

10th August 1943

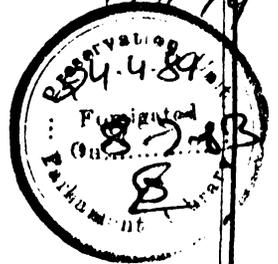
TO
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

Official Report

Volume III, 1943

(26th July to 25th August, 1943)

EIGHTEENTH SESSION
OF THE
FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,
1943



PUBLISHED BY THE MANAGER OF PUBLICATIONS, DELHI
PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS, NEW DELHI
1943

Price Rs. 1 As. 6 or 2s.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

President:

The Honourable Sir ABDUR RAHIM, K.C.S.I.

Deputy President:

Mr. AKHIL CHANDRA DATTA, M.L.A.

Panel of Chairmen:

[From 27th July to 19th August, 1943.]

Syed GHULAM BHIK NAIRANG, M.L.A.

Mr. K. C. NEOGY, M.L.A.

Mr. HOOSEINBOY A. LALLJEE, M.L.A.

Sir HENRY RICHARDSON, M.L.A.

[From 20th August, 1943.]

Syed GHULAM BHIK NAIRANG, M.L.A.

Dr. P. N. BANERJEA, M.L.A.

Sir F. E. JAMES, M.L.A.

Secretary:

Mian MUHAMMAD RAFI, Barrister-at-Law.

Assistants of the Secretary:

Mr. M. N. KAUL, Barrister-at-Law.

Khan Bahadur S. G. HASNAIN.

Marshal:

Captain Haji Sardar NUR AHMAD KHAN, M.C., I.O.M., I.A.

Committee on Petitions:

Mr. AKHIL CHANDRA DATTA, M.L.A., *Chairman*.

Syed GHULAM BHIK NAIRANG, M.L.A.

Mr. M. GHIASUDDIN, M.L.A.

Sardar SANT SINGH, M.L.A.

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

CONTENTS

Volume III.—26th July to 25th August, 1943.

	PAGE.		PAGE.
MONDAY, 26TH JULY, 1943—		WEDNESDAY, 28TH JULY, 1943—	
Members Sworn	1	Member Sworn	121
Starred Questions and Answers	1—24	Starred Questions and Answers	121—50
Statements laid on the Table	24—36	Unstarred Questions and Answers	121—54
Death of Mr. Naoroji Dumasai	36—37	The Indian States (Protection against Disaffection) Amendment Bill—Motion to continue adopted	154
Motions for Adjournment— Refusal of the Government of India to forward Mahatma Gandhi's Letter to Mr. M. A. Jinnah—Ruled out of order	37—38	The Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	154
Refusal of permission to Mr. W. Phillips to see Mahatma Gandhi—Disallowed by the Governor General	38	The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Applica- tion (Second (Amendment)) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	154
Depriving certain Local Governments of their Power to control Foodstuffs within their respective jurisdiction— Leave refused	38, 39	The Usurious Loans (Amendment) Bill— Motion to continue adopted	155
Failure of the Governor General's Council to protest against Legislation by Ordinances—Disallowed	39	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amend- ment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	155
Misadministration in distribution of Wheat—Not moved	39	The Indian Merchant Shipping (Amend- ment) Bill—Circulated	155—58
Failure to bring in circulation sufficient number of small coins—Ruled out of order	39—40	The Removal of Hindu Social Disabilities Bill—Introduced	158—59
Failure to put into operation the Recip- rocity Act against the Colonial Africans residing in India—With- drawn	40	The Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill —Introduced	159
Failure to supply First-Aid Equipment, medicines, etc., on the Mail Train which collided with goods Carriages at Borgaon near Akola—Negatived	40—41, 42—58	The Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	159
H. E. the Governor General's Assent to Bills	41	The Removal of Political Disabilities Bill —Introduced	159
Amendment to the Insurance Rules	41—42	The Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill —Introduced	159
Amendments to certain Motor Vehicles Rules	42	The Members of the Central Legislature Payment of Salaries Bill—Introduced	159—60
The War Injuries (Compensation Insur- ance) Bill—Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee	42—43	The Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill —Introduced	160
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee	43	THURSDAY, 29TH JULY, 1943—	
The Indian Boilers (Amendment) Bill— Introduced	43	Member Sworn	161
The Public Debt (Central Government) Bill—Introduced	43	Starred Questions and Answers	161—74
The Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	43	Postponed Question and Answer	174—76
The Motor Vehicles (Drivers) Amendment Bill—Introduced	43	The Indian Boilers (Amendment) Bill— Passed	176—77
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amend- ment) Bill—Introduced	43	The Reciprocity (Amendment) Bill— Motion to consider adopted	177—78, 181—90, 191—95
The Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Amendment Bill—Introduced	43—44		190—91
The Indian Army and Indian Air Force (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	44	Statement of Business	
The Reciprocity (Amendment) Bill— Introduced	44	The Motor Vehicles (Drivers) Amendment Bill—Passed	178—80
The Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill —Referred to Select Committee	44—45	The Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill—Passed	180—81
TUESDAY, 27TH JULY, 1943—		The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amend- ment) Bill—Referred to Select Com- mittee	196—97
Member Sworn	59	The Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Amendment Bill—Passed	197—201
Starred Questions and Answers	59—72	The Indian Army and Indian Air Force (Amendment) Bill—Passed	201—02
Unstarred Questions and Answers	72—81	FRIDAY, 30TH JULY, 1943—	
Statements laid on the Table	81	Starred Questions and Answers	203—10
Motions for Adjournment re— Deaths by starvation in Orissa—Dis- allowed	82	Unstarred Questions and Answers	211—14
Refusal to allot a day for discussing Government's Monetary Policy— Ruled out of order	82	Statements laid on the Table	214—16
Policy of the Railway Board in giving Dearness Allowance not by increasing salaries—Disallowed	82	Condemnation of the cowardly attack on Mr. M. A. Jinnah	216—21
Forfeiture of Security of the Hindustan Disallowed	82—83	Motion re the recent Paggung Legislation in South Africa—Adopted as amended	221—54
Failure to commit non-official opinion on the International Clearing Union Scheme—Ruled out of order	83—85	MONDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 1943—	
Judicial condemnation of the Bombay Government's method of dealing with the sabotage movement at Nandurbar —Ruled out of order	85	His Excellency the Governor General's Address to the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly	255—66
Excessive inflation of the Paper Cur- rency—Ruled out of order	85—86	Member Sworn	267
Nomination of the Panel of Chairmen Resolution re treatment of Political Prisoners and Detenus—Negatived	86—120	Starred Questions and Answers	267—85
		Unstarred Questions and Answers	286—88
		Statement laid on the Table	288
		Declaration of Exemption and Notifications under the Registration of Foreigners Act	289—92
		Summary of Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the Standing Labour Com- mittee	292
		The Reciprocity (Amendment) Bill—Dis- cussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	292—309
		TUESDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 1943—	
		Starred Questions and Answers	311—24
		Unstarred Questions and Answers	324—27
		The Reciprocity (Amendment) Bill— Passed as amended	327—33
		The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill —Discussion on the motions to consider and to circulate not concluded	333—68

	PAGES.
WEDNESDAY, 4TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Starred Questions and Answers	359—74
Unstarred Questions and Answers	374—78
Committee on Petitions	378
Statement of Business	379
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	379—414
THURSDAY, 5TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Starred Questions and Answers	415—83
Unstarred Questions and Answers	433—35
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> deaths due to starvation and famine condition in Bengal—Ruled out of order	436
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on the consideration of clauses not concluded	436—69
FRIDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Starred Questions and Answers	471—83
Unstarred Question and Answer	483
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> deaths due to starvation in Bengal	483—85
Declaration of Exemption under the Regis- tration of Foreigners Act	486
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	486—516
MONDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Member Sworn	517
Starred Questions and Answers	517—27
Unstarred Questions and Answers	537—39
Message from the Council of State	539
Statement of Business	529—30
Interim Report of the Railway Convention Committee	530—33
Motion <i>re</i> the Food Situation—Discussion not concluded	534—74
TUESDAY, 10TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Starred Questions and Answers	575
Motions for Adjournment <i>re</i> — Loss of Life due to Floods in Ajmer— Disallowed	575
Raid by the Delhi Police on the Premises of <i>The Hindustan Times</i> —Ruled out of order	575—76
Motion <i>re</i> the Food Situation—Concluded	576—621
WEDNESDAY, 11TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Member Sworn	623
Starred Questions and Answers	623—31
Unstarred Question and Answer	632
Message from the Council of State	632
Secret Session	633
THURSDAY, 12TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Transferred Starred Questions and An- swers	635—58
Short Notice Question and Answer	658—59
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> failure of Government to secure attendance of Government Members for constituting a quorum in the Assembly—Ruled out of order	659—61
Resolution <i>re</i> — Pilgrimage to the Hedjas—Negatived	661—82
Stabilization of Prices—Discussion not concluded	682—97

	PAGES.
FRIDAY, 13TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Statements laid on the Table	699—701
The War Injuries (Compensation Insur- ance) Bill—Passed	701—24
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	724—40
Statement of Business	740
TUESDAY, 17TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Member Sworn	741
Short Notice Question and Answer	741
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> failure to prevent export of rice from Bengal— Ruled out of order	742—43
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	743—80
WEDNESDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 1943—	
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	781—817
THURSDAY, 19TH AUGUST, 1943—	
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	819—58
FRIDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Short Notice Question and Answer	859—61
Nomination of the New Panel of Chairmen	861
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	861—95
SATURDAY, 21ST AUGUST, 1943—	
Motions for Adjournment <i>re</i> — Demolition of a Mosque on Asoka Road, New Delhi—Disallowed	897
Non-release of Maulana Hafizul Bah- man detained in Moradabad Jail— Ruled out of order	897—98
Message from the Council of State	898
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses not concluded	898—935
TUESDAY, 24TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Member Sworn	937
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> Serious Food Situation in Bihar due to purchase of Foodgrains by Government for Export —Ruled out of order	937—33
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Discussion on consideration of clauses concluded	938—76
WEDNESDAY, 25TH AUGUST, 1943—	
Short Notice Questions and Answers	979—81
Statements laid on the Table	981—83
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> failure to transport Government purchased Wheat from the Punjab to famine-stricken East- ern Provinces—Ruled out of order	983—84
The Delhi University (Amendment) Bill— Passed as amended	984—1018
The Public Debt (Central Government) Bill—Circulated	1018—19

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 10th August, 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.

STARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir the Leaders of Parties have agreed that the questions set down for today may be put off till Thursday or Friday.

Sir Henry Richardson (Nominated Non-Official): We are agreeable only for Thursday and not for Friday.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Have all these Honourable Members who have got questions to ask agreed?

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Yes, Sir. We are also agreeable for Thursday.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Then, today's questions will be put down for Thursday.

†262*—298*.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT.

LOSS OF LIFE DUE TO FLOODS IN AJMERE.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari (Tanjore *cum* Trichinopoly: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir, may I ask what has happened to the Motion for Adjournment which I gave notice of yesterday regarding loss of life in Ajmere and the Government deliberately withholding information on this matter?

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I read in the newspapers something about loss of life caused somewhere in Ajmere by the floods.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: Yes, Sir, my motion relates to the same.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): A communiqué was issued on the subject by the Government.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: The question that I want to raise is we want information for one thing and secondly, the telegram reporting huge loss of life is dated 1st August and the first time we heard about it in Delhi was only yesterday.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Evidently the Honourable Member did not read the communiqué.

Mr. N. M. Joshi (Nominated Non-Official): The contention of the Honourable Member is that the telegram was deliberately withheld, or it was delayed. That is the point.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The communiqué was dated 5th August.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: The loss of life involved was 8,000.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): This was published on 7th August.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: We saw it only after the House met yesterday.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The motion is wholly unjustified.

RAID BY THE DELHI POLICE ON THE PREMISES OF THE HINDUSTAN TIMES.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next motion for adjournment is also by Mr. Krishnamachari. He wishes by this motion to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the raid made by the Delhi Police on morning of 9th August, on the *Hindustan Times* premises and serving an order on the Keeper of the Press holding up the issue of the papers, the *Hindustan Times* and the *Hindustan*.

Is it alleged that these papers have been singled out for this kind of action?

†For these questions and answers, see pages 635—58 of these Debates.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: These two papers have been singled out and the order was sprung upon them yesterday morning asking them not to issue their paper without the permission of the Chief Commissioner.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I should like to know what are the facts.

The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell (Home Member): I submit that action was taken by the Police under their ordinary powers. They have availed themselves of their powers of search and of satisfying themselves. Under the Defence of India Rules, they are endowed with full powers of search and full powers of satisfying themselves whether any action under the Defence of India Rules is necessary.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Have the Police taken such action in other cases?

The Honourable Sir Reginald Maxwell: In most other cases, orders have been passed at once under the Defence of India Rules. But in this case, they used their powers of preliminary investigation before passing such orders. It appears they made the search and examined the copies of the *Hindustan Times* which had already been printed and they satisfied themselves that the copies were fit for publication and they returned them to the *Hindustan Times* and the edition, as every one knows, has appeared this morning.

Mr. T. T. Krishnamachari: As the sequel has shown, it was altogether an unwarranted intrusion on the premises and I do not think there was any justification for that.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): It is not possible for this House to review the action of the Police in each case when they take action under some law or other. It is not for this House to say whether that action was justified or not. I rule the motion out of order.

MOTION RE THE FOOD SITUATION—concl'd.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The House will now resume further consideration of the motion relating to Food situation in India.

Mr. Nabi Baksh Illahi Baksh Bhutto (Sind: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, I have very attentively listened to the polished and chiselled apologia that my Honourable friend the Food Member made yesterday. In the last Session too I heard with the same attention the whole debate on the food situation. I am not a pessimist but with all my efforts I am sorry to confess I did not find even a dim and flickering ray of hope. I am as a matter of fact surprised that there is no revolution already. We are sitting on the mouth of a volcano and instead of trying to save ourselves we are discussing without thinking that it may burst at any time. Is this the time for discussion? We want action, strong action. But I can assure the House that as far as these Treasury Benches are concerned there is no hope of any action. Famine is the traditional accompaniment of war, and although we have much advanced in the science of killing each other, yet we have not been able to save ourselves from famine. Willingly or unwillingly India is at war and therefore it must undergo all its hardships. Government knew it very well but they sat with folded hands and calmly waited for the fall of Burma. After the fall of Burma, Government started with their usual propaganda; we were told that there was no scarcity of food grains. Then came the control and with its advent food grains made their exit and found place in the black market. Then we heard of "de-control", a Food Department, and finally of a Food Conference in purdah. Sir, this is the brief story of our food situation. I have no intention of repeating all that has been said again and again on the floor of this House; I have stood to point out the futility and uselessness of the whole debate. All of it is a mere farce; there is no intention of solving the problem. Sir, the Central Government is impotent,

it has no power of action. In comparison with the Provincial Governments who derive their power from the Government of India Act, 1935, the Central Government is an item from an old curio shop. Like Don Quixote, Government try to kill this giant of food scarcity, and perhaps they do derive some quixotic satisfaction out of their attempts, but I am sorry the results of their attempts have been exactly the same that were achieved by Don Quixote. The other day I read in the papers that in the course of a single day as many as 27 dead bodies were removed from the pavements of Calcutta. All these unfortunate persons had died of starvation. People are divorcing their wives because they cannot maintain them and some of them are even selling the women to get a meal. May I ask what contribution these knight-errants of our Food Department have made to relieve the sufferings of these people.

We have heard too much of the "Grow More Food" campaign. At least I have never understood this campaign. Do Government think that the readers of the *Statesman* and the *Times of India* grow food? Will the advertisements published in English and vernacular papers induce the farmer to grow more food? Can he read? Is he not already trying to grow as much as he can? If Government really want to encourage the farmer to grow more food they will have to give him more facilities. But Government are doing exactly the opposite. Sir, in my own province, Sind, against the wishes of the public and the Assembly the Government have enhanced land assessment without imposing any upper limit. This will cripple not only the big zamindars but even the small *khatdars* who will be nowhere. Is this the encouragement to grow more food? Do you expect cheap food by these means. Again, due to the floods of last year even the seed is not available in my province, and large tracts of land are uncultivated simply because Government do not care to provide more water. My own seed of the value of thousands of rupees was taken by Government at the controlled rates. The result was that for my own lands I could not get good seed at the control price and so I had to use inferior seed which too I got with great difficulty. And this is not all. They bought it at the rate of Rs. 4 per maund and nearly a week after increased the rate to Rs. 5/8/- per maund, so that in reselling that seed Government made a profit of Rs. 1/8 per maund. Who is on the losing side? The zamindar who sold at the rate of Rs. 4 and the consumer who bought at the rate of Rs. 5/8. Sir, this is how Government are filling their coffers while the people are starving. Only the other day I read a statement by the President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber in which he says that the Sind Government have made a profit of Rs. 60 lakhs in grain transactions. Sir, mine is a surplus province but in the same paper I read that even in Bengal where the food situation is most critical Government are buying wheat at the rate of Rs. 12 per maund and selling atta to the public at between Rs. 20 and Rs. 24 per maund. In Assam I understand nearly two crore acres of land are available for cultivation and so far the Assam Government have done nothing to get this land cultivated. Sir, nothing can be done until the Provincial Governments are brought under control and the Food Department is centralised. The most obvious and the first available remedy for the shortage of any commodity is to get it from the places where it is available in plenty. For the present shortage of food grains in India the obvious remedy is that firstly all the surplus provinces should be controlled and secondly wheat from Australia and rice from South America should be imported. It is the primary duty of the Government of India to release shipping for the purpose.

One word about statistics too. We have heard too much of them and I am sure the House will be interested in knowing how these statistics are collected. In Sind the average output of wheat per acre is 12 maunds for *khas* and 8 maunds for *dubari*, but Government have calculated at the rate of 14 and 6 maunds respectively. I am a rice grower and only in small portions of my zamindari wheat is grown, but Government have calculated that 1,800 acres of my land grow wheat. This is far in excess of the actual acreage. The greatest

[Mr. Nabi Baksh Illahi Baksh Bhutto.]

fun arises from the fact that at the rate of 3 maunds per acre Government want me to supply them 5,400 maunds of wheat while my own actual output of wheat is only 3,241 maunds.

Sir, these Axis prisoners are also a burden; it seems very unjust to maintain and feed thousands of them, while they feel it degrading to work along with Indians. Why not send these prisoners to Australia, Canada or to South Africa, the country of super-humans?

It is a futile argument on the part of the authorities that there is no shortage of foodstuffs in the country. Government members are constantly harping on this old note which has lost all its charm and I must congratulate the Honourable Food Member on his rather frank admission of the facts. We must not forget that even the 2 per cent. shortage means that 8 million people must starve. Sir, I suggest to Government to appoint a joint committee of both Houses with the Honourable the Food Member as its President. Let this body be the final authority in matters of food. But are Government really strong enough to do it? I very much doubt the strength of the Central Government and I would like to request them not to pose as a matador if they cannot take the bull by the horns. They should leave the arena and make way for others.

Sir, I know I have adopted a line which is rather different from the trend of the Honourable Members' speeches which preceded mine. While they have accused Government of a weak policy and inaction I attribute their failure to their weakness and impotence. I have no intention of inflicting a long speech on the House but with your permission, Sir, I shall quote some passages from the Honourable the Food Member's speech in support of my case. He says :

"But as soon as free trade was declared in the eastern zone obstructions of every kind were placed in its way. I have before me a list of over 60 cases reported from time to time and we have not yet been able to complete the investigation of these cases. But the nature of the allegations are as follows: Stocks purchased were seized, a percentage of all purchases was ordered to be surrendered and in some cases at a much lower price than purchase prices, stockists were ordered to close godowns, traders were warned not to sell, station masters were asked to refuse wagons, carters and carriers were stopped from assisting movements and exports were banned by pre-emptory orders."

At another place the Honourable the Food Member says:

"... the surplus provinces probably with reasons of their own do not accept any other surplus figure than their own. Secondly, the purchasing organization is not at the disposal of the Central Government; the procurement plan does not function and supplies are not available according to programme."

Now, Sir, while the Honourable the Home Member finds ample powers to do all he likes; the Food Member, whether it is Sarker or Azizul Huque, never finds any power with him. As my Honourable friend, Mr. Krishnamachari, said yesterday, the Government have ample powers to suppress the liberties of the people, but have no power to feed them.

Sir, this is the greatest hoax of all times. While one part of this Government acts like a dictator the other finds itself in a helpless position.

Sir, the impotence of the Government of India is self-imposed. If they want they can assume power to deal with the situation.

As I said before, although I think that this debate is useless and futile, it will at least serve one purpose. Those who are really responsible for the situation will know the temper of this House and of the masses whom this House represents. The Government of India, and the British Government too, should not forget the lessons of the French Revolution. It is not too late, but even now if they are not ready to handle the situation correctly the responsibility of the consequences will be theirs. A hungry mob is the most dangerous thing.

And, Sir, in the end I must assure the Honourable the Food Member that although in this part of the House we thoroughly appreciate the aspirations of the Honourable Member's heart, yet we have not closed our eyes to the fact that he has but "poor means for those desires". Though his burning

zeal may "feed the fires of Home, through night and day," yet it is not capable of feeding even a single person out of the thousands who are daily starving.

Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani (Tirhut Division: Muhammadan): On a point of order. Sir, I deserve the protection of the Chair simply because I had no knowledge of the arrangement come to by the House that the questions should be postponed. I reached the House only a few minutes late. My car got punctured and I was unavoidably held up.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I cannot help it. The Honourable Member was not in his seat when his name was called. As a matter of fact, the Honourable Member's party requested that questions for today should stand over and he also should have known that.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths (Assam: European): Mr. President. Let me begin by confessing that never in this Assembly have I felt as much difficulty and as much hesitation as I feel today in rising to speak on the subject of food. And I feel this difficulty and hesitation because there are so many things which could rightly and properly be said, things which indeed, the interests of truth and justice demand should be said and yet which in practice are better left unsaid, because they would not contribute here and now to the solution of the urgent problem that lies before us. It would be easy to point out the many things which have not been done, or the things which have been done too late, or the things which have been done without sufficient firmness and resolution, but it is not so easy to point out those things in such a way as not to undermine public confidence still further and so aggravate the evil which we are seeking to cure. Nor is it so easy at this late stage to say exactly what should be done to put right the omissions and the errors of the past. And I suppose it was because of this difficulty that the Honourable the Food Member in his speech, which, with great respect, I must characterize as disappointingly unconstructive, concentrated almost entirely on the past and told us little or nothing about his plans for the future.

He told us of his difficulties. He said in effect that action had been hampered by non-co-operating tendencies on the part of certain provinces, but he gave us no indication as to how he proposed to surmount those difficulties. I have known the Honourable the Food Member for many years and I know that he is not a defeatist, I know that he is a man capable of fighting difficulties, but we in this House are entitled to be told what are Government's plans for overcoming the difficulties which up to now have prevented them from handling the food situation with the maximum possible efficiency. And I expected to hear, I hoped to hear, from my Honourable friend in his speech some account of what he proposed to do to overcome these difficulties which have cropped up. It is essential in a matter of this kind that the public should be given confidence. And if the public is to be given confidence, my Honourable friend must in his reply give the public the impression that there is somebody at the helm of affairs.

If we are to judge fairly regarding Government's performance in the matter of food, we must begin by estimating the magnitude of the task and perhaps, the easiest starting point is to compare the organization which exists in this country with that which was set up in Britain to deal with the problem there, a problem different in character but certainly no more difficult than that here. At the outset of the war, the Ministry of Food consisted of a staff of 33,000 persons. The plans in the main had been prepared for three years, most of the staff, had been trained and practically all of that staff were in their chairs five days before the outbreak of the war. The staff consisted of a few civil servants who had been able to draw upon the personnel of the trade and to supplement their own knowledge and experience with the more intimate knowledge of food and the distribution of food which only those in the trade were able to supply. The Ministry of Food, therefore, found itself in a very strong position on the outbreak of the war.

[Mr. P. J. Griffiths.]

Let us try and compare that now with things in this country. Let us begin by saying quite frankly that Government was slow, incredibly slow in getting off the mark and that slowness persisted even after they had been warned both inside this House and outside it of the seriousness of the situation which both approaching. Let me remind them that as far back as September last year I told them that "there is a very widespread feeling in this country that Government are not tackling this problem with sufficient earnestness", and then I went on to say "that we feel that Government are too much inclined to sit back and to say: it is a very difficult problem; what can we do?" Even, that warning, which was based on an accurate diagnosis of facts as they then were, did not produce the required effect and so we find that 9 months later there is still uncertainty about the future, 9 months later we still have not had one sole Member of the Viceroy's Council placed in wholtime charge of India's most important problem. For all these things it is impossible to acquit the Government of India of blame.

But having said that, let me turn to the other side of the picture and let us see how the difficulties of the Government of India were infinitely greater, infinitely more complicated than those which had to be faced by the Ministry of Food in Britain or by other food authorities in other parts of the world—and it seems to me that the difficulties of the Government of India were in the main three.

In the first place the Ministry of Food had behind it the backing of the whole people of the country, because the people of Britain wanted to win the war. Thanks to circumstances which we need not discuss today, the Food Department in this country has never found itself in the position in which it could rely on the 100 per cent. backing of all sections of the community, and when therefore we condemn the Government of India for their sins of omission, it is, I think, only right to bear that in mind. I know that some of my friends, who are obsessed with political considerations, will start arguing as to whose fault that is. I am not concerned with that question today. I am concerned with food, and I say that whatever the reasons may be, the Food Department in this country has suffered from not being able to rely upon the 100 per cent. backing of the people of this country.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan (Agra Division: Muhamnudan Rural): Not even 95 per cent?

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: I do not know. I have not the figures of Moslem League membership with me.

I turn, then Sir, to the second difficulty which the Government of India had to face, and that is what I must with great respect describe as the obstinacy and the selfishness of certain great provinces. I will quote an example but following the example of the Honourable the Food Member, I will not mention provinces by name. I will quote the example of a great province which had during the past twelve months, one million tons of rice more than its normal yield but which nevertheless either refused or failed to send even 200,000 tons of that excess to help Calcutta in its time of distress. I could go on to give other instances of a similar kind, but the fact that I want to urge is that we in this country, at the moment, are suffering from the growth of a very dangerous spirit of provincial separatism. We are suffering from economic nationalism reduced to its narrowest and therefore most dangerous terms. As regards the value of economic nationalism for a large unit, there may be room for difference of thought, but no man can contemplate with equanimity the possibility that this country might be split up into large numbers of separate economic units, each of which would be sublimely indifferent to the welfare of the rest. So, I say again, when we judge the Government of India and criticise them for what they have or have not done, let us bear in mind this tremendous difficulty. I shall have a little more to say later as to why I think the Central Government could and

should have taken much stronger action than it did against certain provinces. But whatever be our views on that point, do not let us forget the existence of this difficulty, a difficulty, which has magnified beyond conception the task which had to be faced by the Honourable the Food Member and his permanent officials.

Then I come to the third difficulty, and here I speak with a good deal of hesitation because what I have to say may sound like an impertinence coming from a non-Indian; but I can assure this House that I say it in no impertinent or arrogant spirit, but that I mean it as a genuine contribution to this debate. It does seem to me that one of our greatest difficulties in handling the food situation at present is that we have not yet sufficiently developed a civic conscience or sense of social responsibility amongst us. I am not suggesting that in other countries, because this conscience is strong, because the sense of social responsibility is strong, that therefore there are no offenders. Of course there are offenders in every country, but in my own country, for example, when people commit offences against the food laws the whole force of public opinion is against them. There is no feeling that they have done something clever; there is rather the feeling that they have done something disgraceful, and the entire force of public opinion is brought to bear upon them to make their lives uncomfortable. I do want to suggest that if we in this country are to achieve cohesion, if we are to achieve progress and prosperity, we have to develop that same kind of public opinion which will so fashion people's thoughts that the man who breaks the food laws, the man who offends against social welfare, is treated more or less as an outcast.

An Honourable Member: A leper!

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: I would treat lepers far better.

In assessing the work done by the Government of India we must bear in mind the difficulty which at present exists because that kind of public opinion has not yet been sufficiently developed.

Sardar Sant Singh (West Punjab: Sikh:) Not forgetting to consider the responsibility of Ministers and officers of the Government.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Order, order.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: I am forgetting nothing, but I am omitting many things because they are not relevant to the present debate.

In the light of these difficulties, how are we to judge the policy and the alleged vacillations of the Government of India, and in particular what have we to say regarding the swift change over from the basic plan to the policy of free trade some weeks ago? I am not going to discuss the basic plan itself in detail; but I will simply say this, that it is true that in some respects the plan was unsound, that it under-estimated the difficulties, that it under-estimated the obstinacy of provinces, and that it was of necessity based on figures of doubtful validity. It is easy enough to say all that, but that does not alter the fact that the basic plan did succeed in moving one million tons of wheat at a time when that movement was essential. It is quite true that the basic plan failed when it came to deal with Bengal. It failed to a great extent in dealing with the rice situation. But, at any rate, it did very much to ease the situation as regards wheat, and I think we should be wrong and unfair if we turned down that basic plan as something which never ought to have been thought of. It was a plan which had to be improvised; it was a plan which to some extent worked; and it was a plan which, with all its faults, lessened the disaster which afterwards overtook us.

And then what of the change for which Government have been charged with vacillation—the change from the basic plan to the policy of free trade? I would ask Honourable Members to cast their minds back to what the position was in Calcutta when that change took place. I would remind them that there was a time when Calcutta had only a few hours food. That sounds like a rhetorical exaggeration, but as it so happened I was living at that time with the District Magistrate of one of the industrial areas outside Calcutta, and I

[Mr. P. J. Griffiths.]

have never seen a man more weighed down with anxiety, then when that officer came into my room and said: "There is enough food in this town for tomorrow; but there is none for the day after, and unless fresh supplies arrive tomorrow I cannot conceive what we are going to do". That was the position that the Government of India had to face. Does anybody believe that because they had laid down a basic plan they should have adhered obstinately to that plan? Does anybody think that they should have said: "Calcutta is on the verge of starvation. We know that Calcutta is the centre of India's war effort. We know that in a few months Calcutta will have to be the base for the attack on Burma. We know these things. We know that Calcutta is near starvation, but we have in our wisdom laid down the basic food plan and so we must stand by it." What would this House have had to say if the Government had taken up that attitude of obstinacy. I say without hesitation that whatever the basic plan may or may not have achieved, the change at that time from the basic plan to the policy of free trade was the path of wisdom and the path of statesmanship, and I for one will be no party to any condemnation of the Government for that particular action.

But let me pass on quickly, for like my Honourable friend, the Food Member, I have so far spoken only about the past I want briefly to speak about the future, and I want to put before this House my views as to what practical action is required to be taken. I would classify that action under four heads:

Firstly, rationing of urban areas all over this country:

Secondly, a drive for food stocks, similar to the drive which has just been undertaken in Calcutta and Howrah:

Thirdly, very much stronger action against offenders; and,

Fourthly, a very much stronger line with those Provincial Governments which will not play.

I am not going to stop to speak in detail about rationing, but I will just say this: that the need for rationing does not simply arise because of shortage. Now I am not going to discuss that question as to whether there is or is not shortage. That seems very academic, and, at any rate, as a former District Officer I know the exact worth of the Government figures of the production of rice or other crops. So, passing over the question of shortage, it seems to me that in war time there is a feeling of uncertainty in the air and that feeling make some people lay up stocks and that in its turn means that other people have to starve. The only conceivable way of preventing that unequal distribution, that unequal sharing of the burden, is by rationing wherever possible, and I have not the least doubt in my mind that rationing is necessary in every town in this country.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Provided you are able to secure efficiency and honesty.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: Of course; I admit the difficulty. Rationing is necessary in every town in this country, and I believe the Central Government has that in mind. But what we in this Group want to know is how far their plans have advanced, how far they have secured the agreement of the Provincial Governments, how they propose to bring pressure to bear upon those Governments which will not agree, how far the staff has been selected in the various parts of India for this job, how far arrangements have progressed for training that staff, and how far the forms have been printed. These are all big jobs, jobs that take time, and we want to be assured that the plans for them are at an advanced stage. I do hope that in his reply the Honourable Member will tell us something about this, and I hope still more that this will not be another case of leaving preparations and arrangements until it is too late.

I come to the second point, the repetition all over India of the kind of food drive which has just taken place in Calcutta and Howrah. I happened to be living in Howrah during the two days when that drive was taking place,

and I see every reason to believe that it is going to be a great success and that it received a measure of public co-operation far beyond what had been expected. I myself believe that when the results of that drive are made known we shall see that it has made a very real contribution to the actual food problem. A word in passing, about the Government of Bengal. A lot has been said in this House about and against the Government of Bengal, but I think it is very important to distinguish between the present Government and its predecessors. Whereas its predecessors confined their efforts to recrimination and abuse, the present Government has seriously got down to the job and it is at least making an effort. Let us bear this in mind when we talk, sometimes rather lightly, about the Government of Bengal.

Then I come to the third necessity,—the need for the strongest possible action against hoarders and offenders against food laws. I must say that in this matter the Government of India and the Provincial Governments have made themselves a laughing stock. Serious offences have met with fines of Rs. 10 or 15. Does my Honourable friend, the Food Member, know how these things are dealt with in Chungking? Does he know that on the 4th anniversary of the "National Mobilisation of the Spirit Day" 16 prosperous merchants and traders who had offended against the food laws were paraded through the public streets, with words of ignominy and contempt written upon them? They were exposed to the well deserved contempt of the entire population. Is it not time that something real, something drastic was done in this country to deal with those evil men who are making their own profit at the expense of the millions? Are we going for ever to stay tender hearted while people die? Surely, it is time that the Central Government and the Provincial Governments realised that responsibility rests heavily on them for seeing that stern action is taken by magistrates against those who are convicted of offences against food and similar laws.

Then I pass on finally, Sir, to the need for very much stronger action with regard to those Provincial Governments which will not play. It is no use at this stage in the war for my Honourable friend, the Food Member, to come here and say "there is provincial autonomy, we are helpless, what can we do?" Dealings between the Central Government and the Provincial Governments are bilateral and not unilateral. It is not a question of the Central Government alone wanting things from the Provincial Governments. The Provincial Governments too want help, want support, want aid in many directions from the Central Government, and the Central Government, if it is determined, has through these indirect methods, endless ways of bringing pressure to bear upon the provinces. I will not develop this theme further, except to say that the greatest obstinacy has been shown in some of those provinces which are at present governed under section 93.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: They are under the complete control.

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

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: I am just finishing, Sir. When you analyse the position, the main factor is psychological. If, once the people of this country are made to feel that the Government of India is resolute and determined, the situation will begin to respond, but at present no such feeling exists in this country at all. The feeling in the country is that there is nobody at the helm of affairs, that the Government of India is weak and spineless. I do not share that gloomy view. I know that there are on those Front Benches at least some Honourable Members who have courage and determination, and I know that my Honourable friend, the Food Member, is amongst them. I tell them now, if they will be resolute and firm, their plans may miscarry, they may make errors of judgment, but they will have the country behind them in spite of that. But if they are irresolute and hesitate to take decisive action in time, then they will meet with nothing but condemnation at the bar of history. Let them see to it, while there is still time.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall (Member for Railways and War Transport): I listened all day yesterday to the speeches made in the House and, rather to my surprise, heard no complaint that transport failures were at the root of the food situation. There might appear therefore to be very little reason for me to intervene in the debate. On the other hand, several speakers seemed to be under the impression that, while Bengal and other parts of the country were starving, the Government of India were doing nothing to move food to the afflicted areas. My Honourable friend, the Leader of the European Group, accused the Government of India of fiddling with legislation while the food problem was burning. The Deputy President of the House described the position as absolutely hopeless, in itself an absolutely hopeless attitude to the problem. Mr. Krishnamachari called for action but was not content to put his trust in Government nor, so far as I could understand, in providence. But the speech which seemed to me to strike the right note was that of Mr. Joshi, whose theme was the wise one, namely, that the magnitude of the deficit is not such that it cannot be overcome by efficient management. This morning Mr. Bhutto in his quiet way and Mr. Griffiths with his brilliant oratory stressed the need for action. I will try to meet these points briefly in so far as they refer to the movement of foodstuffs.

Leaving aside the long term programme and the various political points upon which Mr. Griffiths touched and with which my Honourable colleague will doubtless deal, what are the remedial measures which have been taken by the Government to move foodstuffs to the distressed areas? It is the immediate relief of those areas which is agitating the minds of so many people in this House and in the country in general, and I want to tell the House a few facts about the position in order, if I may say so, to give the House and the people most concerned something to bite on, and to assure the House and the public that, in spite of all that is being said about Government, you can put your trust in them. They are not either weak or spineless.

The food situation will not be saved, as Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi suggested yesterday, by a five-day debate. It will be saved, as Mr. Joshi says, by action—action within the next 6 or 8 weeks in moving surpluses which exist in surplus provinces to the deficit areas.

The Food Department, in conjunction with the Governments of Sind and the Punjab, have acquired a very considerable quantity of food grains and they continue their purchases. When I was recently in Lahore, the representatives of the Punjab were complaining that these purchases were so heavy that the storage was full and that it was imperative that the Railways should move more grain more rapidly in order that room might be made for further purchases. We have indeed loaded some 13,000 wagons or a quarter of a million tons more food grains on the North Western Railway in the first seven months of 1943 than in the corresponding period of last year. That is not enough. The successful solution of this problem depends upon the close co-operation of the five Government organisations concerned, the Food Department of the Government of India, the Government of the surplus province, the Government of the receiving province, the priorities organisation of the War Transport Department and the Railway Administrations. Unless all these departments play their part, there will be hitches but I am glad to be able to assure you that within recent weeks considerable progress has been made in co-ordinating the work of these different agencies. That is the main function and immediate care of the Food Department.

The result of such co-operation is demonstrated by the situation in Bombay today. Six months ago, the position there was desperate but the Government of Bombay, in collaboration with the Central Government and other Provincial Governments, set about their problem with a will. Food grains were bought. Special trains were arranged to rush immediate stocks to Bombay to meet the emergency, a rationing system was introduced and

today I understand that, although the rice stocks of Bombay are somewhat short, there is an ample supply of millets and wheat and there is no general anxiety. So far as I can see, there should be no difficulty in moving to Bombay the quantity of food stuffs scheduled under the revised plan. The relatively satisfactory position in Bombay demonstrates what can be done if the situation is grasped (*An Honourable Member*: "and full co-operation given") and full co-operation given.

The movement by rail of food grains from the Punjab to Madras, Travancore and Cochin with its immense haul is not an easy matter. I do not disguise the fact that our movement programme *via* New Delhi and Balharshah to South India fell short of its objective owing to railway operational difficulties but it is satisfactory to observe that at the end of July we had succeeded in working up to an average of 105.5 wagons per day against 110 wagons of wheat and other food grains scheduled to move *via* New Delhi for that direction. The revised food plan reduces the demands on this route which should make, available a greater capacity for movement in the direction of Bombay. Food grains for Travancore and Cochin are moving, and must move *via* Karachi and, although I have to hand no up to date figures of the quantities which are moving, I have no reason to suppose that the plan is not operating effectively.

But the province which is causing the most anxiety to this House is Bengal. In the last three weeks of July, we despatched from the Punjab in the direction of Bengal an average of 36 wagons of wheat and 30 wagons of other grains every day. The Bengal Government's own figures show that nearly 2½ million pounds of rice, paddy and wheat were imported daily into Calcutta in July and the population of Greater Calcutta and Howrah is some 2.48 millions. More could have been sent from the Punjab if arrangements could have been made to receive it but it is no use consigning grain to terminal stations if it cannot be handled. We have already suffered from traffic blocks owing to that reason. The plan which my Honourable Colleague, the Food Member, mentioned provided for the despatch of 120 wagons a day of different foodgrains to the Calcutta area and these should be booked to the following stations to the following maximum limits:—

	Wagons.		Wagons
Howrah	65	Ultadanga	7
Ramkristopore Flour Mills Siding	20	Kantapukur	15
Ramkristopore Goods Sheds	13		

If more wagons were received in any station on a given day, waste of transport would take place and there would be no improvement in the food situation. The problem therefore is one of business and transport organisation, of correctly correlating despatches to unloading stations, of ensuring that the documents are received in time and in order and of efficient handling at the receiving end. To assist an even flow of wagons to the Calcutta area and its distribution to the stations which I have mentioned, the possibility of organising a regulating station at Moghulserai is under active examination but there are complications to be overcome.

The House will want to know what is moving into Calcutta since the floods interfered with transport. The answer is that priority arrangements have been made to move 90 wagons of food grains coming from the East Indian Railway every day (actually the average between July 29th and August 2nd was 106) and 60 wagons of foodstuffs of other kinds, also emanating from the East Indian Railway, while 40 wagons of foodgrains are reported to be flowing in over the Bengal Nagpur Railway.

If, therefore, we are able to keep up our programme of 190 wagons of food grains and foodstuffs per day to Calcutta and beyond by these routes, this will represent some 8 million pounds of food or enough to give adequate nutrition on a full diet of 2½ lbs. a day to more than 8 million people and this takes no account of the foodstuffs which arise in Bengal itself. As I

[Sir Edward Benthall.]

mentioned previously, the population of greater Calcutta and Howrah is 2½ million and to give the population 1 and 1/3 pounds of food grains a day, apart from other foods, would require some 75 wagons only against the number which I have quoted. And these figures take no account of the foodstuffs which are being sent by other Railways such as the Bengal and Assam, nor does it take into account the supplies which are being sent by sea from Karachi. One steamer loaded with wheat left for Calcutta from Karachi a day or two ago. Another will sail in the very near future and only last night I received news of a couple more being probably available in the next few days. This route *via* Karachi must be the main route for further relief on a major scale in the near future. Sir, that is the position.

When the Regional Controller of Priorities in Calcutta approached the Minister for Civil Supplies in Bengal on the 5th instant, the latter informed him that he was not conscious of any complaints in regard either to the quantity or the proportions of the foodgrains received. At this stage, it ceases to be a problem of transport and becomes one of distribution, especially to that section of the people who cannot afford the price. I believe, therefore, with Mr. Joshi that efficient co-operation and energetic management can see the province of Bengal through the next critical weeks. If support is given to the Government of India and to the Government of Bengal instead of making the sufferings of the people the sport of politics, the energetic efforts which are being made by all concerned to effect these movements and to improve distribution will see Bengal safely through to the next harvest.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad (United Provinces Southern Divisions: Muhammadan Buraí): Sir, I heard with great interest the speech delivered by my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths. While developing his four points before the House he omitted to mention two more. One thing which he did not clearly mention is: How will you override the Government of India Act of 1935 about provincial autonomy? If he will read the proceedings of the Conferences referred to above—and I have got all of them with me and I had taken pains to go through them—, he will notice that any scheme which was framed by the Government of India was stabbed from behind by the Provincial Governments and *vice versa*. It is not possible for the Government of India to frame any unified policy unless it is supported by the Provincial Governments, and, with the system of Government that we have in India, it is impossible to follow the practice and to carry out the experiences of the United Kingdom where there is a single government. If you want to follow the practice of the United Kingdom, you must ask the Parliament to change the Government of India Act and have a unified policy for the foodgrains. It is impossible for the Food Member to frame any policy when he is stabbed by the Provincial Governments at every stage.

The second thing which he omitted to mention is the part played by the businessmen. I can assure the Honourable gentleman that the businessman of India is not the businessman of England. A businessman of England is a personification of honesty; a businessman in India is just the reverse. He is sucking the blood of the poor men in order to feed himself and become fat. Take the case of wheat trade in India. It is entirely in the hands of one particular community. They control the movement and the distribution and also the price of wheat throughout India and they are in communication with one another. It is these people who can easily supply food when they desire to do so. It is these people who can starve the people if they desire to do so. In the United Provinces, when the control of the prices was introduced, this community contrived and arranged amongst themselves that they would give no food to four big cities. They did not send wheat to the four big towns of the United Provinces, namely, Lucknow, Agra, Cawnpore and Allahabad. There was shortage

of food in these cities and the Government was paralysed and they had to give up their policy of control and adopt a new policy. This compact body which carries on the trade in wheat is a body which can paralyse any Government and it is not possible easily for the Government to break down the monopoly of this particular community, much less it is possible for any businessmen.

My Honourable friend laid great stress on the point that there must be a separate Member for the supply of food. I am not interested in the distribution of portfolios. It is left to H. E. the Viceroy. Let him make any distribution he likes. Let him double the number of Executive Councillors. I am not very much concerned about it. But one thing on which I am deeply concerned is that the portfolio of food should never be given to a businessman. In the interests of the people of India and in the interests of the poorer people I do not like blood suckers should become still fatter at the sacrifice of these poorer people. They are the businessmen and they know how to support another businessman, but they never care for the poor people. It is really one of the characteristics of a businessman in India but this is not the characteristic of a businessman in England to have utter disregard for the poor. If the Honourable gentleman will read my speeches in the Assembly he will find that I have mentioned definite instances of businessmen who have definitely and deliberately cheated the public and swindled them right and left. A thing of this kind can not happen in England but it is possible only in this country. This is a point which he should not entirely overlook. I entirely agree with him on other points with the exception of these three points which I will mention *seriatim*.

In the first place, he should consider very carefully the Government of India Act. It is not possible to introduce the system which is prevalent in England unless he modifies the Government of India Act and have a unified policy of the Government of India. We should not allow them to be stabbed by the Provincial Governments as has been happening in the past. In the second place, they must understand exactly the nature and the position of the businessman in this country and should not apply their experience of England to Indian conditions. This second point is exceedingly important. In the third place, penalties have been very poor. We should have more stringent penalties. If we have penalties of the same type as they have in England, there will be a chance for the free distribution of foodstuffs.

Now, I come to the Honourable Member for Railways. He is one of the greatest culprits by breaking down the policy of the U. P. Government. I wanted to move an adjournment motion on the subject, but you, Sir, asked me to postpone it because I would have an opportunity of discussing it on the present motion. The Government of the United Provinces with the support of the Government of India stopped the export of wheat from the United Provinces and yet my Honourable friend purchased wheat from U. P. and exported it in his own carriages from the United Provinces to other parts of India. Because he has got the monopoly of the transport, it does not mean that he should break down the rules and should purchase wheat at competitive prices and take it away without giving any notice to the Provincial Government. In this particular case, I should like to mention that this kind of competition exists in other provinces also as was referred to by my Honourable friend Maulvi Abdur Rasheed Choudhury. In the United Provinces we have got four authorities and they compete with each other. They are the Provincial Government, the military authorities, the G. I. P. Railway and the East Indian Railway. These four agents go to a particular place and offer the highest prices and they constantly go on raising the price level of foodstuffs on account of this open competition. My Honourable friend purchased wheat at the rate of 3 seers per rupee and less. He can afford to pay the deficit from public funds but a poor man like myself who is in charge of feeding 20,000 persons at moderate expense cannot afford to pay the deficit from any such fund. So, I cannot compete with him and I have to starve on account of the wrong action taken by the Railway Member by entering into competition with the other purchasing authority which he had

[Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad.]

no business to do and exporting it without the knowledge of the Provincial Government.

Coming to the position of Bengal, there are three things which I would like to mention. I have got the figures before me and from the figures it appears that last year their production, which is practically equivalent to consumption, was 8,639,000 tons. The Honourable Member for Food also said on the floor of the House that the Minister gave him assurance that the rice could be exported. Then my Honourable friends coming from Bengal did not raise their voice of protest on the floor of the House and draw the attention of this Assembly that rice was being exported outside Bengal which was unfair. When they knew very well that the supply from Burma was stopped, they should have taken steps to increase their acreage of cultivation. Instead of that, they continued to grow jute which was bringing them more money, but not food. When shortage actually came in they ought not to have adopted the policy of free trade and send out their Agents to purchase at competitive prices. They did not solve the Bengal problem by this method. They introduced all sorts of difficulties and intricacies in the three neighbouring Provinces.

What I feel at present is that the Honourable Minister for Food Supplies in Bengal should give us definitely how much foodstuffs they require till the next crop. This quantity ought to be distributed among the various Provinces and it should be the duty of the Government of India to get this particular quantity and give it to Bengal. I know that in U. P. we can spare sufficient quantity of rice; we can give up our *pulao* and other luxuries and thus make the rice available for the people of Bengal. In the same way, other Provinces also can give up their luxuries for the sake of Bengal. Bengal can thus get their foodstuffs at reasonable price without raising the price level in the neighbouring Provinces. This is the way in which the problem ought to be solved.

Now, Sir, I ask my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths whether he can give an assurance that the Government of India Act of 1935, will be altered. It cannot be amended. One should realise that Government of India can formulate policy but they have got no machinery to carry out in practice their resolution. The machinery is all possessed by the Provincial Governments. The machinery for action cannot be created under the present Government of India Act. The only thing they can do is to deliberate a policy and leave it to the Provinces to carry it out. The business of the Government of India should be first to collect accurate statistics, for each Province, for each district. They should know exactly how much food there is in the country, in each Province, in each district. Next they should know definitely the military requirements, the requirements of the deficit provinces and then if anything is left for export, that is feeding the neighbouring countries, that should be allowed if we can afford it. This is the business of the Government of India to find out. They should tell each Province, you have got so much foodstuffs, you must release that in this particular way. This method should be outlined in a manner that transport difficulties should be the minimum. This ought to be done immediately by the Government of India. Beyond it is not possible for them to go. The Provincial Governments should distribute the quotas to each district. They should have an Advisory Committee for each Province, and I am glad that such an Advisory Committee has just been established in U. P. I hope they will establish in all other Provinces in which they can collect enough foodstuffs required by the Government of India.

The next suggestion is that the Government of India should adopt a policy similar to that which they adopted in the case of piecegoods. They should force the people to sell their produce within a certain limited time. The people should not be allowed to accumulate and hoard indefinitely. If they do so, then the Government policy will be frustrated. Within a certain limited time, the whole thing should go out. I know there is a tendency among the cultivators not

to part with their wheat and this tendency is supported by a political group as well. They support this particular action by giving the cultivators to understand that the value of the wheat would go up if they could keep it for some time longer, till the country is on the verge of starvation. The Provincial Governments should effect compulsory sales, or whichever method is convenient. I think it would be well if the Government should promulgate an Ordinance that the cultivator, the producer should part with his wheat within certain limits. The next thing is that those who want to stock wheat should get a licence, so that everybody cannot store wheat. The Government should know who is storing wheat and what quantity so that the Government might fall back upon that stock in case of need. Unfortunately in India, it is not in every place that we can store wheat. Wheat gets spoiled in the rainy season. Those people who want to store must be compelled to take a licence. The wheat thus stored could be sold only at the discretion of the District Magistrate. If some such steps are taken, then I am sure the situation will improve.

The next question is that of price level. In Shahdara, the price of wheat is Rs. 10 a maund, if you go few miles in U. P. the price is Rs. 13 to Rs. 15 and sometimes even Rs. 19 a maund. My Honourable friend Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan tells me that in Meerut, it is Rs. 20 a maund. This is something scandalous.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque (Food Member): Not free trade.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: There is plenty of wheat in U. P.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Free trade when import is impossible will not succeed. There is really no shortage of wheat in U. P. The Government can certainly compel the cultivators to part with their wheat within a certain time limit. I will discuss this question in detail when we discuss the currency policy and stabilisation of price on Friday next. In spite of the abundance of wheat in U. P., it is scandalous that the price should be so high. It is a question of understanding between the various Provinces. I beseech the Government of India that they should frame only a policy and force the Provincial Governments, merely moral pressure is not sufficient to follow it. I may tell the British Government, I may tell my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, that as far as distribution of foodstuffs is concerned, the Government should take drastic steps against Provincial Governments which do not co-operate. Supposing a Provincial Minister goes to a cultivator and says, "do not sell your wheat, the price will be doubled soon, there will be no control, you can do what ever you please". If a Minister in one Province goes to every farmer and says thus, which is really to the benefit of the cultivators, what will be the impression created. Will the Government of India be able to do anything in that Province? Nothing. We cannot possibly neglect this aspect in framing our policy.

Now, I come to the suggestion that we should ask all the Provincial Governments to part with some of their foodstuffs to feed Bengal. I am positive that everybody will give up their luxury, we will give up our surplus stock if only to feed Bengal. At least for the next few months, we must make Bengal tide over this crisis in the food situation so that the difficulty can be partially solved. Do not send out your Agents to purchase food from the Provincial Government. They will themselves purchase food at reasonable price. Then this difficulty will be met. The second difficulty will be about the price. After securing the stock you leave the provinces to fix prices within the limits prescribed by the Government of India, the price question will automatically be solved. The cultivators should be forced to sell wheat immediately or time limit may be fixed within which the wheat should be sold. Cultivators will keep something for their own needs and their seed requirements, but whatever surplus there is should be brought to the market and sold to the public or to persons who hold special licenses so that they may keep it for distribution in the months when foodstuffs will not be available.

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

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Very well, Sir.

Rao Bahadur N. Siva Raj (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, I really did not like to intervene in this debate but the remarks that fell from my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths call for my intervention. I really do not hold a brief either for the Government of Madras or for any one in particular in Madras. But I do want to take Madras out of the category of the section 98 provinces which according to Mr. Griffiths, have thrown considerable obstacles in the way of the Government of India in the solution of this food problem.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: Not Madras.

Rao Bahadur N. Siva Raj: I am glad that Mr. Griffiths has singled out Madras as an exception. The real feature of the situation is that food, as a problem, never was and never has been a concern of the Government of India at any time, or for that matter, of the provinces. And in spite of the fact that 90 per cent. of the population of this country are rural masses and people who depend entirely upon agriculture, the fact remains that for a long time there have been people who have been going without food. The fact that they were not vocal and the fact that they were merely a section of the population belonging to the rural classes has been responsible for the question not coming to the forefront. Now that the suffering has been removed from that section of the population and has been transferred over to the urban population, the question has assumed this importance. Moreover, war and the conditions created by war have also been responsible for making this food problem such an important one. But it must be admitted by all the critics of the Government of India or for that matter of any Provincial Government, that the problem of food, and particularly the problem of feeding such a huge population as 400 million of people of India, is a mighty big problem. It is a vast and complex problem and also it is a new problem to Government. It was suggested by Mr. Griffiths that the Ministry of Food in England and the people of England have co-operated towards the solution of such food problems as may exist in England. It is true, and there is no doubt of the fact, that the Englishman today is fighting for his very existence, and consequently he knows his responsibilities and his duties, and so also the Government in England knows its duties and responsibilities. Above everything else, England is a country with a much smaller population, perhaps about one-tenth of the population of India. Secondly, English food is more or less standardized, but here in this country we find different types of food and people having different tastes scattered throughout the province. Thirdly, the trade channels in England and trade organisations are more or less definite and ascertainable, but in this country the trade channels and the trade organisations in many respects can be said to be unascertainable. I, in my own way, in my budget speech in March 1942, indicated to Government the dangers that were lying ahead in the matter of food, and I also suggested that the "Grow More Food" campaign must be taken up quite seriously, in addition to my suggestion about standard cloth and also about putting down the black market mercilessly. I do find now that all these three steps are being taken; but in the case of the "Grow More Food" campaign I find that after all this debate we are suggesting only a long term remedy for what I call a short term emergency like the food problem that exists in Bengal and other places today. But even in the matter of the "Grow More Food" campaign I feel that Government ought to give definite directions to the provinces in the matter of the assignment of land. I can quote one instance as to how Government in its own way is putting obstacles in the way of production of more food. There is, for instance, a system called the penal assessment of persons who occupy unauthorised lands for the purpose of cultivation and to produce food. I personally think that it has been a fraud perpetrated all these years in the name of penal assessment by Government upon the innocent cultivators in the villages. The man who takes

up land for cultivation even though it is unauthorised land, knows and every one round about knows the fact. The man is cultivating it openly, and Government also allows the man to cultivate the land; but when the land is actually producing food and when stone is converted into gold, Government steps in, takes the yield and puts the land in auction and sells it to the highest bidder. In the same way obstacles are created even now in the way of the "Grow More Food" campaign in the provinces.

I know of another difficulty in these grants of land in the Provincial Governments. In Madras, and particularly in the northern areas like Guntur and Kistna, lands are assigned to those persons who are not cultivators themselves but who merely make these lands a part of their estate. So even if the land is cultivated and more food is grown, it really goes into the hands of capitalists who are ultimately interested in the black market.

Now, Sir, there is no use trying to analyse the causes of the food problem or even throwing the blame at the door of the Government of India and making charges as to their inefficiency or inability to solve the problem of food. But I do wish to make a few suggestions to the Government of India with a view to see that they might take some steps in that direction. I find that nearly every one today is a hoarder and the first hoarder I think is the army itself. Has the question been examined as to how far the army has acquired supplies and acquired supplies in excess of its requirements? And I think personally, and I think it is also the view or rather the fear of the people of the country that the army is needlessly acquiring much more than is needed for its own supplies. There is another opinion which is gaining ground among the public, and every one is tempted to believe it, that there is a lot of waste in the matter of food in the army; and I think, Sir, it will be very much better for the Government of India to concentrate its attention on this particular aspect, namely, whether the army is acquiring more than its requirements, and secondly, whether it cannot see its way to stop the wastage that is now going on.

Then there is the problem of procurement of the food supply. No doubt many an Honourable Member has suggested various methods as to how the supply ought to be procured by the Government of India with a view to send it over to the deficit provinces. There are recalcitrant provinces, there are selfish provinces, and there are I think profit-earning provinces in this unfortunate affair. The Government of India must take immediate steps to see and find out if statistics are available,—and the tragedy of the situation is that no real statistics are available in the matter of food,—and if statistics are available, to find out and fix the responsibility upon the provinces, particularly the surplus provinces, to release such surpluses to the Government of India for them to be distributed in the proper way.

Then in the matter of food distribution the most important thing is transport. The Honourable the Railway Member has given us the latest figures regarding the availability of the wagons. While wagons are certainly available I know, and it has been complained to me by persons who are very highly placed in the administration of Madras province, that transportation within the province is made difficult on account of the unfortunate habit of the railway officials depending upon *bakshish* before they release their wagons, and I do hope that the Government of India, through the Railway Member, will take immediate steps to see that corruption, particularly in the matter of wagons which are reserved for foodgrains at least does not take place. It is an age-old habit and it is very difficult for us to put it down in the course of a few days.

The third thing that I would suggest is that when the local administration get the food supply, they must see to it that the food is distributed equitably and properly. The mere fact that the supplies reached the province is not going to solve the problem at all. And there we are up against the particular type of the Government or the particular type of the person who are in charge of this distribution of food supply. I personally feel that so far as Madras is

[Rao Bahadur N. Siva Raj.]

concerned, the Government there has been able to pitch upon a system by which the food is more or less fairly distributed in the province, but we find that even there the traders in rice, most of them—people who do not belong to Madras, practically people coming from Bombay and some Baniyas, and Seths from the Bombay Presidency—hoard rice and it was known that some of these people have hoarded rice enough to last for three months. But it has all got underground. I would suggest that the Government of India should issue immediate directions to the Provincial Governments to be very strong in the matter of getting those supplies out if necessary by raiding those places. I personally would suggest that.

So far as price control is concerned, it is no doubt difficult, as it has been pointed out by various speakers, that unless we are able to lay our hands upon the stocks available, it is somewhat difficult to control the prices, and even if you control the prices without the stocks it would be a mere formality and the tendency will be for the traders to see that it goes into the black-market again.

My fourth suggestion is this; although I do not know what the remedy is. I think propaganda must be carried on not merely on behalf of the Government of India but also on behalf of the Provincial Governments by various propaganda bodies that have come into existence as a result of war effort. I find that very few of these people belonging to the National War Front ever take any interest in the matter of food and it will be very necessary for the National War Front people and others who are employed in this agency of propaganda to see that the people are not needlessly made panicky by so many suggestions that are made from time to time. One reason of the panic is that people fear that the Government is wanting more and more supplies of food for the sake of the army. Another reason for the panic is that somebody is constantly threatening the people with the menace of the Japanese invasion particularly on the East Coast. I suggest to the Government of India that they should take steps to see that propaganda on behalf of the Food Department must be carried on regularly into the interior parts of the villages even.

I have nothing more to say except, in the last resort, to congratulate the Honourable the Commerce Member on his undertaking to do what, I think, is a very big job, namely, to satisfy the Members of this House on the various difficulties and the problems suggested by them in this debate. It is unfortunate that even though he is one of the latest Members of the Executive Council he should have been charged with some of the heaviest Departments. I really and honestly feel that he has bitten more than he could chew and I hope that the Honourable the Food Member will try to meet the points which have been raised in my speech.

Mr. K. C. Neogy (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): I am in sympathy with my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, when he described the Food Member's speech as disappointing. But I was rather surprised at the enthusiasm which my Honourable friend put into his arguments. I wonder as to whether he was speaking on behalf of the National War Front. . .

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: No.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: . . . or, on behalf of his constituency.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: On behalf of myself.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: So far as his constituency is concerned, I gathered the impression from a reply that I received from the Honourable the Food Member to a question not very many days ago, that his constituency had succeeded in enlisting the good offices of that rather elusive personality—the Crown Representative—for getting supplies from certain States, and for that purpose his constituency, as far as I am aware, have been treated exactly like the Security Services. Sir, having got what they wanted, I thought that it was rather ungracious on the part of their representative to get up in this House and roundly abuse the Government in the way that he has done. Sir, the food problem

has really been complicated by the fact that very powerful employers of labour, particularly Britishers, have in the past succeeded in hoarding food in the name of their labour, and the present difficulty is not a little due to this fact.

Sir, I expected my Honourable friend the Food Member to give a true account of the state of things in Bengal. Unfortunately, however, I did not find in his speech any detailed account of what the position was in his native province and mine. I have, I think, a special reason to complain, because when I attempted to move the adjournment of the business of this House a few days ago, a general impression was created that the Honourable Member would let us know the result of the enquiries which the Government of India had instituted into the very serious reports about deaths from starvation that were being received. My Honourable friend contented himself with saying that the situation is unprecedented. I wonder if he had in view the great famine of 1770 to which brief reference has already been made, and which I am told led to the death of millions in Bengal. When Lord Cornwallis made a detailed enquiry he found that this famine had led to the devastation and depopulation of one-third of Bengal. Sir, when I went into certain historical accounts left by admitted authorities, I was struck by the resemblance of some of the factors that have led to the present situation, with the facts that led to the famine of 1770. I read, for instance, in Hunter that:

"The whole administration was accused of dealing in grain for their private advantage. It was in vain that the Court of Directors wrote one indignant letter after another, demanding the names of the culprits."

No satisfactory investigation was ever made: and the native agents of the governing body remain to this day under the charge of carrying off the husbandman's scanty stock at arbitrary prices, stopping and emptying boats that were importing rice from other provinces, and "compelling the poor ryots to sell even the seed requisite for the next harvest". Not without reason does the Court express its suspicion that the guilty parties "could be no other than persons of some rank" in its own service; and, curious to relate, the only high official who was brought to trial for the offence was the native Minister of Finance (in those days too they had Native Ministers) who had stood forth to expose the mal-practices of the English administration. It is fair to add that he was "acquitted." It is not surprising that my Honourable friend, the Food Member, is anxious to get rid of this portfolio, lest he too were to share the same fate as the Native Minister of 1770.

Sir, the East India Company is still with us, though not in its original shape. Lord Clive is no longer with us, but a lord of Clive Street has been installed in the Government front bench; and I was again reminded, when I heard my Honourable friend refer to the needs of Calcutta, of what was written by Hunter as regards the attitude of the authorities of the day with respect to the famine of 1770. He says:

"Until 1772 Bengal was regarded by the British public in the light of a vast warehouse, in which a number of adventurous Englishmen carried on business with great profit and on an enormous scale. That a numerous native population existed, they were aware; but this they considered an accidental circumstance."

Now, Sir, my honourable friend was waxing eloquent over the arrangements he has made for rushing food to Calcutta, Howrah, and the industrial areas, but not a word was said as to how his own railway system was assisting in the distribution of foodstuffs in the interior of the province. Sir, his speech reminds me of the very recent observations made by the Secretary of State himself in the House of Commons where he repeatedly referred to the needs of Calcutta and the industrial areas. My Honourable friend perhaps thinks that Clive Street constitutes Calcutta, and that Calcutta constitutes Bengal. That was exactly the attitude of the East India Company in the year 1770.

Sir, I should now like to come to some of the observations which my Honourable friend, the Food Member, made. His speech is a confession of abject incompetence and failure on the part of the Government to rise to the height of the occasion, as has been observed by other speakers. I mean no disrespect to any individual member occupying the Government front bench when I say that

[Mr. K. C. Neogy.]

our affairs, so far as the food situation is concerned, could not have been more mismanaged had they been entrusted to a corporation of congenital idiots and consummate knaves. Sir, I am not here to decry any particular Provincial Government or any particular Ministry in a Provincial Government. But I should like to point out that so far as the Government of India are concerned, they did not realize the seriousness of the situation, when they were about to lose their hold in the Far East.

We have seen an ex-Member of the Executive Council, Mr. N. R. Sarker, in a speech which he delivered not very long ago as a non-official in Calcutta, blaming the Government of India for their shortsighted policy. This is what he said:

"It should have been realized by Government in laying their plans that although a predominantly agricultural country, India as a whole had never been self-sufficient in the matter of foodgrains taken as a whole. Her deficit in rice which in normal times stood at about 14 lakhs tons was met by importation from Burma. As regards wheat her position becomes just sufficient to meet her normal requirements as a result of agricultural development in provinces like the Punjab and Sind. Without realising this precarious character and without instituting an immediate effective plan on the outbreak of the war to cope with the growing demand in India, we exported foodstuffs somewhat imprudently to feed the peoples of Iran, Iraq, Mauritius, Ceylon and other countries."

I daresay he spoke from inside knowledge. And may I, in this connection, refer to an observation made by Mr. Joshi? I do not think my Honourable friend weighed the position very carefully when he said that the deficit in India was nothing very much to worry about. Sir, India is normally a deficit country. You have to remember that we have two million soldiers who have been enlisted, and a very large number of foreign troops that are in the country, and about whose number we have no definite information, and a large number of foreign prisoners of war who, I understand, are being entertained with the lavishness that is due to friendly foreign potentates: if you take all these factors into consideration, and remember the excessive consumption of available foodstuffs on all these accounts, you cannot take a complacent view of the situation. The deficit there is, and has been always with us. The deficit has been aggravated by all these factors, and from all accounts the next crop is not likely to be a very favourable one.

I was rather disappointed to find that my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, when he enumerated the different steps that in his opinion should be taken to meet the situation, forgot those ships, whose pictures he was good enough to print a few weeks ago in the different newspapers at great cost to us, that were rushing with food to India.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: They are.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: But they should continue to come.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: They will.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: That is one of the suggestions that I should like to emphasize, and which was omitted by my Honourable friend. I should like to see those ships continually rushing across the seas from Australia and other places with millions and millions of tons of wheat of which they have so great a surplus. Without that it is impossible to save this country. What is happening in Bengal to-day, will be happening all over India in the course of a few months unless that step is taken. Meanwhile, what is the suggestion that we can make? The suggestion that one can think of at the moment, and which should be carried out as an emergent measure, is to induce the military authorities to part with a portion of their stocks that may be available within the province of Bengal itself, on the understanding that those stocks would be fully replenished if and when necessary. Sir, without some such emergent measure it will be impossible to save Bengal.

We have been treated to statistics of various kinds. It took my breath away to find that in one statement which was circulated under the authority of the Honourable the Food Member, one pound per day of cereals has been

described as an ideal *per capita* allowance for the adult population. Sir, I am not going to embarrass my Honourable friend by referring to what he wrote in his own book on the subject. It was at least 50 per cent. more than this, which, according to him, the author of "The Man Behind the Plough", should be allowed per adult unit. 50 per cent. more of rice alone, and here we have one lb. per head of all cereals put together. Statistics have been found to be particularly unsatisfactory by officials and non-officials alike on this occasion, but Major General Wood has his own statistics on which to base his calculations of deficits, carry-overs and needs of the people. May I ask my Honourable friend, the Food Member, to meet this particular point when he gets up to reply?

A pointed reference was made to the attitude of the Government of Bengal. This is what was stated by the Honourable the Food Member:

"The Provincial authorities stated that they did not require for the next few months any rice even though they were in deficit."

Deficit was admitted in December, but evidently the apprehension was that at the moment their rice might have been transferred elsewhere, as unfortunately was the experience of Bengal. Next follows something which is very significant.

"They said, 'We have no suggestion to make. Let us carry on with whatever stocks we have at present. When we are in difficulty we will come up with suggestions, but let us carry on for the present.' " That summed up the attitude of the Government of Bengal at that time. The Honourable Member added:

"The general position taken up by Bengal was that as they were not in surplus but in deficit, they should not be asked to contribute in any way to the all-India pool and that they would be able to manage their affairs if they were not asked to undertake any extra-provincial responsibility."

That was the issue.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi (Dacca cum Mymensingh: Muhammadan Rural): Who said this?

Mr. K. C. Neogy; This was said by the representatives of the Government of Bengal, according to the Honourable the Food Member.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: Who are those representatives?

Mr. K. C. Neogy: The Chief Minister and others. The issue was, was Bengal going to be asked to contribute towards the all-India pool in spite of her deficit? I do not know what was meant by all-India pool. May I in this connection, and in passing, mention that the reports of these Conferences are not available to us in the Library of the House in spite of the assurance given by the Honourable the Food Member. Therefore, we have no opportunity of examining this particular statement in its proper context.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: Can any self-respecting province be expected to depend upon the assurances of the Government of India, particularly after the speech that the Honourable Member made yesterday on the subject? What was the position? Major General Wood in his statement on the 13th May, 1943, after calculating the requirements of the situation according to his own statistical methods, came to the conclusion that 793,000 tons were required to be sent to Bengal, and he agreed that that quantity of foodstuffs was going to be sent to Bengal by the Central Government. But actually how much has been provided out of that? Only 39,963 tons. Out of about 800,000 tons promised, only about 40,000 tons had been actually provided. That is what I have got from the answer given by the Honourable Member in reply to a question of mine. What is the use of disclosing one's plans before a Government of this character? I am not surprised that the Government of Bengal did not take the Government of India seriously in this matter.

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

Mr. K. C. Neogy: There is one other point which I should like to mention. I asked a question as to when it became apparent to the Government of India that the situation was serious in Bengal. He said, although the statement that Bengal was in deficit was made in December, it was in March, only at the beginning of March, that the rice position in Bengal became difficult. That also I take from an answer given by the Honourable Member to a question. "Since that period there has been no export of rice from Bengal", added the Honourable Member. I asked for figures as to how much rice was exported after it was realised that Bengal was in deficit in December. No answer was given to this, no figures have been given of the actual export. A bare statement was made to the effect that no exports were made after March. But what about exports between December and March? On this point I have a figure which was given in the Bengal Legislative Assembly by a Minister on the 15th March, 1943. I do not vouch for the accuracy of this figure, but the figure given of export in 1943, on the 15th March, in the Bengal Legislative Assembly was 2·84 lakhs of tons exported from Bengal. I do not know how far this is correct, but the Honourable Member owes a duty to the House to tell us how much of the rice was allowed to be exported from Bengal from December.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: Whereeto?

Mr. K. C. Neogy: I do not care whereeto. That rice was not available for consumption in Bengal. I do not care where it was sent. In the course of a few weeks the allied army, perhaps an all-white army, would be marching to victory in the eastern front of India. Unless prompt measures are taken to save the people of Bengal, the army will march across the plains of Bengal that will have been whitened with human bones.

Sardar Sant Singh: I congratulate my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, on the brilliant speech that he has made this forenoon and on the independent view that he has taken although I differ from him in apportioning the blame on the right shoulders. In discussing the food situation I am at one with the policy that political methods should be eschewed entirely . . .

Mr. N. M. Joshi (Nominated Non-Official): Not entirely.

Sardar Sant Singh: . . . should be, ought to be eschewed when we are face to face with a serious situation, a picture of which has been given to us by the Honourable Member from the Bengal Province.

There are two matters which the Food Department is dealing with; first is the question of policy, and second is how to carry out that policy into practice. So far as the question of policy is concerned, the Food Department is staffed with members, Europeans and Anglo-Indians who do not know what food problem is. I am reminded of a mathematician with tripods like my Honourable friend, Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad, who calculated the average depth of a river. He found it to be three feet and advised a family of four or five people that they could safely wade through the river. When they went into the middle, every one of them was drowned. This is the policy of the Food Department to-day. They sit at home, decide upon a course of policy, without knowing the actual conditions that are prevailing in the country, and the result is that when they carry out that policy into practice, they find themselves in deep waters and find that the whole policy has failed. The whole speech of the Honourable the Food Member is an indication that the Government of India have laboured and laboured very hard to control the food situation in the country, to devise ways and means, to carry out the distribution of food but the Government could not get over the hurdles and have failed. Government practically say that the stream was too much for them. Provincial autonomy has stood in their way. The poor cultivator gets a kick, because he is charged for demanding high prices. But when prices have gone up all round, what right have the Government to complain of the prices that have been charged by the poor

cultivators? Why do they go for the poor cultivator, when the Government of India had not been able to control the prices of other necessities of life. When there is a rise in the price of all commodities, the cultivator has to sell his grain according to the prices that he has to pay for other necessities of life. They should spare the cultivator and look to the hoarder. A hint was thrown out by Mr. Neogy today and he referred to Hunter's report on the famine of 1877 wherein it was stated that those very persons had been carrying on the Government who were responsible for carrying on trade in foodstuffs and they were the people who were exploiting the famine stricken people. The same is the case today. The real reason is that hoarders are to be found not amongst the cultivators, not among the banyas as my friend Sir Zia Uddin said and not among the middle men but amongst Government members. They have been excluded entirely from the operation of the food control. Most of them are influential people whom no Government and no law can catch. I will give some illustrations for which I can vouchsafe for their accuracy. It will go to disprove the criticism made by Mr. Griffiths that the people are not co-operating in the matter of supplies of food. How can they co-operate. It is impossible for them to co-operate. It will be against their self-respect to co-operate with a Government that is carried on by methods which I shall presently describe. I begin with the instance of the Sind Government. They purchased wheat from the cultivator at Rs. 6 or 7 per maund and they sold it at Rs. 15 or 17 and made a profit. May I ask what is the fault of the cultivator?

Seth Yusuf Abdoola Haroon (Sind: Muhammadan Rural): They sold it according to the Punjab rate.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I am afraid your figures are hopelessly wrong.

Sardar Sant Singh: What are the exact figures?

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I will give them in my reply.

Sardar Sant Singh: I say that the Sind Government made a profit and the profit went to the Sind Government and not the cultivator. Is there any justification for this action of the Sind Government?

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai (Sind: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Ask where it is used and what for?

Sardar Sant Singh: Why should the profit be made by the Sind Government? Then there is another scandalous case which I want to bring to the notice of those responsible for it. That is the case of the control of sugar. The Government have given the control of sugar to those persons who have contributed handsomely to the War Purposes Fund. Do the Government realise that it is those who contribute big sums to the War Purposes Fund and get the monopoly of selling sugar who make big profits out of sugar and they exploit the consumers.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: And salt also.

Sardar Sant Singh: Yes, salt, sugar, kerosene and everything. Do you know that the purses that are presented to the Ministers when they visit the mufassil and to His Excellency the Governor are contributed by those persons who got the monopoly of selling these commodities. How can you ask for the co-operation of the people when they know that the trader who deals in these controlled articles is not given the distribution but the distribution is practically sold, auctioned and that auction is utilised for purposes other than those for which the food control is intended. Then there are political considerations. We know that the U. P. Government did not decontrol the price of wheat even though it had been decontrolled in the Punjab. There was no decontrol for three months in the U.P. I cannot vouchsafe for the accuracy of the reason but the impression in the U.P. was that the U.P. cultivator, being Congress minded, has been penalised by that control, while in the Punjab, which was furnishing recruits for the army, the control was taken away. Was it not a political reason? (*An Honourable Member*: "It is wrong.") That is not solving the food problem. It is the creation of a

[Sardar Sant Singh.]

loyalist class and adding to their ranks. That is what it comes to. I will give you some illustrations which are apt and which prove the scandal. Certain foodgrains were purchased. I shall not name the foodstuffs. They were purchased from the C.P. by a high placed person in Bengal. The Government of the C.P. recommended that the foodstuff should be requisitioned. The Government of India was agreeable. Then came the hitch, because the person concerned was an influential member of the Working Committee of the Muslim League. Therefore it should not be requisitioned. I am telling you what political reasons are working.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: On a point of order. I must say that it is not possible for anybody to deal with an assertion of this character unless there is at least a previous intimation to bring out this fact. I submit that, in a vast country like India, if an isolated instance of sugar control given to one person is going to be the subject matter of debate in a momentous matter like this, you will kindly look into this matter.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The Honourable Member should not deal with individual cases. He ought to deal with the motion as it has been moved, namely, the general food situation in India.

Sardar Sant Singh: The point that I am trying to make is that political considerations have influenced the Government of India and they have gone to make the whole policy a failure. If the policy is to succeed, political considerations must be eschewed and these are the illustrative cases . . .

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): I think you had better leave out the illustrations.

Sardar Sant Singh: There are so many other cases in which the guiding principle has not been the solution of the food problem with a view to making the position easier but it has been of a different nature. In the face of these facts which every man in the street knows, the people are not co-operating with the Food Department. I know that the Honourable Member for Food is not responsible. He has recently taken charge of this department but he ought to put a strong foot upon any other consideration except that of his policy being given effect to. I need not mention other questions but I will request him to look into this question and issue directions immediately that the Food Department stands for the proper distribution of food. One point more that I want to mention in the connection is this. I find that rules and regulations are made the pretence for delaying the sending of foodstuffs to Bengal. I know of a case and I am glad that Mr. Christie is here and he should be able to tell us something about it. Certain foodstuff was purchased by the Bengal Government and it was sold to them by the Delhi syndicate. The Chief Commissioner of Delhi had been writing to the Food Department to issue a permit so that the foodstuff could be sent immediately to Bengal. The Deputy Commissioner had been trying his level best to send this foodstuff to Bengal. There had been repeated reminders sent to show that the foodstuff was deteriorating and was going to waste and it should be sent immediately. The Food Department insisted that it should be debited against the quota allotted to Bengal. May I ask if the question of debiting or crediting the quota could not be put off for some later date? Three months were wasted in getting this red-tapism complied with.

Then, Sir, conditions are laid down which, so far as I know, should not be the business of the Food Department but should be left to the Provincial Government concerned as to where the foodstuff is to go. They ban one station and recommend another station. That is not right. It is the duty of the Bengal Government to distribute the foodstuff and to send it where people are starving. It is not the business of the Food Department to point out various places where the foodstuff should be sent. The Bengal Government had the foodstuff which they wanted to send to some particular places and yet the Food Department had been sitting on that matter for the last

three months without issuing the necessary instructions. Meanwhile, the foodstuff is rotting. I do not know whether they will increase the "Grow more food" movement by this method or decrease it. People are starving and yet red-tapism goes on unabated and unchecked.

Then, Sir, blame has been laid on the Punjab that it is not selling. May I inform my Honourable friend that there are dealers in the Punjab with whom rice and wheat is lying and they are willing to send it to Bengal, but nobody is issuing them permits to sell it. I know wheat is lying and yet there is nobody to purchase it and send it to Bengal. The impression has gone abroad that the Punjab is a surplus province and yet it does not sell foodstuff. I repudiate this charge against my province.

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta (Bombay Central Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): What did Sir Chotu Ram say?

Sardar Sant Singh: Sir Chotu Ram is not Punjab. Punjab consists of men with human feelings of sympathy for their fellowmen in Bengal. Therefore, I say that it should not be supposed that Punjab is not selling. Punjab is willing to sell provided the sale takes place on business lines and not at a higher price than the market price.

One word more, Sir, and I have finished. The Honourable the Food Member has made an appeal to organise relief measures. I want to give him a suggestion. I am proud to say that the Sikh community is an expert in organising free kitchens, in sending relief and in being more humanitarian. I will request him that if he approaches the Shree Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal, he will find a ready response from them and will be greatly assisted in organising relief work.

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.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): I understand that the arrangement is that the Leaders of Parties should take part in the discussion this afternoon.

Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Ghani: Sir, I rise to a point of order. Sir, today, it so happened that I was in the House at just 3 minutes past eleven of the clock. In the House, before my arrival some Honourable Member was called upon to speak, and while that Honourable Member was about to begin his speech, a point of order was raised by my Honourable friend Mr. Krishnamachari that his Adjournment Motion was not disposed of. The Chair was pleased to take up that Adjournment Motion and during the disposal of that Adjournment Motion, I came into the House and was in my seat. Then, I rose to a point of order, but the Chair did not follow my arguments. I sent a written representation to the Chair explaining the position and that representation is pending with the Chair. Now, Sir, I want to know the decision of the Chair on that representation whether I was at fault at all. In my opinion, I was not at fault because I was in my seat during the disposal of the Adjournment Motion. I seek the protection of the Chair regarding my privilege of speech, which was left unfinished yesterday.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): I am told by the Secretary that this matter has been finally disposed of by the Honourable the President and it is not open to me to reopen that question.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee (Bombay Central Division: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, in the first instance I must thank the Government for convening this special Session to consider the war situation and questions arising out of the war. In the last Budget Session, I had moved a cut requesting the Government to convene a special Session this year at least to consider the war

[Mr. Hoosainbhoy A. Lalljee.]

situation and questions arising out of the war. I am glad, Sir, that the Government have conceded this demand and called for this meeting. But I must say that while we expected that this Session would be mainly confined to the war situation, we find unfortunately that legislative business has come in between which has taken up a long time and we are no better. I must also say that in this Session the Government had in the first instance allotted only one day for this all important question of food, but later on, they allotted two days. We are thankful for this little mercy, if I may say so, for their having agreed to allot two days. I also find that during the time at his disposal, the Honourable Member-in-charge has placed the facts before us very lucidly, very fully and in some detail, though he was handicapped all along in the way of divulging certain aspects of the question which are of very great importance to this House. If Honourable Members on this side are going to put some questions hereafter, it is not due to our fault. If such information could not be given out publicly, surely a secret Session for that purpose would have been better. I must admit, and I believe many of my Honourable Colleagues will also admit that the Honourable Member-in-charge has placed before us facts and figures in a very lucid and clear way. From the way in which he has handled this subject, I see he has mastered this subject. He has given great thought to this and he has put in a lot of hard personal work. I was a little bit surprised when I found that my Honourable friend the Leader of the European Group and some other Honourable Members made the suggestion that we should have a Member-in-charge entirely of Food portfolio. Sir, I am not one of those who believe that a Member-in-charge of one portfolio can do justice, because he has only one portfolio. It is the man who puts his heart into the business and works hard and acts according to the wishes of the people that is more needed than an entirely one Member. This Food Department was created in the month of December last and for a few months, there was no Member-in-charge. The present Honourable Member has only taken up this portfolio hardly a couple of months ago. During this period a lot of things have been placed before us, a lot has been done. I do feel that at present he ought to be kept in charge. If they want he may be relieved of some other work, if he does not wish to keep that work, but so far as I am concerned, I am convinced that in the short period he has been holding charge of this portfolio, he has done his best, and the department has done well.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: Then make him a Food Member, pure and simple.

Mr. Hoosainbhoy A. Lalljee: That may be. But there is no justification for any direct or indirect insinuation to say that because the Member-in-charge has a lot of other work, something less has been done for the food problem within the few months the Department has come in and he has been in charge. My Honourable friend referred to some of the facts. He referred to one important fact about what I said on the last Food discussion. At that time, I did say, and I do feel that after all this discussion from my Honourable friends on the other side that I was not far wrong. I am a businessman, my people have been businessmen and from the facts that we gather as businessmen, I laid my views before this House, howsoever poor the statistics may be. I must say that all along the Government of India have taken very little care for statistics so far as food problem of the people are concerned, before the war and even during the war. It was not so much a question which had always been in the mind of the people in India. But it was a question which was always in the mind of the people of Great Britain, they being people living in an island, they have seen for centuries that whenever their island was attacked, it meant starvation for the people. Even during the last war they learnt a good deal about their food problem and at the cost of the taxpayer they tried their best after the war to make themselves self-sufficient in the matter of food. They grow sugar at an enormous cost to the public. In fact every child I met in England in 1925 knew that they had a strong navy to protect them and see that they are not starved, and that so long as they were not starved their Empire and their rule would prevail. That has been their mentality and let my

Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths compare that with that of the Government of India, and he will find that they have not at all been careful here about food. The safety of our people depends on the food that can be grown in our own country. There they have the largest navy in the world to protect them and see that they are not starved; here our shores are all open and there is no navy worth the name. If we therefore have not been more careful it is not our fault.

Coming to the figures I find that the Honourable Member gave us certain figures last Friday. He has given us the total population, the production for 1942-43, the surplus and deficit and also the average total quantity of rice, millets, wheat, gram, available within the trade bloc for human consumption and seed purposes. To these I have added two more columns which have also been circulated and they are with regard to average production for five years, 1937-42, and the requirements of cereals per adult per day at the rate of one lb. My Honourable friend Mr. Neogy rightly pointed out that that one lb. was not sufficient. We all have often said that if each of us got one lb. in this country we would thank God.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: That is described as the ideal allowance.

Mr. Hoosainbhoj A. Lalljee: Now what do we find? If I take the figure at one lb., I find 38,560,000 tons are required for the whole of India. I find that the productive average for five years is 40,469,000 tons,—an increase. Then taking the production of 1942-43, I find the figure to be 42,392,000,—a further increase. On these figures which have been supplied to us by the Government of India no one can say that there is any deficit. In fact taking the figure of one lb. there is a surplus of nearly 4½ per cent. in former and 8½ per cent. in latter set of figures. Then there is another thing and that is seed and for that,—speaking as a business man and not as an agriculturist,—I allow 2½ per cent., calculating one seer of seed for one maund of crop. Even then I do not find that there is a deficit. Of course we have to consider the serious position that has arisen owing to distribution in certain provinces which have been very badly hit. I do not put down the shortage in Bengal to 2 millions but anyhow there is an acute shortage and one which justifies our very careful consideration in view of the conditions prevailing in Bengal. But I repeat there is no great cause to feel that we are going to be very short of foodstuffs. There may be a little shortage but from the figures which have been supplied by Government I find a surplus of 2½ to 4½ per cent., that is, if we take the production average of five years and if we take the production of 1942-43. The question that arises is, how has this great shortage occurred in Bengal? It has been said that there have been some exports, especially in 1942, and a Minister, as Mr. Neogy pointed out, made that statement. We have not got figures of exports, but considering that from the time Japan entered the war in December 1941 shipments from the port of Calcutta have been very little, there would have been hardly 10 per cent. of the usual exports. The hoarder has been accused by Honourable Members and rightly too, but, as it appears, when the Provincial Governments themselves want the people to keep some stocks what are the people to do? Are they to disregard that advice? And what has been done with regard to these provinces. Then it has been trotted out that the constitutional position comes in the way. During the war there have been many instances where the constitutional position has been given the go-by; and I can emphatically assert that if war exigencies demand today many things will be given the go-by. Thank God the Japanese are not in Bengal today, but does the Honourable Member say that even then he will leave the Ministers to manage their affairs? This food crisis is just as serious as that. In fact the Bengal and Assam frontiers are actually and very shortly going to be the battlefields, and therefore Government should do all they can to provide food for the people of Bengal. It is only natural and fair that in this war zone people should keep a little stock, and human instinct being what it is, it is nothing unusual or even wrong. Then, Sir, the position of

[Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee.]

Bengal is not the same as of Great Britain; I have said from the beginning that the position is quite different.

Now the question of all questions is: from where are we going to make up at once the present deficit in Bengal? I find from the statistics and from the reports that I have received that we have a fairly big quantity in Punjab and also in Sind and I am very glad that the Honourable Member for War Transport has tried his level best to arrange for its immediate transportation from the Punjab to Calcutta. But I must say that he should take the other districts of Bengal also into serious consideration. I have often been in Calcutta and in districts of Bengal and for sometime I do feel that taking foodstuffs only to Calcutta or Howrah or Ultadingshi is not sufficient. I do not know what is now the condition of river-craft in Bengal on which its Districts depend. I was told last year when I was in Bengal that a lot of our rivercraft in Bengal were requisitioned for war purposes and some taken to Burma and if that is the position today, it is really serious and more liability falls upon the War Transport Member. My Honourable friend, Member for War Transport, has told us that he is going to do more, and in fact, they have arranged ships to go from Karachi to Bengal. I am glad to learn that. But I feel I am not divulging a secret when I say that that sea-route is not quite so very clear. I do not know whether it will be right to say that very recently—within the last month—we heard of mishaps to our ships in the Arabian Ocean. I therefore warn the Government that it is not a much use our relying on the sea-route so long as the Andamans is in the hands of Japanese; it is not so safe.

I should like to point out one thing more: When recently ships containing wheat were coming from Australia into our harbours, the City of Bombay and the City of Calcutta and India generally were very very glad and may I say very very happy—I do not make any distinction between Bombay and any other part of India in this respect. It did afford some relief. But now we find this wheat was destined for some other place and I understand from paper reports and for what they are worth,—I will not say that they are absolutely correct—that as soon as the Punjab wheat was available, this quantity which came from Australia was replaced. As I have already said, I cannot vouch for the correctness of this news, but if that is so I am sure my Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, who is not here at the moment and who wanted us to eagerly and thankfully see ships coming from Australia with cargoes of wheat, will not be happy to learn this. A few ships with wheat were brought to this country as some parts of this country were passing through acute famine conditions but this cargo being destined for other places, the very first opportunity, and within a very short time, was taken to replace it and that too during the time when we were still having acute sufferings. Whose interest is first? Mine or somebody else's?

An Honourable Member: You take somebody's.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: My Honourable friend says 'you will take somebody's'. What does that mean? Wheat from Australia can be despatched to other places but if India wanted it, it is lent to India only to be replaced as soon as possible. What is the meaning of that? It is not fair, not even humane.

We have got to consider seriously about distribution, but it is no use discussing that, unless and until the Government of India makes bold to take powers into their own hands. In this war situation I was pained to learn that in matter of food supply our Government of India was so helpless with its provinces. Sir, my Honourable friend mentioned some instances. One of them was that the Station Masters could also be prevailed upon to cancel the supply of wagons. Then, Sir, after a lot of discussion one thing leaked out, namely, that guilty provinces were being ruled under Section 93. Then after further discussion we found out by process of elimination that Bombay was not there, Madras was not there. U. P. and Bihar remained. All this trouble had arisen

when Bengal wanted food and the Government of India thought of purchasing from Bihar and the United Provinces. Now, Sir, the eminent high Governors of those provinces surely come to the Viceroy once a year on official visits; surely they put into action all the political movements that are directed by my Honourable friend the Home Member. Not only that; they also carry out broadcasting and propaganda work directed by my Honourable friend the Leader of the House. I find, Sir, that if a leaflet for propaganda goes out from the Central department at once meetings are held and speeches are made. But, Sir, orders, nay, requests to pass on some foodstuffs for a starving population near the war zone are not carried out. I cannot see the reason of this affront and why it is tolerated.

Sir, we have got to consider what other and superior powers are necessary. I believe, His Excellency the Viceroy still holds the powers of both the House of Commons and House of Lords; and I do not think they have been taken away. Therefore even if it comes to amending the Government of India Act, the powers are there. There are other ways and means too. First of all, you have got to make the provinces realize their duty—and if the provinces will still have that mentality, you must not and cannot help taking severe action. If my Government tells me anything I am in duty bound to believe that, and will certainly follow their advice. If my Provincial Government tells me to hoard a little, I will hoard a little more. That is human instinct—call it loyalty, if you like. But I will carry out their wishes. The Government of India have also got a propaganda Department. The Honourable Member-in-charge of the Foodstuffs cannot, I see, divulge important things for some reason or other or take action. Therefore, now, I feel my own Government is the best guide for me and I will act accordingly. I ask the Honourable Member for Food to impress upon the Government of India and insist upon them, as the Honourable the Finance Member does, to see that their orders are made effective throughout India. I refer him to Finance Ordinances and the Textile Orders. . . .

Mr. Jamnadas M. Mehta: Question.

Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee: Those orders are considered to be effective; in so far as the Provincial Governments are concerned, they must and will carry them out, and so are the orders of the Honourable the Home Member. I am dealing with Provincial Governments.

On this cloth control, I congratulate my Honourable friend, the Finance Member, for he has insisted upon cloth merchants to regularly declare their stocks, and if they do not do so, something will be done. Why don't you do that for grains all over India? People can wear clothes only when they have food in their stomach.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: On a point of order. I think, cloth is not under the orders of the Honourable the Finance Member. He is giving too much credit to the Finance Member.

Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee: I know. It is under my Honourable friend the Commerce Member.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: There again my Honourable friend is incorrect. It is under the Honourable Member for Industries and Civil Supplies.

Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee: That is all the same. Anyhow I am not going to deal with that any more, the time is short.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): The Honourable Member has one minute more.

Mr. Hoeseinbhoy A. Lalljee: I will just finish, Sir. My only appeal to Government is that they must centralize all power in themselves as regards food and they must create, if necessary, a body like the Eastern Group and have the representatives of all Governments on that. I would suggest that all the orders must come from the Central Government and they must be carried out throughout India so far as foodstuffs are concerned.

[Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee.]

There is one last thing that I would like to point out. It is this. I have had a leaflet handed to me in which I find that the Ministers in Bengal have been always saying, or some of them, that there is no food shortage in Bengal: And last but not least, I find that Mr. Suhrawardy has stated very recently: "Is there any real shortage of food in Bengal? No, most certainly not." And this in spite of soaring prices! Therefore, I still contend that if there is a fair distribution under the control of a strong hand things will be better. Government is doing everything for the war. But the food question is just as important and my Honourable friend should insist

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Your time is up.

Mr. Hooseinbhoj A. Lalljee: insist that necessary powers are given to him.

Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall (Bhagalpur, Purnea and the Sonthal Parganas: Non-Muhammadan): On a point of order, Sir. The Chair has the authority to regulate the discussion and is the sole judge to see whether the subject is debated from all points of view. May I submit that some impression has been created that Bihar

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): What is your point of order.

Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall: That nobody has spoken from Bihar.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): I over-rule this point of order.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: That is not true. Yesterday we heard a speech from Bihar.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): Order, order. Dr. Banerjea.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Sir, I listened yesterday with rapt attention to the eloquent speech made by my honourable friend, Dr. Sir Azizul Huque, which was full of music, poetry and history. But the main burden of his song was that the Government of India was powerless, that the Government of India had done whatever it could do within its limited powers, and that the Government of India was unable to do anything more.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I think that is a very wrong inference. I never said that. All I said was that anything which has to be done is of a remedial nature; it takes a little time and this is not the time in which it can be done.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: That was the impression left on my mind by the speech of the Honourable Member. Now, on this particular point we on this side of the House have fundamental differences with my Honourable friend and his colleagues sitting on the Government Benches. My Honourable friend took shelter behind the doctrine of Provincial Autonomy. My own view is, and that is the view of many of us sitting on this side of the House, that Provincial Autonomy in the proper sense of the term is not functioning at the present moment anywhere in India. The Provinces are under the control of the Central Government to a very large extent and the Central Government itself is a subordinate branch of the British administration. Therefore, it comes to this that there is only one government in the country and that is the British Government in India. We must brush aside from our minds all references to Provincial Autonomy and things of that sort.

Sir, I am sorry to have to say that my Honourable friend, although he comes from Bengal, has not been fully alive to the gravity of the situation which prevails in that Province. From every side of Bengal, from every district and every town, comes the news that Bengal is already famine-stricken. We hear accounts, harrowing accounts, of starvation from death, of people feeding even on carcasses, of wives and children being sold. Can any situation be worse than this? These accounts would melt even stones, but our Government sits unmoved and unaffected.

Sir, despite all the excuses which have been put forward by the Government, we hold that the Government is responsible for the present crisis. This crisis would not have arisen but for the want of foresight and vision on the part of the Government and for the wrong action which they subsequently took.

More than two years ago distinct signs of a coming crisis were visible but the Government of India was unable to read those signs and to take the precautionary measures to guard against them. When the Government woke up from its slumbers what did it do? The Government of India took ill-conceived measures which went very greatly to complicate the situation.

Speaking for Bengal, I should say that the trouble began with the denial policy of the Government. Stocks of rice were removed from several districts of that Province and were exported from that province—whether they were exported out of the country I do not know. Then what happened afterwards? No measures were taken to fill the gap which thus occurred. Then the Government of India took several measures inconsistent with one another so that, to use the words of Sir Nripendra Sircar, a former Member of the Executive Council, the Government policy changed every fortnight. Restrictions were placed at one time on the movement of food articles: the next moment these restrictions were removed. On top of that the prices were fixed without any reference to the control of supply. Now there were other factors which complicated the situation further. Food was exported from this country until very recently, and very little food was obtained from abroad, although such importation had been insisted on from all sections of this House. I understand that wheat was obtained from Australia; but as soon as the wheat position in the Punjab and Sind improved to some extent, this loan which had been obtained from Australia was paid back. Now, if the Government had retained this wheat in this country that would have helped to ease the situation in Bengal to a great extent. Now this was the policy of the Government—an inconsistent bungling and incoherent policy. Add to this, there was inefficiency and dishonesty on the part of many officers of the Government. What is the result of all this? The result of all this is that at the present moment we have arrived at a point where it is difficult to foresee what the end of it all will be. We find that the Government have persistently held the view that there has been no shortage of food in the country and this view has been expressed by all from the Secretary of State down to the tahsildar. But if there is no shortage of food in the country, what is this difficulty in obtaining food due to? It must be due to inefficiency on the part of the Government and the irrational policy which has been adopted by it. If we compare the position in India with the position in the belligerent countries which are actually at war, what do we find? They have safeguarded their food position. There is no country, no belligerent country, at the present moment where the food situation is so bad as it is in this country. Therefore, the Government stands condemned in the eyes of world opinion. I would request the Government of India to appeal to an international tribunal or refer it to the President of the United States of America, or the President of the Chinese Republic, or the head of the Russian Government. Let them pronounce a verdict on the present situation in India and we will be guided by that verdict.

But it is not my present intention to blame or condemn the Government. That is not my real object. If I refer to the past it is only because I want the Government to learn from the experiences of the past. My present object is to rouse the conscience of the officers of the Government, of the head of the Government, and to make them alive to their sense of duty. That is my present purpose. And in order to rouse their conscience, I express this view that if there is right feeling on the part of the Government, if there is right thinking on their part, and if there is resolute determination on their part to do the right thing, the situation can still be saved to some extent and loss of many lives may be averted. In that view of things I should like to make a few definite suggestions. Many Honourable friends of mine have already made suggestions

[Dr. P. N. Banerjea.]

and I agree with many of those suggestions, but I would like to put the suggestions made in this House in a more concrete and categorical form.

In the first place, it should be definitely recognised that there is food shortage in some parts of the country, particularly in Bengal. I do not think it is desirable to indulge any longer in any quibbling with regard to phrases or jugglery with regard to figures. What has to be admitted by the Government is that food is not available at ordinary prices in some parts of the country.

That having been recognised, the next step for the Government to take would be to assume the responsibility for making the necessary supply available in the deficit areas, particularly in Bengal. Thirdly, I urge that such supply should commence immediately. There should not be the slightest delay in making the supply, and such supply should be continued till the scarcity ends. In this connection I may mention that an Honourable Member of this House, Mr. Abdullah, is willing to offer a large quantity of wheat if the Government can avail itself of it. Only two hours ago I received a telephonic communication from the Rice Merchants' Association of Lahore in which the President of that Association said that they were willing, the Rice Merchants' Association were willing to give us 2½ lakhs bags of rice immediately, and they have been willing to part with this quantity for the last ten days, but no facilities were given to them to take it to Bengal. He further told me that Mr. N. M. Khan who is the Food Controller in Bengal was here at that particular moment, is still here and is going back to Bengal empty handed because no facilities could be given to him to take charge of those bags of rice, 2½ lakhs bags.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: At what price?

An Honourable Member: There is permit.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Permits and things of that sort—the whole machinery is so defective that it is not possible to take immediate action.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan: The Honourable Member wants to know at what price.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Fourthly, I would urge that the purchases should be made by the Government of India through the Provincial Governments, and the price to be paid should be reasonably moderate. Fifthly, I suggest that the Central Government must make adequate arrangements for overcoming the transport difficulties. I know there are many difficulties, and just at the present moment the breach on the E. I. Ry. near Burdwan has added to those difficulties. But if the Transport Member decides to give priority to the moving of foodgrains he will be able to overcome all these difficulties.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: We have already done so.

Mr. Lalchand Navalrai: Nothing more is required then?

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: I am glad that the Honourable Member has done so. I do not know whether the measures taken by him have been adequate or not, but the public feeling is that the measures which have so far been taken have been extremely inadequate. More measures will have to be adopted in order that foodgrains may be moved from the Punjab and from Sind to Bengal with the least possible delay. If the breach in the railway line cannot be repaired within a short time, temporary bridges will have to be constructed and foodgrains may be taken through the loop line or the B. N. Ry. or the B. N. W. Ry. So, all these steps will have to be taken before the transport situation becomes completely normal. Sixthly, I urge that imports should be obtained from abroad, from Australia and, if possible, from other countries, because the supply which exists at the present moment in India is insufficient. Seventhly, I urge that the purchases made by the Government for military purposes and for the supply of food to its civil employees should be restricted to the immediate needs and should not be so large as to disturb the market to a great extent. In this connection, I am happy to find that the United States of America, a great country, a country which is in the vanguard of the civilised nations of the

world, has already set a good example. A communique has been issued by this great country to the effect that purchases should be made for the military forces only for a small period and no large stocks should be held. This brings me to the question whether already large stocks are held or not for military purposes and for feeding the civil employees of the Government. There is a feeling abroad that the military people have amassed large stocks and that a considerable portion of these stocks has deteriorated, because the stocks could not be used immediately. If that be so, I would urge that some portion of these military stocks and stocks reserved for civil employees should be released in order that the starving population may be fed. If necessary, this release should be on the basis of a loan so that as soon as the next crop is harvested that loan may be paid back.

Eighthly, I urge that there should be a Central Food Council to advise the Government of India in all its activities in regard to its purchase, fixing of the price, the movements of food articles and so forth. (*An Honourable Member*: "And a committee of the House".) This House ought to be represented on that Food Council. I further urge that this Food Council should meet at least once a week.

Ninthly, I come to the question of distribution. The Provincial Governments should adopt a fair and equitable basis of distribution and should work under the guidance of a Provincial Food Council consisting of representatives of all parties and interests. This Council should also meet once a week.

Tenthly, there should be food committees in every district and in the more important towns.

Eleventhly, I would suggest that the industrial concerns, commercial firms and tea planters must not be allowed to keep large stocks, that is to say, stocks beyond their immediate needs.

Twelfthly, I come to a very important point, and that is that Bengal should be declared a famine area and that steps should be taken to give effect to the Famine Code. A copy of this code, I hold in my hand. Already, the signs of famine as mentioned in this Code have been observed and the preliminary stages have already been passed. The next step is to start relief works throughout Bengal and to give gratuitous relief at the homes of the people who will not go out to the relief works. My friend Dr. Sir Zia Uddin suggests to me that rupees should not be given but that food should be supplied. I entirely agree with him that food must be supplied.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: Who is to declare Bengal a famine area?

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: The Provincial Government, but under inspiration from the Central Government. There is no distinction, as I said. There is only one Government in the country and that is called the British Government in India.

Thirteenthly, in the urban areas of Bengal, rationing should be resorted to with the help of representative non-official committees and if possible, through the ordinary trade channels.

Fourteenthly, the maximum prices should be fixed for the principal food grains in the province and every necessary step should be taken to make these prices effective.

Lastly, I would urge that adequate assistance should be given to those voluntary relief organisations which are doing so much good work within their limited resources. Their work, I understand, is being hampered by the police and the Government of Bengal. My witness is my Honourable friend belonging to my party.

Now, Sir, this is a short-range policy. Although a short range policy is needed at the present moment and should be given immediate effect to, we require also a long range policy, because the war is not likely to end very soon and so long as the war persists we shall have to suffer from scarcity of food. Therefore, I suggest that simultaneously with the adoption of the short-range

[Dr. P. N. Banerjea.]

policy the Government should adopt a long-range policy by assisting the growth of more food. I am told that a food campaign has been started and has been in progress. But this is a mere press campaign and propaganda through pamphlets. The bulk of the people are illiterate and this sort of propaganda will not be of any help. I, therefore, wish to make some practical suggestions, in this connection. First, there should be the supply of sufficient quantities of good seeds to the cultivators. Then, there should be provision of adequate facilities for irrigation and drainage. There should be suitable advances to cultivators to expand their operations. The cultivators should be encouraged to bring under cultivation cultivable waste lands with the help of motor tractors. Lastly there should be adequate arrangements for the supply of manures and synthetic fertilisers.

If all these steps are taken, a great disaster may be averted. Sir, there have been many black chapters in the history of British rule in India. If you are not prepared to take adequate steps at the present moment, you will add another black chapter to that history.

Sir, I hope and trust that the Government will now rise to the height of the occasion and see to it that British rule does not come to an end in such dismal circumstances.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): Mr. Deputy President, my Honourable friend, the Leader of the European Group, yesterday faithfully echoed the feelings of all the non-official Members of this House when he stated that the Government did not sufficiently appreciate the seriousness of the situation by not discussing this matter earlier and going on with other matters which were not of immediate importance. This is nothing new as far as the present Government is concerned. They are well known for doing the right thing at the wrong time. While people are dying of hunger, while people are crying for food, they are thinking of improving the University education in the country.

I would like to compliment my Honourable friend the Food Member on his lucid survey of the situation that exists in the country today. His, indeed, was a wail asking for co-operation and help from every quarter. When I listened to the speech of the Honourable the Food Member, I must admit that I had a feeling of depression. But in contrast to that came the speech of the Honourable Member for War Transport. He stated and gave us information that the situation was, indeed, not so bad. He reminded me of a person who was lost in a thick forest and was whistling to keep up his courage. It has been recognised by everyone in this House, not only in this House but also outside, that the food situation, which is facing the country today, is indeed a very serious one. It is said that it is no use dwelling on the past, but I feel that if we are to ignore the past altogether, we shall fail in appreciating the situation at present and making plans for the future. It cannot be denied by anyone that the Government of India as far as this question was concerned, failed completely when the war started in 1939. Every country that was well-organised, every country where the Government were not puffed up with a feeling of self-satisfaction tackled this problem at the very beginning. At first nothing was done. Even after Japan entered the war and after Burma, one of the chief countries from where food came to India, was lost, even then the Government did not take any effective action. The Honourable the Food Member has told us that it was only in December 1942 that a Food Department of this Government was set up. This, to my mind, is criminal negligence on the part of any Government and it is more than criminal negligence on the part of a Government which has not got the sanction of the people behind it. While the Government of India have taken every step for the prosecution of this war on the battle front, they have totally ignored the home front. And let me tell them that no battle has ever been won and especially nowadays no battle can be won by only fighting on the battlefields. If your home front

is not secure, in spite of all your armies, in spite of all your tanks and armaments, you will not succeed, and as far as the home front was concerned, it was totally ignored. That, to my mind, is indeed a position which has brought the present situation into existence.

Sir, a number of suggestions have been made. I do not think that there is any conceivable suggestion that has not been made to the Honourable the Food Member for relieving the distress. But this debate was not really intended for the purpose that the non-official Members should come forward with suggestions and place them before the Government. If that was the intention of this debate, if the Government wanted to know what were the suggestions that the non-official Members could offer, then it could have been done much better in a Committee. I understand that the object of this debate was to find out from the Government what concrete steps they were taking to meet the situation and what help they demanded from the non-official Members of this House to meet that situation. My Honourable friend, the Honourable Member for Food, will forgive me if I say that his speech is lacking in that respect. If I might describe the years from 1940 to 1943, they can aptly be described as an era of Conferences, disappointments and disillusionments. We have been told that one Conference was held at such and such time and another Conference was held at such and such time, and if you read the speech of the Honourable Member carefully, you will find that every time the decision of the Conference was different to what it was the last time. They accepted one proposal at one Conference and they rejected it at the next Conference. They met again and accepted the proposal that was made at the first Conference. This has been the position as far as the tackling of this problem is concerned. We were told that there was a very representative Conference convened of representatives from all interests. We were told that it met here in Delhi for nearly three weeks or more. No indication has been given to this House as to what have been the tentative suggestions of this Conference. And now I understand this Conference of experts is going to meet in Simla to write the report.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I think the Honourable Member is wrong. The Committee has concluded its deliberations and the report is being drafted. They have gone back to their homes and they are expected to meet in about five days' time.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: I may have misunderstood what I heard about this report. Perhaps the report is being written in Simla.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: That is so.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: The writers must keep their heads cool.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: I am sorry for making this mistake but it was from the members of this Conference themselves that I understood that they were going to meet in Simla to consider the report, not that I grudge them a few cool days of Simla. Not at all. But what I was saying is this, that the only justification that could be offered by the Government for delaying the discussion of this matter could be that the Government might be in a position to place certain data or certain conclusions of this Conference that was being held. That also, Mr. Deputy President, is not available to Honourable Members of this House. I really fail to see what is the object of this debate. The Government come before us, they do give us a historical background and a lucid survey of the position. But what is the good of this debate. How can non-officials assist the Government unless we know what their concrete proposals are. The proposals which have been made by Honourable Members of this House must have been placed before the Honourable Member for Food at one time or another. It is not that the non-official Members of this House derive inspiration from God Almighty which the Honourable the Food Member can not. The object of this debate has been completely frustrated. Everybody realises that the Food situation is serious. Everybody agrees that something is to be done, but it is the duty of the Government to tell us what it is that they intend to do. It has been

[Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan.]

said I think it was my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths and some other Honourable Members also have stated that there should be a separate Food Member. Sir, this is another mentality of the bureaucratic regime which one finds difficult to understand. It is not the Member or the heads of these Departments that make things go. The whole structure is rotten. It would not make the slightest difference whether there is a separate Food Member or whether there are half a dozen Food Members. As far as we are concerned to state it in Persian:

"Márá cheh azin Qissa keh khar amado buz raft",

which means, whether a donkey comes or a goat goes, that really does not matter. It cannot improve the situation.

An Honourable Member: Who is the donkey and who is the goat?

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: To whomsoever the cap fits he will put it on. What I am saying is this that this does not really matter. We have discussed the matter for two days and somebody suggests there should be a separate Food Member. To my mind it seems that the present Food Member took a few months to reach where he is now. Now, a new Food Member will come and he must take another few months to grasp the situation. Because one thing is certain, that whenever there is a change, the new man, whoever he may be, will not accept the policy of the man who is going. Otherwise, he cannot justify this change. So, therefore it will take another three or four months and by the time the new Member is able to understand how the situation lies, another Session of the Assembly will be held and my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths will put up a case for another new Food Member and contend that unless a new Member comes the situation will not change in the country. These methods of conferences, change of heads of Departments, change of Secretaries are very dear to the kind of Government that we have today. They have never solved the situation in the past and they never shall do so in future.

The Honourable the Food Member complained about the lack of co-operation from Provincial Governments. A great deal has been said on that point. To my mind, it seems that the Government of India are in that pitiable position that they do not get the co-operation of any one. The Provincial Governments do not co-operate with them, the political parties do not co-operate with them, the only people who seem to be co-operating with them, and even there, there is some doubt, are those who are taken into the fold of the Government of India. Sir, this is really a very serious situation that the present structure should fail at a time when there is the greatest need for co-operation. What is the reason for that? Is it that the Provincial Governments are devoid of all sympathy and of human feelings. Is that the reason? I am afraid I cannot accept that as the reason. There must be something wrong in the dealings of the Government of India with the Provincial Governments that they find they cannot co-operate. Then, Sir, my Honourable friend the Food Member also wailed about these hoarders. My Honourable friend the Leader of the European Group rightly said that these people who are really social curses should not be shown any mercy. But this benign Government is so merciful towards the culprits of this kind that they do not even mention their names. My Honourable friend asks public opinion to condemn these fellows, but we do not know who these fellows are. Who are they? Why are the Government so afraid of exposing one or two of them. I dare say it would be a lesson to others if they did. The machinery of the Provincial Government has failed because of the attitude of those who are at the head of these Governments. At present the only good record of an official which is appreciated by the people who are higher up is, how much money he has collected for war fund, not what steps he has taken to help the poor people, not what steps he has taken to relieve distress of the poor, but how much money

has been collected for war fund. The result of all this is evident. As has been pointed out, it is the experience of every non-official Member who is not living within the four walls of the Delhi Secretariat that whenever anybody is hauled up, he can always get his release by paying a little subscription to your war fund. It is a fact. People do not come forward to co-operate with you because they know full well that they will only be getting a bad name, when the Government will not be able to bring to book those fellows who are culprits in this respect. This to my mind, Sir, is another matter that needs drastic change in the policy of the Government.

Sir, there is one point, I do not know whether these figures are correct or whether we have not understood these figures correctly. I hope my Honourable friend the Food Member will correct me if I am wrong. We were supplied with certain figures. The statement gives the population and the surplus and deficit position of each Province in respect of principal cereals in 1943 as compared with the normal. Here is given a total of 42,392,000 tons as the production for the year 1943. There is another statement supplied to us where it is stated that the total requirement at 1 lb. of cereals per adult unit per day is 38,560,000. So this really leaves a surplus of nearly 32 lakh tons. Now all this time we have been told that there is a deficit, that India does not produce sufficient foodstuffs for the population of the country. But we have been supplied with these figures,—I do not know whether there is a misprint or we have not understood these figures,—I should like the Honourable the Food Member to explain why this discrepancy has arisen in the figures which have been supplied to us. Then there is another question. My Honourable friend said that when they removed these trade barriers somewhere certain actions were taken by certain people which did away with any benefit that might have accrued on account of the removal of these trade barriers. He told us that the station masters were stopped from sending the foodstuffs; he told us that all this happened in May and June when the trade barriers were removed; we are now in August and Government are still making inquiries. It seems to me that either there is a lack of co-operation between the various departments or there is that slowness in the movement of the Government for which it has earned a reputation. Sir, these are really very serious matters, that certain action is taken by the Government of India to relieve the distress of the people and certain people put obstacles in the way of the Government. Of course Government are not in possession of facts and so I do not know what they can tell us, but I should have liked to ask what action they propose to take in a matter like this; because, let me tell you that action such as this bring Government into discredit, and you cannot expect the illiterate people to have any regard for your authority when your orders in matters like this are not carried out. There are two propositions before the House; either there is a sufficient amount of foodstuffs in the country or there is not. If there is not sufficient foodstuffs I am afraid nothing can be done by any Government. If they carry foodstuffs from one province to another they will start starving the people of that province. So the only remedy for a position like that is that they must arrange for immediate import. You cannot solve this problem by carrying foodstuffs from one area to another. You might do it temporarily but if you want that this thing should not recur you must import foodstuffs. But if on the other hand, as has been contended by some Honourable Members, there is a sufficient amount of foodstuffs in the country,—and in this assertion of theirs they are supported by no less an authority than the Secretary of State for India who stated in the House of Commons, if I remember rightly, that there was no scarcity of foodstuffs so far as India was concerned; it was only a question of distributing it properly,—then it is really a more serious problem for the Government to tackle than in the other case. Sir, food is more important than anything else. People can forego other requirements of life but food is a commodity which they cannot do without. And in this respect, as I have tried to show, Government have been most negligent. It should have been their primary duty to tackle this problem; it should have been their duty to make plans from the very beginning, and in that respect they have failed

[Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan.]

completely. However, what has happened has happened. But for God's sake get a move on now and see that when the time comes for the next crop you are not found in the same mess in which you are today.

My Honourable friend the Food Member made an appeal, a very moving appeal, to public opinion for co-operation in this country. Sir, a Government that treats public opinion with contempt has no right to demand co-operation from that public. Have we not noticed on the floor of this House how the representatives of the people have been treated with contempt, how their opinions have not got the slightest effect as far as the actions of the Government are concerned? What right have they to appeal to public opinion to come to their rescue when they find themselves in a hole on account of their own actions? It is not that public opinion in the country has not been willing and has not offered at every stage and at every moment the fullest co-operation, but the Government have consistently and persistently refused that co-operation and treated it with contempt. And let me tell you this, Sir. You may win battles in all the battlefields of the world, but as far as the home front is concerned you will never be able to carry on successfully unless you can have the good will and the co-operation of the people of this country. You must admit that in those provinces where the Governments are functioning and where they are not ruled under section 93 there is more co-operation from the people than in those provinces where the rule of section 93 is in force. My Honourable friend Dr. Banerjee, suggested that there should be food committees in Bengal. I have been reading in the papers that there have been established during the last few months thousands of food committees. That shows that if there are representative persons in the Government with power and authority the people at large are prepared to place their faith in them. But as long as the Government of India is constituted as it is, it cannot command that co-operation, that confidence and that good will which is required at this moment. Therefore, Sir, if the Government of India are really anxious, if my Honourable friend is really honest when he appeals to public opinion, they should show some more regard and some more respect for the public opinion of the country.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: Sir, I am now to reply in the course of an hour or so to points which have been referred to in two days of debate. I may therefore be excused if I am not able to reply to all the points,—not because I have not some answer, but because I may not have sufficient time.

Sir, I will begin with a reply to my Honourable friend Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi. He referred to the situation in Bengal being disposed of in a few sentences. And one or two other Honourable Members on this side have also

4 P.M. said the same thing. Sir, I have never considered that speech by itself is the best part of a man's performance, and I thought that it would be better if within the time at my disposal I narrate before the Honourable Members the steps that we have taken to meet the most difficult situation in Bengal. Sir, I might say at once that I yield to none in the House in my deepest feelings for the unprecedented sufferings of the province to which I have the honour to belong. My feelings are fully well known. Accustomed to hear many speeches, I thought that lucky are those who know when to refrain from saying all what they actually say. Sir, I will not say anything more on that point.

But, Sir, it has been a matter of almost tragic feeling within me that during the last two days' debate Honourable Members have made statements which will show as if the situation was solely due to the only factor which was spoken to by the Honourable Member himself. Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi said that huge quantity was lost by loss of Burma, that Burma rice fed half the labour population of India. I thought when categorical statements like these are made, there ought to have been some effort to understand the implication of the loss of Burma import. The total rice production of India is about 25 or 26 million tons and the total Burma import was only a million and a half. The

average imports from Burma to Bengal were 400,000 tons, but there were exports from Bengal to other parts; the net imports to Bengal were only 200,000 tons or thereabout. Sir, in the year 1941-42, the net import for Bengal, which may be considered as lost after loss of Burma, was only 224,000 tons as against the normal production of 8½ million tons, in other words 2 out of 8½ tons was lost.

But the next point is still more serious. An impression was created that huge quantities were lost by denial policy, as if the whole of Bengal was bled white by the effect of this denial policy. Sir, I leave it to the Honourable Members to judge when I state all the facts of this denial policy before this House. The total quantity taken under this denial policy was only 17,500 tons of rice and 20,000 tons of paddy. Converted all into rice it will come to roughly about 36,000 tons, against the production of that year of 10 million tons. Do remember that it was after the harvest of 1941 which was one of the biggest harvest. Against that ten million tons of production, the utmost which the denial policy affected was only 36,000 tons.

There is something more and that is the question of distribution. The Government of India was a hoarder, was a profiteer, was an institution which was out to see that the Bengal people are starved! But, Sir, how this amount was distributed? I have got exact figures of this denial policy. Out of 17,500 tons of rice, only 2,500 tons were sent to Ceylon and one hundred tons were purchased for the Defence Services. So, 2,600 tons only out of 36,000 tons of rice were taken by the Government of India either for the purpose of export or for the purpose of Defence Services. As regards rice, 4,000 tons were used for the District of Midnapur; 2,000 tons for the cyclone area of Bengal and 8,900 tons for the purpose of Calcutta and industrial areas. So far as paddy is concerned, not a single ton was purchased or sent out by the Government of India. 2,600 tons was used in the Bengal districts, 1,600 tons for cyclone areas of Bengal, about 500 tons for Calcutta and Industrial area. The rest was milled in Calcutta for Bengal purposes. Sir, that is the story of the denial policy about which a good deal of propaganda has been going on as if that is responsible for the present situation. I believe, my Honourable friend, Dr. Banerjee, will also admit that 2,600 tons which was sent out, the rest being used for the purpose of Bengal—cannot at least create the present situation.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: I said that the trouble began with that.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: But my trouble also begins with that.

My Honourable friend, Sir Ghuznavi, said that huge quantities were exported to Saudi Arabia and Persian Government in 1942. I do not know why he selected these two particular countries. Probably he has no objection if exports are made to Africa or Ceylon.

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi: I objected to all exports of foodgrains from Bengal.

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

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: Sir, so far as Saudi Arabia and Persian Gulf are concerned, the total amount of rice and all foodgrains exported during the year 1942-43 was:

Behrein	6,143 tons
Arabia	32,318 ..
Total	38,461 ..

Then, Sir, he referred to the frantic telegram of Mr. Fazlul Huq. I am at least happy that he has become frantic to send the telegram now. I ask my Honourable friend to find out, when did Mr. Fazlul Huq realize—I should not have used his name—when did the late Chief Minister of Bengal realize that there was famine condition in Bengal in 1942? Was it in August 1942 as my friend says today? Will he get an answer from him as to why is it

[Sir M. Azizul Huque.]

that in January 1943 when the Government of India wrote to the Government of Bengal that there was a great shortage for civilian consumption, of vegetables—specially potato and onion—the reply came in the month of January from the Bengal Government that nothing need be done for potatoes and onions,—because there are plenty in Calcutta. Sir, in that letter in the month of January the Government of India promised to give financial assistance, assistance to get seeds and manures. The Government of India wanted to get a seed programme so that India could, if necessary, import from other countries. May I know, Sir, if there was such famine, as is represented to be, in August 1942, why this letter came from the Government of Bengal without any programme, without any estimate of seeds, and without a request for financial assistance? In the end it was said that nothing need be done because there were plenty of potatoes and onions in Calcutta. Not only that. May I say again on that very statement which is known to everybody, that Bengal had an estimated production of 10 million tons of rice in 1941-42? How is it that within six months the whole of that rice was exhausted to create famine conditions in the month of August, and specially when anybody, who is familiar with the economic situation knows that from about the end of August till the first week of September, at least the *Aus* crop, one-quarter of the total rice crop, is available in the market. Sir, these are facts which are at least such that makes me say that it is not a day too soon that Mr. Fazlul Huq should have now sent a frantic telegram.

Sir I will now deal with some of the other points which Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi placed before this House. Many suggestions have been made to me before and may I say also by Honourable Members during this debate. Sir, I took charge of this Department on or about the 3rd May, and since that date till today, we have been trying our level best to tide over the immediate difficulties. When Dunkirk happens, when Singapore falls, when there comes a retreat in the North African regions, surely, Sir, that is not the time to have an immediate enquiry to find out why in the past we made mistakes. We have a most serious problem to deal with today, and I do beseech Honourable Members to believe me, on behalf of the Department, that for the last three months, day and night, we have been working to see that a little more relief goes to the deficit areas. Moment after moment, not merely between the hours of 10-30 in the morning and 5 in the evening, but for much longer hours, everybody has been working and trying to do his best to meet the exigencies of the situation. Possibly a little breakdown here, possibly a little dislocation there: but the sum total is that some poor men may be starving in certain areas and they are constantly before us.

Sir, that is more or less my explanation; for the last three months we have been battling against heavy difficulties. We have not yet been able to plan and make a programme for the future, but we have taken steps. Whatever might be the view of the Nawabzada that public opinion cannot be mobilised in this country for various reasons, I at least belonging to the country should try my best to get public opinion with me in any measures that I may take to tackle the food problem of this country. I would not be true to the interests of the starving millions if I sit down in the Secretariat and draft a plan without consulting those whom I can, without getting an opportunity to know the facts of the case, without understanding the implications of the problem, without realizing the complications of the situation: and all this, believe me we have been doing; but it was not our fault that we could not, humanly speaking in consideration of the time factor do anything more and place a programme before you today. I do realize the futility of the debate, as my friend the Nawabzada has told me. But, Sir, even that futility sometimes gives some consolation when man is battling against tremendous difficulties. A little talk to a friend gives him a solace and comfort. It is from that spirit that I brought this motion before this House

because I thought that we would be participants in the common weal and woe, and participants in any measure that we might recommend for the country.

Sir Henry Richardson has spoken about my being in charge of three Departementes. I plead guilty to it. He has asked—which department has suffered. But this much I can assure him that it is not the Food Department. Every question has been disposed of as expeditiously as possible. I can also assure him on the floor of this House that for the last three months everyone in the Department has been doing the same thing.

Sir, I could not understand the point of view of Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury that the hill tribes are the worst sufferers because vegetables are so cheap. Well, Sir, I am at least happy to find that there is some part in India where vegetables are cheap because the people will not pay the proper price for vegetables to the hill tribes even when they have to purchase rice at a high figure. He also questioned the sudden change into free trade. Sir, it was not a sudden change. It was a change which was forced upon the Government of India. It was a change which had to be accepted, and I for myself can assure you that though this decision was made almost simultaneously with my taking charge of my office, I am convinced that if free trade had not come we would not have been able to sit on the floor of this House even today. There would have been a complete crash of the civic life not only of Bengal, but of other parts of India. It may be that our estimates might have been wrong. It may be that now that the traffic police is in the corner, you find life so comfortable. But the manner in which that life has been built up is a factor which is often not noticed.

Mr. Joshi has referred to several things that I can or should do. Sir, I will never say what I can do. But this much I will say on behalf of the Government of India,—that but for the fact that during the last three months we were obliged first and foremost to supply the needs of the deficit provinces, as those needs were of the most urgent emergency, they would have prepared a scheme to put an end to this state of things. It is no use my saying that I should have the co-operation of this and that. I should prefer to await judgment when the real plan comes.

Mr. Haidar Imam has referred to free trade as putting up the selling price of rice to Rs. 40 a maund in Bihar. I myself was twice in one of the districts of Bihar after the introduction of free trade. I was there also before its introduction. I know definitely that prices went up from between Rs. 12 and 13 to Rs. 17 and 18, but not to Rs. 40. But we are between the devil and the deep sea. Criticism has come from the United Provinces that because there are barriers, the wheat price has gone up to Rs. 19: somewhere else the price has gone up because there is free trade. There seems to be doubt as to whether the fault lies with free trade or with the barriers. I think there are other economic reasons behind. In my speech I tried to give a picture of the factors which are responsible for the food situation in the country. The fault lay neither with the barriers nor with free trade.

I will not try to imitate the language of my friend Mr. Neogy. My talents do not permit me to do so. I will also not try to imitate the strong language which has been used by weaker persons. May I say that so far as the general food situation is concerned, the position in the year 1942-43 as compared with 1941-42 was that rice was about one million tons short: wheat was about one million tons surplus; and millets, of which there was a very large quantity, were said to be merely about 3½ to 4 million tons surplus. Much has been said about the 'Grow More Food' campaign results. I could not at least understand the point of view when Mr. Bhutto said that the 'Grow More Food' campaign had no appeal to the public. Probably he was so interested in the reduction of land assessment that he forgot the other side of the picture. There was definitely an increase of at least over a

[Sir M. Azizul Huque.]

million acres under rice production as a result of the 'Grow More Food' campaign. The acreage increase under wheat was not much, but it was substantially about half a million acres. I am speaking subject to correction because I think there is some mistake in my typed copy, but in any case, the yield was at least one million ton surplus. Rice, in spite of the increase in acreage, was in deficit, not for the fault of the 'Grow More Food' campaign or of the Department presided over by my Honourable friend, Sir Jogendra Singh, nor because the landlords in certain parts did not co-operate, but because the weather conditions which are an inevitable factor in Indian production created this disastrous result. Sir, will Honourable Members be surprised to hear that there was a diversion of a little over five million acres of land from short staple cotton to maize and millet? It was the greatest result which has been achieved by the 'Grow More Food' campaign, namely, the diversion from a crop which was not necessary, which was not a food crop, to a crop which is a food crop. Under maize and millet,—there was an increase of about 7 million acres with a yield of 8.7 millions more, whereas 5½ million under short staple cotton was diverted to food crops. As regards the 'Grow More Food' campaign, I find that some of the Bengal Members said that this is very weak. I do not wonder, but I think those who come from the U.P. and Bihar, and Madras and Bombay, will support me that these provinces made very comprehensive arrangements right from the end of last year to encourage more vegetable production. Not only that, but if anybody is interested, I shall be able to tell him the total amount of money which the Government of India has paid to these provinces with a view to increasing vegetable production.

Several questions have been asked as to import of more food grains. I can assure Honourable Members that the question of getting imported food grains is being vigorously pursued. I am not able to say now, because we have not been able to know definitely, but let us remember that even supposing that we are able to get an assurance that we will get more imports, it depends upon various factors, shipping difficulties, the danger of the sea, distance. And it cannot be immediately available. It will take at least 2 months or 2½ months even if we are able to secure crops elsewhere just now. That is no solution of the immediate problem. The solution of the immediate problem must be explored somewhere else. That may be a solution for the future, but this much I can say that the question has been vigorously taken up for some time past.

I have been asked as to what my plan is. I have made it clear that the Long Range Planning Committee will soon recommend to us measures that should be taken,—and the Long Range Planning Committee is constituted not only of those persons who have actually tackled this problem but non-officials who are interested in the general economic problem of India. We are awaiting their report. The Food Conference was called on the 5th, 6th and 7th July, and at that Conference we decided about the immediate problem and the immediate programme. Here may I say that, as a result of that Conference, we have settled on a programme of supplying one million tons of foodgrains within the next few months, namely, from August to April—rice, maize and millets from August to November, and wheat from now up to March-April. And out of 926,920 we had allotted 441,000 tons to Bengal only. Considering that we have to meet the needs of provinces like Bombay, Travancore and Cochin, Madras and even other provinces, it cannot be said that we have not done our best to give a sufficient quota to Bengal within the supply as may be available to us. Several questions have been asked and particularly by my Honourable friend, Dr. Banerjea. It is very difficult to answer a question when he says an individual Member of this House is prepared to sell a lakh maunds of wheat to the Government of India. But generally I can say that as soon as we introduced the scheme we have been asked by a number of persons who are anxious to make a little profit at the cost of the provinces in deficit. We have been asked whether they

cannot take wheat to Bengal and sell it there. We said, if you arrange with the Government of Bengal and if the Government of Bengal accepts it—the quota of Bengal is 441,000 tons—we will give facilities for any food grains that may be available from any source. We have therefore authorised each province to negotiate if necessary with the surplus provinces. May I here acknowledge the fact that the Punjab Government has vigorously taken it up and I have just heard about two days ago that they are considering what more rice, apart from the revised basic quota, can be given to Bengal. I acknowledge also, whatever may be our difficulties, we would have been nowhere but for the part which the Punjab Government and the Sind Government have played in this matter. The whole situation would have gone completely out of hand if these two Governments had not given us the grains which they have supplied. My Honourable friend, Sardar Sant Singh, also referred to an individual case. I wish Honourable Members would refrain from making statements of that character, because the facts are these. A gentleman from Delhi had about 1,000 tons of damaged bajra and we were not prepared in view of the transport difficulties to send that damaged bajra to Calcutta, when we can send good bajra there. We have just given him permission that he can send the damaged bajra to some other place where they can mix it with other foodgrains and use it for human purposes. Where we can get good bajra we could not possibly allow the damaged bajra of my Honourable friend's client or of anybody else. May I also say that he wanted a price which the Government of Bengal was not willing to pay?

I have been asked a question about the future. As I said before, we are making all possible arrangements. But our experience has told us that unless all arrangements are complete and then only our policy is declared, there is a danger that speculators may take advantage of the position and try to make the best out of the policy of the Government to take action. If there had been no publication that free trade was going to be introduced, a certain number of people would not have gone suddenly to other provinces to purchase as much as they could, knowing that free trade would be introduced. I am, therefore, reluctant to speak anything as to what our programme is but I can assure you that we are doing our best. Speaking for myself, this may not be a legislature which is called a Parliamentary responsible legislature but I belong to this country. I was born in this country and I shall die in this country and my sympathies will always be with those brethren and sisters of ours who are suffering today.

Sir, it is not necessary for me to refer to the story of what things have been done in England. As has been pointed out, the very staff is such that they have been able to tackle this problem. Is it known that in England it was not in 1939 but long before that, in November 1936, that the President of the Board of Trade set up a department for the purpose of the control of foodgrains. In spite of that, rationing measures could not be introduced in England till the 8th January 1940. In view of that, I do hope that people will realise the difficulties of introducing rationing measures. My friend, Dr. Banerjea, says 'Why not declare Bengal a famine area. Why not distribute grains'. Somebody said, 'Not money but food grains should be distributed'. It is all very easy to say that. I ask Dr. Banerjea today 'Will he go to Bengal and take charge of the distribution? Will he do it'.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: So far as the Famine Code is concerned, there is a method laid down in the Famine Code.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I am speaking from experience. I had once to administer the Famine Code. I have arranged myself the administration of the famine areas in a district and I know every bit of the work. I say that it is extremely difficult to arrange for famine relief on a vast scale for the whole province of Bengal. It is not an easy proposition and do remember that in the Government of Bengal there are men who have their interest in the soil, who are really determined to see that everything possible is being done. It is no use criticising them and saying 'Why has this not been done and why has that not been done in this province or that province', without knowing fully

[Sir M. Azizul Huque.] well the difficulties under which those provinces suffer. If tomorrow a rationing measure is to be introduced, supplies must be first assured and that is a question which must be the kernel of all our efforts, namely, how to bring supplies.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: That was my suggestion.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I know that was your suggestion and there are other suggestions but I say that all these suggestions are sometimes washed away by the flood of the Damodar. It is the Damodar flood that sometimes stands against in spite of all our suggestions to the contrary. That is a factor that has to be taken into consideration, not by Dr. Banerjee on the floor of the House, but by the responsible Government of the province which has to administer the rationing measure. They are in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. I have not agreed with them in many matters, but I can say this much that there is a determined wish on the part of the Government to tackle this problem as best as they can. I may not be as intelligent as Dr. Banerjee.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: You may be more intelligent.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: It is, therefore, not necessary for me to reply to many of the suggestions made on the floor of the House, because the time will come when the House will get an opportunity to discuss all these measures. This is the time to find out how we can bring more supplies to the provinces. That is the main problem. The transport problem, the distribution problem and every other problem depend on whether we can bring food grains to the provinces.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: We are all agreed on that point.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I hope you will agree only on that for the time being. I will hear your suggestions a little later when you and I will no longer see the spectre of dead bodies. I will be prepared to meet every point when the situation has improved.

I am sometimes surprised when I find that even when undeniable facts are placed they are not taken note of by some Honourable Members of the House. My Honourable colleague, the Honourable Sir Edward Benthall placed before you the position that in spite of the difficulties that have been placed on the whole transport organisation, due to war conditions, in spite of the fact that there has been a flood which has dislocated traffic in certain areas, Calcutta has been supplied, with at least one pound, and for the last few days with more than a pound of food grains from North India and it is not an easy proposition in these days to organise the purchase in the Punjab and to transport the stuff to distant Bengal. That fact should not be forgotten by those who think that we have brushed aside the question of Bengal in two sentences. Then, Sir, there is one mistake of fact and that was made by Mr. Neogy who is usually accurate with his figures. He said that only 39,963 tons had been supplied to Bengal. That is not a fact.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: I quoted from the Honourable Member's reply to my question.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I am not concerned in this House whether the statement was made by any Honourable Member or not. I am only concerned with the actual facts and I know it is not a fact. It is 153,943 instead of only about 40,000 which the Honourable Member quoted. This is the quantity that has been supplied to Bengal in the last few months.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: The inaccuracy is not mine.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: My friend, Mr. Sant Singh spoke of the Sind Government making a profit. I wish he would not interfere with the responsibility of the provinces. After all, the Government of India on the fullest consideration of all the circumstances felt that it may be permissible

for one province to make a little profit with a view to keep the all-India price in a stabilising factor. If I know that one province has been able to keep the price of wheat at a fairly low level in that province, it is not my concern or that of the Government of India to interfere with their discretion, even though they may make a little profit. It will be the responsibility of the Provincial Legislature to find out as to why the agriculturists are not getting the benefit out of it. Taking the standpoint of all-India, I say there are difficulties. I do not say that there is not another side to the picture but I think that the picture has been fully considered and on a consideration of all these factors I thought that I should explain to Mr. Sant Singh that probably a little less interference with provincial responsibility in these matters is better in the interest of everybody.

I am not sure whether his complaint about the control of sugar comes from the same client who tried to sell *bajra* but in any case I do hope that matters of this kind will be brought to the notice of the Department by the Honourable Member and speaking on behalf of the Food Department, including the sugar section, I can assure him that any complaint of that nature will be fully investigated.

Sardar Sant Singh: Thank you.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I do not think I have the strong foot of my Honourable friend and I do not want to stray in that line but I do feel that when my friend discussed the question of Australian wheat being replaced he was not aware of the whole Indian economic position at that time. At that time, when the wheat came, we had a million tons surplus in the Punjab. At least, at that time, I am frank enough to admit that we did not consider that, as a long range policy, storage is a necessary element with a view to keep track over the future situation. Nobody could anticipate events and in spite of all the eloquence of my friend Dr. Banerjea I found throughout his speech in February last not a single reference that the Bengal situation is going to be out of hand. He was a distinguished Professor of Economics. He knows all the facts and yet he did not anticipate in the least manner. He did not even refer to Bengal then. Surely, you cannot blame the Government of India if they also could not anticipate. We have to learn the bitter lessons of life. The history of a country is created by a series of little incidents which play their part. Sir, it is not an easy matter to frame a programme but it is quite easy to criticise as to why Singapore has fallen after it has actually fallen but not before.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Government ought to have better information than the non-official Members.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I thought the Members of the Legislature are also free to get any information they required. If my learned friend would require any facts relating to economic statistics, I can say not only on behalf of the Food Department but on behalf of every Department of the Government of India that they will always be prepared to place them at his disposal. In fact, I was reading very carefully Dr. Banerjea's speech in February last. I find it can almost be placed in parallel lines with today's speech. The only new feature of his speech today is the question of referring to the arbitration of the President of the United States of America, Russia and China. I cannot say how it can be done but I will certainly pass it on to the Honourable Member-in-charge either of the Home Department or of the External Affairs Department for necessary action in the matter.

Dr. P. N. Banerjea: Are you prepared to face that tribunal?

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: When I have faced Dr. Banerjea, I can face anybody in the world.

I do not think it is necessary for me to take the time of the House any more except to touch upon the question about the ideal rationing. I do hope that Members will realise that it is calculated according to a principle by scientists. Just as the complexion and the features of men differ, so every man

[Sir M. Azizul Huque.] has his own notion of that ideal rationing. There must be some supplementary food added to it. When we say an ideal diet of one lb. or 1½ lb., we admit that one is not dependent on that only. He has to take vegetables, he has to take fish, he has to take meat and milk and so many other things. We take all these things into consideration when we call it an ideal rationing. (Interruption) Sir, there are strong objections on the meat side as to why I mentioned the name of fish.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Being a Bengali, you are more interested in fish than in meat.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I am interested in both and I have also suffered from chillies and tamarind too. That is my explanation of the ideal food. As I said, it must not be understood to consist of foodgrains only. As my friend knows, these things are calculated in different ways.

To conclude, Sir, we have done our level best to keep control over the situation, but we cannot contend against factors which are uncontrollable. Still, at the risk of a bad simile, I will say that even when we are almost on the point of drowning in the mid-stream we are still contending against it. When we find that the despatch programme of 120 wagons a day was washed away by floods in one night, it is contending almost in mid-stream. We have to find out as to how to tide over the situation. I can assure you that expert advice as to whether the wagons could be diverted by the B. N. R. or by B. N. W. R., was at the disposal of the War Transport Department and to the best means of carrying goods. 190 wagons are really going now every day for the last two weeks and we are sending different kinds of foodgrains.

Mr. Hoosainbhoy A. Lalljee: A few for Bombay also.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I can assure the Honourable Member that we have done as much as we can for the Bombay people and it is established by the fact that today with rationing, everybody does not utilize the ration card and no difficulty has been felt so far.

Mr. Hoosainbhoy A. Lalljee: It is not quite correct.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: It is a fact that everybody is not taking

Mr. Hoosainbhoy A. Lalljee: There is something else.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I will leave it to the Bombay people to say what that "something else" is. Anyway, the situation in January was so desperate that my friend knows that the Governor of Bombay had to come in a hurry to Delhi and special trains had to be arranged for sending grains. But today I am glad to say there has not been one complaint from anybody on the Bombay side that the Bombay situation is not under control. And I do hope and pray to God—and I think it is the Providence only that is the last comfort of everybody—that the situation in Bengal will also be under similar control at no distant date.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: May I ask a question from the Honourable Member? The Honourable Member has referred to the question of imports and has stated that it will take two or three months

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I said it must take a little time.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: But the requirements are immediate. May I find out what is the view of the Honourable Member regarding the suggestion which was made that to meet the present situation the Defence Department may be asked to lend foodstuff and when you import some, it may be given back?

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I say this with gratitude to the Army Department that there have been several occasions in Calcutta and other places when the Army Department lent their stock of wheat and other commodities for civilian consumption.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: May I ask one question? I referred to two instances and one of them was in which a Member of this House is concerned, namely,

my Honourable friend Mr. Abdullah. He is willing to place at your disposal a certain quantity of wheat.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I would like to know the exact amount. It is no use saying a "certain quantity". I want to know if he has got physical stock, and, if so, how much and at what price? If he will report that tomorrow to the Department, I can assure you that within 24 hours steps will be taken for its purchase.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Then, there is another suggestion. The Merchants' Association of Lahore are willing to place at the disposal of Bengal 2½ lakhs of bags of rice immediately. Will you take them over?

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: That question has been before us and in the last Conference which was held on the 5th, 6th and 7th of July. We permitted each province, if necessary, to go to another province where there is a surplus and to get grains by private negotiations. On behalf of the Government of Bengal, a member of the I. C. S., who is the Wheat Commissioner, is actually at Lahore today not only to look to the transport question but also to negotiate with the Punjab Government whether, subject to the basic quota and subject to the commitments of the Punjab Government, more surplus grains can be available. I can say that so far as we are concerned we will always give the fullest assistance not only to the Government of Bengal or the Government of Bombay but to every Provincial Government if they are in deficit to go to any other province and find out the grains and, if possible, to make the necessary transport arrangements. But there is a danger and I hope my Honourable friend Dr. Banerjee will realise that supposing the people from Madras go to the Punjab, the people from Bombay go to the Punjab, the people from Bengal go to the Punjab, the people from U. P. go to the Punjab, because it is a surplus Province, it will again create economic dislocation. That is why we have to carefully watch what Province should or should not be allowed and in what circumstances. I can assure you that we will certainly not do anything which will not facilitate the supply of grains to deficit areas.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: That is exactly why I suggest that the Government of India should take the matter in hand and negotiate with the Provincial Governments and take charge of that food and make it over to the Province of Bengal.

The Honourable Sir M. Azizul Huque: I hope my Honourable friend will realise what he means by taking charge of food.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The debate on the motion is now closed. The Assembly will adjourn till tomorrow.

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