The Disolution of Muslim Marriages (Amend-		rity Prisoners—Ruled out of Order	495
ment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	140	Election of Members to the Standing Com-	
The Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment)		mittee for the Food Department	495
Bill—(Insertion of section 12B)—Motion		Election of a Member to the Council of the	
to continue adopted	140	Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	495
The Muslim Kazis Bill—Motion to continue		Motion re Food Situation—Discussion	
adopted	140	concluded	495—541
The Indian Evidence (Amendment) Bill—		FRIDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 1943—	
Motion to continue adopted	140	Member Sworn	543
The Indian Merchant Shipping (Amendment)		Starred Questions and Answers	543—58
Bill—Referred to Select Committee	140—43	Unstarred Questions and Answers	554—55
The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Bill		Statements laid on the Table	555—63
—Motion to refer to Select Committee—		Short Notice Question and Answer	563—64
Withdrawn	143—65	Resolution re Recruitment of Scheduled	
SATURDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 1943—		Castes to the Key Service of the Army—	
Starred Questions and Answers	167—83	Adopted	564—79
Unstarred Questions and Answers	183—89	Resolution re Reform of the Cantonment Ser-	
Election of Members to the Delhi University		vice—Withdrawn	579—88
Court	189		
The Central Excise Bill—Introduced	190		

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 16th November, 1943.

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

MEMBER SWORN.

Mr. Yeshwant Narayan Sukhthankar, C.I.E., M.L.A. (Government of India : Nominated Official):

STARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

(a) ORAL ANSWERS

TICKETS ISSUED FROM DELHI FOR DELHI-AMBALA SECTION RAILWAY STATIONS.

196. *Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state if it is a fact that the number of tickets issued from Delhi for stations situated on the main line towards Ambala are more than the seating accommodation in such trains, especially the Third, Inter, and Second classes? If not, what are the average figures for the months of June 1939 and June 1943?

(b) Is it a fact that owing to lack of sitting accommodation passengers have to stand in the compartment and outside?

(c) Have any passengers been injured or killed by falling down from the running trains in India during the period from 1st July, 1942 to the 30th June, 1943? If so, what are the figures for individual Railways?

(d) Has any compensation been paid to the relatives of the victims referred to in (c) above? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) I am aware that there is overcrowding in certain trains. The information asked for as regards the number of tickets issued and the seating accommodation provided for stations situated on the main line towards Ambala is not readily available.

(b) No. It is open to passengers who have taken tickets at a station, but who for want of room in the train cannot commence their journey, to apply to the Station Master who will refund the fare in full, provided the ticket is given up within 3 hours after the departure of the train. Reference is invited in this connection to rule 57 1 (i) of the Indian Railway Conference Association Coaching Tariff, No. 14, which is in the library of the House.

(c) Cases have been reported of passengers being injured or killed by falling down from the running trains during recent months. Railways keep a regular record of all accidents due to passengers falling or jumping out of carriages during the running of trains. The statement for the year 1942-43 will be shortly available and this will be placed on the table of the House.

(d) No compensation is payable by Railways to the relatives of those killed or injured unless such accidents are the direct result of negligence on the part of Railways. Travelling outside carriages is an unauthorised form of travel and those who insist on adopting that form of travel must be prepared to take the consequences. I would refer the Honourable Member, in this connection, to my answer to question No. 191 in the Legislative Assembly on 4th August, 1943.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I know if there is overcrowding on almost all the trains or only on a few trains, as the Honourable Member thinks?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: It varies considerably.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I also know that it is the railway servants and the policemen who travel on the footboards and it is they who set the example to others and that they should be stopped first from travelling on the footboards?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The Honourable Member has expressed an opinion.

STATIONS ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY HAVING EUROPEAN INSTITUTES FOR EMPLOYEES.

197. *Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state the names of the stations on the North

Western Railway where there are European Institutes for employees with the number of Members on the rolls of each of them on the 31st March, 1943?

(b) Is it a fact that the European Institute at Jind had only four members on its rolls on the 30th June last? If so, why is an Institute allowed to be maintained for such a small number of staff?

(c) What is the "minimum membership which entitles an Institute to function as such?" If no such limit has been fixed, is it proposed to fix some? If not, why not?

(d) What monetary and other aid by way of the rental value of the free housing accommodation, etc., was given by the North Western Railway Administration during the financial year 1942-43 to (i) the European Institutes, and (ii) the Indian Institutes?

(e) Is the aid given to the Railway Employees Institutes on racial considerations? If not, what are the other considerations?

(f) Is it proposed to give aid to the various Institutes on the number of members or to apportion the same in proportion to the number of the European and Indian employees on the Railway? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) I lay a statement on the table of the House.

(b) No, the number was six. The question of closing this Institute which has been in existence for many years is under consideration.

(c) No limit of membership has been laid down. It is not proposed to lay down any limit but each case will be considered on its merits.

(d) (i). The rental value of European Institutes was during 1942-43 nearly Rs. 42,000.

(ii) The rental value of Indian Institutes was during 1942-43 nearly Rs. 17,000, and a grant of Rs. 1,920 was made for meeting the rent of one non-railway building used as an Institute.

(e) No; the requirements of each Institute for performing their functions are the only consideration.

(f) On the North Western Railway the Headquarters Staff Benefit Fund Committee allots funds to the Divisional Committees on a *per capita* basis and the latter distribute the funds according to the needs of each institute. It is not proposed to make any change in this procedure.

Statement.

Name of the European Institute.	No. of members on the rolls of each Institute on 31st March, 1943.	Name of the European Institute.	No. of members on the rolls of each Institute on 31st March, 1943.
Delhi	52	Sukkur	27
Jind	6	Burt (Lahore)	226
Saharanpur	64	Quetta	46
Ambala Cantt.	28	Sibi	17
Kalka	17	Mach	7
Ghaziabad	15	Khanewal	22
Bhatinda	27	Multan Cantt.	18
Ferozepur Cantt.	23	Rawalpindi	66
Bahawalnagar	10	Peshawar Cantt.	15
Karachi Cantt.	97	Malakwal	13
Kotri	36	Moghalpura	155
Rohri	38		

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: In view of the fact that Indians and Europeans sit at table together nowadays, why should there be separate institutes for Indians and Europeans and why should Government spend money on these separate institutes?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The answer to that is found in the reply to part (f).

Mr. N. M. Joshi: May I ask in view of the fact that in course of time circumstances have changed and the need for separate European institutes is now

disappearing, will the Honourable Member institute an inquiry and find out whether these separate institutes are necessary and if at least some of them can now be converted into joint institutes?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I think I am correct in saying that such inquiries are taking place constantly on the different railways.

HARASSMENT OF RAILWAY STAFF BY POLICE.

198. *Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Has the attention of the Honourable Member for Railways been drawn to articles appearing in the *Railway Herald* of Karachi, dated the 30th August and 6th September, 1948, regarding harassment of railway staff by police? If so, does he propose to make a statement on the various incidents quoted therein stating what steps Government propose to take to relieve the railway staff from the police harassment and malpractices? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. The answer to the second part is in the negative but the matter is under inter-departmental investigation.

EQUALISING OF SCALES OF PAY OF GRADE V, EAST INDIAN RAILWAY.

199. *Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state if it is or it is not a fact that the scale of pay of grade V, East Indian Railway, prior to 1928 was Rs. 33-4-87, and that the new scales of pay were introduced in 1928 and 1934, which were Rs. 28-3-52 and Rs. 30-3-45/5-60, respectively?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that the new rates were introduced on the ground of cheapness of commodities and for reducing operating costs?

(c) Is it or is it not a fact that for the last four years there has been a considerable increase in the Railway earnings and in the prices of commodities and the new scales of pay are not sufficient for the incumbents?

(d) Is it or is it not a fact that the entrants in service after 1934, are a little better off than their seniors who entered service after 1928?

(e) In view of the present conditions and unequal treatment to the staff serving in the same grade, do Government propose to consider the advisability of reducing the old scale of pay and making it the same for all the staff?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) and (b). Yes.

(c) The answer to the first part is in the affirmative. As regards the second part, the inadequacy under present conditions of the wages of certain classes of Railway employees has been recognized and is the reason for the grant of a dearness allowance.

(d) Yes.

(e) Government have at present no intention of reducing old scales of pay.

TONGA STAND AT ROORKEE RAILWAY STATION.

200. *Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state if it is or it is not a fact that there was a Tonga Stand at the Roorkee Railway Station prior to 1924?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that in 1924 it was converted into a Third Class Waiting Shed, and that the Railway authorities held out a promise to construct a new Tonga Stand in 1926? If not, what are the real facts?

(c) Is it or is it not a fact that ever since then great inconvenience has been felt by the public for want of a Tonga Stand, specially in view of the increase in traffic due to Roorkee being headquarters of the Sub-Division and an important military centre with the Civil Engineering College, United Provinces Government Workshop, Offices of the Hydro-electric Department and other offices, and being the Railway Station of Piran Kalyar Mela and representations for a Tonga Stand have been made to the authorities by the public?

(d) In view of these considerations, do Government propose to consider the advisability of constructing a Tonga Stand, and removing this grievance of the public?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a), (b) and (c). The information asked for is not readily available and its collection would involve an amount of time and labour that would not be justifiable in war time.

(d) As Railway Administrations are competent to deal with such matters, a copy of the Honourable Member's question will be sent to the General Manager, East Indian Railway, for consideration.

YUGOSLAV DIE-CASTING EXPERT EMPLOYED AT KANCHRAPARA WORKSHOP.

201. *Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) for how many months the Yugoslav Die-casting Expert was employed in the Kanchrapara Shops;

(b) whether that expert has made any dies for die-casting, if so, for what items; and

(c) if the answer to (b) be in the negative, why this man was employed at all?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) For less than a month.

(b) No, but he was consulted from time to time on die-casting.

(c) He was employed on the preparation of jigs and fixtures.

CHINESE WORKMEN IN KANCHRAPARA WORKSHOP.

202. *Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Chinese workmen in the Kanchrapara Workshop;

(b) whether these Chinese workmen enjoy a higher rate of wages and get a special train to convey them from Calcutta to Kanchrapara; and

(c) whether the period of the up and down journeys is counted as overtime in their case?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) 704.

(b) Yes.

(c) No.

ASSISTANT OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT APPOINTED AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY IN THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SUPPLY.

203. *Mr. H. M. Abdullah: Will the Honourable Member for the Supply Department please state:

(a) if it is a fact that an Assistant of the Political Department with a pay of Rs. 350 was appointed as Assistant Secretary in the Directorate General of Supply in 1941;

(b) if it is a fact that he was reverted to his substantive appointment for delaying many important cases involving loss to Government; and

(c) if it is proposed to re-employ him in the Salvage Directorate as Assistant Director on Rs. 1,000; if so, why?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: (a) Apparently the Honourable Member is referring to the appointment of Mr. S. Narayanswami, who was previously employed in the Political Department. He was officiating as a Superintendent in his parent Department and was employed as a Superintendent in the Eastern Group Supply Council on a salary of Rs. 720 per month, just before his appointment as Assistant Secretary in the Directorate General of Supply.

(b) Orders for his reversion to his substantive appointment were passed for delaying a number of cases. These delays did not involve any loss to Government.

(c) He has been appointed as Assistant Director, Salvage, at Bombay on a salary of Rs. 800 per month. It was decided after full consideration of the case that it was not necessary to revert him to his parent-Department.

BENGALI AND MADRASI OFFICERS IN THE RAILWAY RATES TRIBUNAL OFFICE, CALCUTTA, AND ASSAMESE AND BENGALI OFFICERS IN THE MADRAS AND SOUTHERN MAHRATTA AND SOUTH INDIAN RAILWAYS.

204. *Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam: Will the Honourable the Railway Member be pleased to state the number of Bengali and Madras officers in the Railway

Rates Tribunal Office, Calcutta, and the number of Assamese and Bengali officers in the Madras and Southern Mahratta and South Indian Railways?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The information asked for is not available and I regret that I cannot undertake to compile it.

TRIAL OF TICKETLESS TRAVELLERS BY A RETIRED MAGISTRATE IN THE SIND AREA OF NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

205. *Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state if it is a fact that a retired Magistrate has recently been appointed in the Sind Area of the North Western Railway to try cases of people on the spot, who are alleged to have been found travelling without ticket?

(b) Is it a fact that none of such persons has been dealt with under section 113 of the Indian Railways Act, but all of them are challaned under section 112, and is it the Magistrate's conception that all persons having no ticket come under section 112?

(c) If the reply to part (b) above be in the negative, does the Honourable Member propose to lay a statement on the table of the House showing the number of passengers dealt with under sections 112 and 113. separately, since the appointment of the Magistrate?

(d) Is this Magistrate paid by the Railway or the Provincial Government of Sind?

(e) Is it a fact that the fines inflicted by the Magistrate are too heavy?

(f) Do Government propose to issue instructions to the Railway Magistrate pointing out the difference between sections 112 and 113, and asking him to record his reasons for the differences? If not, why not?

(g) Will the Honourable Member please refer to the Honourable Sir Andrew Clow's speech in the final stage on the Indian Railways Amendment Bill, published on page 1059 of the Legislative Assembly Debate for Wednesday, the 5th March, 1941, wherein an assurance was given that the administrative machinery would be improved so that there was little possibility of abuse to the public? What improvements have been achieved in this direction?

(h) Is it a fact that the passengers experience much inconvenience in obtaining tickets owing to late opening of ticket windows at stations and guards refusing to issue certificates to travellers who are unable to obtain tickets in time? What steps do Government propose to take to enquire into and to remedy this state of affairs?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) Yes.

(b) and (c). Information is not available, nor do I propose to call for it. Framing of charges under the appropriate section of the Indian Railways Act is a matter for the Magistrates concerned and not for Railways.

(d) The expenditure involved is borne by the Provincial Government of Sind.

(e) I am not prepared to pass an opinion on the judicial findings of a Magistrate.

(f) No, it is not for the Railway Department to issue instructions to Magistrates.

(g) By Railways securing the agreement of Provincial Governments to the appointment of Special Magistrates, an improvement of the administrative machinery is secured. The early disposal of cases of ticketless travel, made possible by the appointment of Special Magistrates, causes as little inconvenience as practicable to the public, and ensures an increased measure of protection against ticketless travel.

(h) I would suggest to the Honourable Member to bring up specific instances of late opening of ticket windows and the failure of the guards to issue certificates to the notice of the Local Advisory Committee for Karachi, of which the Honourable Member is a member. I should, however, add that the increase in the number of passengers and the reduction in the number of trains, unfortunately necessary, has necessitated a regulation in the hours of opening of ticket windows and has probably prevented the guards of trains from complying with the request for the issue of certificates to the full extent of the demand by passengers.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Has the railway any control over these magistrates?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: No.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I also know if the Honourable Member will give the policy of the railway, which was announced in the House by the Honourable Member's predecessor to the effect that magistrates will be asked to act according to certain policies and not according to their own inclinations?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I am not aware what policy the Honourable Member refers to.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: I have mentioned in my question what the policy is: will the Honourable Member send him a copy of the debate in this House in which that policy was laid down, that there will be a great distinction between 112 and 113, which he is discarding altogether?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: No; I am not prepared to give any such undertaking without further consideration.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: May I know if the Honourable Member wants that he should act autocratically as he likes to the detriment of the public?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I have no doubt he is doing his duty.

MALTREATMENT OF CERTAIN *Muccadams* AT QUETTA STATION BY ANTI-CORRUPTION DEPARTMENT.

206. ***Mr. Lalchand Navalrai:** (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state if certain *Muccadams* working on the Quetta Station were maltreated and beaten during the recent investigation by the people of the Anti-corruption Department?

(b) What steps have Government taken in that connection? If none, why?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) The information available to Government is that no *Muccadams* working at Quetta were maltreated during the investigation by the anti-corruption staff.

(b) Does not arise.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Were any *muccadams* examined by the Anti-Corruption Committee?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I have not the file with me. I think they were, but there was no maltreatment.

FACILITIES FOR PILGRIMAGE TO ARABIA BY LAND ROUTES.

207. * **Mr. H. M. Abdullah:** Will the Leader of the House kindly state what kinds of facilities have been provided for Indian pilgrims who have been denied the use of pilgrim ships but are keen to go to holy places in Hedjaz by land routes?

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed: The attention of the Honourable Member is invited to the *Press Communique* issued by Government on the 9th September, 1948, a copy of which is laid on the table.

Press Communique.

The Government of India announced on August the 11th that owing to the danger to which pilgrim ships and their passengers would be exposed by enemy action, no arrangements could be made for the Haj pilgrimage this year by sea. Government have consequently been investigating the possibility of pilgrims proceeding by land routes. These may be described as follows:

(i) *Via* Iraq.

(ii) *Via* Kuwait and Bahrain.

(iii) *Via* Iran.

2. The first two routes involve a lengthy sea journey from India up the Persian Gulf, and are therefore open to the same objection as the route *via* Jeddah. Moreover the Government of India have learned from His Majesty's Representatives in Iraq and the Persian Gulf that neither at Baghdad and Zubair nor at Bahrain and Kuwait is there any motor transport available for pilgrims. Thus even if pilgrims reached these places where they would not be welcome unless they brought their own food, it is certain that they would not be able to proceed further by car. Nor can the third route *via* Iran be recommended. Public motor transport services are no longer available in that country; and food is expensive and not always easily obtainable.

3. Any who contemplate travelling in their own cars *via* Iran are reminded that they must obtain an export licence from the Directorate General of Supply, New Delhi and that it is impossible to purchase either spare parts or tyres in any country on the route to the Holy places. It follows; that the smallest breakdown may result in their being

unable to complete their journey. The roads are reported to be very rough and the likelihood of breakdowns occurring is very great.

4. The Saudi Arabian Government, who have been consulted in the matter, decline all responsibility with regard to transport for pilgrims travelling overland and will not be able to spare any cars to assist overland pilgrims in case of breakdowns on the long and difficult journey across Arabia.

5. In publishing this information the Government of India are actuated only by a desire to enable intending pilgrims to avoid fruitless expenditure and unnecessary disappointment.

NEW DELHI;

The 9th September, 1943. Asstt. Secy. to the Govt. of India, External Affairs Department.

I. S. GONSALVES,

Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali: Is it possible for us to know whether any arrangement is possible and by what time it will be completed?

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed: It is not possible.

IMPORT OF AMERICAN PLANTS FOR MANUFACTURING SULPHURIC ACID.

208. ***Mr. H. M. Abdullah:** Will the Honourable the Supply Member please state:

(a) if it is a fact that four plants are being imported from the United States of America under the Lease-Lend arrangement for the manufacture of sulphuric acid;

(b) the names of the firms on whose behalf the plants are being imported; and

(c) how much advance money has been paid by those firms?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: (a) Government have asked for 4 contact type sulphuric acid plants on Lease-Lend. The demand has not yet been agreed to by Lease-Lend authorities in the United States of America.

(b) These plants are not being sought on behalf of any particular firm. There are numerous applicants. Allocation would be considered if and when it is known that plants will be received.

(c) This question does not arise.

Mr. Muhammad Azhar Ali: May I know from the Honourable Member when these plants are arriving and when the shipping arrangement will be complete?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: I do not know whether the plants are arriving at all. We have not yet received the approval of the Lease-Lend authorities for the supply of these plants.

Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani: Will the Honourable Member consider the claims of Muslim firms, if any?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: They will not only be pleased but they will have to consider the claims of every one.

METEOROLOGICAL COMMITTEE.

209. ***Khan Bahadur Shaikh Fazl-i-Haq Piracha:** Will the Secretary for Posts and Air please state:

(a) the functions, constitution and the personnel of the Meteorological Committee; and

(b) the time when the term of office of its present members expires?

Sir Gurunath Bewoor: (a) and (b). The Honourable Member is apparently referring to the Meteorological Co-ordination Committee. This is an inter-Departmental Committee constituted informally for the purpose of securing co-ordination between the Air Force Meteorological Organisation and the Civil Meteorological Organisation and facilitate quick decisions. The Director General of Observatories is the Chairman, and the members are—the Chief Meteorological Officer, Air Headquarters, the Superintending Meteorologist, and the Meteorologist acting as Liaison Officer, the last named being the Secretary of the Committee. Representatives of the Army, the Navy and the United States of America Air Force are invited to attend the Committee as

and when necessary, according to the subjects discussed. There is no term of office prescribed for the members.

MOTOR VEHICLES SUPPLIED TO THE TRADE FOR SALE TO PUBLIC.

210. *Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: Will the Honourable Member for War Transport please state:

(a) whether the motor vehicles supplied to the Trade for sale to the members of the public who satisfy the test of essentiality are supplied at cost; and

(b) the percentage of profit that is allowed to the Trade on such transactions?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: (a) Chassis for transport vehicles are delivered to dealers at approximately cost price, *plus* a small remuneration to distributors.

(b) The dealer receives a commission at a flat rate of Rs. 300 per vehicle, over the price fixed for the chassis.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: May I ask if any departmental costs are added in arriving at the cost?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: Not, so far as I am aware.

COMPENSATION FOR AIR-CONDITIONING SETS REQUISITIONED FROM PRIVATE OWNERS.

211. *Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: Will the Honourable the Supply Member please state;

(a) the policy of Government in connection with payment of compensation for air-conditioning sets requisitioned from private owners;

(b) whether the price is based on replacement value or on the original value; and

(c) whether there is any variation in regard to assessment of value of such sets from the practice followed by Government when sets are purchased or acquired from the trade?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: (a) and (b). The policy of Government in fixing compensation is based on the principle that compensation shall not include any appreciation in value due to war conditions. The intention is that no one should benefit at the expense of the public from restrictions imposed owing to the war. The amount of compensation must also depend on the actual condition of the article, *i.e.*, allowance must be made for depreciation and wear and tear. Compensation for air-conditioning sets requisitioned by Government is therefore based on the original cost *plus* repair charges, if any, *less* depreciation at 10 per cent. per annum, *plus* installation and restoration charges.

(c) No.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: May I ask the Honourable Member if his attention has been drawn to a leading article in the *Statesman* about the 20th October last, entitled "requisitioning", wherein it was mentioned that an officer of Government had obtained a set through the Government which he advertised for sale at a price in the *Statesman* which was nearly twice the price he paid for it?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: My attention has not been drawn to that. I do not know what I am expected to do even if my attention had been drawn to it, unless precise particulars are furnished.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: If the Honourable Member will make enquiries he will know what he should do.

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: I will look into it.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Will the Honourable Member state whether any of these sets have been resold by Government?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: Not to my knowledge.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Has the Honourable Member got a list of the distribution of these sets—who has got these sets and how they are being used now?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: I have not got it but I am certain somebody in the Supply Department has got the figures.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Will the Honourable Member see that these are being used for proper purposes since they have been taken?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: I shall look into it.

Mr. C. P. Lawson: I quite appreciate his point regarding depreciation but may I ask the Honourable Member whether his department has taken into account the normal advance in the price of all commodities and all machines of this kind before making compensation?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: If my Honourable friend means by 'normal advance' replacement cost of the article at the present moment I venture to state that replacement cost cannot be a test where there is no replacement possible now or as long as one can look ahead. If we were in normal days this might be taken into consideration, but in times like these when no air conditioning plant is now coming through the trade channel and if it can come at all it can come only on Lease-Lend, the question of replacement cost or what my Honourable friend says, normal advance in prices cannot be a factor to be taken into account.

Mr. C. P. Lawson: I quite appreciate that replacement cost cannot possibly come into this, but does the Honourable Member not think that if replacement cost is impossible and unfair, the pre-war cost or invoice cost less depreciation is equally unfair?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: The policy has been settled in consultation with the Finance Department who have the largest say in the matter. I shall endeavour to have this question re-examined in consultation with the Finance Department if necessary.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Is the Honourable Member aware that there are sets for sale at profiteering prices?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: We would like to know where they are. We would like to requisition them.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: That is exactly the point. If the Honourable Member will make enquiries he will find that sets are for sale, while private individuals have been made to give up their sets?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: If the Honourable Member has got any information, I shall be grateful to him if he can furnish it to me.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: The Honourable Member's department has only got to make enquiries in the city of Delhi.

Mr. E. L. C. Gwilt: May I ask the Honourable Member whether he is prepared to issue a statement of the number of air-conditioning sets that have been requisitioned and have been handed over to hospitals and those that have been handed over to departments of Government?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: If the Honourable Member will please put down a question to that effect he will get the information at the next session.

MUSLIMS RECRUITED TO CERTAIN POSTS IN GUN AND SHELL FACTORY, COSSIPORE:

212. *Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Will the Honourable the Supply Member please state:

(a) how many Muslims have been recruited to the following posts in the Gun and Shell Factory, Cossipore, including the Dum Dum Branch:

- (i) Officers (Gazetted),
- (ii) Foreman,
- (iii) Assistant Foreman,
- (iv) Store-holder, and
- (v) Assistant Store-holder; and

(b) how many new posts have been created in the above Factory, since the war started, and what the proportion is of Muslims in comparison with Hindus and others in the above category of posts?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: (a) One as Assistant Foreman.

(b) 81 posts. I lay a statement on the table of the House.

Category of Posts.	Muslims.	Percentage.	Hindus.	Percentage.	Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans.	Percentage.	Europeans.	Percentage.	Jews.	Percentage.
(i) Officers (Gazetted).	Nil	Nil	2	16.6	Nil	Nil	10	83.3	Nil	Nil
(ii) Foremen .	Nil	Nil	3	20	3	20	9	60	Nil	Nil
(iii) Assistant Foremen	1	2.63	14	36.84	14	36.84	8	21.06	1	2.63
(iv) Storeholders	Nil	Nil	1	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
(v) Assistant Storeholders.	Nil	Nil	2	50	1	25	1	25	Nil	Nil

RAILWAY BOARD RULES *re* SELECTION BOARDS FOR PROMOTION TO SELECTION POSTS.

213. *Mr. H. M. Abdullah: Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state:

(a) whether the rules regarding the constitution of Selection Boards for promotion to selection posts have been revised by the Railway Board recently; if so, if the Honourable Member proposes to place a copy of the instructions issued in this connection in the Library of the Central Legislature;

(b) whether the Selection Boards are constituted to make a definite act of selection, and whether they are directed to fix the order of merit of the candidates so selected; and

(c) whether or not appeals against the decisions of the Selection Boards are permissible, and whether the order of merit fixed by a Selection Board is liable to revision by an authority other than the Selection Board?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) The revision of the rules in question is under active consideration.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

PROMOTION OF SUBORDINATES TO LOWER-GAZETTED SERVICE IN TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT, NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

214. *Mr. H. M. Abdullah: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state the criteria for the promotion of subordinates to the Lower Gazetted Service in the Traffic Department of the Operating and Commercial Branches of the North Western Railway?

(b) Is it a fact that some years ago all such promotions were given, as a general rule, to Traffic Inspectors and station staff?

(c) If the reply to (b) above is in the affirmative, when and why was this practice stopped?

(d) Is it a fact that Superintendents and Head Clerks are promoted to the posts in the Lower Gazetted Service in the Commercial Branch now-a-days?

(e) How many Head Clerks have been promoted as officers in the Lower Gazetted Service, and how many of these appeared before a duly constituted Selection Board and were not selected for the post of Office Superintendent?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) While the criteria cannot be precisely defined the qualities which are required of an officer are well understood by the competent authorities.

(b) No, promotions were not confined to such staff.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Yes, they are considered for such promotion along with other staff and are promoted if considered suitable.

(e) The Honourable Member has not specified the period to which he refers. There are at present four Head Clerks who are officiating in the Lower Gazetted Service in the Transportation (Traffic) and Commercial Departments and all of them are borne on the list of clerks approved for posts of office Superintendents.

Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani: May I know whether the criteria for promotion of subordinate officers on the N. W. R. are different from other Railways?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: My answer was that the criteria cannot be precisely defined. The qualities which are required of an officer are well understood by the competent authorities.

**COMMUNAL COMPOSITION OF SUPERINTENDENTS AND HEAD CLERKS
(ESTABLISHMENT) ON NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.**

†215. ***Mr. H. M. Abdullah:** Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state the communal composition of Superintendents and Head Clerks, Establishment, on the North Western Railway on the 1st October, 1943?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The statement which I lay on the table gives the information readily available.

Statement showing communal composition of Superintendents and Head Clerks, Establishment, on the N. W. Railway on 1st October, 1943.

	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh.	Total.
Superintendent, Establishment, Headquarters Office	1	1
Assistant Superintendent, Establishment, Headquarters Office	..	1	..	1
Head Establishment Clerks	10	4	1	15

REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH AIR FORCE CONFERENCE, LONDON.

216. ***Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** Will the Secretary for Posts and Air please state:

(a) whether the Government of India have received the plan which is reported to have been evolved at the Commonwealth Air Conference held in London recently; if so, if it is proposed to place a copy of the same on the table;

(b) the views expressed by the representatives of Government who were delegated to the Commonwealth Air Conference; and

(c) whether the Government of India have taken any decisions on the plan or report; if so, what they are?

Sir Gurunath Bewoor: The Honourable Member is referred to the replies given by me to starred question No. 16 put by Mr. K. C. Neogy and starred question No. 21 put by Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh on 8th November, 1943.

POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION IN INDIA.

217. ***Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari:** Will the Secretary for Posts and Air please state if the Government of India have any comprehensive plan for the post-war development of civil aviation on the lines on which various other Dominions as well as foreign Governments are reported to have? If so, do Government propose to publish this plan for the information of the public so as to allow full opportunity to the public to address itself to the problem and make its views known to Government?

†Answer to this question laid on the table, the questioner having exhausted his quota.

Sir Gurunath Bewoor: The Honourable Member is referred to the reply given to part (c) of Mr. Govind V. Deshmukh's starred question No. 21 in this House on the 8th November 1943.

REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH AIR FORCE CONFERENCE, LONDON.

218. *Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: Will the Secretary for Posts and Air please inform the House:

(a) if before committing themselves to any plan that might have been agreed upon at the Commonwealth Air Conference, the Government of India will consult the Legislatures as well as Indian commercial interests;

(b) if the Government of India intend not to countenance any proposals which are not in the interests of Indian nationals and which in the international sphere discriminate between Indian interests on the one hand and British and foreign interests on the other;

(c) if Government of India will see to it that no non-national interests are allowed to acquire ownership and control of civil air lines in the country, and that fullest opportunity and assistance is given to Indian national interests to run air lines in the country;

(d) if in any plan that may be formulated either here in India or anywhere else in regard to civil aviation, accredited representatives of Indian public opinion and commercial community will be associated with the delegation that might represent India on such Conferences; and

(e) if without effective consultation with such representatives on all vital matters connected with the development of civil aviation, Government proposes to enter into any commitments with any other Government?

Sir Gurunath Bewoor: (a) As I have already stated in reply to certain previous questions in this House, the Air Conference held recently in London was for the oral exchange of views and the discussions were of an informal and exploratory character. The conclusions are only provisional and there is no question of Government committing themselves to any plan at this stage.

(b) The Government of India can never have any such intention. On the other hand, they are confident that the development of Indian Air Services will have full scope for development as a result of any agreements that they may enter into.

(c) I would refer the Honourable Member to the reply I gave to parts (a) and (b) of Mr. K. C. Neogy's starred question No. 247 on the 9th of August, 1943.

(d) This would depend on the character of the Conference on which India is represented and representatives would be selected accordingly.

(e) Government are always prepared to receive representations and views from all persons interested in the development of civil aviation and would give their careful consideration to them but consultation with any particular interests would depend upon the circumstances of each case.

SUB-DIVISION OF CONTRACTS ON COMMUNAL BASIS ON RAILWAYS.

219. *Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya: Will the Honourable Member for Railways please refer to the policy laid down in the Railway Board's letter No. 857-T, dated the 25th May 1940, regarding the sub-division of contracts on a communal basis, viz., "That it has come to the Board's notice that a Railway has recently divided long standing Hindu Fruit Contracts at certain stations into separate contracts for Hindus and Mohammadans. The Board consider that the decision to divide contracts on a communal basis would not accord with the intention of the principle laid down in paragraph 2 (a) of the Board's letter, No. 857-T, dated the 11th May 1940. I am, accordingly, to state that the Railway Board desire that, as far as practicable you should refrain from sub-dividing existing contracts on communal basis.", and state if this policy or

principle is carried out by the North Western Railway at Delhi, Lahore, Amritsar and other important stations on that Railway? If not, what are the reasons therefor?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Yes, and I have no reason to suppose that this policy has not been followed by the N. W. Railway ever since the issue of the letter referred to by the Honourable Member.

TWO DEAD BODIES FOUND NEAR RAILWAY LINES BETWEEN DALPATPUR AND MUNDA PANDEY RAILWAY STATIONS.

220. *Mr. Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyaya: Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state:

(a) if it is or it is not a fact that on or about the 11th or 12th July, 1948, two persons were found dead near the Railway Lines between Dalpatpur and Munda Pandey Railway Stations (Moradabad-Bareilly Section) on the East Indian Railway;

(b) the cause of their death, whether they were thrown down by the running train or otherwise; and

(c) the verdict of the enquiry?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a), (b) and (c). No, but I understand that on the 18th July one person was run over and killed while trespassing on the track between Dalpatpur and Munda Pandey. The Police report shows that the incident was not due to the fault of the Railway Administration, or their servants.

SURPLUS WAGONS AT DEPOTS IN COALFIELDS OF BENGAL AND BIHAR AND RAISING OF COAL OUTPUT.

221. *Mr. K. O. Neogy: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether it is a fact that in recent weeks a very large number of surplus wagons have been lying idle in the different Depot stations in the coal fields of Bengal and Bihar for want of sufficient indents from the collieries due to shortage of coal? If so, what is the number of such wagons week by week?

(b) Is it a fact that, of late Government have been considering the question of increasing the output of coal?

(c) Is it a fact that the potential capacity of the smaller collieries to increase their output is greater than that of the bigger collieries? Have Government any proposal under consideration for giving any special facilities by way of an enlarged public supply of wagons to the smaller collieries with a view to helping the increase of the output of coal?

(d) Does the Honourable Member propose to place on the table a statement of the suggestions, if any, made by the different trade organisations and other individual members of the trade for increasing the output of coal, as well as the opinions of the technical experts of the Government of India on the relevant points in so far as they may concern the Honourable Members' departments?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) Since the resumption of traffic on the E. I. Railway main line, coal loading in the Bengal and Bihar fields has not been up to the level of wagons available and the balance of wagons left over after all allotments had been made was on the increase. The figures asked for are not readily available.

(b) Yes.

(c) No, Sir. The surplus of transport is due to the serious drop in the raisings of coal. This again is primarily due to a shortage of labour, which affects all collieries, big and small, alike. In order to make the most effective use of the wagons available, various inducements were given to all collieries. For example, the associations of the coal trade were asked to give figures of any stocks of coal of low grade lying at any colliery so that arrangements

could be made to move that coal, special wagon supplies were allotted to industries that could secure coal, consumers were permitted to draw supplies of coal from whichever source available, and the loading of hard coke produced by the non-by-product plants was permitted. Unfortunately, some of the steps taken produced a detrimental effect on the equitable distribution of coal and were discontinued. The re-introduction of the old "public" supply system of allotment was considered in consultation with the coal trade associations and it was agreed that this would be extremely harmful as it would allow large quantities of coal to go into the black market.

(d) No, Sir. The suggestions received from associations relate mainly to matters which do not affect the departments under my control, but I shall be prepared to give information on any specific points affecting my departments, which the Honourable Member may have in mind. A printed pamphlet has also been received from one individual member of the coal trade and this is doubtless in the hands of the Honourable Member.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

NON-INCLUSION IN STATE RAILWAY ESTABLISHMENT CODE OF PROVISIONS OF RULE 7 OF RAILWAY SERVICES (CLASSIFICATION, CONTROL AND APPEAL) RULES.

32. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether the provisions of rule 7 of the Secretary of State for India, Railway Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules ensuring that nothing in the said rules or any rule framed thereunder shall operate to deprive any person of any right or privilege to which he is entitled:

(i) by or under any law, or

(ii) by the terms of any contract or agreement subsisting between such person and Government on the date these rules came into force,

have been embodied in the State Railway Establishment Code or any other Code framed and issued by the Governor General in Council under Section 241(2) of the Government of India Act 1935?

(b) If the reply to (a) above be in the affirmative, will the Honourable Member please refer to the specific provision of the rules on the point?

(c) If the reply to (a) above be in the negative, why has not such an important provision been included in the Railway rules? Is it proposed to do so now? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) No, the provisions of rule 7 of the Railway Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules have not been included in any of the Codes issued by the Governor General in Council under Section 241(2) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Because the inclusion of provision in this sense was not felt to be necessary.

EXTENSIONS OF SERVICE TO STATE RAILWAY GAZETTED OFFICERS.

33. Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state the number of gazetted officers, separately, in each State-managed Railway, (i) who are on extension of service on the 1st September, 1948, and (ii) who were due to retire after the 1st September, 1948, but have been given extension of service to commence from the date of their retirement?

(b) How many officers from each Railway have been lent for service with the Defence or other Departments in connection with the war?

(c) If the number of officers on deputation in connection with the war is less than those on extension, is it proposed to reduce the number of officers on extension to enable the lower grade officers to get their due promotions? If not, why not?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) and (b). The attached statement gives the required information.
(c) Does not arise.

Railway	Statement.		
	No. of Officers on extension of service on 1-9-43	Officers due to retire after 1-9-43, whose services have been extended.	Officers lent to the Defence and other Departments in connection with the war. Position on 1-9-43.
B. & A.	10	1	23
B. B. & C. I.	17	2	31
E. I.	29	5	42
G. I. P.	19	4	21
N. W.	18	4	37
O. & T.	2	1	13
Total	95	17	167

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT THEIR GUARANTEE OF INDEPENDENCE TO LEBANON BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have received notice of a motion for the adjournment of the business of the House from Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi. He wants to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the failure of the Government of India to persuade His Majesty's Government to implement their guarantee of Independence to Lebanon and to restrain the French Committee from acting in a tyrannical and oppressive manner which is so prejudicial to the progress of the war and the solidarity of the United Nations.

Is that the responsibility of the Government of India?

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi. (Dacca cum Mymensingh: Muhammadan Rural): Why not?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I hold it is not. The motion is out of order.

RECONSTITUTION OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I have to inform Honourable Members that I have decided to re-constitute the House Committee which was set up by me in February 1935. I accordingly nominate the following members to the Committee:

- (1) Mr. A. C. Datta (Chairman),
- (2) Sir F. E. James,
- (3) Dr. Sir Ziauddin Ahmad,
- (4) Mr. N. M. Joshi,
- (5) Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta,
- (6) Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee,
- (7) Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan,
- (8) Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra,
- (9) Mr. G. V. Deshmukh,
- (10) Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait,
- (11) Sardar Sant Singh,
- (12) Sardar Mangal Singh.

MOTION RE THE FOOD SITUATION.—contd.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Before the House proceeds with the debate on the motion regarding the food situation in India, I should like to know whether it is agreed that there shall be a time limit on speeches today?

Dr. P. N. Banerjee (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Before

I speak on that, I should like to inform you that the Honourable the Leader of the House and the Honourable the Food Member have agreed that the debate on the food problem will be continued on Thursday, provided that official business is finished on Wednesday. If necessary, the closure will be moved at the end of the day and the Party Leaders will support this closure motion.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If the business is not finished?

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: In case the business is not finished, then the closure will be moved but we are all hoping that it will be.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Closure can only be moved with respect to a debate that is going on on a motion. If there has been sufficient debate, then the House will accept the closure. Otherwise not. There cannot be a closure that there should be no business on any particular date or particular hour.

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed (Leader of the House): The position is that we are prepared to allot Thursday for the continuation of this debate, provided we are guaranteed that our legislative business will be finished tomorrow. This can only be done if the House, as a whole, will agree to the President applying closure to the motion, when the last Bill may be under discussion. We may be safe in assuming that the official business will be finished tomorrow.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The best thing would be for the Leader of the House and the Leaders of Parties to consider the matter today and let me know at the end of the day the decision arrived at. In the meantime, I should like to know whether there is going to be a time limit for the speeches today.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: I suggest 20 minutes for ordinary speakers and 30 minutes for Leaders of Parties. That is my personal opinion.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Does the whole House agree to that?

Sir Henry Richardson (Nominated Non-Official): May I suggest that what the Leader of the House has said creates a rather impossible position for the Leaders, because although it is evident that the House does want another day, who can guarantee that a spark on the Hindu Code Bill, in the course of a ten minutes speech, may not set alight a bonfire, in the flames of which the chances of our getting an opportunity to voice our views on the food situation may be absolutely extinguished. Therefore I do suggest that the Government should make up its mind and if the House really desires another day, it should be done unconditionally. Let us have the food debate tomorrow. Let us finish it tomorrow and if the Leader of the House is so sure that the Government business will be finished in a day, it can be taken up on Thursday.

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed: I regret that the Government is not in a position to accept that suggestion. We must finish the Legislative business before the end of the Session. For that purpose, we want the co-operation of the whole House and not only the Party Leaders. I said that the House as a whole should agree to this arrangement.

Sir Henry Richardson: There are gentlemen who are not members of any Party.

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed: That is why I said 'the whole House'.

Honourable Members: We are all agreed.

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed: I ask the House to agree to the closure being applied by the President at the time of the last motion.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The President cannot apply the closure if there has not been sufficient debate. That is why I suggested that the matter should be considered and a statement made at the end of the day.

Mr. N. M. Joshi (Nominated Non-Official): If the debate is to close today, some of the Leaders may have to speak and the Government will have to reply. Therefore the House and the Leaders will have to make up their minds earlier.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Is the Government business more urgent than the food situation?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That is not the issue at all. I hope the food situation will improve as a result of this debate. I should like to know if there is going to be any time limit.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions; Muhammadan Rural): I suggest 40 minutes for Leaders and 20 minutes for others.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: I do not think the Leaders should have more than 30 minutes.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I want the position to be made clear.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Sir, the position as far as the Leaders of Parties are concerned and as far as the organised Parties are concerned is that they are agreeable to your fixing the time-limit at 40 minutes for the Leaders of Parties and 20 minutes for others. As far as the unattached Members are concerned, I do not know what objection they can have to this arrangement.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: The objection is that we want to get a chance of speaking.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I cannot make any distinction between the Leaders of Parties and the other Members. It is for the Members to come to an agreement among themselves. If they come to an agreement, I shall be very glad to enforce it. But if there is no agreement, then, of course, there shall be no time-limit because I have not got the power myself to fix a time-limit.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: I wish to make an offer to the organised Parties. If only the Leaders of Parties speak hereafter, then we are prepared to give them 40 minutes, provided their followers do not speak.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): May I take it that, at any rate, the time-limit of 20 minutes for Members generally is agreed to.

Honourable Members: Yes, yes.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: Sir, I wish to make it quite clear that other party Members will not speak hereafter.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: Does that mean, Sir, that after this only the Party Leaders will speak and their followers will not speak?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That depends entirely upon the Chair. **Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta**.

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta (Chittagong and Rajshahi Divisions; Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, it is not just three months when we have had a full-dress debate on the food question. The situation at that time

Mr. N. M. Joshi: On a point of order, Sir. May I ask whether the Leaders of Parties will now get the same time as the other Members and nothing more than that because the Honourable the Deputy President is not a Leader of a Party and he is going to speak now? I take it that there is no agreement regarding the 40 minutes to be given to the Leaders of Parties.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I understood that so far as the Members generally are concerned, 20 minutes' time-limit is agreed to.

Honourable Members: Yes, yes.

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

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: I was saying, Sir, that it is now just three months that we had a full-dress debate on this food question in the last Autumn Session. The situation that existed at that time was fully discussed. Therefore, I should think that it is not quite necessary to re-open the whole question from the very beginning. We are concerned at the present moment in this debate with the situation as it has developed after the last Session, that is, during the last three months. Therefore, I shall confine my remarks to the period after the last Session.

Now, Sir, we are told that during the last three months many ships have arrived with grains and they have been unloaded and that a very large quantity has been sent to Calcutta and other districts. That is all right. Figures have been given to prove the increasing supply and better distribution. But what

[Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta.]

is the actual position now in spite of all these imports and distribution? Has the position improved or has it deteriorated since then as a result of the efforts of Government? I do not want to give my own version. We have had from the Honourable the Food Member himself a statement which he issued in the shape of a White Paper. He has told us in that statement that the position, so far as Bengal is concerned, has deteriorated. He has also told us that during the last three months the position has become more serious. He also says that rice is not available in a number of districts and wherever it is available the black market price of Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per maund is beyond the means of even the well-to-do classes. I do not know how to emphasise these two short statements. In the first place, he says that rice is not available in a number of districts in Bengal. His second statement is that wherever it is available, the price is beyond the means not only of the poor people but even of the well-to-do classes. Those are the statements made by the Honourable the Food Member in the White Paper which he has issued. These two very short statements give us a complete picture of the magnitude of the famine in Bengal. So, there has been no improvement during the last three months but there has been a steady and serious deterioration. Then the question is what will happen now? We have been told by the Honourable the Food Member that the next 2½ months is most critical and we have been given the assurance that the Government of India is making every effort to tide over the difficulty. But he says that the success of these efforts will depend upon the possibility of importing substantial quantity of food during these 2½ months.

Now, let us examine this question of imports. We know that in May last, when the position of the country was desperate, an offer of Australia was partly refused by the Government at Home with the full concurrence of the Government of India on the ground that there was no need for it and that there was a good prospect of a good harvest in the Punjab. On that ground the import was refused. That was in May 1948. Let us come to the present time when according to the Food Member the position has become still more serious and still more critical. Now, Sir, at the present moment we have been told that a very generous offer of Canada has been refused by the Government of India.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava (Food Member): It has not been refused.

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: It has been refused. That is the statement made in the House of Commons and that is the statement made on the floor of this House. I am sure about that position. It has been refused and the ground given is not that shipping is impossible or difficult but on the ground of mere economy of shipping. That is the ground given for refusing supplies from abroad when thousands and thousands are dying for want of food.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings (Secretary, Food Department): The Honourable Member is mistaken. That has not been refused either by the Government of India or by His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: I am not dreaming. I am speaking on the basis of the statements made on the floor of the House and in the House of Commons by Mr. Amery. That, Sir, is the position with regard to the imports. Although we are told that large quantities have been imported we do not know where they have gone. We demand a clear statement from the Government about this. We have demanded many times information on this point in the press and on the platform and we demand again on the floor of the House a clear statement from the Government as to where and to whom this imported stock has gone. So much about the imports. What about exports? Exports are continuing in spite of the recommendations of the Gregory Committee. Exports are continuing under one pretext or another. Recommendation of the committee has been accepted but not without exceptions. These exceptions are only the thin end of the wedge. The Press Communique of July 1948 said that "in view of the gravity of rice position in India, the Central Government finds it impossible to undertake, until further notice, further exports of rice from India". But again

we have been told in this White Paper issued on 11th November that the export quota basis to Ceylon has been restored.

Mr. E. H. Hutchings: Is the Honourable Member referring to rice or pulses?

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: I am referring to pulses. Pulses are also food-grains. It does not make any difference, whether it is rice or pulses. The export quota which was cancelled in July has now been restored. I do not think the Honourable Member will challenge the statement which is contained in the White Paper. A monthly quota has been granted. My case is, that export was never stopped. I shall give a very interesting piece of information. In Calcutta, I was told by a respectable gentleman—the source of his information was no other than an Agent of Isphani & Co.—that at dead of night, after one o'clock every night cart loads of rice were taken in bullock carts to the docks. They were removed at night to escape the notice of the people. My friend told me that he got curious and so one day he kept awake and with his own eyes saw cart loads of rice being removed. Thus he verified the statement. I sent this statement to the Press, but it was not allowed to be published. It was not challenged but only withheld. Even full story of death is not allowed to be published. That is the position about exports. That disposes of the first promise of import for the next 2½ months. The second hope is given on the basis of *aman* crop, the winter crop. The Food Member says that there will be improvement in procurement and distribution. What do you mean by improvement in procurement of *aman* crop? Purchase of crops on the spot? We know one thing, that the *aus* crop was purchased by the Government, we also know what was the fate of the *aus* crop purchased by Government. The crop purchased by Government disappeared mysteriously and did not give the slightest relief. No reply was given to repeated enquiries as to disposal and destination of that crop. That is the experience of the purchase of *aus* crop. That is the bitter experience. The past experience has made people apprehensive about the purchase of *aman* crop. That would give no more relief than the purchase of *aus* crop. The thoughtless and reckless policy of purchase by Government in a haphazard manner is one of the reasons for the famine in my Province. Purchase even above the control price. It is a matter of common knowledge that District officers openly advised their agents to "purchase any quantity at any price". That is one of the main reasons why there is so much distress in Bengal. At the present moment, even now we are receiving reports that Government agents are busy making purchases, and wherever there is purchase by Government Agents, the prices at once go up.

Well, Sir, about distribution: responsible officers of the Food Department have complained to me bitterly that there is absolutely no arrangement for distribution. We demand the immediate formulation of a scheme which will minimise delay in grain going from the main grain centres to different local centres. The essence of the whole matter is quick action in view of the nature of the calamity. There must be a scheme for creating local stores for a group of villages and for every town so that there may be physical demonstration of the stock and that will inspire confidence in the measures taken by the Government. At present there is no organisation, there is no machinery, there is no agency, there is no staff for distribution. The poor district officers are handicapped and helpless and cannot cope with the work. As to military help recently requisitioned I have no remarks to make because I have not yet been able to form any opinion as to what they are doing, and what they will be able to do.

We have been told by the Food Member that an important announcement of policy as a result of the recommendations of the Gregory Committee is collaboration and co-operation of people, without which he feels and admits it is impossible to solve this food problem. I ask the Government to be honest with regard to this policy. Release the Congressmen. They will be the most suitable agency to help you in the matter of distribution of foodstuffs to people. Rightly or wrongly, the people have no confidence in Government measures.

[Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta.]

Whenever a Government agent appears, people immediately lose confidence. They become shy and keep aloof. I therefore think that the moment you release the Congressmen—you cannot dispute at all events that they are lovers of the country—the moment the Congressmen take up this task of distribution of foodstuffs, it will inspire confidence in the minds of the people. As regards distribution, I have got one specific suggestion, as regards Greater Calcutta. It must be fed by import from abroad and not by diversion from the districts. As regards rationing, I reserve my remarks as the scheme and its details are still under consideration.

The Food Member's critical period is advancing and still there is preparation and consideration. They would never come to a decision. This is about the next 2½ months. I have discussed the first three months, and I have discussed the next 2½ months. Now what after the next 2½ months? There will be temporary relief from the *aman* crop. But what is the programme after *aman* crop? I give you warning that import and distribution must be continued until the causes which have operated in bringing about this calamity have ceased to exist. There is just the danger of Government feeling a false sense of security and they will again be caught napping. It is this non-realisation at the proper moment of the difficulties and realities of the situation that is responsible for this famine in Bengal.

There is one other most important matter which, it appears to me, has not received proper attention—i.e., the question of post-famine rehabilitation and reconstruction. It will not do merely to feed them at the present moment. Not merely for the present should the wolf be kept from the door but some steps must be taken to rehabilitate and to reconstruct. The surviving distressed must be restored to their pre-famine condition and must be put on their feet and given a fresh start. I have no time to elaborate it, but that is a most important question.

That is about food. As regards cloth, winter has come and cloth is as essential for the preservation of life as food. I invite the attention of Government to this question of standard cloth. The quantity allotted by the Government of India to Bengal has not been sent; their promise has not been implemented. And I am told that as many as three steamers came with standard cloth from Ahmedabad to Calcutta, but only one has been unloaded and the other two still remain waiting to be unloaded. Another complaint about standard cloth is the fluctuation in prices.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Standard cloth is not under discussion now; it is the food situation which is being considered by the House.

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: That was mentioned only incidentally.

On this food question our case is that it is a man-made famine, as a result of the war. The responsibility must be fixed. Who is that man or that group of men who are responsible for this famine?

Pandit Shambhudayal Misra (Central Provinces Hindi Divisions: Non-Muhammadian): I named them.

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: Every one is giving those names, but there must be some authoritative finding. The law has provided the extreme penal punishment—a life sentence—for a man who is responsible for the death of one single human being. What should be the penalty for those people who are responsible for the slow and prolonged process of murder of thousands of human lives? They should be publicly tried. I do not know if there is still a case of over-dramatisation. It is a pity that that responsible officer who spoke of over-dramatisation is still in His Majesty's service.

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

Before I call on the next speaker, Mr. Kailash Bihari Lal wants to know whether he will be allowed to make a speech on an amendment of which he has given notice. It has been repeatedly laid down by the Chair that no Member, by simply giving notice of an amendment, acquires any priority or a right to be called on to speak. He has got to take his turn with others.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: Sir, in my speech this morning I shall not attempt to cover the whole of the ground traversed in this debate. There are certain questions which I know the Honourable Member would desire to speak on himself, such as Central control, the question of imports, special measures for nutrition and rehabilitation of the population, and also the amendments which ask for different forms of inquiry. These I shall not touch. I have, I am afraid, neither the wit nor the eloquence which might commend me to this House. I am unversed in Parliamentary graces, and I am quite prepared to be described as just another sun-dried or perhaps, to use a more technical term that is common in my department, a "dehydrated" bureaucrat. But, Sir, I can offer you, if I may say so, a sincere expression of my feeling of sympathy for the people who are suffering, particularly in Bengal, the province where I have had the privilege to serve off and on for 28 years and where I have received much kindness and hospitality from the people. But I am afraid that expressions of horror and distress will not satisfy this House; they will want to know what I propose to do to secure for the people of Bengal and the people of this country the food which is their property and which is their right. I should like to stress that word "property", because I regard now the food of India, wherever it comes from, as common property. We have got to get away from the idea and the conception of food as private or provincial property from which capital, whether it is political or whether it is financial, can be made. For, unless we can bring the whole resources of India to account and make them available for distribution to hungry people, no help that I can bring from outside can secure us against local distress and local famine. It is no longer a question of it being a matter of grace or of charity or of congratulation that surplus areas should send what they know they can easily spare to deficit areas. It is an inescapable duty which must be scrupulously performed, whatever may appear to be the needs of local or sectional interests.

That, Sir, is the problem which we in the Food Department have to face. It has been stated in slightly different terms in the report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, where it is said:

"The procurement problem is not primarily an issue of moving supplies from surplus to deficit provinces but of acquiring from the cultivator the maximum amount to be obtained from every part of India."

This debate has certainly not been without constructive suggestions, of which I have made a very careful note. In particular, yesterday we received some very constructive suggestions from my Honourable friend, Mr. Gwilt. Many of these suggestions have been of great value and interest, but I think that many of them also will be found to reappear in Government's own policy. And if in the time at my disposal today I do not deal with each of them in detail I trust that the House will not deem it a discourtesy. They will not be brushed aside nor will they be forgotten. Many of them indeed are familiar friends to officers of my department and of other departments of the Government of India who have been discussing and working on this problem for months. And it has been of intense interest to me to hear from different sections of this House the same ideas, the same points of view, often diametrically opposed to each other with regard to almost every aspect of the problem which we have under consideration. On procurement we have been told, "You must go straight to the cultivator", and again, "It is fatal to cut out the trade; you will never succeed unless you make use of the existing trade organisations". As to prices we are told on the one hand that there can be no statutory control of foodgrains prices, and on the other that we shall be failing in our duty if we do not impose the most rigid control. In fixing prices first of all we have been told that we should consider the interest of the producer, then we are told that we must put the interests of the consumer first. We are blamed because we failed to ensure

the continuity of food supply by providing reserves in time. Then again we are told that for Government or the Army or the essential services to have reserves is to starve the general public. Not long ago, it was the army that was supposed to be taking the grain out of Bengal and starving the people.

[Mr. R. H. Hutchings.]

Now, Sir, the House realizes that it is the Army that is feeding and saving the people.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra (Presidency Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Whom and where are they feeding? Are they feeding you? They are not feeding our men.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: They are feeding no less than 7 districts. I am now able to tell that in the last two days we have sent out from Calcutta 2,000 tons of food a day to these districts. If the Honourable Member would like to have a list of the amounts, I will give it to him.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra: Since the food debate started.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: I do not mention this diversity of views which has been offered to us in order to pour ridicule on our critics. On the contrary, the course of the debate is merely an illustration of the fact that whenever earnest and thoughtful men come to consider and apply their minds to this food problem, they find that there are usually at least two answers to every question—sometimes four or five—of which only one can be the right one; and generally the same answer is not applicable all over India. That we have made experiments in the past, that we have made mistakes, that we have had to change our policy from time to time, is admitted. But, Sir, is it really to be wondered at if even now and in this House there are so many different opinions on the same problem.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: You want to take advantage of that.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: I venture to suggest that it is not surprising that the Government of India and the Food Department did not at once foresee every possible contingency and provide automatically the appropriate remedy.

The fact is, Sir, that no bright ideas or inspirations or sudden stroke of genius are going to settle the Indian food problem. It is in essence an extremely simple one. We all know that we want to achieve, we all know the results that we would like to see. But when we come to work it out in detail, it is clear that we are up against a very big administrative problem, which is not only new to the administrations which have to deal with it but for which in many cases, entirely new staff and entirely new machinery which does not exist at present, has to be constructed in order to carry out the work. The prime need, as I see it, is not to continue arguing about what should be done and what should not be done, but to lay down broad principles, to agree upon a coherent policy, which will make allowance for special conditions or special emergencies, and apply that policy consistently throughout the whole of India. I claim, Sir, that that is the position and the aim of the Food Department today.

After a series of crises and expedients, the Foodgrains Policy Committee was appointed and it made its report. The Fourth Food Conference was held and it was designed to ascertain in the quickest manner possible from the administrations, who would have to carry the policy into execution, what were their opinions on its general proposals. Those opinions were expressed and decisions were come to. Those decisions have been announced both by the Honourable Member and myself at the conclusion of the Conference, and I do not propose to repeat them here. In some cases we have had to accept the principle as an ideal, and decide, either for administrative reasons or because of emergent conditions in a particular area, that we would work towards that ideal by reasonable stages rather than attempt a doctrinaire solution of problems which required elastic treatment. The policy, however, has been settled and announced. Let nobody have any doubt that we intend to see it through, and in seeing it through I would ask for the whole-hearted support of this House.

What then are the prospects? Clearly the most important factors in the situation are now psychological. We have got somehow to restore confidence both among the producer and the consumer. I shall be told perhaps that there is little in the past history of this subject and our treatment of it, to inspire confidence, but I think that the situation now is different from what it was a year ago. Far be it from me to hold out any false hopes of an easy solution, or to say that now we have got imports, India is perfectly all right. I do not

say that. Nor do I believe that our troubles will end with the harvesting of the next rice crop, bountiful though I hope it will be. When I say that conditions are different, I mean this and nothing more that imperfect as our statistical information and imperfect as our knowledge still is we have now got a policy which we had not got before. Administrations are far more alive to their duties and responsibilities. The public itself is beginning to realise that food is no longer a subject which can be made the sport for all political ambition or financial ingenuity. The connected problems of the control and supply of other commodities are receiving increased, and increasing, attention. At least one High Court has called for records and pronounced a salutary judgment on food offences for which it has prescribed greatly enhanced sentences. The House will shortly see, I hope, other measures which we have in preparation to teach the same lesson.

What are the most important things that we must strive for? I have said that the problem is in essence now an administrative problem. Food must become the first priority subject for the time being of all administrations. The whole resources of those administrations must be focussed upon it in all its different and connected aspects. One of the most important points is an effective application of the Foodgrains Control Order. Hard-pressed district officers, I know, will say that for this they need more staff. Very well, that must be faced. It has been said more than once that the Centre took no steps to control the hoarding of stocks. But the Foodgrains Control Order was issued as long ago as May 1942. Like many such measures it was by no means perfect in its original form. . . .

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: What has your office been doing all along?

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: The administration of the Foodgrains Control is naturally a matter for the provinces and I am pointedly drawing attention to the duty of the provinces to administer the order. . . .

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: You are now drawing attention and you stop there?

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: Well, the order is still open to amendment, and if the Honourable Member has any amendments which he would like to propose in that order, I shall be the first to welcome his suggestions. . . .

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: We do not want amendments: we want that the destitutes should live.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member will have his own turn.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: This order provides that persons engaged in any undertaking which involves the purchase, sale or storage of foodgrains in any quantities exceeding 20 maunds shall take out a license from the Provincial Government. The order also provides that such licensee has got to declare his stocks and he must make true returns of his stocks to the Provincial Government. In other words the order gives you the basis on which you can assess and locate the stocks within your province. That, it seems to me, must form the basis of any sound food administration. Secondly, we believe that prices must at least be kept under control. We have accepted that statutory price control is the ideal to be aimed at all over India. It is perfectly clear that it is anomalous that a particular commodity produced in one province should have a price there which bears no relation whatever to the same commodity elsewhere. We must first of all strive to reduce those immense diversities of prices which are the result of emergent local conditions and which in their turn give rise to heart-burning and jealousies which, we find, seriously interfere with procurement and distribution. It is perhaps a truism to say that where ideal conditions exist for price control, then there is no need for it. But I for one do not see how we are to reduce the present price chaos in India to anything approaching order unless there is control. How that control is to be exercised in different areas, by what stages and in what regions we should establish parity, whether a successful system of ceiling prices which is in operation should be allowed to continue or not, all these are questions which must under existing conditions be answered with reference to the actual facts of the situation in different localities. But price

• [Mr. R. H. Hutchings.] •

control must, we believe, not only be supported by control of other commodities, and the attempt to supply consumer goods, but it must be accepted throughout India in principle, and we shall neglect nothing to make it effective. . . .

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Have you succeeded in making it effective at any place?

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: You have heard Mr. Kirby speak on rationing, and I do not propose to repeat any of the grounds which he covered; but I would like just to make two points about rationing. In India, as in the rest of the world, I believe—in fact I know—that experience has shown that wherever rationing has been introduced it has been successful, and it has been welcomed by the great majority of the people. Its essential attraction from the point of view of the consumer is its fairness, and from the point of view of the Government its attraction is that it establishes beyond doubt what is the actual need of the urban population. The more that doubt can be replaced by certainty, the greater are the chances of successful planning, and from that successful planning will flow the re-establishment of public confidence. I know that there is the argument that in surplus areas the demands of urban areas in the rationing scheme may seem on paper to be larger than under normal conditions. . . .

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

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: May I have a few minutes more?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Yes.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: But I would say that experience again has shown that the off-take in a rationing scheme is seldom more than 80 per cent. of the numerical demand.

I have finished except for making one point and it is this: that I believe that in this problem that we are facing today in India, the psychological or if you like to call it, the spiritual factor is of vital importance. At the last Food Conference, a remark was made by a great Indian leader and administrator, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar; he was speaking on price control and he made a rather astonishing statement: he said "Price control is a spiritual matter". I thought over what it was that he was trying to convey; and I think what he meant was that in food control and in price control, success depended on an element of co-operation and sacrifice such as perhaps is not too common in the world today. We in India, I feel, are suffering now from the effects of exactly the same things that created the war in Europe—those motives of fear and of greed which have made international co-operation and friendship impossible. I would like, if I may, to recall to you the terms of a letter which was written two thousand years ago by a man called Saul of Tarsus to the people of Ephesus. He had been discussing with them the difficult conditions under which they lived and what it was they had to face up to; and this is what he said, if I can recall it to you. . . .

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Mahtta: Keep it for Sunday service.

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: I thought the words are worth recording; he said:

"Stand then with your loins girt about with truth and having on the breast-plate of righteousness and your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Above all taking the shield of faith."

What did he mean by that? Confidence and trust. . . .

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: In Government?

Mr. R. H. Hutchings: If we can re-establish that feeling. . . .
(Interruptions.)

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I must ask the Honourable Member to conclude his speech now.

Mr. Hossainbhoy A. Lalljee (Bombay Central Division: Muhammadan Rural): This is a most vital and important question that we are discussing, but before I come to it, I ought to place before the House facts relating to the working of the Committees that are being appointed by the House, because it has been said in this House that the attendance of Members of this

House at these Committees has not been what is desired. This Food Committee was appointed about nine months back and the first meeting was called by wire on the 7th November, and I find that no less than four members out of the five were present. And still it is said that we are not present at the meetings! Again, several conferences and committees were being held, a big report has been brought out, but to none of these conferences or committees did the Government ever think it fit to call a single Member of this House. And still we hear from the Government that the Members of this House do not attend committee meetings! So far as the Supply Committee and the Defence Committee are concerned,—both of the war—I can say that 90 per cent. and sometimes 95 per cent. of Members have been present.

Now coming to the main question, there are certain things that have been well established, established beyond doubt. The first is that there is famine prevalent not only in Bengal but there was a famine before that in Bijapur, that the conditions in Orissa, Travancore and Cochin are almost on the verge of famine, that the condition in Malabar, in parts of Madras, and if I may say so, in Bombay, is very severe. It has also been admitted, and rightly too, and it is for my purpose a very strong point, that no less a person than Mr. Amery has, after all, agreed that for the last 30 years the people of this country have not had sufficient food to eat. In fact, he has admitted that even to-day the position in the country is that a greater portion of the people are not being fed as they ought to be and as are fed in all other parts of the world. This is our prosperity, or poverty which I leave to those people who claim to be of the great civilised nations to judge, and who at times pride themselves on their great successful administration of colonies and countries that are ruled by them and call themselves trustees, guardians and what not.

Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta: Why quote Amery?

Mr. Hoosenbhoy A. Lalljee: Because he is the last man to admit true facts about us. Another important fact has been established beyond doubt, and that is, up to this day we have no reliable statistics of the food produced in this country. Even after four years of this great war, and after the last war and during all this period the administration has not got any reliable statistics to go upon. This proves beyond doubt the kind of great interest that is claimed to have been taken or is being taken for better administration, which includes law and order, peace and prosperity of the people of this country. To-day again we have met here to consider figures that have been placed before us. Three months back certain figures were placed before us. Before that some time back certain figures were placed before the conferences and committees. What do we find, I ask my Honourable friend, the Secretary of the Food Department? The first paragraph of the Food Committee report says that reliable statistics are not yet available. And not a single Member of this House has been invited to any conference or committee or anywhere else. Although this condition is prevalent a policy has been laid down, settled and announced. This is the great regard for the people of this country. The other day the Honourable the Food Member said, you are a supreme body. To-day we hear that policies have been settled and announced. Some time back the Honourable the Leader of the House said we have got very great regard for the House. And the regard is this, that we are nowhere called up till now, when for some time a great portion of the country is starving or on the verge of starvation. Who can deny that? Up to now not a single Member of this House has been taken in the conferences or committees, and not a single piece of reliable statistics has been placed before this House. But we are told a policy has been settled and announced and therefore, Sir, we are here only for the purpose of hearing the word 'regards' from the lips of my Honourable friends on the Treasury Benches.

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum (North-West Frontier Province: General): . . . and lectures from foreign experts!

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad (United Provinces' Southern Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): This is only a school debate.

Mr. Hoosenbhoy A. Lalljee: The policy has been announced. Then why do you want us? What have you placed before us? This scrap of paper . . .

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: This White Paper.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: But the print on it is black.

Mr. Hoosenbhoy A. Lalljee: While I feel very glad that the Honourable the Food Member is taking it so nicely, I must admit that for my part I feel very much. However, thank you very much. Further if I may say so, you conveyed to us the other day that you have got supreme regard for this House.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: That I have.

Mr. Hoosenbhoy A. Lalljee: Let us live in that hope. I live in hope, you live in hope, everybody else lives in hope. Hope never dies. This is the condition of this House. We have been told in the British Parliament that they were responsible so long as Indians had not got self-government to look after the affairs of India. When we read that, we thought that something was going to be done. There are many people in Great Britain who are very sympathetic towards humanitarian objects, if not for anything else. We find when food discussion took place there in the House of Commons out of about 600 members the maximum attendance was between 35 to 53, and we find that in that debate neither the Prime Minister, nor the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, the greater Labour leader—I do not find just now either our Labour leader, Mr. Joshi here, or Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, or I am sure they would feel very sorry. We do not find there any of those who had been in India, like Sir George Schuster, or Sir Stanley Reed, and lastly we do not find a word being said by Sir Stafford Cripps. That was the state of affairs during the debate that had gone on in the House of Commons, but one thing has emerged from it and that is this. That the Secretary of State has admitted the dire poverty of India and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir J. Anderson, has agreed that there is inflation in this country.

Now, we have got very recently the Food Committee's report, and in that report we have not been supplied, nor has any committee or conference asked what are the figures of all exports of foodstuffs during 1938 to 1943. This is very important to know true position. Is it that you cannot find that figure? A country to find out its true position has to rely upon export figures as much as on figures of production and consumption. Will that be denied? But not anywhere do I find that the great committee of 25 gentlemen that was selected have insisted for that. There are no export figures from 1939 to 1943. We have only got the figure for the army consumption and we knew that that figure was not very great. However, we are thankful that that figure at least has been given and I must admit that it has removed a lot of misunderstanding. So far so good, but what about the total export figures? I demand that. It has been alleged against the Government that large exports have been going on. Why don't you give those figures? Have you not got your records and records of the custom houses? Have the Custom Houses administrations also gone or have they also become just in the same position as the departments of the Government of Bengal? The Government of Bengal cannot give us death figures or rates. The portfolio of local Self-Government may therefore be taken as gone. It is good for nothing. Take the case of law and order, if we do not know death figures we do not know how many people have committed suicide and how many have been murdered. Is it that Bengal Police does not truly know? This is the sample of how local Self-Government and the Police in Bengal work, and may we take it that it is why the Government of Bengal are unable to give the figures of deaths for days together that are taking place in the various districts of Bengal and in Calcutta, or else why do they not come forward and give us the figures of the deaths? Many people have committed suicide, or have attempted suicide. Why has no action been taken?

An Honourable Member: The figures are sun-dried and de-hydrated.

Mr. Hoosenbhoy A. Lalljee: Now, Sir, since the war started, a very large number of our countrymen have ungrudgingly helped the war efforts. I am very glad that our present Viceroy has been one of the foremost in declaring the great services rendered by the people of this country and by the Forces. Since 1939 we have supplied so many things including large quantities of food-stuffs not for our military only but also for the people of Iraq, Iran and for

the people of Russia. If that is so, why the quantities of those supplies have not been mentioned anywhere? Today even I am in a position to state that a part, a small part it may be, of the provisions that we are sending to the Middle East for our own soldiers is going to the civil population. I do not grudge that. It is essential. Why is there no mention of that? There is an object in what I say. We are very much grateful to Australia and Canada for offering us 100 thousand tons of wheat. We ought to accept it. Thanks have been already conveyed. Has anybody ever thanked us for the foodstuff that we sent in 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942? We do not know. At least, this side does not know. The people do not know whether you sent one ton or one hundred thousand tons to various countries. Is there any letter of thanks from them? Can this Government enlighten us whether there is any gratitude expressed to us? Neither figures nor thanks have we got but we are all eager to send out our thanks. Certainly we are a courteous people. We claim we are more civilised people. We send out thanks for anything that is offered to us but in this case it may be the fault of the Government who wish to keep us ignorant of the quantities that have been sent by them that they do not say anything. I wish that the Government would place before the country the quantities they have sent and also letters of thanks or acknowledgment. Have we received thanks from Russia, if not may I ask, from anywhere else? (*An Honourable Member*: "We do not want thanks. We want our food back.") We were told a little time ago in one Committee that we were going to get some foodstuffs from the United Nations on certain conditions. If those conditions were not set out, I should certainly have appreciated that offer very much and would have thanked those people who had offered them. I never knew till recently that the United Nations had representatives in this House, representing their views and laying down conditions for the food that is likely to come. I find that my friend, Mr. Gwilt, the other day, said, 'If you don't have rationing and if you do not conserve well your own foodstuffs, it is impossible for you to get supplies from the United Nations'. I agree, Sir, that we should conserve our foodstuffs but I never expected the gentleman representing the United Nations in this House, which includes China and Russia, to lay down any condition. When the question of equality or some status or position is concerned, the Asiatics are treated by them quite different from the Europeans. We are nobody there. I ask, is it honourable or fair that we should be told like that? Is this the kind of lever to be applied? Have we not sent foodstuffs and so many other things to them for solid four years? Foodstuffs and many other things have gone from India to even Britain for all these four years. We never put any such condition. According to the Food Committee report, we have been asking only for 250 million tons from outside to make a reserve of 150 million for distribution and 50 thousand

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: You are wrong about your figures. It is a million and a half altogether and five hundred thousand for the reserve.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: Thank you. I wanted that figure. For that we want tonnage and we are unable to get tonnage. Only half a dozen ships have brought some cargoes and for that half a dozen messages of thanks have been conveyed to His Majesty's Government, as if we have no right on our mercantile marine. We are told that His Majesty's Government have been graciously pleased to supply transport by the end of the year, sufficient to bring in some quantities and we have already expressed our gratefulness to His Majesty's Government. We have our own a number of steamers on the Indian register belonging to Indian companies. Almost all of those ships are for now four years being utilised by the British Government for war purposes. Where are those ships, may I ask? When Japan declared war, Australia and New Zealand wanted every one of their soldiers on the battlefield to come back to their own country but, it is regrettable, we cannot ask for some of your own ships when we are starving to come to your aid. We have got about 40 ships on the Indian register, which have been serving His Majesty's Government for four solid years and yet you cannot ask for half

[Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee.]

a dozen of those ships for conveying foodstuffs to you when hundreds and thousands of our people are dying in our country, and when a couple of ships are given our Government expresses our gratefulness for them and asks us to be grateful. Sir, when a couple of ships were recently sent our Government was eager and anxious to send your grateful thanks to them, and told us we cannot expect unless they were able to spare for us, as if we were no one.

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

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Am I not, Sir, entitled to 40 minutes?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): That was not agreed to.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Very well, Sir. The only thing that I want to ask the Government is that they have been sending out ships for various purposes and they must now demand them back at once for food. Then, there has been a shortage of river craft in Bengal, which is an admitted fact, and something must be done. We have long neglected this transport although famine has been raging.

Finally, Sir, I want to say to my people who are always considering themselves to be the surplus provisions that they also depend upon other parts of India for many things and specially for their cloth, tea, sugar, iron, matches and for so many other things. Controls have been put and we are, they must remember, selling them at controlled prices. It is not fair at least for Sind to make profits from Bombay, a province with which she was so much attached not long ago and to which the Bombay province made a subsidy of 60 to 80 lakhs annually without ever considering that a day might come when the Sind people will forget all those obligations and would want some profit from us. I am sorry, Sir, I have very little time I agree generally with the remarks of Honourable Member and with the Honourable the Secretary of the Food Department that so far as food is concerned, it must be considered to be the property of all the people of India and that no one has got a right to claim it as his own. The surplus provinces must be prepared to give to the deficit provinces. I also agree with him that there should be reserves, price control and rationing. Furthermore, we must acknowledge that had it not been for the great help that the military has rendered just now at the instance of the Viceroy to Bengal the position would have been still worse and we are very much thankful to both His Excellency the Viceroy and C-in-C. for having done that. But I ask in all humility why this was not asked for at least during last few months?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member must conclude his speech.

Pandit Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, the famine that is raging in Bengal has been characterised as a man-made famine, but it has been forced upon the province from which I come. There have been demands from all sides of the House to fix the responsibility for the famine. It is quite natural for those who have seen the famine area and the way in which things are being managed or mismanaged there to make this demand. But I should like to say that we may wait a little for fixing this responsibility if it is at all necessary. The present is not exactly the time for fixing the responsibility either by means of a Royal Commission or even by public trial. Then, again, the fixing of the responsibility is not a very difficult matter. Such of the provinces as are functioning today under the provincial autonomy have to labour under various handicaps, safeguards and special powers and they are being made the scapegoats. In season and out of season Mr. Amery has inside and outside the House of Commons trotted out the ground that it is the fault of the provinces which are autonomous. Even just now Mr. Hutchings was asked: 'Why do you not do this and that?' He blamed the provinces. Mr. Amery does it for the consumption of Allies and the U. S. A. But there is no reason on earth why the same thing should be said here in this House? Of course, during the war the Centre has been made a very weak, disunited and disorganised body. They cannot handle anything successfully. When the war

began, it was the duty of the British Government to set up a strong centre with an organised unity of Departments, something like the joint responsibility of cabinets to make all India one solid unit. There is provision in the Constitution Act to that effect and that provision has also been strengthened later on by amending Parliamentary enactments. There was no difficulty to follow them. But it was not done. As my Honourable friend Mr. Neogy remarked yesterday, it was not done in order to show to the world that Indians cannot manage their own affairs even in Autonomy. Although the primary responsibility for all this and the main responsibility for things like famine and food distress are in the White Hall, my friends on the Treasury Benches cannot be absolved. Entirely subordinate to the White Hall as they are, it is their direct charge to exercise that responsibility.

Without going into details, I should like to illustrate things by what is happening in my own province of Orissa. There the famine has been forced by the Central Government on account of its weakness, want of foresight and disorganised activity. All these things can be well illustrated there and note may be taken by the Government for their future action. Here I must, however, remark that it is very regrettable that unnecessary and undesirable political propaganda is being carried on there and capital is made of the sufferings of my people for that propaganda. Apart from that, I will now describe how the food distress happened in my province. I may at the outset refer to the normal economic conditions of the Orissa peasant. I may refer the House to a statement made by my Honourable friend Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh in the Council of State on the 12th of August last during the food debate there. Very interesting figures are given in the last three columns of his statement: *per capita* production in oz. and in mds. and *per capita* consumption of foodgrains in different provinces. Here I may point out that Orissa is perpetually on starvation diet. It is always on the verge of starvation. In Orissa, the *per capita* production is 19.6 oz. per day and *per capita* consumption is only 18 oz. foodgrains. In the neighbouring province of C. P. the *per capita* production is 26.5 oz. and consumption is 22.8 oz. In Sind, the *per capita* production is 28.6 oz. per day and consumption is 20.6 oz. The Oriya peasant has got nothing to supplement his food, such as meat, eggs, fruit, etc., unlike the peasants in N.-W. F. P. or even in Sind. This 18 oz. foodgrain is paddy and not wheat, nor even rice. Orissa is not a wheat eating province. There is also another factor to be taken into consideration. The non-coastal districts are better off in production and consumption.

An Honourable Member: What about fish?

Pandit Nilakantha Das: That requires money. This *per capita* consumption if calculated in rice will come to about 6 or 7 oz., that is, about 15 or 17 tolas of rice. Any one who knows the peasant in Orissa will bear me out that the Oriya peasant does not even supplement his rice with an onion, and sometimes not even with salt. So in the case of Orissa, the dictionary meaning of surplus does not apply. It is something else. The peasant has got to sell his paddy because he has no money—no other means of paying his land rent and taxes and also for his little necessities of life like salt, cloth, etc. According to the figures given by my Honourable friend in the table referred to Orissa exports 187,000 tons of foodgrains outside the Province per year on the average though it is not a surplus Province as such. The Oriya peasants have no money to meet their ordinary demands, they are obliged to sell their produce. It is not real surplus. The situation now in Orissa has been aggravated on account of people coming back from Burma. On account of the bombing of Calcutta and Assam; an army of such people also came back from those places. We used to send out 187,000 tons or 45 lakhs of maunds of paddy or 30 lakhs of maunds of rice from the Province in normal years. There is no margin. If the export is a little more or production a little less we are sure to be in the grip of famine. The Central Government should be careful. Foodgrain control merely in theory will not do. These little details must be observed and carefully attended to.

[Pardit Nilakantha Das.]

When last year it was required that all surplus Provinces should contribute to the deficit areas, our Provincial Government carefully calculated, for last year the stocks and sent out 18 lakhs of maunds of rice before the middle of this year. Suddenly there appeared to be alarming conditions in Calcutta and the Central Government went off its head, and there was declared free trade in the eastern regions of India. Many of the Honourable Members might have observed what the Premier of Orissa then said. He said, that if the free trade continued, there was no other alternative for the Ministry except to resign. There was a public statement to that effect. But in the meantime 10 lakhs of maunds of rice had gone out to Bengal, and 4 lakhs of maunds had been amassed by stockists to be sent to that Province. When the appeal was made by Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee for opening free kitchens, these 4 lakhs of maunds were finally allowed by the Premier of Orissa to be sent to Bengal. On the 4th of this month a statement was made by that Premier that only 1½ lakhs of maunds out of this stock were sent out to Bengal by that date.

When this was the position the Provincial Government wanted somehow to bring paddy from the non-coastal districts where there was some surplus to save the situation, if possible. But in the last statement of the Premier it was made clear that there were no transport facilities available, and in the words of the District Collector of Ganjam "starvation stalks in the land" and we are today in the dire grip of the famine. Who made this famine possible and who forced it on our people? Ganjam, Puri and Balasore, the coastal districts were all caught up in the famine. This is in short the history of the famine in Orissa.

There is another factor also to observe. I found that some patriotic people, for humanitarian reasons wanted to open free kitchen in Puri, and they got some rice locally. Perhaps some shopkeeper got it, by providing means of private transport from Sambalpur. So the real difficulty for the starving people was that there was no money. Rice was selling at ten annas a seer, but there was no money to buy it. People were starved to death for want of money to purchase rice. This condition is peculiar and must be taken note of. Sterling balance, inflation and various such other money creating devices do not mean anything to the poor Oriya peasant. You should give money to this land. Oriyas must get money.

I was a Member of the Supply Department Committee since when the department was organised. I quite realised that money was being poured out to all in India. But my people in Orissa were starving. No money was sent to Orissa, because there were no industries which could supply war materials. I also stressed this point in the Committee and here I must acknowledge with thanks the kind sympathy shown by Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan and Sir H. P. Mody towards my poor Province. I named small industries like pottery, China clay, tinning and dehydrating fish, etc. I wanted them to start those industries in Orissa with small capitals.

I need not go into more details. Today the fact remains that though you have purchased 600 crores of rupees worth of articles from this country for

war supply, Orissa's contribution will not be anything near a few lakhs. I was told to go to the Commerce Department and the Transport Department and from this door to that door, but I have gone to all these places in vain. This disorganised thing is no Government; you must organise the Departments in proper co-ordination and co-operation with one another. It has been now held that a strong Government is necessary. But a strong Government may be still oppressive and it might create panic among the people. It must be properly organised to make it one unitary institution. One department should always count upon the co-operation of another whenever necessary.

In this connection I will give another fact which is very significant. In the coast of Orissa the only factories worth the name are rice mills. I may say by the bye that those rice mills ought to be closed at once if possible

because they are the worst hoarders. And many of these millowners have no life interest in the land; they come from outside like so many merchants and others also in Orissa. They are not only the worst hoarders but they can corrupt even the blind God of justice. Apart from that, they employ a very small number of people. In this region there is only one factory, a glass factory, which employs about 600 labourers. This factory is near my home and some six months ago I found that the managers there employed very few people in spite of getting some war supply orders. To my question they said they had no coal. I went to the Provincial Government and they said that they had recommended 15 wagons a month. I went to the Transport Department and the Commerce Department and what they said or what they did I need not here say. The glass factory is practically closed today for want of coal whereas for those rice mills coal is being supplied and there much of this supply is being sold in the black market today. That is the position.

Here I may tell you that there are three aerodromes in Orissa and many Members here might have read the statement of Maharaja Parlakimedi, the Premier of Orissa, when he resented even labour being brought from abroad, from C. P. and Malabar for these aerodromes. Orissa is famous for its labourers, and the adaptability to skill of Oriya labourers is well known.

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

Pandit Nilakantha Das: Very well, I have already indicated how things should be managed and how there should be a strong Central Government with a definite plan and purpose working like a unitary institution with firmness as well as forethought.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: Sir, let me begin my speech by expressing thanks to those nations who do not belong to the so-called Commonwealth but who have shown their sympathy in our distress; I mean particularly the contribution of £100,000 by Ireland and the promise of another £100,000 to come. Let me also thank China for having contributed to our country in our hour of distress. Sir, let me also take this opportunity, with which I hope the whole House will agree, that we here are very happy that the great Asiatic European nation has recovered its lands from a foreign foe, that nation being Russia. We are happy at the recovery of its lands by Russia for we know very bitterly in this country what it means to have our lands and resources taken up and administered by a foreign agency.

Now, Sir, coming to the immediate subject of the debate, my concern is not with the death of yesterday so much as with the death of tomorrow; for I see that death which is today stalking round the land of Bengal will tomorrow be striding all over the country. Today it is Bengal, tomorrow I am sure my own province will not be immune from it. I am not so narrow-minded as to think in terms of this province or that province; my mind is broad enough to consider that every part of India right from the North-Western Frontier to Cape Comorin is my country and that the minutest minority and the biggest majority are all my countrymen. Those being my feelings I am not going to bother over petty things as to who is responsible for this disaster and who is not responsible for it. I want to go into the root of the question and I say that this famine is not only man-made but is the result of planning; and I am not making this assertion without foundation. If I had any doubts about it I am today convinced after hearing the Honourable Member who spoke for Government,—the sun-dried "dehydrated" bureaucrat. I am convinced that this is the fact and that all of us have to be careful to save ourselves from this planned famine in one part of the country. Sir, if it is not part of a plan how do you explain the bungling measures which were taken by the Central Government? One day they talk of food control, the second day they talk of free trade, the third day they have Regional Commissioners; one day they say that prices should be controlled, the next day they say there should be free trade. What is the meaning of all this? Can you imagine that these highly paid men whom we pay for their services to this country do not understand these elementary things? My Honourable friend who spoke on the side

[Dr. G. V. Deshmukh.]

of Government just now talked platitudes about psychological factors, food price factors and spiritual factors and Food Controllers, and so on, as if we do not know anything. I want to tell him that he knows mighty little about the general principles of war rationing and food question at the time of war. Is this a new subject? At the time of the last war, in 1918, all these questions had cropped up before the British people, and there is absolutely no excuse for those gentlemen to come here and say that the question is new, that it is complex and tackling it would be an ambitious scheme, that they have no agencies and no officers and no men to deal with the subject, and so on. I say these are all hypocritical excuses. They are fatly paid, paid so much that no service in the world is paid as much; I do not see any reductions made in their salaries even during war, and if anything, there have been extra allowances. And what are we paying these people for? To remain ignorant and at the time of crises to ask experts to come after two or three years of war to settle the food policy of this country. What is the meaning of control of prices of wheat at the early stages and then realizing after six months that this is not good; this leads to blackmarketing. Let me give my Honourable friend a simple elementary lesson in food rationing. Everywhere he talked about rationing and food control. It is an elementary principle of war economy that when you reduce civil consumption—and you must reduce civil consumption—you cannot go in one direction. Both production as well as distribution and control have to be simultaneously looked after. Was this not done in England? Why should not these British people who take fat pays—these sundried bureaucrats who bask in the sun here; that is all they do—why should not they have realized at the beginning of the war that if during the war food economy was going to come to this country, they should read books on the subject? They should have intelligence enough to realize that. Books were published by the League of Nations before 1939 on 'how to manage war rationing'. I do not admit that these gentlemen, who are responsible at the Centre, did not know about war rationing. Sir, one of the two positions these men must occupy, and that is they are ignorant and therefore inefficient. Yet they are so highly paid. You might as well resign and leave that money for feeding my countrymen. If they do not accept that position, if they think that they are very wise, if they claim infallibility—these sundried and 'dehydrated' bureaucrats—then I say that they must admit—and there is no other alternative—that the whole situation is part of a plan, and nothing else. This monkeying with the food problem of this country is part of a plan and it is not just due to oversight.

The next question is production. Have they any idea as to how production has been increased in England which was not primarily an agricultural country, but which was primarily an industrial country. Here the Members expect applause from the House when they announce that in the last three years of war, or after the fall of Burma, the food acreage has gone up from 2 to 4 per cent. This is the result of which we have to be proud of. What has happened in England? There the acreage has gone up by 40 to 60 per cent. How did they manage it? Not by giving niggardly loans as you have given to the provinces, but by giving subsidies to the extent of 60 per cent.—not 14 to 15 per cent.—in order to increase the area under cultivation. Here in India what does 'food production plan' mean? First of all it means big posters: "Mother give me barley, because it is more nutritious than rice". Well, if barley is more nutritious than rice, why don't you give it to the Army, and leave the rice for the poor population. It is more nourishing and contains more vitamins. Why don't you do that? This propaganda advertisement is at par with the efforts of other departments of the Central Government. Here is another instance. At first we saw big pictures of stout Indian soldiers—Sikhs, Marhattas, Punjabis, Gurkhas and Jats—tall, six feeters, and by their side a little European soldier—a Tommy—and these six feeters are told "Give your money to this little man and he will protect you". You might as well ask Sir Edward Benthall or Sir Azizul Huque to hand over all his money to my Honourable friend, Maulvi Sahib, or my brother, Mr. G. V. Deshmukh,

so that when the opportunity arises, this little man will protect you. It was an insult to the soldiery of India.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member can proceed with his speech after Lunch.

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

The Assembly re-assembled after Lunch at Half Past Two of the Clock, Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta) in the Chair.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: May I know, Sir, how much more time I have?

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): You have spoken for 9 minutes and you have eleven minutes more.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: Sir, I am sorry to see that the exhibition of arrogant infallibility that we saw this morning is not in the House. He wanted to teach us

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I am in his place.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: Not you, the other gentleman; he speaks for the Government more than you can or you are allowed to do. If that arrogant infallibility had been here—I am waiting for him to come—I could have told him that he did not have elementary ideas about food situation in war time. I could have told him that the whole mess which you have made is due to your not knowing the elementary principles. To give you an instance, what does he say about rationing? He said something which I did not think was worth paying attention to. The whole idea of rationing is that the man with the lowest income ought to be able to get subsistence food during crisis time: that is the idea behind rationing. But here we find all sorts of ideas put forward. If a man is an industrial worker, give him more food or more calories; if he is a worker in heavy industry, give him still more food; but that does not mean that you can bring in rationing unless you can ensure sufficient supply of food for the population; and therefore all this monkeying about the food problem that has been done by the Central Government can lead only to one conclusion, that it is nothing else—it is not due to inefficiency or to ignorance, but it all is part of a plan. If any more proof was needed, besides the statements of the Secretary of State for India, who seems to have changed his opinion about the famine conditions from day to day as easily as a *demi-mondaine* might change her associates—I say, the way the Viceroy who was responsible for this food crisis sneaked away from India like a thief in the middle of the night, the way the Governor of Bengal fell ill, the way the whole thing has been managed can lead to one and only conclusion and that is that this is not due to ignorance or inefficiency. If that is so, then it can only be part of a plan. I have very little time left; otherwise I could have proved by their own facts and figures and statistics that what I am saying is not a wild statement but it can be proved. Now one more proof I can show you is this: I am reading from Sir Nazimuddin's statement in the Muslim League Council. What he says is this:

"At a conference held on 8th May 1943 Major General Wood laid down the following line of policy for adoption by the Government of Bengal:

(1) The fact that there was a sufficiency of food for Bengal should be proved statistically and given the widest publicity by advertising and repeating *ad nauseam*.

(2) No price control in Bengal until Government acquire physical control of supplies of rice. Meanwhile, forget prices and concentrate on ensuring free flow of rice into the market and exercise restraining influence on prices through Government agencies at regulated prices, the quota allotted to each commercial agent and the price at which he is permitted to buy from day to day being kept secret. Buy in the cheapest market and bring down your offer of prices by judiciously holding off the market when necessary."

Now, Sir, are these measures of a government? Is government run for private profit? Are the finances of a government to be run on the same lines as that of a private capitalist industry? Now, if you are going to do that, then all this talk about the welfare of the country and all that is sheer nonsense—absolute bunkum. It means that the Government is in this Country for nothing else but to make profit, and that profit they want to make out of the misery of the people. That is the mentality of all these exploiters, whether they are

[Dr. G. V. Deshmukh.]

in the Government office or elsewhere. The whole lot of them here seem to have that mentality when we are starving for food; one gentleman who is fairly well-nourished—I am not badly famished either—talks about sending a shipload of bicycles, or a tanker, which would be of more use. We want food; we want strength in our legs to move about, and they are thinking in terms of profits and bicycles. That is the way in which the whole thing is managed

An Honourable Member: May I interrupt the Honourable Member

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: I have very little time—I will answer you later; if the Chairman will give me more time, I am prepared to answer you. Therefore, there is not the least doubt that this is all part of a plan. This war has taught us how European wars are run. If we had any doubts about European diplomacy before, all those illusions have been swept away. These European wars are run for European civilisation with Asiatic blood and Asiatic treasure. There have been more men killed and wounded of my countrymen than I dare say even the Britishers themselves, for whose empire this fight is being carried on; and in spite of all that, do we get any credit for it? Whichever way you look at it, it always takes the same turn. If you are fighting for the sport of fighting they are mercenaries. My countrymen are not cowards. Thank God that the womb of Mother India does not produce cowards. It is still producing heroes. From the heights of Abyssinia, to the plains of Tunisia, Tobruk, Sicily—and the latest information is that when in Italy the 8th Army could not do anything it is the Indian regiments who are being engaged—what does it mean? It means that wherever there is any doubt or difficulty, it is my countrymen who have to come forward and give their lives. And what does this Government do? I do not see one gentleman whom I knew before the war has left this country, and yet they are talking of the empire: they say they are fighting and they are using my countrymen as mercenaries for pay. But if some of us do not fight, because we have got our own ideas of respectability and independence and we would rather fight on equal terms and not as slaves, then they say "You are not doing your duty by the empire or commonwealth," liberty, freedom and all that bunkum that we have been hearing about *ad nauseam*. I say we will have nothing to do with this European diplomacy, where our blood has been spilled in this war as a matter of compulsion. We do not want to have anything to do with your European politics, whether it is Nazism, or whether it is Fascism or whether it is even Britishism, which means talking big and behaving mean. We do not want these Europeanisms at all. We want to look at this thing from our own point of view, from the point of view of our own interests. I have got a toothache and have got to see how that can be relieved, I have got a stomach ache and I am hungry and therefore I want food; that is how we look at the problem. All this talk does not impress me, as I say, whether it is Nazism, or Fascism or Britishism or any other ism; of Britishism we have had a long experience. Recently we are having an addition to this Britishism in the statements of the Secretary of State: he is making vulgar statements after statements day after day, repeating untruths, which nobody pays any attention to, repeating like a parrot or even worse. We do not want to have anything to do with those things. What we want is our own interest; and I say behind this planned famine there is this vindictiveness. There is vindictiveness for this reason that in the last 150 years—I see that my time limit is approaching, I am not going to take more than a minute—in the last 150 years, in spite of your efforts at emasculation my countrymen can produce heroes about whom I can be proud. In spite of the 150 years of keeping us down so that we may be humbled and we may have inferiority complex I find that my countrymen are just as good as, if not better than these people who have tried their utmost to humiliate and humble us. We may be poor, we may be famished, but I can tell you I am proud that in spite of their attempts they have not been able to make us slaves. That is the vindictiveness behind, and all I say is this, that on the brow of our poverty you cannot force us to wear the crown of slavery.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari (Tanjore *cum* Trichinopoly: Non-Muhammadan Rural): I support the amendment to the motion moved by my Honourable friend, Mr. Neogy. I must say that having listened to food debates, this being the third one, I do not feel that they have been followed up by any substantial achievement on the part of the Government. I have been listening attentively to the speeches made by the Members of Government to see if there was any indication that they have realised the seriousness of the position for one thing, and secondly, that they felt confident that they can grapple with the problem. The Honourable the Mover of the motion was very restrained, asked for co-operation, told us what has all been done. He said that the Government is going to follow a particular policy. He has been supported by two of his subordinates. Mr. Kirby told us about the mechanics of rationing, and Mr. Hutchings this morning reviewed the debate in this House, preached a sermon, but gave us no hopes so far as the future is concerned.

Sir, what is happening in this country and in England is an attempt at throwing responsibility on others shoulders. Every person who is responsible in a measure wants to shove off the responsibility on to somebody else. The debate in the Parliament revealed, the Honourable Mr. Amery wanted to throw the responsibility on Provincial Autonomy. Sir, I remember that while this House was discussing this question of food on the last occasion I showed fairly conclusively, in my opinion and in the opinion of those that can judge the question,—that the question of Central Government's responsibility could not be disputed. At that time I referred to the operation of sections 102 and 8 of the Government of India Act by reason of the declaration of an emergency, and the addition of section 126A to the same Act which made the executive authority of the Central Government supreme. If the executive authority of the Central Government becomes supreme where is the responsibility? The authority of the Governor General is supreme and he owes allegiance directly to the Secretary of State for India, and how could Mr. Amery say that the responsibility by reason of Provincial Autonomy functioning is that of Provincial Government? My Honourable friend on my left—Mr. Neogy—clearly pointed out the other day how executive authority is being exercised in the provinces by the Central Government when it suits them. Sections 12 and 52 of the Government of India Act read with 14 and 54 lay upon the executive authority of the Government of India the responsibility for the prevention of any grave menace to peace and tranquillity of any part of India and makes it a personal responsibility of the Governor General. And now at the modest computation, over a million people are dead in Bengal and it is estimated that about four to five millions more will die before the end of the year over various parts of India, and it is said it is not the Governor General's personal responsibility and it is not the Secretary of State's responsibility! In the face of these facts how is it possible to support an amendment asking for a Royal Commission to enquire into the cause of all this. It is not, as my Honourable friend Mr. Jamnadas Mehta mentioned, that I have cast away my inferiority complex. I maintain I never possessed it. I think, to-day to go and ask Amery and Co. to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate into what has happened in India, particularly when they have shirked their responsibility and tried to cast it on provincial ministers, is something that the world will laugh at. Sir, what we have really to ask is, how are they going to discharge that responsibility? The Government of India Act under which we are working in this House, forbids us to recommend to the House of Commons the only remedy that should be taken in the circumstances. But we can very well ask, we can very well remind them of a statement made in 1901 by the then Secretary of State, Lord George Hamilton, in introducing the annual financial statement in the House of Commons. He repudiated the idea that Britain was bleeding India, that Britain was exploiting India and said:

"I admit at once that if it could be shown that India has retrograded in material prosperity under our rule we stand self-condemned and we ought no longer to be trusted with the control of that country."

[Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari.]

Is it or is it not a fact that retrogression in the economic sphere has taken place in this country all these 43 years; and to-day we have reached the climax of that retrogression. Can anybody on the Treasury Benches or anybody in the House of Commons deny that that retrogression has been progressive and has reached its culmination to-day? Am I or am I not right if I remind the British people, if I remind their agents in this country, of that statement of Lord George Hamilton made, not in a cavalier manner, but in all seriousness—if I remind them of that and say, "Quit, get out, we have had enough of you, we do not want you any more", is there not enough justification for asking you to do that? Having that justification how can we with our self-respect intact,—how can we asked them to come to this country and be the arbiters in regard to the responsibility for this famine and decide who is responsible? The responsibility is theirs, it is not ours. The primary responsibility is theirs when they have taken all the power and they have shirked it, not only to-day but during all these 150 years, and particularly, after that statement of Lord George Hamilton, all these 43 years. We are right in asking them to quit whether it offends them or not, no matter whether the circumstances under which we ask them to quit are right or not right, or propitious or not propitious.

With regard to the question of the appointment of a committee of enquiry, I agree with my Honourable friend, Mr. Lawson, that as facts have to be found a fact finding enquiry committee is useful. Probably facts might themselves be judgments, but a Royal Commission we shall not have. And it is not necessary to-day so much to fix responsibility, whether it belongs either to the provincial ministry or to the Central Government. We are convinced that it is Central Government's responsibility and I am not concerned whether the responsibility is going to be saddled on the shoulders of Mr. Fazlul Huq so far as Bengal is concerned, or shifted on to the present ministry. We are not concerned with it at all, but we do want an examination into the facts which have led to this debacle in order that it might help us to face the future.

Sir, I think that, if the facts are examined, as my friends who spoke before me have proved, without doubt, the Government of India's responsibility would be clearly shown. Starting from the denial policy, which is in effect a scorched earth policy, operated in this country out of mere panic, starting from that, the putting in of an extra population in Bengal where the pressure on the stocks of food was in existence together with a complete inability to improvise food for the extra population that they have put in there, for this the Central Government must take the responsibility without any shadow of doubt. It may be that the Provincial Government is partly responsible but can it be denied that during the second Huq Ministry, it was not the Ministry but Sir John Herbert that was ruling the province and the Ministry was tamely submitting to the acts of the Governor. Look at what happened to Travancore and Cochin States where the quantum of food that is produced locally is just two-fifths of the needs of the population. The Government of India under their basic plan have promised very generous treatment to these States but the actual performance has fallen terribly short of the promises made. The conditions in Travancore and Cochin are nowhere similar to what obtains in Bengal in spite of infinitely poor resources in these States and the responsibility for that must be laid at the door of Sir John Herbert and his bureaucratic machinery. There is no use trying to put the blame on the popular Ministry because the Ministry had no power but only responsibility.

Sir, the question that has got to be asked today is what is the Government going to do about it all. Your free trade policy which sought to help Bengal has in effect brought Orissa to the same misery. (*An Honourable Member:* "Bihar also".) My friend says that Bihar is following suit. I may tell this House that what happens to Orissa will happen soon to the Vizagapatam District in the Madras Presidency. It is very near famine conditions. Conditions are bad there and if something is not done to arrest the progress of this famine it will creep from place to place and soon the whole country will

be in the grips of famine without a doubt. What is the Government going to do about it. You can devise the mechanics of rationing. You can devise the mechanics of procurement but how can you produce food. My Honourable friend Mr. Gwilt very rightly warned us about one fact. He warned us that this assistance which is now forthcoming from other countries will not be available for long. If it happens that the war situation in Europe gets better, if more countries come under the occupation of the United Nations, then as the area of occupation increases food from the countries which now offer us food and the few ships which are now carrying food grains to us will be diverted to Europe as these areas will probably need relief more than we do.

What are the Government going to do about it. Have the Government thought out any plan? Has the Finance Member thought of utilising his sterling resources in this connection. Has he thought of requesting U. S. A. or Britain to give us a few ships which we will buy ultimately as against our sterling resources, so that we shall not be adversely affected by any change in the circumstances of the European warfare but will have a regular supply of food grains coming into the country. I understand that so far as Bengal is concerned the official hierarchy feels that they have merely to wait for two months and that at the end of two months they will get the *aman* crop and all will be well. Suggestions have been made that the *aman* crop should be purchased by Government. But people who have been in Bengal and who have studied the question feel that it is not going to be so rosy as all that. After all the *aman* crop will be available only for six months, provided it is taken hold of by the Government. Even if rationing is introduced, it can be successful only in urban areas. It has been successful in Bombay. It has been successful to a degree in Madras but do the Government's advisers realise that there are pockets in between one rationing area and another where there are a large number of people without land, people who live on a cash wages, who have to purchase in the black market. My experience in Madras is this. Where there are two very good rationed areas where rice is sold at a fixed price of say Rs. 18 per bag or something like that, in between these two urban areas in the villages rice is being sold at about Rs. 45 per bag. This is the black market price. What is the use of your mechanism of rationing when dealing with countrywide famine. It will only suit urban areas. Unless rationing is going to provide for all the deficit areas, for the landless labourers and those who live on cash wages, what is the use of rationing? But even in regard to rationing, I do not know if what is contemplated by the Bengal Government at present is going to prove suitable at all. I have here a statement which says that the dole which the Bengal Government contemplate at present for manual labourers is 6 chhataks, whereas an ordinary adult will get 4 chhataks and as against this I will ask the House to compare what has been laid down as being the correct ration under the Famine Code, under which an adult labourer gets 16 chhataks. An ordinary adult who does not do manual labour gets 12 chhataks as against the four chhataks that has been proposed by the Government of Bengal. I cannot understand what use doling of this quantity is going to be, unless it is the opinion of Government and its advisers that those who have been starving should not be given a meal which will fill the stomach and that they can assimilate food better if fed on a smaller dole. Unless that be their opinion I cannot understand how this is going to solve the problem of starvation. So, rationing on these lines under which a man gets only a quarter of his needs is not of much use. One cannot therefore draw much comfort or solace from that erudite speech of Mr. Kirby. It was good as far as it went and as far as urban areas go but what about the rural areas. That is the real crux of the problem today. In Bengal what is happening is that destitutes are being removed. Very rightly perhaps but why is that being done. Today, the zamindar, the capitalist, the contractor and the office holder mentality rules in this country. Could you persuade the Central Government to take action against the Punjab? The Punjab zamindari interests are adequately represented here and the people who represent those interests cannot divest themselves

[Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari.]

of their previous affiliations and that is exactly what happens all over this country. In Calcutta, the rich English business man, the Indian business man, the rich Marwaris and the well-to-do classes live in their houses and go to their cinemas and races as if nothing is happening, as if there is no famine in Calcutta. They do not wish to see these miserable people dying in the streets of starvation and the Bengal Government is willing to oblige them by transporting the destitutes to up-country areas.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Honourable Member's time is up.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: I am finishing. I would impress upon this Government that unless they divorce themselves of this affiliations and unless they propose to put their shoulders to the task and give some hope that something is being done—instead of merely asking the people to co-operate with you—and that something is being definitely planned, it is not much use having these food debates. They leave us exactly where we were.

Sir F. E. James (Madras: European): Mr. Deputy President, Sir, it is pleasant to see my Honourable friend Dr. Deshmukh back in the House after absence of some time during which he has lost none of his sound fury and wind; but I am bound to say that my Honourable friend did not contribute very much else to the purpose of this debate. He stigmatised an argument used by my Honourable friend Mr. Lawson as a foolish one, not apparently aware of the fact that one of the difficulties in the present situation is the absence of consumer's goods, as he himself, coming from Bombay, knows very well indeed.

Now, Sir, I am not going to say a word as to where the blame for the present situation lies. Many people can point a finger of scorn at this or that administration but my own view is that everybody who has been in public life in the last two years must share to some extent the blame for the present situation, and no one is exempt.

Some Honourable Members: Why? No, No.

Sir F. E. James: I gather that the response of my Honourable friends shows that the cap fits them in any case. In any case, what we should do here is not to look for scapegoats but to look for remedies. It is in that spirit that I wish to address a few remarks on certain points which I do not think have been dealt with in this debate.

Now, I want, first of all, to say this. While as an old resident of Bengal, I have heard with great distress of the trouble there, I know there are many in this House who can speak with much more direct evidence of the situation there today. I do, therefore, want to put in a plea for the situation in South India and particularly in the States of Travancore and Cochin. Whereas rice production in Bengal is 83 per cent. of Bengal's requirements, in Travancore and Cochin together it is less than 50 per cent. Therefore, they have to be fed mainly, whatever else they might do within those States, from supplies abroad. Here I would like to pay a tribute to the administration both of Travancore and Cochin.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Indian States are administered much better.

Sir F. E. James: One is administered by a Dewan who is personally known to many Members of this House and another is administered by a European who is a member of the Indian Civil Service. They have been working together in the kind of comradeship that I hope to see in other parts of the country. They have from the very beginning controlled prices. They have set up a monopoly procurement agency. They have brought under control the distribution of all available supplies. They have instituted rationing not only in urban but also in rural areas long before other provinces or States even thought of it. And yet today, so meagre are the supplies which they are able to get even on the basis of the revised basic plan of the Government of India that the rationing per head per day is 5 ounces of rice or, including other grains, only 7½ ounces per head.

An Honourable Member: It is not even 1 lb.

Sir F. E. James: Not half a pound. If the Honourable Members had travelled through Malabar as I have travelled and seen the effect of this meagre allowance upon the life of the population, their hearts would have been wrung, as mine was wrung. Unfortunately, owing to the declared policy of the Travancore and Cochin Government, they did not give publicity to their woes. They felt, whether rightly or wrongly I cannot say, that if they gave the kind of publicity that was given to the troubles in Bengal, it would undermine the confidence of the people of the States in the ability of the administration to deal out evenly such meagre supplies as they receive. The deficit per month is 31,000 tons. Up-to-date, under the revised plan of the Government of India, they are only receiving about 80 per cent. of that each month and under the basic plan according to the figures that I was given by my Honourable friend Mr. Hutchings the other day for 1943-44, the Government of India are only planning to give 50 per cent. of the requirements of the people in those two States. Is that to be the penalty of efficient and wise administration? I would ask my Honourable friends, the representatives of the Food Department here, to look into these figures. They ought to be revised; they can be revised and, if necessary, they should be put on as high a priority as supplies for Bengal. I can assure my Honourable friends of this, that whatever they send to Travancore and Cochin will not disappear. It will go to the people and it will go on the basis of rationing, which is the only fair and equitable basis for the distribution of food today.

The next point I should like to raise is in connection with rationing. I was very glad, indeed, to hear a new speaker in this House, Mr. Kirby, the other day and I am sorry he is not here today because I want to raise one particular point in connection with the application of rationing, and it is this.

May we assume that where rationing is applied to urban or other areas, it applies to all alike? I ask that because today in the Bangalore Civil and Military station where certain necessities of life are rationed to the civil population, there are certain classes, the dependents of military officers, who draw rations from military supplies, whose rations are in some cases three, four, five and many times the amount of the rations which the ordinary civil population draws. That is entirely wrong. That has created in Bangalore and in other places, in South India, which I need not mention, two classes among civilians, the ordinary and the privileged. Now, Sir, I will say this in justice to the military authorities, whom I myself saw in Bangalore when I was there last, that they are perfectly willing to apply exactly the same scales of rationing to the dependents of military officers as are applied to ordinary civilians.

But they claim that they must be approached on that by the civil administration. Why has not that been done before? The Bangalore Civil and Military Station is a direct responsibility of the Central Government. I do suggest that this should be put an end to immediately. Civilians who are not actually in uniform must be treated alike and there must be no favoured class.

The third point I wish to touch upon is the reference in the report of the Gregory Committee to the need for greater austerity among the more favoured classes. Here, I speak with great feeling. I have been in Bengal and I have seen the meals prepared at the great hotels and restaurants in Calcutta which are out of all proportion to the situation surrounding. In Bangalore, the other day, where we knew that there was a shortage of rice, I was present at a luncheon where at least 120 persons, belonging to the middle and upper classes, were served with plates of curry and rice. That is wrong. You can go into the hotels and restaurants of this imperial city of Delhi. Where are the signs of austerity? When I was in the Middle East with some of my colleagues in May last, I found that there was a shortage of meat. What was the result? It was decreed immediately that in every hotel or restaurant, there should be four meatless days. When there is shortage of rice in India, has anybody thought of introducing riceless days in the public places and restaurants of towns? Again, in the Middle East we found that

[Sir F. E. James.]

those who were extravagant or who hoarded or who profiteered received very short shrift. In one place in Alexandria I saw myself in the main street on a platform exhibited to the contempt of their fellowmen, 12 citizens of Alexandria with notices hung over them—they were in chains—saying that these men are profiteers, that they had been sentenced, and that they were going to prison tonight.

Sardar Sant Singh (West Punjab: Sikh): Are they Ministers of the Provinces?

Sir F. E. James: Ministers or private individuals, they should be treated alike. That is an important thing in this country. That is the basis of the philosophy of rationing, and as it is the basis for supplying, let it also be the basis for punishment for those who commit a sin against the social conscience of the community. Then, Sir, I suggest to those who are in authority, if my words could reach the Big House, not far from here, I hope they will be considered, why there should not be a nation wide campaign in the interests of austerity on the part of the more fortunate classes of this country. Believe me, Sir, that starvation and malnutrition among ordinary people, up and down the length and breadth of India today, are sowing seeds of discontent and misery that will one day be reaped in a rich cut and unpleasant harvest.

Now, Sir, my fourth point is to suggest that there is a good deal of waste in military circles. I mentioned the other day the case of a distinguished scientist in Bangalore who was approached by the authorities of a prisoner of war camp not far from that City, with a request that he should advise them as to how to make compost out of the surplus bread which they did not need, and that when people are starving! We reported that immediately to the General Officer Commanding the Southern Army and he ordered an instant enquiry. Sir, I have no time to develop this item, and all I will say is this,—I am sorry my Honourable friend the Secretary of the War Department is not here—that from reports I have received from various quarters, there is at least *prima facie* evidence of serious food wastage in military circles, and this should be very carefully investigated.

Then, Sir, the next point is, I was glad to hear from my Honourable friend the Secretary to the Food Department this morning, but was a little disappointed that he did not deal with the administrative recommendations of the Gregory Committee report. I would like to be assured that those recommendations are receiving the highest priority in his own Department. What has happened to the proposals to set up these expert committees? We are told that they are under consideration. I know they are. But after all, the report was presented sometime ago, and on 13th October, more than a month ago, it was considered by the Provinces and the State Governments concerned at the last Food conference. Every day matters, and I am sure the Honourable the Food Member realises that. I do earnestly appeal to him not to let any day pass without putting into effect some of these very important recommendations.

Then, Sir, I am sorry that when my Honourable friend the Member for Education, Health and Lands spoke the other day, he spoke only about food production. But what is being done for medical relief? It is a sad thing to think that even when this immediate problem is solved and when once more people are getting food, these years and months of malnutrition and starvation will lay a very heavy toll upon the children of the future. They are after all to be the citizens of India, the new India that is to be built. How can you build a new free country on a generation which has been starved in its childhood? Therefore, while food is the first essential, the second, almost equal essential is to rush to the infected areas adequate medical and health relief and supplies. Sir, I hold the view that this situation in India, whatever the causes for it, is the responsibility not only of the administrations in India, not only of the British Government which has a direct and primary responsibility in the matter, but also of the United Nations, for after all this is the United Nations war. One of the satisfactory features of this, the present

crisis, has been the instant and willing response that has come from various countries throughout the Commonwealth of Nations. I wish there had been as instant a response from some of those great and wealthy countries outside the Commonwealth. That response cannot be put into effect unless the United Nations decide that supplies to India is the first priority of their war effort and I hope that will be understood and appreciated by those who now control in the interests of the United Nations, all the shipping lines to this country.

My final word is to say, what I am sure, has been in the minds of many, that although this situation may have revealed defects in the administration, yet those who are now in power, as is the case in Bengal, are putting their shoulders to the wheel in no uncertain way and are trying to do what they can, irrespective of community or race. They deserve our support and I hope that the voice of politics in this matter will be dead for ever, not only here, but also in Calcutta. Those who are now in power in Bengal deserve the fullest support of all communities . . .

Sardar Sant Singh: For miscarrying the whole thing.

Sir F. E. James: . . . Those who miscarry when they have the goods to carry deserve to go out of office. Give them the goods to carry. If you give them the goods, they will do the job. First give them the goods. Do not criticise before they have the weapons with which they can wage this war. Sir, not only has this crisis revealed defects in administration but it also has revealed what we knew, but what we sometimes forget, and that is, the terribly low standard of living to which millions of British subjects in this country have been condemned in the past. The moment there is maladjustment they have no margin from which to stand the strain. That fundamentally is the root problem. You do not solve this problem by deciding who is responsible. The solution of this problem lies in the future, and in the hands of those who will wield power in this country. No nation can be half slave and half free.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Honourable Member's time is up.

Sir F. E. James: Political freedom will be counterbalanced and more than counterbalanced unless there is at the same time economic freedom in this country.

Mrs. Renuka Ray (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, it is not my desire to apportion praise or blame between different individuals, ministries or Governments for the manner in which the food situation in Bengal has been allowed to develop; but it cannot be denied that when the situation was most critical there was an entire lack of machinery to deal with it, and even the immediate problem of giving relief fell on the shoulders of voluntary organisations, on whatever small scale they were able to take it up. It is not necessary for me to go into details of what is being enacted in Bengal today, for everybody has heard of it. Today every continent is feeling the miseries of war, our senses are perhaps blunted in regard to mass scale murder and death, yet if we make a comparison I think the death that has faced Bengal for the last few months, the death from which thousands and thousands of our countrymen, women and children are dying inch by inch is far worse than any death by any means of modern warfare. Sir, those of us who have gone down to the interior districts can give you details of unbelievable and untold misery, but I will not go into those details now for they have already appeared in the press and elsewhere. But I think that the tragedy of Bengal is really complete when we find that far more time and far more consideration has been given in acrimonious recriminations and in blaming others and in shelving blame than in combining all energies towards solving this problem or at least saving something out of the devastation that has already set in.

It has been said by many that it is landless labour that has mainly suffered; it has even been said that the small cultivator has aggravated the situation by hoarding. I have seen large numbers of these small cultivators and their families starving. Tempted by the soaring prices these small cultivators

[Mrs. Renuka Ray.]

sold out a far larger proportion of their foodgrains than before, not even keeping enough for their own immediate needs and hence their condition. Outside in the districts and in the rural areas far more than in Calcutta the fate of the poorer middle class families clinging to the last shreds of respectability is perhaps the worst among those who have suffered so far. I have seen women without clothing or in rags and tatters unable to go out for food in relief kitchens, reconciling themselves to death inch by inch by slow degree torture, and this in the 20th century! Can this age be called a civilised age?

Sir, it cannot be denied that when the situation was worsening no authority who was in a position to take action seemed to be aware of what was happening. The growing population, the lack of improvement of agriculture and acreage, the trend of rising prices, scarcity of foodgrains,—these were all there clamouring for attention, but nothing was done. To put the blame on hoarding and speculation alone is to beg the issue. Hoarding and speculation is no particular characteristic of India or of the Indian race; this type of exploitation takes place, as the result of the action of a particular section of the community in every race and in every country including Great Britain. And if a Government fails to take firm and courageous action in time this is bound to gain the upper hand. The actual shortage of foodgrains is recognised today. Each of the factors that have contributed towards it is small in itself, but in the total they are not inconsiderable. It is true that the amount of rice that was needed for Bengal from Burma was not large; it is also true that the amounts kept for the military and for stocks for military and industrial workers or for essential services or for extra population due to evacuation from Burma, when compared to the requirements of the whole population was inconsiderable. But they are all contributory factors. And if we add to all these the failure of harvests, the havoc that was caused last year by the cyclone in Midnapore, the floods of Burdwan and the denial policy of Government, and in particular the boat denial policy, the effects of which have been very unfortunate amongst the fishermen in Bengal, and last but not least, natural apprehension which has played its part on the delicate instrument of price control,—the picture is complete before us.

But it is not to the past but to the future that we must look. I am sure we all welcome what the Honourable the Food Member has told us in regard to the action that is going to be taken in regard to the fixing of prices, rationing in Calcutta and distribution. But it is very necessary that immediate action be taken and that no mistake should be committed again because this time the mistake will be very much more fatal than before. It is not enough for Government merely to buy up the winter crops; it is also necessary that investigation should be very fully made as to whether places known as so-called surplus areas are really surplus or not. Then with regard to distribution, it is a problem of immense magnitude and it is not going to be at all easy. Even with the recent changes that have been introduced or are in the process of being introduced very great difficulties of distribution still remain. I know myself that even stocks that have reached district headquarters or in some cases sub-divisional headquarters have not reached the rural areas and are not moving rapidly or fairly. The distribution should really go through the normal trade channels as far as possible, that is, of course if normal conditions can be brought back. Once everything has been thrown completely out of gear it is not very easy to bring back normal conditions. There is no ground for the slightest optimism when the *aman* crop comes into the market shortly. There is no doubt that conditions will improve a bit. But a worse fate will face Bengal in the summer of 1944 if adequate arrangements are not made about distribution and also about the real deficit that faces us. I think any economist should be able to tell us that one of the main things, which is necessary in a situation of this nature is the restoration of public confidence. Today there is a total lack of public confidence, and this is not only in the economic sphere, but in other spheres also, for example there is abject terror amongst the destitutes to go to

homes, camps or centres set up by the Government. Therefore, I say, something has to be done to restore confidence, and normal conditions have to be brought back.

Sir, I have been down very recently to one of the temporary relief centres set up by the Government of Bengal on Diamond Harbour road. This place was clean, hygienic, with newly built shelters. We saw a batch of 20 destitutes brought in while we were there. They were given clothes and foodgrains, but on closer investigation we found that there was some truth in the criticism that these families are being ruthlessly broken up. I found one old man crying and I asked him what had happened and he said that his 8 years old son, his only surviving relative, had been left behind in Calcutta wandering in the streets. He had protested when he was dragged into the van either to let him wait for his son or to leave him behind, but his protests went unheeded. The same thing happened in the case of a woman with her two children. She said her son had got a job and that at least her son should be informed. Nothing was done. Six out of 20 cases were like this. If in a random selection, six out of twenty cases are of families being broken up like this, then surely it is not just unfair criticism, not just that people want to find fault with Government, when they say these things. There must be some justification in it and surely it is up to those in authority, if they cannot avoid the mistakes, to take the help of voluntary organisations in removing these destitutes and repatriating them to the villages. It is a good move no doubt to return the destitutes to their villages, if relief centres in the vicinity of the villages, and places for cheap foodgrains are really set up. But these mistakes should be avoided at all costs and certainly they do not help in the restoration of confidence if things like this continue to happen.

Sir, I have already said that even the immediate work of giving relief fell on the shoulders of voluntary organisations, and with the help and sympathies that they have got from the whole of India they have carried on well. But of course it is only the State that can really grapple with a problem of such magnitude, and we welcome all efforts of the State in this direction. At the same time, Government schemes, as they have outlined, have not come into operation particularly in the interior districts, and voluntary organisations are really doing good work. And yet there is some truth, some justification in the criticism that these voluntary organisations of ten have to face impediments and obstacles. I am not in a position to say personally about all the obstacles and impediments, and as to how far they are exaggerated or not, though there are many complaints but I think it is my duty to place before this House one case that I know for myself. It has happened very recently. On the 1st of November, a wagon of fine rice was sent as a free donation from the Central Provinces to the Secretary of the Calcutta Branch of the All-India Women's Conference. On receiving the Railway Receipt she went immediately—the same day—and got a permit according to regulations from the Civil Supplies Directorate. She sent a lorry down with freight charges of Rs. 381 immediately to fetch the rice, but she was told that this rice had already arrived a day before and had been unloaded and could not be located. After seven days she was informed that it was located and so she sent the lorry down for the second time, but this time she was told that she must pay Rs. 1,100, not Rs. 381, because there were some demurrage charges and various other charges. So she sent Rs. 1,100 in cash together with the permit asking for the rice again, and this time—for the third time—the lorry was again returned on the ground that she must send a cheque and sign a declaration that no dues are owing to her and that she had received the grain intact. She signed the declaration and sent a cheque for Rs. 1,100, instead of cash, and then this time some coarse rice was given. It was not the rice that was sent there. She refused it and at this stage she got into touch with those who could approach higher authorities for help. Of course on application the higher authorities immediately took up the case and I am sure she has by this time received the rice and charges are reduced. But what of the lorry hire and what of those who have no accessibility to higher authorities? Is this the treatment to be meted out to

[Mrs. Renuka Ray.]

those doing relief work? I do not wish to imply that responsible authorities—high or low—would willingly allow such things to go on, but the net result is just the same. My point is that they should be very careful and they should take steps against those responsible for these mistakes the moment things like this are brought to their notice, and it is for this reason that I have brought up this case before this House. It is no good, saying there are exaggerations and shutting one's eyes to facts when things like this are occurring. It does not restore public confidence either. Nothing can be achieved if public confidence is not there.

Sir, I hope I have not taken more time than I was entitled to. Before I conclude I should like to say one word. I think I am voicing the feelings of my people—people of Bengal—when I say that they are not interested in the mere finding of scapegoats, or the apportioning of blame between authorities and individuals because this will not satisfy the hunger of the starving millions of my country. Sir, I think it is very important that a very thorough investigation should be made, and made at once, with regard to all the contributory factors and the causes which have aggravated the situation. This is not only needed for avoiding mistakes in the dim distant future but in the immediate future that is before us. This work of investigation should be done in the shortest possible time and action taken so that after the *aman* crop, in the summer of 1944, a worst tragedy may not be enacted, that we are seeing enacted before our eyes today.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall (Member for Railways and War Transport): Sir I had hoped in speaking on this debate to avoid the controversial past. But there are one or two points that have been made in the debate which necessitate my giving an answer. My Honourable friend opposite, Sardar Mangal Singh, yesterday fired a few shots at me, and coming as he does from the martial races, he would not respect me if I did not fire back at him. He retailed with evident delight what I have come to regard as a jolly old fairy tale from the Punjab, which bears no relation at all to the present situation. I regard it as a fairy tale because in the first place his figures were wrong. He claims that in the month of May the railways carried out of the Punjab only 16,000 tons

Sardar Mangal Singh (East Punjab: Sikh): Out of the stocks purchased for the Government of India.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The actual figures were, I think, 49,205 tons. Just as his figures were wrong, so were his facts. He said that there was a shortage of wagons in August. In the ten days ending on the 21st August of this year we allotted for export from the Punjab 776 wagons, of which only 627 were filled with foodgrains

An Honourable Member: What happened to the rest?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The rest were unfilled. The foodgrains were not there to fill them. On the 19th August the Regional Food Controller, not an officer in my department, went down to inspect a certain *mandi* where there was considerable stocks; he wanted to know why they were not moved. There were 33,839 bags in the *mandi* and only 800 bags offering for transport. The conclusion is that the remainder were being held back; and I am afraid that at that time those who were owning a great part of that wheat were not carrying out what my Honourable friend Mr. Hutchings described as the inescapable duty of making available foodgrains as rapidly as possible for the relief of other parts of India. Why does my Honourable friend have to go back to May, June and July, if he wishes to complain against the supply of transport? The answer clearly is that he has not got any complaints of a later date. I must point out that my Honourable friend and my Honourable friend's Honourable friends cannot have it both ways. They cannot on the one hand claim, as they have done in defence of the Punjab's attitude, that larger quantities of foodgrains have been exported out of the Punjab than ever before, and yet that the railways have not carried them. They have not

been moved by river, they were not moved by road or by air; they have moved by rail.

Sardar Mangal Singh: Will the Honourable Member give figures of wheat lying at the railway stations at the end of June, purchased for the Government of India?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The Honourable Member himself has quoted those figures—but when we came to ask for that wheat to be put into the wagons, it was not all there . . .

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Even purchased?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: It was not all there; but all this argument about the past I submit, is profitless. What actually happened over that period is summed up, as well as anywhere, in the words of my budget speech, made six months before this happened. What I said then was:

"So long as the need arises, foodstuffs will be moved in high priority; and if bumper *rabi* crops eventuate, as seems reasonably likely, and if confidence is restored, the railways must be prepared to meet exceptionally heavy grain movements which will tax their resources severely."—*So they did*—"But in all events the food will be transported."

And that is what has happened.

For the future I am particularly anxious, it is my ambition, to work in as close collaboration as possible with the Punjab Government and every other Government. I think we can continue to move their foodgrains; I have no doubt about it, except in one circumstance. There are good *kharif* crops in the east of India; there are heavy imports of foodgrains coming in; there is a prospect that more shipping can be made available. In that set of circumstances, it is quite possible that the time may come when the holders of wheat may all wish to see who can get rid of their stocks first, and if that happens and if it is accompanied by what I regard sooner or later as an inevitable panic to get rid of these stocks, then I openly confess that it is quite likely that we shall not be able to carry those stocks fast enough to please them.

Mr. Hooseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Let us hope that they come soon.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The second point which I wish to answer was the point raised by Mr. Neogy and touched upon by one or two other Members. They accused government institutions of hoarding foodgrains. The House knows very well what is the Government's policy towards railwaymen. We have adopted deliberately a policy of cheap food, and of thereby stabilising the cost of living of the railwaymen. We are pledged to fulfil our undertakings and we have done so and done so without hoarding. The monthly returns of the railways between April and October show that over that period the railways based on Calcutta—the E. I. R., the B. and A. Railway and the B. N. R.—held an average stock of rice for 42 days. Mr. Kirby, the rationing expert whom you were listening to yesterday, has, I believe, laid it down—and it is accepted by Government—that a thirty days' stock is a reasonable figure for any large concern which has undertaken to feed its staff. . .

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Minimum?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: That is the minimum; but at any rate even in present conditions, that is reasonable. In the case of the railways it is legitimate to argue that the figure may be higher, because the railways are not one big compact unit, but their staff is spread over hundreds of miles. By the end of October, and in the early days of November, the railway stocks were reduced to 21 days in some cases and in other cases to even less. The position quite recently got so serious that we had to ask the Central Food Department to help us out with some of their stocks and very nobly they have come to our rescue. There is no evidence of hoarding there. You cannot expect the railwaymen to work without food; you cannot expect your food to be transported without feeding your railwaymen, and it is wrong to blame efficiency just because it is efficient . . .

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Is there rationing amongst the railwaymen?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Yes—the scale of supply. . .

Mr. K. O. Neogy (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Will the Honourable Member state whether the supplies for the railways were obtained through private channels or in every case through the Government agency as far as Bengal is concerned?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: The arrangements for procurement of food for the railways is that Provincial Governments are responsible; but the Provincial Governments asked the railways to provide the food in the first instance and they have bought at controlled or other prices, not above controlled prices, in the market.

Mr. K. O. Neogy: What are the other prices? Are they above the controlled prices?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: No; they have never been. I cannot give way to the Honourable Member in the short time available to me. I venture to say that had we failed to produce the food for the railwaymen and thereby failed to carry the food and other necessities for the public, the Honourable Member who accuses us of hoarding would have been the first to spill his venom on Government.

I do not think it necessary to give the full details of all the transport arrangements made as they stand to-day, although, if time permitted, I should like to have done so in response to Mr. Hooseinbhoj Lalljee's request that we should show due regard to the House and give them all the information possible. I think it is generally recognised that so far as transport of foodgrains to Calcutta is concerned adequate arrangements exist. I would only like to make one comment myself and that is, at the moment we cannot find as much grains to be put into wagons as we could in September or October.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: From what part of India?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Mainly from the north of India.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: The Punjab?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: We could carry a great deal more if it were made available. As to the details of arrangements for transport to Calcutta I have already given them to the House; I need not repeat them as there has been little change since I spoke last. As regards arrangements for transport of grains to parts of Bengal other than Calcutta, we have arranged for 20 wagons a day to move from the North Western Railway via Naihati direct to the districts, that is about 400 tons per day; four broad gauge wagons, i.e., 80 tons a day via the metre gauge; 5 metre gauge wagons by the O. and T. Railway, and in addition 400 tons of rice for Eastern Bengal from Dinajpur district. In addition to that we have recently completed, in close co-operation with the Bengal Government, with the assistance of the army and with the help of the local transport authorities, the following arrangements for movement from Calcutta to the districts of Bengal. These figures will I think interest Mrs. Renuka Ray. 500 tons per day are scheduled to move from Calcutta by rail to North and East Bengal and 325 tons per day to move by steamer to East Bengal. This gives me an opportunity to pay a tribute to the inland steamers. They are one of the silent services of whom one hears little, but they have done most valuable transport work in Bengal in recent months. 600 tons per day can be moved by rail to Khulna and on by steamer and flat, and if and when arrangements are made by the Army and the Bengal Government, we will move another 600 tons by that route. But for that additional 600 tons it will be necessary to organise country boat traffic. Finally, there are arrangements being made for moving 600 tons a day to West Bengal by the B. N. R. and E. I. R., if it is required. It is cross traffic of course, and we hope better arrangements can be made. All these arrangements are in addition to the arrangements which are scheduled for direct shipments to the districts from outside Bengal, previously mentioned, i.e., 580 tons a day, and they are also in addition to any arrangements made by the army for moving foodgrains from Calcutta by motor vehicle or by their own steamers.

These are the arrangements which have been scheduled for transport. It is for others to fill those wagons or those ships and flats and I am confident that

with the close co-operation which is now existing between the different departments we shall see those wagons and those flats and ships filled and there will be steady improvement. As regards the new *aman* crop, a transport programme will soon be arranged, and so far as I can see, owing to the satisfactory crops likely to come forward in the east, demands made on transport may be less, but I think that, whatever happens, they will be within the capacity of the transport both internally in Bengal and from outside.

Now, Sir, Napoleon III in one of his more inspired moments said: "War is a matter of detail. There is more detail about an army than anything else on earth". And so it is with the organisation of the war against famine. There is quite a lot of detail to be gone into before bulk supplies can be moved into the mouths of the people who need food in the districts. Goods have to be sold and bought; they have to be removed to the *mandi* and to the railway station; they have to be booked to their destination and to the right destination. They have to be transported, unloaded, taken delivery of, cleared from the railway depot, possibly redistributed by lorry, river or rail, unloaded, taken delivery of and distributed into the mouths of those who need it. All that does require a large administrative organisation, and I am glad to say from the transport angle that the difference between now and a few months ago, even since the time I last spoke, is that the organisation is incomparably better and I would like to pay due credit to all those officers in all the departments of all the Governments concerned for the improvement which has taken place in recent weeks. When I last spoke I showed a certain impatience with the state of the organisation. Certainly since that date much has been done, and now departments of the different Governments are working with much closer harmony, there is greater accuracy about facts and figures and the work generally is better co-ordinated. The final link has been provided by the army. So far as we are concerned, from the transport angle, final arrangements for distribution were the missing link which the Army now supplies. The value of a disciplined force in the final stage of distribution is a factor of the very greatest importance and one which is bound to have its effects very quickly.

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

In conclusion, Dr. Deshmukh in one of his more relevant moments asked us to look not to yesterday or to-day but to look to tomorrow. It was over a year ago when I said that the peoples' food was a matter of the highest importance, and if it was offered for movement it would be moved. Ever since August of 1942 priority arrangements of one kind or another have existed for the movement of food. Ever since that date there has been no complacency on the part of the Government in the matter of the movement of peoples' food, no lack of foresight. I venture to say that in this matter of getting food to the areas where the danger of famine was showing Government was awake long before the public. There has, of course, been a certain amount of operational difficulties, but there has never at any time been any question of our, not being able to move food that was offering over a period. My Honourable friend, Mr. Lawson, referred to the disastrous breaches on the E. I. R. They were disastrous from several points of view, but not from the point of view of food, because we were able to move more food, after the breaches took place, to Calcutta than before.

Food is one of the things which must move like coal and military traffic. It must move, it can move and it will move, and what I am saying is not, as my Honourable friend the Nawabzada would say, whistling to keep up courage. What I have said will be done will be done.

Those who are familiar with Government procedure will know by sight the red "Priority" labels which we have on the files. We have also a label in blue marked "Immediate" for anything which is even more urgent than that. It is credibly reported to me that in another great arsenal of democracy in the west when they have a priority file they label it "Rush", and when there is a super-priority file, they now label it "frantic". We go about it in more prosaic ways. We have a "Central Priorities Committee", not a "Frenzy Bureau", but I

[Sir Edward Benthall.]

maintain that by one way or another it gets results. But whether the movement of food is labelled 'Priority' or 'Immediate' or 'Rush' or 'Frantic', the

people's food will be moved wherever and whenever it is offered for movement. In this regard I would mention to Sir Frederick James that we have very carefully in mind the question of supplies to Travancore and Cochin. We are aware that even if bumper crops in Bengal and the East help to alleviate the position there, the problem of Travancore and Cochin will always be with us and arrangements must always be made for feeding them. But the arrangements for Travancore and Cochin must largely be made by sea and I understand that a careful and detailed programme has been worked out. If it is not sufficient, I have no doubt that the authorities concerned will go back to the Food Department to make out their case but so far as transport is concerned, so far as my department is concerned, we will give Travancore and Cochin just as close attention as Bengal. That is all I have to say. This year the difficulty lies in the main in Bengal, Travancore and Cochin. Next year, it may be elsewhere but from the transport angle, I can assure the House that we will be alert to watch the situation and to try to forecast beforehand the requirements of transport for whatever area is in need.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Mr. President, this Assembly has seldom, if ever, been invited to consider a matter of such tragic importance as what we have been discussing since last Friday. I do not intend to paint the gruesome picture of misery that is stalking the fair land of Bengal. Suffice it to say that the distress which has been prevailing in Bengal has been real, widespread and calamitous and at last through the efforts of the *Statesman* which is the news Bible of every Englishman in this country, it has come home to them not only in this country but in England that India is really in the grip of one of the worst calamities that could befall a country. My Honourable friends who have spoken before me, specially from the European Group, have said that this is not the time to place blame on anybody. Let us not think of the past. Let us not think of the present but let us think of the future. Let me tell them that unless you take into consideration the past and the present, you can never decide about the future. It is only if we are to examine the past with regard to this matter of food that you will be able to plan for the future. The Food Department has been, during the most critical months, saturated with European officers. The Food Department during the most crucial months was under the direct control of the late Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, because from February to May, till the Honourable Sir Azizul Huque took charge of the Food Department, it was administered by the highest in the land. Is it not an irony of fate that a Viceroy who had come with hopes, with promises of improving the agriculture in this country should have ended his regime with an inglorious page in the history of the last 7½ years? If he had devoted more time and attention to the economic ruination of India than to geographical unity, he would have been able to save thousands of lives in this country. I think every member of this House will express his appreciation of the prompt action which has been taken by the new Viceroy. He realised his responsibility. He realised his duty and now I ask whether it was necessary to wait till hundreds and thousands of lives of poor Indians were lost before they could take effective measures. I want to know why was it not possible for the Government to take the same measures four months ago as what they did now. Is the war situation any better today than what it was? As a matter of fact, during that time there was less danger of Japanese invasion or Japanese attack than there is now and if the military could spare the transport and the men to serve the people of Bengal now, why could they not have done this a few months ago. Why should they have waited to see thousands of lives of men, women and children being lost before any effective measures could have been taken. My Honourable friend, Mr. Hutchings, I think I am right in saying that it was his invidious speech today, has made a speech which is the worst condemnation of the present Government. He stated, as a matter of fact he admitted, that

'we have made experiments in the past. We have made mistakes. We have changed plans from time to time'. This is what he admits. A Government that makes mistakes, changes plans, where the lives of innocent people are concerned, has no business to be sitting there. A Government like that in a free country would have been kicked out long before this. What is the use of your coming forward and saying 'We have made mistakes? We had no plans'. Why did you not have any plans? Whose fault is it? Is it the fault of the peoples of India or is it your fault? Who was there to check you from making plans? Who was there to prevent you from having a well laid and well planned policy? And now we are told that they have now a plan.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Who knows that plan will not be changed again?

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: I only hope that this time their plan is of a different nature and that this time what they have planned will really give food to the peoples of India. My Honourable friend Sir Edward Benthall said that this time I would not say that he was whistling to keep up his courage. I was rather disappointed because in the speech that he made today there was not that courage which I found in his last speech. His speech today was an admission of failure. He told us that "the foodstuff will move; it must move;" but he did not say it did move.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: I did.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Sir, if the House will see the speech as reported, they will find that that expression 'it did move' is not there. My Honourable friend may have had it in his mind. However, let us admit that it did move, but it moved very slowly. It moved so slowly that it is equal to not having moved at all.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: It moved too fast for the suppliers.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: My Honourable friend says that it moved too fast for the suppliers. I am afraid in the 20 minutes that I have at my disposal I am not able to expose the activities of my Honourable friend's Department. But he would find that from facts and figures I could show that if the food in Bengal did not move from Calcutta to mofussil, it was the fault of his department and of nobody else.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: No, Sir.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: My Honourable friend says 'No.' As I said, I am not going to be dragged aside from this debate, but I have got here the statement of no less a person than the Chief Minister of Bengal which he made yesterday at the Council of the All-India Muslim League and which has been published in the papers this morning and it shows in clear terms the inefficiency of the Department of Transport, apart from the inefficiency of every other Department of the Government of India.

Sir, my Honourable friend Sir Jogendra Singh, who, I think, spoke yesterday, gave a very fertile picture of the success which the 'Grow more food' campaign has achieved. He told us that so many million acres of land have been brought under cultivation of food, but he did not tell us that it was not due to his propaganda for 'Grow more food' but it was due to the fact that a large tract of land where cotton used to be grown before had to be converted into food-growing area because of the fact that the Japanese market for short staple cotton is no longer there. I would have liked to know how much more land throughout the country has come under cultivation during the last year and not his telling us that so much more has come under cultivation of food. In this connection, let me tell you that the whole history is tragic and the actions of the Government of India have been callous. There is next door to Bengal two million acres of land lying fallow in Assam. The yield per acre is 15 maunds. That means that 30 million maunds of rice can be grown. Converted into tons, it comes to over one million tons and that is exactly what is expected to be imported into this country or perhaps a little more than that. If the Government had any plan and if they could think and not be buried into files, looking at the colour of the labels attached to them, they would be able to find out that India itself could be self-sufficient in the matter of food. But no attention is paid to that and no notice is taken of that.

I submit, Mr. President, that the whole tragedy of the situation is due to

[Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan.]

the actions of the British Government. The situation that has arisen in India is due to the fact that India has been made a party to this terrible war that has been raging in the world. It is the British Government that have decided to make India as the base for their operations in the East. It is the British Government that have decided to make Bengal as the frontier of India in this war. Bengal, in fact, is suffering for the cause and for the safety of the whole of India, if not of the whole of the British Empire. I submit that it is the duty of the whole of India and of the British Government to help Bengal fully to get over this calamity. But what do we find? My Honourable friend, the Finance Member, has become only a financier and has ceased to be everything else. When the Bengal Government asks for help at this time and when it requires the financial assistance of the Government of India, they are told that they must manage in their own way. They must try and raise loans and if they fail, then the Government of India will see what can be done. I submit that this is not really the kind of policy that is expected of a Government which is responsible for bringing this calamity on the people of Bengal. It is the duty of this Government to help fully and freely the Government of Bengal in trying to improve the condition and save the lives of millions of people who are still in a very serious danger.

My Honourable friends, some of them, have opposed the appointment of a Royal Commission on the ground that we do not want a Royal Commission; we want this Government to get out. If this Government could get out by our merely saying 'get out', then there would be nothing better than that. It is no use our playing to the gallery and saying 'get out' as if they have got out by our saying that. This is what we have been saying for the last 20 years, but they are stronger today than what they were 20 years ago, thanks to the policy that some of our countrymen have been following. That is not the point. The point is that we do want a thorough inquiry into this matter not so much for making a scapegoat of any individual but to prevent a recurrence of it. I submit—and it is my experience after having toured Bengal for three weeks—that the mighty steel-frame of administration in this country has collapsed under human misery. It is not able to deal with situations like these. It has been playing the role of a policeman for so long that it has lost all initiative, all drive and all courage to face a situation like the one that is prevailing in the country. It is a matter which needs very thorough enquiry.

Now, Sir, a number of amendments have been moved suggesting that there should be a Committee like this, or a Committee like that. But I am afraid these Honourable Members have not appreciated our demand for a Royal Commission and not for a Committee. Those who know the constitutional and the legal position would realise that a Royal Commission has got much more and much greater powers than any Committee that may be appointed by the Government of India. A Royal Commission can ask for any papers from the Government of India, a Royal Commission can summon anybody to appear before it and give evidence, a Royal Commission can administer oath to every witness which no Committee can. If you want an enquiry, let that enquiry be of a kind that would really find out the real causes and the real remedies to prevent such a situation in future. What is the use of your Committee? If your Committee wants some paper from the Home Member, let us say, then he will say, "it is a secret document, I cannot give it to you". So that is the reason why we want a Royal Commission.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. (East Central Punjab: Muhammadan): Will such a Commission have an Indian element in it?

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: My friend asks, will there be an Indian element in it. My Honourable friend, who is a Member of our Party, has not seen the amendment moved by Mr. Essak Sait that the Royal Commission should compose of independent and impartial persons, a majority of whom shall be Indians, Indians—I do not want to cast any reflection on those who are sitting over there—not Indians like those who are in the Government of India now, but Indians who will command the confidence of the peoples of this country. I want to know what fairer composition, what better

composition of an enquiry committee can be than the one which has been suggested in the amendment. Nobody has opposed that there should not be an enquiry into it. My Honourable friend, I believe, it was Mr. Gwilt, said that they want a fact finding enquiry.

An Honourable Member: It was Mr. Lawson who said this.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: I am sorry if I have rattnered something on Mr. Gwilt which he did not say. Mr. Lawson said he wants a fact finding enquiry, yes—finding of fact as to who is responsible for the loss of thousands of lives of Indians, finding out the fact whether the present machinery is able to cope with situations like these, finding of fact as to what measures should be taken and to see that there is no recurrence of a situation of this kind in the future. That is the object of the amendment which has been moved by my Honourable friend Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan and has been amended by my Honourable friend Mr. Essak Sait. I appeal to this House and I do hope that they will support this amendment and I request the Government also that if they have the good of the people of this country at heart, they should be the first one to welcome a proposition of this kind which would prevent a recurrence of such a tragedy.

I see that my time is nearly over. I can only say that I make an appeal to the people of Bengal that this is no time for petty jealousies, this is no time for internal squabbles and quarrels when thousands of our countrymen are dying of starvation and hunger, when Hindus and Muslims are both equally suffering from this misery and calamity, but this is the time for every one to unite and work hard and co-operate with the Provincial Government and any machinery that is there to relieve the distress of the millions of people living in Bengal.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: Sir, I rise to support the demand made from all parts of the House that there should be a thorough enquiry into the situation that has arisen in Bengal and several other parts of this country. Sir, thousands of people have died in Bengal and we do not yet see when these deaths will stop. The other parts of India may not be as worse off as Bengal, but they cannot be free from that danger. I therefore feel that it is the duty of this House, considering the great bungle and the muddle made by various Governmental authorities in this country and in Great Britain that this legislature will fail in its duty if they do not demand and secure a thorough enquiry into this muddle. There must be an enquiry into the causes that led to this muddle. The enquiry must go to the root of the cause, there must be an enquiry regarding what was done by the Provincial Government, the Central Government, and by the Secretary of State and the responsibility must be fixed upon the right shoulders. I would also like that the enquiry should be thorough. Among the causes which have led to this disaster, I feel the main cause is the weak agricultural economy of Bengal and some other Provinces. Bengal is the place where the zamindari system exists and there is the greatest exploitation of the poor peasantry of that Province. I feel, Sir, there must be an enquiry into this fundamental matter. As regards the machinery for enquiry, I have no special prepossessions in favour of any one, but I want to say this on this occasion to my colleagues in this Assembly that this is the occasion when all parties in this House must agree. We all want an enquiry and therefore it will be wrong, if on account of our insistence upon our small differences, we allow the Government to escape the censure which is implied in this demand for an enquiry. I therefore, if I may, appeal to all sections of this House not to insist upon their small differences. I mayself have got something to complain about the Royal Commission, something to complain about the other forms of Committees which have been proposed before this House. Objection has been raised to the Royal Commission. I am myself a republican in my views, but, Sir, I know as a practical man, in order to come to this legislature, I have to take oath of allegiance. I may say all persons here have taken the oath of allegiance, and therefore if we can unite on a Royal Commission, let us unite and give up our small differences. This country has suffered terribly on account of our internal differences, let us not allow our country and especially Bengal to suffer on

[Mr. N. M. Joshi.]

account of our differences as regards the machinery which should make the enquiry into this matter. I would therefore appeal to all sections of this House to unite on this point. Sir, if I have made an appeal to all sections of the House to unite I would make an appeal to all sections of governmental authority to unite also. The most painful and the most undignified spectacle presented to the whole world by the governmental authorities of this country is the disunity and the recrimination which has been indulged in by every section of that governmental authority. The Secretary of State for India thought that it was the best opportunity for him to condemn the people of India and their capacity to rule this country. He talked of the popular ministry in Bengal being mainly responsible for the muddle, forgetting altogether the constitutional situation in this country. No Provincial Government can be responsible for fixing the prices and for moving on grains from one province to another. The best remedy and the main remedy for any deficiency of food in the first place is that the prices must be controlled, which can be done only by the Central Government and inter-provincial movements of grain can only be done also by the Centre. Then, Sir the Bengal Government finds fault with the Punjab Government and also with the Central Government and the Central Government tries to bully and use blustering words only. I therefore suggest to the Government of India to stop this fault-finding among themselves and unite and co-operate with each other. Let them admit frankly that there has been a failure on the part of every governmental authority in this country and in Great Britain. I do not wish to defend the Bengal ministry; the Huq ministry was complacent. If the complaints which Mr. Fazlul Huq is making today had been made at that time, and if he was not listened to either by the Bengal Government and the Government of India, it was his duty to resign, but he waited for the Governor to ask for his resignation. Sir, the present Ministry in Bengal has been in existence and administering the country for six months. They too could have been more vigorous and more efficient. It is now several months since we have been hearing about the Bengal ministry introducing rationing in Bengal, and we were promised that rationing in Calcutta would be introduced on the 15th November. But the 15th November has passed. The Government of India have failed and failed very miserably; they were first timid in using their powers of controlling prices and when they began they vacillated. Sir, it is not a Government of this kind which can solve such an important and difficult question. I do not wish to spend more time in pointing out the failure of this Government or that Government. I suggest to them now that since they will not resign and we cannot remove them from their position, they should open a new chapter, take up courage and unite and face the problem.

Sir, the Government of India appointed a committee and that committee has reported. I would suggest that they would now stop discussing; we have enough discussion. Let there be action. The time has come for action. I have many faults to find with the decisions of that committee; some of the recommendations are at least in my judgment halting. But I am prepared to accept, in order to get prompt, quick and vigorous action, all the recommendations of that committee. I suggest that the Government of India should draw up a time-table now and take action so that within three months, within at least six months, all the recommendations of that committee will be given effect to. I suggest that they should make a monthly report to the public and to the legislature as to the action taken on the recommendations of that committee. The committee made 98 recommendations; I should like the Government of India to get reports, every month from all the Provincial Governments and publish in a tabulated form the action taken in each of those 92 recommendations; and let such report be published every month till at the end of the six months all the recommendations will have been given effect to. I suggest that the Government of India should not stint money on printing as they are doing. Unfortunately this Government do not realise, although they sometimes talk of securing public confidence, the importance of public education. This Com-

mittee published a report. Plenty of people after seeing a summary came to me in Bombay and asked for a copy, thinking that as a Member of the Legislative Assembly I might have been given a copy. Not only was I not given a copy while I was in Bombay but after coming here I had to beg for a copy. Copies are not available at the bookstalls. The Government of India have never realised the importance of public education. They feel that they are an irresponsible Government and need not bother about the public; and when they make a muddle and cannot deal with a situation they talk of securing public confidence. If they want to get public confidence they can only get it by public education. I therefore suggest that they should make a report to the public and to this legislature every month on the action and progress made on all the 93 recommendations made by the Committee. I do not wish to go into the details of the questions dealt with by that Committee, but I wish to say a word about the control of prices. I should like the Government of India to follow a bold policy as regards the control of prices. They said that their ultimate goal is that there should be Central control by the Government of India. I should like that ultimate goal to be reached very quickly. You cannot have different and varying prices in different provinces and deal with the present situation at all. Prices must be uniform as far as possible in all parts of the country.

The second point which I should like to make about prices is that the prices ruling today in all provinces are too high and beyond the power of the general masses of people in the country. You may try to provide grain throughout the country but if your grain is too costly to be purchased by the people, starvation will not end. Sir, some praise has been given to Bombay for its rationing. If I may say so, I had contributed my humble mite towards at least securing rationing in that city. But let me tell the Government of India that in Bombay after one month's experience we found that at least 30 to 40 per cent. of the ration was not taken by the people.

The Honourable Secretary this morning said that 20 per cent. of the ration was not taken, or at least 20 per cent. of the ration is generally not taken. In Bombay, nearly 40 per cent. of the ration was not taken. I feel, Sir, that it is due to the fact that the prices in Bombay were too high for some sections of the population to buy grain which was too dear. I would therefore suggest to the Government to take every measure to lower the prices. I am not suggesting that the peasant should not get his reasonable cost of production; let him get only reasonable cost of production. But if, on account of the policy which the Government of India is following in finance and in allowing inflation to take place, prices cannot be reduced, I would suggest to the Government of India to face that question boldly and take up the question of giving subsidies and thus keeping the prices at a reasonable level at least for that section of the population which cannot afford to purchase food at the present level of prices. Sir, I would suggest to the Government of India, if they are going to stop starvation in Bengal, that they will have to subsidize food for the landless labour in rural areas. Even if you take your grain to the villages and if your prices are high unless the landless labour plunders his richer neighbour he will not get food. I would therefore ask you take steps to provide subsidy at least in the case of these landless wage-earners in rural areas. I feel, Sir, there is a similar need for subsidizing the food of un-organized labour in urban areas. For instance, in Bombay the textile labour is getting dearness allowance; he may be in a position to purchase food, but there are hundreds and thousands of labourers even in the city of Bombay who are not well-organized, who are not getting sufficient dearness allowance from the employers. In their case too a method must be found for subsidizing their food.

Sir, much has been said about 'Grow more Food' campaign. I would suggest to the Government that they should take a bold step to secure more food from the land in this country. The Government of India had failed to take precautions to secure fertilizers for the land. It is a well known fact admitted.

[Mr. N. M. Joshi.]

by everybody, and a most humiliating fact, that although the land in India is not very poor the yield of land in India is the lowest in the whole world.

Mr. President. (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member has one minute more.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: Sir, I therefore suggest to the Government of India to take bold measures. The Honourable the Food Member told us that 41,000 tons have been brought into this country during this month in six ships. I would like to ask one question. If he is thinking of bringing into India 1,500,000 tons at the rate of 41,000 tons per month in six ships, will he not take 40 months—at least 30 months—to complete this import? Is that sort of action going to remove the distress in this country? Is that going to give confidence to the public?

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

Mr. N. M. Joshi: Sir, I have done.

Mr. Frank R. Anthony (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, I agree entirely with the Honourable the previous speaker who said that all sections of this House should unite in demanding an enquiry. But I feel, Sir, that we should not expect too much from such an enquiry. I agree entirely also with the point made by my Honourable friend, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, that a Royal Commission will have certain wider powers and definitely show certain superior features as compared with an ordinary committee of enquiry. But a Royal Commission also will not, I feel, come up to our expectations. It will, as its name implies, take its terms of appointment from the British Government and can we expect such a Royal Commission—if circumstances warranted—to indict the British Government, if it found it necessary, or to indict a member of that British Government, if it found it equally necessary. To expect this, Sir, is to expect too much. The Royal Commission would be placed in the unenviable position of having to find a scapegoat or scapegoats, and it will find a scapegoat or scapegoats. The result will be that the findings of the Royal Commission will inevitably lead to its repudiation by the people of this country. It will lead to bitter recriminations; it will lead to unseemly and even indecent controversy.

I, for one, cannot see how those responsible in London and in Delhi, for the direction of policy of this Government, are going to escape blame, complete blame, for the present disaster which has overtaken this country. I cannot see how they are going to repudiate the indictment which published facts inexorably, lay at the door of those who control and have controlled Government policy in this country.

I have before me the Gregory Committee's Report. On page 29 of this Report figures are given of the net imports and exports with regard to India for the period from 1937 to 1943. I find that in the year before the war India was a net importer of over one million tons of foodgrains. In 1939-40 India was a net importer of foodgrains to the extent of almost 2½ million tons. And then suddenly we find in 1942-43 that India is no longer a net importer; India becomes a net exporter to the extent of 860,000 tons. These published facts tell their own story. The Government cannot explain away this gap by saying that it was caused by the sudden stoppage of imports from Burma. It was the inescapable duty of the Government to see that at least a semblance of the previous balance between exports and imports was maintained. Government by their lack of foresight—I will not use the expression used by my Honourable friend, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, of criminal negligence—created this gap of three million tons of foodgrains as between the period 1939 and 1942-43. The total consumption of foodgrains in this country has been placed by Government between 52 and 55 million tons. That is, Government by its lack of foresight—I won't say by its deliberate policy—has deprived this country of 1/18th of its total supply of foodgrains. It has deprived twenty millions or more of the people of this country of the foodgrains which were available to them in the year 1939-40.

And if it was necessary in 1939-40 for India to be a net importer to the extent of 2½ million tons, how much more necessary is it today, in the face of the vast additional demands that India is carrying in the matter of food? My friend, Sir F. E. James indicated today that there is tremendous wastage by the military. I myself have heard stories—I have not been able to verify them but I have no reason to doubt them—about the considerable wastage on the part of the military authorities, of troops selling their excess supplies in the markets, while thousands of other people were dying of starvation. Apart from any wastage, military consumption in this country has imposed a tremendous additional burden on the food resources of India. This is an issue which officials have sought to treat lightly and are still trying to do so; but no good can be achieved by burking this issue of the tremendous burden placed on India's resources by military consumption. The Food Member is not here, but I think he gave the military consumption as a percentage—he mentioned some time ago that India's armed forces ate something not very much—that they were consuming one per cent. of the total foodgrains available in this country. Regarded as a percentage it may not seem much; but let us analyse the actual figures. According to the press, India has raised about two million troops; many hundred thousands of these are overseas. Even if we allow a liberal margin, we can safely estimate that there are not more than two million troops in this country, that is, .5 per cent. of the population as a whole. According to the Food Member's own figures this .5 per cent. of the Indian population is eating one per cent. of the total foodgrain supply; that is, they are eating double of what should be allotted to them on the basis of the available food supplies. Worked out in actual figures it means just this: two million troops in India are eating their own share and they are, in addition, eating the share of two millions of India's civilian population.

I do not, for one moment, suggest that the troops should not be well fed; it is axiomatic that an army, in order to constitute an effective fighting machine must be well fed, it must be contented. But what I do ask is, that the Government should not sidetrack this issue of the tremendous additional burden which consumption by the armed forces is placing and will continue to place on India's food resources. And this is a problem which will be accentuated and not mitigated in the near future. With India as the chief basis of operations against the Japanese, we should normally expect the number of troops in this country to increase and not to lessen.

Then again I feel that another serious strain has been imposed on India's food resources by the thousands of prisoners who have been brought into this country. The actual figures have not been made available to us, but even if tens of thousands of prisoners have been brought into India their consumption of foodgrains represents a very serious additional burden on Indian resources, because these prisoners are, according to my information, treated not only on a liberal but on a very lavish scale.

The number of refugees brought into this country also represents a serious additional burden thrown on India's food resources; and I would ask the Government not to blink at these various facts, not to put off criticism or suggestion by saying that these different elements merely consume a very small proportion of India's foodgrains. I maintain that the cumulative effect of the consumption by India's armed forces, by the thousands of prisoners in this country, by the tens of thousands of refugees in India—the cumulative effect has been to deprive hundreds of thousands of civilians of the stocks which would normally have come to them.

And in the face of these vast additional commitments, if it was necessary, as I have said, in 1939-40 that India should have been a net importer to the extent of 2½ million tons, how much greater is that need today? Mr. Joshi has just mentioned that the Honourable Food Member is trying to satisfy us by saying that India has imported 40,000 tons of foodgrains. We have heard and read typical official statements that foodgrains will be imported into this country as and when shipping space permits. But these statements bring no reassurance to us. Unless the Food Member can wield real influence in this

[Mr. Frank R. Anthony.]

matter—and I doubt it very much—unless he can impress upon those who really control the government of this country the inescapable need for importing, not 40,000 tons, not even a million tons, as suggested by the Gregory Committee, but several million tons of foodgrains, only then can we hope to see the present situation succumbing even partially to administrative control.

I feel sure that most of us agree entirely with the principle of rationing. I think it was Mr. Kirby yesterday who asked us why many of us were afraid that rationing meant not salvation but starvation. Apparently Mr. Kirby, who seemed very new to this country, is not aware of the fact that rationing, if it is to be a success in India, will depend on the efficiency, the integrity of your administrative machine; and the public in this country know that not only is your administrative machine not efficient, not only is it not honest, but today it is a broken reed on which neither the Government nor the public can rely. It is a hopelessly unbalanced administrative machinery on which you have got to depend for the hopes of success of your rationing scheme. That is why the public in this country are afraid about the success of that rationing scheme because you have a hopelessly unbalanced administrative machinery—overpaid and mentally famished at the top, and under-paid and morally famished at the bottom. If the vital pre-requisite of rationing, that is an adequate and continuous flow of foodgrains is not ensured, you will, in attempting to implement rationing, be building up a powder magazine which will blow up the Food Department and its whole scheme. I have watched the working of rationing in South India where this vital pre-requisite of an adequate and continuous flow of foodgrains was not there. I have seen the poorer man, the daily worker standing, not for hours, but for days, in queues, not only losing his daily wage but being required, because of control or lack of it, to starve.

We also realise that before rationing can seriously be implemented you must have a successful procurement scheme. Even if you cannot implement rationing, I feel that you should have a procurement scheme. Even if you have to allow for a margin of loss, owing to the inefficiency or corruptness of your administrative machine, it is better to have a procurement scheme that will procure some food, rather than not have a scheme at all. In this connection I would ask the Food Member as to what machinery if any he has devised for procuring the *Aman* crop. If you have no machinery ready to collect the *Aman* crop, you will find the prospect which you normally expect from a bumper crop, you will find the prospect of relief literally slipping through your fingers.

We realise also the need for price control, but I would ask the Honourable the Food Member and his advisers to remember that the declaration of price levels does not constitute control of prices. In Bengal for instance you have declared, I think, the rice price-level at Rs. 15. Having declared this price-

5 P.M. level you will accentuate the tendency to hoarding and black-markets. Your *Aman* crop, unless you have an effective procurement machinery, will disappear so soon as you have imposed the price control level which you will not be able to implement unless you have at your disposal machinery for counteracting hoarding and blackmarket dealing which will inevitably result from the declaration of the price control level. That is why, finally, I would ask the Honourable the Food Member to remember this, that his procurement scheme, his rationing, his price control, these measures will accentuate the tendency to hoarding and blackmarket dealing, and the only way in which he can possibly scotch hoarding and blackmarket dealing is by adopting, if he has the courage and the vision to do it,—by adopting the most ruthless measures against hoarders, blackmarket dealers and profiteers. As Mr. Jamnadas Mehta said in his speech, Government seems to have some kind of spiritual affinity with hoarders and blackmarket dealers. We still see on the part of the Government an inexplicable tendency to deal with these people with misguided leniency. As I have mentioned, your price control attempt, your procurement scheme, your rationing all these will aggravate the tendency

of hoarding and blackmarkets and unless you are prepared to deal ruthlessly with the hoarder and the blackmarket dealer, all your hopes, all your schemes all your plans will be torpedoed.

STATEMENT OF BUSINESS.

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed (Leader of the House): As regards the business for Wednesday and Thursday, it will contain the following items; first, the legislative business which was entered in the original list, and secondly, after this is finished, the continuation of the food debate. In view of what appears to be the general attitude of the House, there will be sufficient time perhaps even to-morrow for the continuance of the food debate; if not, at any rate, there will be a whole day, Thursday, available for that debate.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, the 17th November, 1943.