

COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

Wednesday, 20th March, 1946

Vol. I—No. 9

OFFICIAL REPORT



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COUNCIL OF STATE

Wednesday, 20th March, 1946

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

MEMBER SWORN :

The Hon. Mr. Satyendra Mohan Dhar (Nominated Official).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CORRIDOR TROUGH MADRAS PRESIDENCY.

167. THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : Is it a fact that a proposal has been made to Government for the transfer, out of British India, of about one hundred mile corridor through Madras Presidency up to the Bay of Bengal and that this transfer of territory is under consideration ? If so, will Government make a full statement on the subject ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN: The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative. The second part does not arise.

TUNG HSIANG SADIYA COMPANY

168. THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : Will Government give the main details as are available of the Tung Hsiang Sadiya Company, which has been formed to operate about 1500 pack animals in relays between Sadiya and India, and Hsianwah (Yunnan) and Kangting (Sikiang) to trade between India and China ?

THE HON. MR. Y. N. SUKTHANKAR : The Government of India received a report last year that a company known as the Tung Hsing Sadiya Company had been formed with the objects stated in the question but, so far as Government are aware, no such company has ever operated in India and nothing is known of its activities elsewhere.

IMMIGRATION OF INDIANS INTO THE UNITED STATES.

169. THE HON. MR. P. N. SAPRU : Will Government state the steps, if any which they have taken to press on the United States Administration the desirability of passing the Cellar Bill at an early date ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : The Agent General continues to represent to the State Department of the United States Government the importance to Indo-American relations of the early enactment of the Bill. The President of the United States and the State Department are taking an active and sympathetic interest in the measure which, having been passed by the United States House of Representatives, is now under consideration by a sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Immigration.

LAUNCHING OF NEW ENTERPRISES BY AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN

170. FLIGHT-LIEUT. THE HON. RUP CHAND : Will Government state :
(a) Whether any agreement has been reached by British and American officials as a result of which American businessmen coming to India to launch new enterprises will have the necessary facilities ; if so, a copy of the agreement may be laid on the table ?

(b) Whether British officials have now the power to grant passports to United States business men without referring the matter to the Government of India ; if so the reason for the assumption of this power ?

NOTE —The Hon. Rai Bahadur Sri Narain Mahtha put the questions standing in the name of the Hon. Raja Yuveraj Dutta Singh and the Hon. Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru put the questions standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. P. N. Sapru.

(c) Whether the attention of Government has been drawn to a news item circulated by Reuter and published in Indian newspapers early in February, referring to the announcement of an agreement, as described in (a) and (b) by U. S. Assistant Secretary of States, Mr. Donald Russell, in his talk with Democratic Representative Emanuel Celler; and whether this news item is correct?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER: (a) No such formal agreement has been entered into.

(b) Government have authorised British Passport Control Officers in the United States to grant visas for India, without reference to the Government of India, to American businessmen subject to satisfactory personal record and limitation of stay to the period necessary for the purpose for which entry is sought. This discretion vested in these Officers before the war; and with the end of the war it has been restored.

(c) Government have seen the news item referred to; the position is as stated in the answer to clause (b).

DETENTION OF MEMBERS OF THE AFGHAN ROYAL HOUSE

171. THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH: Is it a fact that about fifteen members of the Afghan Royal House have been secretly held in detention in India by Government since about 1941? If so, will they make a full statement on the subject stating their names, their alleged offences, the law under which they have been so dealt with, the place where they are confined and the future plan in connection with their release?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN: There are ten persons detained in India who are connected in varying degree with previous dynasties in Afghanistan. Their names are as follows:—

1. Sardar Ghulam Ahmed, s/o Sardar Ali Ahmed Jan.
2. Sardar Fazal Ahmed, s/o Sardar Ali Ahmed Jan.
3. Sardar Ali Muhammad, s/o Sardar Ali Ahmed Jan.
4. Sardar Fakir Ahmad, s/o Sardar Ali Ahmed Jan.
5. Musammat Shah Bano, wife of Sardar Ali Ahmed Jan.
6. Musammat Shah Gul, wife of Sardar Ghulam Ahmed.
7. Musammat Mah Gul, wife of Sardar Ghulam Ahmed.
8. Musammat Mah Gul, wife of Sardar Ali Muhammad.
9. Sardar Abdullah Jan, s/o of Sardar Mohd. Ishaq Khan.
10. Sardar Mohd. Hasan Khan, s/o Sardar Mohd. Ishaq Khan.

The first eight are in detention since June 1941, while the remaining two have been detained only recently. All are detained under Regulation III of 1818, the first eight in the Karwar jail in the Bombay Presidency, and the other two in the Quetta District jail.

Sardars Ghulam Ahmed and Fazal Ahmed surrendered to officers of the Government of India after they had tried unsuccessfully to organise a revolt against the Government of Afghanistan from a base in Tirah on the N. W. F. of India. They surrendered unconditionally and were soon after joined by their six relatives mentioned.

These persons were originally allowed to live in a private house but in 1941 they caused a disturbance and used violence in the Bombay Secretariat and their continued truculence thereafter necessitated their confinement in Jail. The question of their continued detention or restriction is about to come under review.

The remaining two persons, viz, Abdullah Jan and Muhammed Hasan Khan are detained as they are implicated in the attempt of their brother Sultan Ahmed to stir up rebellion against the Afghan Government from a base in Waziristan. The question of their continued detention or release will be reviewed from time to time in accordance with Regulation III of 1818.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Is it the policy of the Government to house persons detained under Regulation III of 1818 in jails ? Or are they mostly detained in private houses and confined in places ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : Notice, Sir.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA : The Hon. Member stated that their cases were likely to come under review. Are the cases likely to come under review by a court of law or by the Executive Government ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : By the Government, of course.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Have the cases been reviewed before, or is the first time that the review will take place ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : Notice, Sir.

HIGH DENOMINATION NOTES

172. FLIGHT-LIEUT. THE HON. RUP CHAND : Will Government state the exact volume of high denomination notes of the value of Rs. 10,000, Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 500 in gross circulation on December 31, 1945 and the exact proportion of the amounts held by Banks, treasuries and the general public, respectively ?

THE HON. SIR CYRIL JONES : The relevant figures are :—

Rs. 500 denomination Rs. 26,30,000

Rs. 1,000 denomination Rs. 1,15,39,96,000

Rs. 10,000 denomination Rs. 19,26,30,000

Government have no information as to the exact proportion of these notes held by Banks, treasuries and the general public respectively on that date.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Is this the figure which was in circulation before the Ordinance or after the Ordinance ?

THE HON. SIR CYRIL JONES : Will the Hon. Member kindly read the question ?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I have read the question, and therefore I am asking this question. The date mentioned in the question is 31st December.

THE HON. SIR CYRIL JONES : The Ordinance was issued in January.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : But has the Hon. Member any later figure ? What is the position now ?

THE HON. SIR CYRIL JONES : The figures I gave naturally relate to the terms of the question as asked. I have given, in response to previous questions, corresponding figures in respect of the values of high denomination notes in circulation as on the 11th January, 1946.

NUMBER OF COMBATANT OFFICERS IN THE INDIAN ARMY

173. THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : (a) What is the total number of Indian and British combatant officers in the Indian Army ? How many of the latter are British service officers and how many Indian service officers ?

(b) Will Government give corresponding figures for medical officers in the Indian Army ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : (a) The total numbers of all categories of officers serving with the Indian Army (excluding Medical Services) on the 1st February 1946 were as follows :—

British Service officers attached to Indian Army	.	.	.	.	14,755
British officers, Indian Army	.	.	.	.	15,241
Indian officers, Indian Army	.	.	.	.	8,941
					38,937
			Total		38,937

(b) The corresponding figures for Medical Officers in the Indian Army on the 1st March were—

British	.	.	.	.	425
Indian	.	.	.	.	5,641
			Total	.	6,066

NUMBER OF PERMANENT COMBATANT OFFICERS IN THE INDIAN ARMY

174. THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: (a) What is the total number of permanently commissioned Indian and British combatant officers respectively in the Indian Army? What is the number of such officers in each rank?

(b) What are the corresponding figures for the Indian and British officers in the I. M. S.?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS: (a) and (b). I lay a statement on the table

Statement

(a) The strength of regular officers of the Indian Army (excluding Medical Services) distributed according to substantive ranks is as follows:—

	Cols. and above	Lt.-Cols.	Majors	Captains	Sub- alterns	Total
British	142	705	491	717	339	2,394
Indian			43	254	233	530
Total	142	705	534	971	572	2,924

Separate figures are not available for acting, temporary or war substantive ranks.

(b) The corresponding figures for the Indian Medical Service are as follows:—

	Cols. and above	Lt.-Cols.	Majors	Captains	Total
British	20	79	161	78	338
Indian	9	48	67	16	140
Total	29	127	228	94	478

NUMBER OF OFFICERS IN THE R. I. N., R. I. N. R. AND R. I. N. V. R.

175. THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: What is the total number of Indian and British officers, respectively, in the R.I.N., R.I.N.R. and R.I.N.V.R.?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS: On the 1st of this month, the figures were:—

	Indian	British
R. I. N.	77	156
R. I. N. R.	72	127
R. I. N. V. R.	1,097	437

NUMBER OF INDIAN OFFICERS IN THE R. I. A. F.

176. THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What is the number of Indian officers in the R. I. A. F. and how many of them hold permanent commissions ? How many R.A.F. officers are serving in the R.I.A.F. at present ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : The number of Indian officers in the R.I.A.F. is 1,419. Of these, seven hold permanent commissions. It has been decided, as an interim measure, to grant a further ninety permanent commissions as soon as possible. Seventy-two officers have already been selected for these commissions subject to medical fitness. Further selections will be announced at an early date.

The Royal Indian Air Force is a wholly Indian force. No R.A.F. officers can, therefore, serve in it. At one stage, however, a certain number of R.A.F. Officers were attached to squadrons of the R.I.A.F. This is no longer the case and I am able to assure the House that a position has now been reached where all 10 squadrons of the Royal Indian Air Force are officered throughout by Indian officers.

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR PERMANENT COMMISSIONS IN THE INDIA ARMY, ETC.

177. THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : (a) What is the number of Indians who have applied for permanent commissions in the Indian Army, R.I.N. and R.I.A.F., respectively, upto 15th February, 1946 ?

(b) How many applications have been disposed of and how many applicants have been selected for permanent commissions in each service ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS :

(a) Indian Army	. . . . .	2,500
R. I. N.	. . . . .	577
R.I. A. F.	. . . . .	477

(b) 1,790 Army applicants have been interviewed, out of whom 105 have so far been granted Commissions and the grading of the rest is under consideration.

461 of the R.I.N. applicants had been interviewed by the 15th of last month. Out of these, 35 have so far been selected for commissions, 223 have been found unsuitable and the cases of the remaining 203 are still being considered.

As regards the R.I.A.F. 210 candidates had been interviewed up to the 15th December last ; 72 of these have so far been selected, subject to medical fitness.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : May I ask with regard to the R. I. N. how it is that the proportion of those who have been granted Commissions is so small as compared with the proportion of the applicants selected for Commissions in the Army and the R. I. A. F. ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : I can only say that the Boards have recommended approximately half of the candidates whom they interviewed as being unsuitable, partly for technical qualifications and partly for the general qualifications necessary for an officer.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Are these Boards following in the case of the R. I. N. a higher standard ? Have the Boards laid down a higher standard in the case of the R. I. N. than in the case of the other two services ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : I am not aware of that, Sir.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Will Government inquire into the reasons for the small proportion of the applicants taken into the R. I. N. ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : I will endeavour to find an answer to that, Sir.

178. THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Will Government state :—

(a) The quota fixed for each province for the annual production of additional two lacs tons of vegetable ghee by new factories ?

(b) The quota fixed for each province for the annual target production of 1.25 million tons by the existing factories ?

See reply to question No. 179.

VEGETABLE GHEE

179. THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Will Government state :—

(a) What is the quota fixed for each province for the desired annual production of additional two lacs tons of vegetable ghee by new factories ?

(b) What is the quota fixed for each province for the annual target production of 1.25 million tons by the existing factories ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : (a) Additional production anticipated under the Immediate Scheme for the expansion of the vanaspati industry is 1,57,500 tons which has been distributed among the different provinces as follows :—

Province	Annual capacity allotted in tons
Bengal .	37,500
Bihar .	7,500
Orissa .	7,500
Madras .	33,000
C. P. & Berar .	7,500
Bombay .	10,500
Total for British India .	103,500
Total for Indian States .	54,000
Grand Total	157,500

(b) No such target is contemplated. A Committee is considering a long range plan for the expansion of the industry.

THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KERAMAT ALI : Has no quota been allotted to Assam ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA ; No, Sir.

THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KERAMAT ALI : What are the reasons ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : As far as I know, they have no raw material.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Are parties who are not allotted under this quota entitled to open their own factories within those areas for hydrogenated ghee ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, Sir. We have tried under whatever powers we may have to prevent that in order that there may be a planned development of the industry.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Are Government aware that capitalists from Northern India are now starting factories over and above parties that have already been given permission ? I have to-day received a complaint from Hospet.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Well, Sir, a lot of things are done which I cannot take responsibility for.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Have you got power to prevent such intrusion by outsiders beyond the permission given by Government ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : The powers that Government have consist of (1) consent to issue of new capital and (2) import licences. No import licences have been granted since we adopted planning to parties whom we did not select. But it is possible that some people may have registered their orders before we started planning.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Will Government take powers to prevent such people circumventing their existing powers ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is a larger question which I believe the Planning and Development Department is considering.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Is the statement that the quota for new mills was fixed at 2 lakhs tons correct ? You have given a statement here that the total was 1,57,500 tons. But the quota mentioned in the question is 2 lakhs tons.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, Sir, that is not correct. I have given the correct figures.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : You have issued licences. The Planning Department fixed a quota and from that quota you have distributed. Is that so ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, we never accepted that.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : The Planning Department quota was never accepted by you ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : They did not fix any quota. We fixed the quota. The Food Department know the matter best.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : There is some confusion, Sir. The Planning Department fixed a quota, that so much should be distributed by the Food Department. The Food Department had no hand. I say it with all responsibility. I want to know whether all the quota has been exhausted.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : There was no quota allotted to us by the Planning Department. We went into the whole matter ourselves and we fixed a quota according to the requirements of the country.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What is the target laid down by the Food Department ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We fixed as a short-term measure about 1½ lakhs tons but the long-term matter is still under consideration.

THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KERAMAT ALI : Was the Assam Government consulted as to whether raw material would be available within the Province for the production of vegetable ghee ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I could not reply to it off-hand but we know that they have not got the raw material. My friend cannot tell me that there is raw material for the manufacture of vanaspati ghee in Assam.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : In many provinces to which you have allotted quotas there is no groundnut produced, for example Bihar.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is a matter for discussion.

THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KERAMAT ALI : What is the source of the Hon. Member's information that Assam has no raw material ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We are supposed to know those elementary things.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : One explanation I would like to have from you. You said that capital issue will be sanctioned to those parties whom Government choose, to the parties to whom quota is allotted.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : To whom import license is given.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Suppose there is a private party who does not want to float a company but finance it from his own pocket and he can manufacture ghee. Will Government object to that ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We shall not facilitate a thing like that.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : But you would not object, Sir ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : If we can object, we will. Object we will.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Object means what ? What will you do ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We will object.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : By order, Sir ? Will you stop them doing it by special orders ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : As I have said, Government have not yet got any legal power to enforce the licensing of industry. That is a matter which is under consideration by the Planning and Development Department. But with such powers as we possess to-day we try to plan industry.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Up to now you have no power to stop that ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is for you to infer.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : I want to know what Government will do to prevent parties circumventing their licensing power by going to a neighbouring State and starting a factory to the detriment of factories that are licensed by the Government ? In fact a factory is being started in Sandur to the detriment of the factory for which license has been given in Hospet. A big North Indian firm has gone there.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We can debate it as long as we like. I cannot add anything more to what I have said.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I want to put a concrete question. Is it a fact that the Crown Representative has taken power unto himself to prevent unauthorised industrial development in Indian States ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, I do not think so, Sir. I am not aware of it anyway.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : What is the guarantee that it will not be circumvented by Indian States ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I have already explained. You can debate it as long as you like. We have got two powers just now. One is in respect of capital issues. The other is in respect of the grant of licences for the import of machinery. Those are the two weapons we have got.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Indian States have got their own ports.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Doubtless they have.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Question No. 179 is the same as 178. The same question has been repeated. They are the same.

180. FLIGHT-LIEUT. THE HON. RUP CHAND : Will Government state :

(a) Whether food articles of various descriptions are still being exported from India by land or sea ?

(b) Whether, in view of the grave threat of famine in this Country, do Government propose to put an embargo on the export of food articles at once to conserve supplies ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : (a) Export of certain foodstuffs other than foodgrains, which are surplus to internal requirements, is allowed in restricted quantities.

(b) The export policy is kept under constant review and adjusted to changing conditions of supply and demand.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Will the Hon. Member tell us what are the excess productions in India which he is permitting to be exported ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I cannot prepare a statement at a moment's notice.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : Can you give us an idea of the articles of food which you have been exporting ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Speaking from memory, which is not very good sometimes, we have allowed, for example, export of dried fish in small quantities. We have allowed export of small quantities of onions from Madras to Ceylon. That has been an old trade. Some parts of South India send out some small quantities of onions. Then some small quantities of potatoes have gone out from Madras to Ceylon. Garlic has gone out and things of that kind. A lot of tamarind goes out of India.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Any foodgrain ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No foodgrain. Walnuts, pistachio nuts and things of that description.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : The Hon. Member is aware that groundnut is also used by the poor people as alternative food.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I have not mentioned groundnuts.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : When we have shortage of food 300,000 tons of groundnuts were allowed to be exported.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : When was it allowed to be exported ?

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : It is the Customs statistics ; it is not my figure, Sir.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Yes, in the old days there was a surplus of groundnuts ; and exports were allowed on a much smaller scale than previously. But now we have stopped it.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Since when ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : On the day I am talking we have stopped it.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : To-day ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We have stopped it for some time.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY

181. **THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH** : Will Government make a statement relating to the proposal of establishing an aircraft industry in India, with such financial and administrative details as may be deemed necessary to explain the proposal in concrete form ?

LT.-GENERAL THE HON. SIR THOMAS HUTTON : Government have come to the view that steps should be taken to establish if possible an Aircraft Industry in India. They are now arranging, in consultation with the Ministry of Aircraft Production, for a technical Mission from the U. K. to come to India and advise them on the location of the plant, the organisation of the proposed factory, the production programme, the financial implications and other connected questions. Government will be glad to make a fuller statement after they have considered the report of this Mission.

FORMATION OF FRONTIER PROVINCE IN ASSAM

182. **THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH** : Is there any proposal to form a Frontier Province in Assam by cutting out the Hill districts of the Province ? If so, will Government state the main features of the scheme, together with its financial and administrative implications ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : The reply to the first part of the question is in the negative.

The second part does not arise.

FOOD SITUATION IN BIHAR

183. **THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH** : (a) Will Government state what proposals were made by the Government of Bihar to the Government of India before the recent Food Debate in the Central Assembly regarding the methods to meet the food situation in that Province, but which Government turned down ?

(b) Are Government aware that the food situation in Bihar is very serious. What steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken to improve substantially the situation ?

(c) Do they propose to give Bihar at least her pre-war quota of imports of food to ease the threatened seriousness of the position to some extent ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : (a) The only proposal of the Bihar Government which was not acceptable to the Government of India pertained to an increase in the statutory maximum price for rice.

(b) and (c). The Government of India are aware that Bihar needs assistance from outside. A quota of foodgrains based on our existing resources has already been allotted to Bihar. Whether the Government of India will be able to give Bihar her pre-war quota of imports, depends upon the volume of imports made available.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

184. **THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH** : (a) Are Government aware that the final session of the League of Nations will begin on the 8th April next to wind up the League and transfer its assets to the United Nations Organisation ?

(b) Has India received any invitation to attend ? If so, who will represent this country ?

(c) Has India been committed to the payment of any financial contribution to the new organisation which will replace the old one ; if so, how much ?

(d) Will the Central Legislature be consulted before this country is committed of any such financial obligation ? If not, why not ?

(e) What steps have Government taken or propose to take to ensure that if India is asked to make any financial contribution to the new organisation, she would be adequately represented by her nationals on its Secretariat and other effective positions in the organisation ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : (a) Yes.

(b) Yes. Sir Atul Chatterjee has been invited to lead the delegation and the selection of the second delegate is under consideration.

(c) Yes. Under Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations the Members are required to contribute to the United Nations Organisation. The General Assembly will determine the allocation of expenses of the Organisation among the member nations when it adopts its first budget later this year.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) All possible steps have been and will be taken to ensure adequate representation of Indians on the staff of the United Nations Secretariat.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Can the Hon. Member enlighten us in what capacity Sir Nazimuddin has been asked to join India's delegation to the United Nations ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : Notice, Sir.

NUMBER OF BRITISH TROOPS IN INDIA

185. THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What is the number of British troops in India at present ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : I regret it would not be in the public interest to disclose the figure.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What are the reasons for which Government consider themselves unable to give this information ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : Sir, it is never in the public interest to disclose the figures of dispositions of troops. I regret I cannot go any further than that.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I have not asked for a disclosure of the dispositions of British troops throughout the world. All that I have asked for is the number of British troops in India, which certainly will not enable any person to know what the number of British troops in other parts of the world is ?

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : Now that the war is over I think there is no danger in giving the information asked for.

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : Sir, I regret I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Could the Hon. Member give us some indication of the reductions made in the British troops in India since the V-E Day ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : Not without notice.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Could he say if there is any proportion about them : that 20 per cent or ten per cent have been sent back ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : No, Sir, I do not carry the figures in my head at all.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I have not yet asked question No. 186, but could the Hon. Member answer part (a) of that question if it is contrary to the public interest to answer part (b) ? Moreover, Government having supplied figures of British and Indian officers in the Indian Army what is the objection really to letting us know what the number of British troops in India is ? How is this different from the other thing ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : Sir, as I have already said I regret I can add nothing to my previous answer that it would not be in the public interest to disclose the number.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUZRU : That means that you just do not want to do it.

(No answer).

NUMBER OF INDIAN TROOPS ABROAD

186. **THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** (a) What is the total number of Indian troops abroad ?

(b) What are the countries in which they are serving ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : (a) I regret that it would not be in the public interest to disclose the number of Indian troops abroad.

(b) Indian troops are serving overseas in the following countries :—

Far East	Middle East
Burma	Italy
Malaya	Dodecanese Islands
Siam	Iraq
Hong Kong	Levan
Japan	Cyprus
Celebes	Palestine
North Borneo	Egypt
Java	Cyrenaica
Sumatra	Aden
Cocos Islands	
Ceylon	

NUMBER OF DETAINED I. N. A. PERSONNEL IN BURMA, SIAM, ETC.

187. **THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH. KUNZRU :** (a) What is the number of Indian soldiers belonging to the I.N.A. in detention in Burma, Siam, Indo China and Malaya, respectively ?

(b) Do Government propose to take steps to bring them back to India as soon as possible ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : (a) On the 15th of last month the number of Indian soldiers who had joined the I.N.A. and were consequently detained overseas was 3,011, of whom 15 were in Burma, 1,132 in Malaya and 1,864 on Singapore Island

(b) These men are being returned to India as quickly as possible, but are not being given priority for shipping accommodation over soldiers who have continued to perform their duty and who are being repatriated or coming on leave. It is expected all will have been sent back before the end of next month.

DETENTION OF INDIANS IN SIAM AND INDO-CHINA

188. **THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU :** (a) Have any Indians not belonging to the Indian Army been arrested by or at the instance of the Government of India in Siam and Indo-China ? If so, what is their number in each case ?

(b) Where are they detained ? Do Government propose to try them in their places of detention ? If not, how do they propose to deal with them ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : (a) When the war was still in progress and military operations in Siam and French Indo-China were expected, the Government of India furnished to the military authorities certain information about local collaborators, with a view to their being arrested. At that time it was contemplated that

these persons would fall into our hands before the end of hostilities. In fact, however, the war ended before military operations which were in contemplation were launched against these countries; and upon the surrender of Japan, the Government of India were no longer interested in these cases. Such arrests as were actually made were accordingly ordered by the military authorities on their own initiative and in the interests of military security.

(b) The only Indian civilians in these countries at present detained are about 350 civilian I.N.A. and I.I.L. members from Siam who are awaiting repatriation at Singapore. The Government of India do not propose to try them or to take any other action against them.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Are Government aware that some time ago about 700 people sent ostensibly from Siam to India were detained in Singapore ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : Sir, there is a discrepancy about the figures. I believe that the Hon. Member is referring to the same people whose number I have given as 350 in my answer to part (b) of the question. I think he is referring to a batch of people who according to my information number 350 but whom I have seen referred to as about 700.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Have any of these people been released in Singapore itself during the last month or two ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : Sir, so far as I can understand the situation all of them, with the exception of about 10 or 20, are now on their way to India or have already reached India.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Are they being sent to India at their own request or are they being, so to say, deported by Government ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : I would require notice of that question.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What is going to be done with the rest ? Will they be sent back to Siam or will they, at the pleasure of Government be sent to India or to any other part of the Empire ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : That is again a question on which I have no information. I shall have to ask for notice.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : If the Hon. Member will read part (b) he will see that it asked for information on these points.

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : Sir, the question asked :—

“(b) Where are they detained : Do Government propose to try them in their places of detention ? If not, how do they propose to deal with them ?” and I have replied that there are about 350 civilian I.N.A. and I.I.L. members from Siam who are awaiting repatriation at Singapore and that the Government do not propose to try them or to take any other action against them. So far as I know Government has no intentions in respect of these people.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : These people having been taken out of the country in which they were living must be told as to what is going to be done with them: whether they will be sent back to Siam or to any other country ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : I have no doubt that the Government or Administration which is responsible will take any measures which may be necessary in that behalf.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Will Government see that these people, unless they want to come to India, are sent back to Siam where they were carrying on business ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : I cannot answer that question.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Will Government enquire into the matter ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : If the Hon. Member will give notice of that question, information such as is available will be obtained for him.

DETENTION OF CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF THE AZAD HIND MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

189. **THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH :** (a) Will Government state how many civilian members of the Azad Hind movement are in detention in several British camps in Europe ?

(b) Is it a fact that many workers of the Azad Hind movement are kept separately in dark cells in a civil jail in Germany ? If so, how many ?

(c) Is it a fact that food arrangements for these people are unsatisfactory, and that many of these prisoners are reported to have committed suicide as a result of cruel treatment meted out to them ?

(d) Have Government made enquiries into the matter ? What steps have so far been taken or are proposed to be taken in this connection ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : (a) Nine Indian civilian collaborators are in detention in Europe.

(b) and (c). No.

(d) Government have made enquiries and are informed that persons now in detention are being held for security reasons at a civil internment camp in the British zone in Germany. The camp is not a prison but a large enclosed area where the inmates live together with complete freedom of association and with ample opportunity for exercise. They are not kept in cells and they receive rations on exactly the same scale as other detenus in the camp who are mostly Germans. There have been no complaints of ill-treatment.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Is there any prospect of their being repatriated to India ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : I should have to ask for notice of that, Sir.

W. A. C. (I.)

190. **THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH :** (a) Has the attention of Government been drawn to a letter, purporting to have been signed by about one hundred W. A. C. (I) members, which appeared in the "Hindustan Times" dated the 17th February, 1946 (Delhi edition), detailing the "unbelievable scandals", including racial discrimination and immorality in their organisation ?

(b) Have Government noticed the following points in the complaints of the Indian girls :—

(i) "Our principal charge concerns the absolute irreparable mess this war-time organisation has been made of the lives, homes, character, discipline, and morals of so many of us in the W.A.C. (I) through no fault of our own."

(ii) "In the service itself we were ill-cared for, fitted for nothing except drinking dancing, necking, and fraternizing with the officers and B.O.Rs."

(iii) "There have been cases without number, of rape, of forced motherhood, of abortion, of venereal disease, of suicide."

(c) In view of the grave nature of the allegations, will Government state what steps have been taken to have a thorough and impartial enquiry made into them ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir, and I am glad to have the opportunity of contradicting this slur on a fine Corps. I shall be prepared to believe in its authenticity when I have seen the original letter and have checked the signatures.

It is alleged that the supervision was inadequate. All hostels were supervised by officers who were responsible for the well-being of the auxiliaries. There were rules for the admission of visitors. The girls were under orders to be in their barracks by 10 P.M. and lights out by 10.30 P.M., but two late passes were permitted a week to enable them to go to Cinemas or dances if they wished. The statement that members of the W. A. C. (I)s were forced to attend any form of entertainment or compelled to attend dances, etc. for the amusement of male officers or British Other Ranks can only be described as a malicious and incorrect statement. Where parents expressed a special wish, auxiliaries were permitted to leave the hostels only with persons approved by their parents.

There have also been allegations of racial discrimination. It is true that the majority of the officers are Europeans, with Anglo-Indians for the second largest number. The reasons for this are, I think, obvious. It is only comparatively recently that Indian women have begun to earn their living independently of their parents, and it is still an exception rather than a rule for an Indian girl to expect to do this. Among Europeans and Anglo-Indians on the other hand, it is an exception for a girl *not* to expect to earn for own living. Those who have in the past earned their own living are obviously more likely to become officers than those who have not.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : On a point of order, Sir. Is this a statement, or is it a categorical reply to the questions asked in this question ?

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : The Hon. Member knows his business.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : I am asking for your ruling.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : I cannot dictate to him the manner in which he should give his reply.

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : This preponderance of two communities among the officers was one of the principal reasons for deciding on the disbandment of the Corps, so that when it is formed again as I hope it will be, it will be possible for all communities to have an equal start.

The article stated that there had been cases out of number of rape, forced motherhood, abortion, venereal disease and suicide. The facts are that the total strength of the Corps was 9,567 on the 1st January 1946. Since it was formed in 1942, two alleged cases of rape have been reported to the W. A. C. (I) Headquarters. In both cases a Court Martial on the person charged found him not guilty. I am unable to distinguish between forced motherhood and rape. Since December 1944, 65 cases have been reported in which W. A. C. (I) personnel were about to have illegitimate children, a percentage of about 0.7. It is however, possible that there may have been a few other cases of which the Hon. the questioner may be aware, in which the person concerned obtained discharge on other grounds and did not reveal her condition. With regard to venereal disease, 25 cases have been treated in military hospitals since the Corps was formed in 1942. The strength of the General Service Section of the Corps is 3,400 and these women could not attend hospitals except on leave. There may have been cases which have not come to light among the 6,000 Local Service women who live at home and can go to private hospitals. There have been two cases of reported attempted-suicide in the history of the Corps. In neither case has the result been fatal.

It has also been stated in this article that personnel of the Corps were accommodated in the same hostel as British other ranks. Owing to shortage of accommodation, this did happen in one case only throughout India. The women were on one floor, the men on another. Special arrangements were made for supervision in this case, but the arrangement was never considered satisfactory, and was abandoned as soon as possible. The arrangement lasted one year.

(c) In view of the facts just explained, and of the decision to disband the Corps Government consider that it would be a waste of public time and money to hold a public enquiry.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA : In view of the seriousness of the complaint, why have not Government thought it necessary, so far to obtain the original letter, check the signatures and make an inquiry ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : I have not stated that Government has not attempted to do so.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Have they succeeded in their attempt ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : No, Sir.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : When is this W. A. C. (I) going to be disbanded ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : The decision to disband the W. A. C. (I) has been taken and the process has begun. It is intended to be completed within one year.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Who will be the first to be discharged—those who are in private houses, or those who are in Government hostels ? What will be the process of discharge ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : I cannot go into the full details of the process of discharge and demobilization.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : May I know, with regard to the point of time, whether the B. O. Rs. will go out of India first, or whether the W. A. C. (I) will be disbanded first ? Which will be earlier ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : There is no sort of race going on, Sir.

AMERICAN TROOPS IN INDIA

191. THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH : (a) Will Government state how many United States troops are still in India and how many have gone back ?

(b) Has any agreement been reached, whereby American troops in India would be required to quell internal turmoil, or possible insurrection in India ?

THE HON. MR. A. D. F. DUNDAS : (a) On the 1st of last month the number of United States troops still in India Command was 54,647, and the number who had already gone back to America was 95,487.

(b) No, Sir.

APPOINTMENT OF CONTROLLER OF IMPORTS

192. THE HON. MR. SURPUT SINGH : Will Government state :—

(a) The purposes of the appointment of the Controller of Imports in India ?

(b) Whether any such office had existed before the war ?

(c) Special qualifications, experience and aptitude the officer possesses for the discharge of the duties of the office.

THE HON. MR. Y. N. SUKTHANKAR : (a) I presume the Hon. Member refers to the appointment of the Chief Controller of Imports. I may invite attention to the Commerce Department Press Note of the 17th June 1941, which will explain the reasons for the creation of that appointment. A copy of the Press Note is available in the Library.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Officers appointed to hold this post have been I.C.S. officers of standing and experience.

I may add that the present incumbent of the post has also considerable experience of the Customs Department having been a Collector of Customs for four years.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE FOOD DEPARTMENT

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA (Food Member) : Sir, I beg to move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, five non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Department of Food during the financial year 1946-47.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER (Home Secretary) : Sir, I beg to move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, four non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on the subjects in the Home Department for the financial year 1946-47.”

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern : Non-Muhammadan) : May I enquire how many times this Committee met in the year 1945-46 ?

THE HON. MR. A. E. PORTER : The Hon. Member was a member himself, and probably he would be able to tell us : I was not here at that time. He will correct me if I am wrong ; but my impression is that it did not meet at all.

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT

THE HON. MR. H. C. PRIOR (Labour Secretary) : Sir, I move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, five non-official members to serve on the Standing Advisory Committee to advise on subjects with which the Labour Department is concerned, for the financial year 1946-47.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT

THE HON. MR. SHAVAX A. LAL (Nominated Official) : Sir, I move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, three non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subjects in the Legislative Department, for the financial year 1946-47.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE ALL-INDIA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) : Sir, I move :—

“That the members of this Council do proceed to elect in such manner as may be approved by the Hon. the President, two persons from among their own members to be members of the All-India Council for Technical Education constituted by the Government of India.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) : Sir, I move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, five non-official members to serve on a Standing Committee to advise on subjects dealt with in the Department of Education, during the financial year 1946-47.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVISORY BOARD OF ARCHÆOLCGY IN INDIA.

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) : Sir, I move :—

“That the members of this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, one more person from among their number to be a member of the Advisory Board of Archæology in India constituted by the Government of India.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE CENTRAL ADVISORY BOARD OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) : Sir, I move :—

“That the members of this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as may be approved by the Hon. the President, one person from among their own numbers to be a member of the Central Advisory Board of Education in India with effect from the date of election.”

THE HON. SIR RAMUNNI MENON (Nominated Non-official) : May I say a word, Sir ? The present position is this. The Legislature is represented on the Central Advisory Board of Education by two Members from the Assembly and one from the Council of State. I think that is a proportion which may be accepted as fair. In any case, we have reconciled ourselves to it. When the numbers of representatives are going to be increased, I suggest that that proportion should be adhered to. I think it is rather unwelcome to this Council that the proportion should be so twisted as to place representation from this house at disadvantage. If the Assembly are going to have 4, I quite admit that we should have 2. If they are going to have 6, we should have 3 and so on. But why they should pitch upon an inconvenient number as 5 for the Assembly and ask us to be represented by only 2, I am unable to understand. In any case, I hope that when the Council of State reconstituted and when a fresh election to the Central Advisory Board takes place, the Hon. Member in charge of Education will see to it that this Council is given a representation of 3 if the representation from the Assembly is going to be 5.

THE HON. SAYYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR (Madras : Muhammadan) : My suggestion is that the suggestion made by my Hon. friend may come into force even from today.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa : Muhammadan) : If the Hon. Member consents to increase the number now, it might be done. Otherwise, you will have to ask that the motion be postponed for the present so that he can consult his Department and then move this motion again.

THE HON. SIR RAMUNNI MENON : I suggest that for the present there should be 2 members. If I may make a personal explanation, the present election is not going to be of much practical importance. This Council will be dissolved, presumably by the end of this year and there is not likely to be much work of the Central Advisory Board between now and the dissolution. So, I shall be quite satisfied if the Hon. Member will increase the number of representatives from this Council to 3 next time when the Council will be called upon to elect.

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH : I agree to that, Sir.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern : Non-Muhammadan) : What will be the number of representatives of the Assembly on the Central Advisory Board of Education this year ?

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH : Five.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Ours will be only one ?

THE HON. SIR RAMUNNI MENON : There is only one now. You are going to have another one. That will make it two.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Are we to elect one member in addition to the representative of the Council already on the Central Advisory Board of Education ?

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH : Yes ; you elect two.

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE INDIAN CENTRAL TOBACCO COMMITTEE

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) Sir, I move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct, one person to represent the consumers on the Indian Central Tobacco Committee.”

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa : Muhammadan) : What is the number of Assembly Members ?

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH : I could not tell you.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW (Madras : Non-Muhammadan) This is an important interest and I think this body deserves 2 members at least from this House. It is a very big body consisting of 50 or 60 members from all sections and to give 2 members from this Upper House is not too much. You get Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 crores of income out of tobacco.

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH : Will you be able to find two consumers' representatives ? I think you had better leave it at that, at present, and then you can raise the point again.

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) : Sir, I move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Hon. the President may direct five non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee to advise on subject dealt with in the Department of Agriculture for the financial year 1943-47.”

The Motion was adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

LT.-GENERAL SIR THOMAS HUTTON THE HON. (Planning and Development Secretary) : Sir, I move :—

“That this Council do proceed to elect, in such manner as may be approved by the Hon. the President, five non-official members to serve on the Standing Committee for the Planning and Development Department for the year commencing 1st April, 1946.”

The Motion was adopted.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : With reference to the Motions which have just been adopted by the Council, I have to announce that nominations to the Committee will be received by the Secretary up to 11 A.M. on Tuesday, the 26th March, 1946 and the date of election, if necessary, will be announced later.

MOTION *RE* FOOD SITUATION

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA (Food Member) : Sir, I rise to move :—

“That the food situation in India be taken into consideration.”

Sir, perhaps the House will allow me to take them back to 1943 when I first addressed this August House. I then, Sir, gave an undertaking that so far as it lay in me I would not let one man starve in the country. Those were dark days. Those were the days of the Bengal famine. That was the time when starvation, pestilence and distress were prevailing in the unfortunate Province of Bengal ; and it fell to me at that time to bring relief to those who were afflicted. If I state today some of the positive achievements of the Department during the last two or three years which have elapsed since then, it is not because I want a bouquet for myself—I am too used to brickbats—but because I want the House and the country at large to understand what a useful Department both at the Centre and in the Provinces and States has been built up during these three years—

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Self-praise is no praise.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am not praising myself as I said, but I think I owe it to the band—

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Please take no notice of such interruptions.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I think the House owes it and we owe it to the band of selfless public servants who have made a success of the Department. They have worked hard and deserve well of us. I do not think, Sir, that it would do at a time like this to discourage the machinery on which rests the responsibility for saving India from starvation.

Sir, the background of the Indian food situation must be examined in the light of the years immediately preceding the war. The House knows, more than I do perhaps, that taking into account the total estimated output of cereals and after making allowances for seeds, wastage and net imports, the total resources available to the country were such as to give a *per capita* supply of only 308 lbs. per annum of cereals, that is to say, under 11 ounces per day per head. The second important point that we must remember is that the marketed output only constitutes, or constituted in the old days, 30 to 40 per cent. of the total production of foodgrains—

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA : You are referring to 1937 ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am talking of the pre-war period—the rest being consumed by the producers, most of whom were really small farmers with very small marketable surplus.

Now, Sir, during the war years, the situation worsened when Japan declared war. The main factor, however, was the loss of Burma. As the House knows, India used to receive very substantial imports of rice from Burma. Requirements, on the other hand, went on increasing, because our population increases by about 5 millions a year. Since 1943 the Food Department has an integrated policy, a policy which was the result of the recommendations of the Gregory Committee. This policy has been consistently pursued by the Department and the Provinces. The policy broadly consists of the controlled movement of foodgrains from surplus to deficit regions, procurement, rationing and price control. If these matters are viewed in the light of the vast size of the country and of the basic facts of our agricultural economy, any fair-minded person must admit that a great deal has been achieved by the Administration to tide the country over the difficult years of the war. Sir, speaking to an All-India Food Conference which was convened in October 1943, I said :

“The situation in which we find ourselves today demands the united and unselfish efforts of all concerned. If there is one thing the tragic events of the past few months have shown, it is the fact of the economic unity of India and the interdependence of the several Provinces and States on each other and on their combined resources. Whatever may have been the case in normal times, what goes on in each Province or State in the matter of production, distribution and utilisation of food supply can no longer be regarded as the undivided concern of that Province or State. It is, on the contrary the concern of everyone in India.”

Now, Sir, that is really the foundation of our entire policy. I admit that constitutionally perhaps the Government of India have not the necessary power or the machinery to direct all the Provinces and States to act in a certain way. But, Sir, by discussion, by exchange of ideas, and sometimes a little pressure, we have on the whole succeeded in evolving a concerted scheme of work. It was for the first time then that the Government of India undertook to exercise this responsibility, and I made no secret of it in the same speech of mine. I said—

“In the mobilization of India's resources the Government of India will have to take and implement decisions which may at times conflict with what appear to be local or sectional interests. Whenever possible, and to the greatest extent possible, the Government of India will proceed after consultation with you”—meaning the representatives of the Provinces—“and with your consent; but if circumstances should compel us to proceed otherwise, I look to you to accept and implement those decisions which we and we alone can take on behalf of all.”

I do not know, Sir, whether it is generally realised to what extent we have succeeded in implementing that policy. In the case of rationing alone, Sir, the schemes operating in the country are responsible for the feeding of well over 50 million people, that is of a population exceeding that of the United Kingdom. Whatever may be said, this substantial section of the population is receiving equitable distribution of food-stuffs; and we are doing our utmost to extend rationing even further. It is sometimes asked why we have not rationed the entire population. It is very easy to say, Sir, but it was very difficult to find especially during the war emergency the vast personnel that would have been required, when there were so many demands on the available manpower.

Take, again, Sir, the question of procurement. It is a matter of obtaining grain from millions of small producers throughout the country living in conditions providing the widest variations. Here too I am glad that the food administration has no mean achievement to its credit. In the south, for example, in Mysore, Madras, the Deccan States and in Bombay, we have been operating a system of compulsory levying, ensuring maximum procurement. In other parts of the country as well Administrations are attempting to improve their procurement machinery and I wish to assure the House that we have told the Provinces that some sort of compulsory procurement should be introduced with the least possible delay. The U. P. will soon have a levy scheme in operation, and, as I have said the Punjab, Bihar and Sind are all examining ways and means, and I hope that in the very near future we shall see a rational system of procurement in all these Provinces. Our aim is to get the maximum of the country's produce, leave to the producer enough for his own needs and deny all opportunity to intermediaries to hoard or to hold up our schemes. (Hear, hear.)

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : What did the Hon. Member say “enough for his meals”?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Enough for his needs.

Sir, before I come to the immediate situation I would like to bring to the notice of the House the recent statement which my colleague, Sir Jogendra Singh, and I made to the Press with regard to the future and present food policy of the Government of India. I need make no apology for referring to it because it has a very important bearing on our present policy. I say, Sir, that that statement is an event of the highest importance for the future prosperity of this country. It was suggested by some that there was nothing new in the Government's statement. Anyway, the criticism is plausible. After all, agriculture is the oldest human occupation and everybody, especially in India, has a vague idea of what should be done to improve matters. The Government's statement therefore might strike a casual observer as a mere string of platitudes interspersed with banal commonplaces. To begin with, the commonplace or the plitudinous is not necessarily false. More often than not it is correct. In fact most of the important things in life are commonplaces and most fundamental truths are obvious. The real significance of the Government of India's statement is that it is the first integrated statement of policy, I suppose, on the subject which it covers. Strange as it may appear, this is the first time in history that any Indian Government has undertaken the duty of co-ordinating and

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supervising agricultural activities in the whole of India, including the Indian States. This has not been done out of any quixotic or romantic impulse but because of the hard realities of the Indian situation. Those realities are that Indian rural economy no longer suffices for the food needs of our population ; that India is no longer an Arcadia flowing with milk and honey but a deficit area which ought to be improved and that an agriculture at the mercy of the vagaries of nature can no longer cope with the food demands of a rapidly increasing population. To meet the present situation it would not be enough merely to repeat the copy-book tag that where one ear of corn grows we should have two. The Government's statement on agriculture and food policy is an attempt to give practical shape to the universally felt desire to raise the country's productive capacity and give the people of the land a more reasonable standard of living. It is no use merely raking up the past and saying that such a thing should have been done long ago. The important fact is that at last it has been done and that as a result of the recommendations of the Famine Enquiry Commission—a Commission which received the support of this House, I gratefully acknowledge—special machinery has been set up by the Government of India to deal with this all important matter and that an agreed policy has emerged committing the Government to definite action in respect of all the many varied aspects of that problem. Viewed in this light, the statement, I claim, Sir, marks a milestone in Indian administration and contains the germs of the policy that must be assiduously followed by any future Indian Administration regardless of its complexion and affiliations. This is claimed because in almost all respects the policy recently enunciated by the Government of India is far in advance of the pre-war conditions in India, and in some important respects it is in line with the most advanced current thought. Special mention should be made of the fact that now, for the first time, the Government of India accepts responsibility for providing adequate food and balanced food for all. Now, Sir, that is not a small undertaking. It has never been done before. Food in the past has mostly been a provincial subject, and I am not aware of any Provincial Government having undertaken that responsibility in the past. For the first time, then, the State assumes the duty of seeing that the humblest citizen gets not only adequate food but also balanced food, food which will keep him in health. For the first time also, Sir, the State accepts responsibility towards vulnerable classes like nursing mothers, school children and heavy manual workers. There will be increased facilities for special beneficial foods for mothers and small children. School feeding will be extended—it has been extended to some extent—and industries employing more than 250 workers will actually be required by law to maintain canteens for their workers.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Free canteens, I hope.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Canteens selling foodstuffs at reasonable rates.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Yes. For the first time the State accepts the principle that the food of the poor should, if necessary, be subsidised by the State, and the question is actively under consideration by a special committee which I have set up.

Increased food production, though a prime need of the country, would not suffice by itself unless the interests of the producers were secured. My Hon. friend is looking at me.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : By you ? God help them !

THE HON. SIR JWALA PPRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Economists, therefore, attach special importance to that part of the statement in which, for the first time, the Government of India accepts the responsibility of regulating agricultural prices in such a way that they are remunerative to the producers and fair to the consumers. We have got to strike a mean which also secures that the benefits of increased production reach the primary producer and the agricultural labourer and do not remain with middlemen and intermediaries, whether money-lenders, landlords, tenants or traders.

This important decision means that even when war-time conditions disappear and trade channels resume their normal functions, some measure of regulation will continue, with a view to establishing a permanent system which will assure a market for the producer and equitable distribution of food to the consumer.

THE HON. SIB SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : What about the poor people who cannot afford to buy ?

THE HON. SIB JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I have said that for the first time we have accepted the principle of subsidising of food for the poor at prices fair to both the producer and the consumer. Without exaggeration it can be claimed that the achievement of this end would be a great contribution to the solution of the problem of Indian poverty.

It is not possible here to review all the various items in that comprehensive statement. Briefly, I would like to say that for the first time the Government of India is committed to the application of science to agriculture and to a programme of work to increase production on definite lines. I am saying that the Government of India has taken the responsibility. So far it has been a provincial responsibility. For example, while everybody knows that wastage of foodgrains through infestation and other causes runs to crores of rupees every year, for the first time the Government have tackled the question by building modern storage depots and godowns and by having a programme for further construction. Again, it is only now that steps are being taken to encourage food processing industries so that perishable and seasonal foodstuffs can be conserved. I have set up special machinery in the Department to deal with this matter. But, Sir, given a policy, steps have to be taken to translate these things into reality. For that purpose we have set up a special section in the Department whose sole task it is to implement all the ingredients of the newly enunciated policy and also to bring the Provinces and the Indian States into line with it.

Sir, I have taken the time of the House to deal with our long-range policy as I think it has a very important bearing on our present position. Now, coming to the immediate situation, it is hardly necessary for me to repeat the narrative as to the manner in which the year 1946 opened. It opened very threateningly, I am sorry to say, so far as the internal food resources of the country were concerned. The accumulated effect of natural calamities like cyclones and droughts on standing crops in the rice and millet producing areas of the South and the wheat producing areas of the North has now been before the public for nearly two months. There is now widespread recognition of the seriousness and the urgency of the position, of the need to raise the food of the people above politics and—a most heartening factor—of the wisdom of united effort to achieve the common end. There are some who think that we should have kept the situation back from the public to avoid panic. My answer is that we believe in the widest publicity—we have nothing to hide—and we have confidence in our ability to face any possible consequences of that publicity. I may mention here that these consequences have been very small indeed. If prices have shown some instability in some parts, they are now being controlled and the general level, taking the country as a whole, is being maintained, which I think is a great tribute to the food administration of the country. For instance, Sir, Madras, the worst affected area, has maintained a firm level of prices. I acknowledge the work done by the Madras Government.

Critics have made some capital out of a statement which I made in November last in Calcutta that there would be no famine this year. I said that deliberately after touring the districts of Bengal. At that time there was a panic in Bengal and everybody including all the newspapers was saying that Bengal was going to have a recurrence of the 1943 famine. It cannot be said that I indulged in a misstatement at that time, as things stood at that time. There was no indication then that the crops then standing would fail in the manner in which they did and I think I can legitimately claim that no human agency could have foreseen this disaster. There was no complaint made by any public or private body that there was likely to be a famine in the South or in the Bombay Presidency until I raised the alarm last January. I suppose the House knows that the workings of Nature are inscrutable and unpredictable.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Will the Hon. Member say something about Bengal? What is the condition now as compared with his forecast in November last?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : In November last, apart from the cyclone damage in the Godavari and Kistna region, there was no ground for fear. Madras, Bombay and Mysore have since been stricken with a calamitous drought. Without any delay, as soon as I heard of it, I sent the Director General of Food on a round tour of Madras. He visited all that area, came back and reported to me. That was somewhere about the middle of December. Even then the extent of the damage was not known, because they were still hoping that there might be rain in which case a lot of the crops would have been saved. Then, Sir, I kept on gazing skywards here and I found that the winter rains had failed even in the North and the rabi crop had withered. That upset a little my equilibrium which is not disturbed easily, but I was upset and I then thought that we should do all we can—not that we had not already done it—to get as much imports in as possible. That was the only line that I thought would assist us. We had already put in our claim for a million tons of rice and 500,000 tons of wheat for 1946. That claim was being considered by the Combined Food Board at Washington. I thought, "Well, now that our position is going to be worse than we had anticipated, I had better press my claim as hard as I can" and I immediately, within 24 hours, sent out the Secretary of the Department to Washington to fight out our case before the Combined Food Board and I myself did a rapid tour of Sind and the Punjab to see what the condition there was and whether I could get any grain from there. About the 22nd of January I called a Conference of Provincial and State representatives to discuss the whole situation. By that time the exact figures of damage to crops were not known even to the Provinces, because it was a progressive deterioration. It had not come in one day. People blame me as to why I did not foresee it in November. People did not know up to the 20th January what the extent of the loss was going to be. For the first time then I was given figures which really alarmed me. What did I do then? Quite apart from taking up a number of measures to tighten up our own belt and to make the best use of our own resources, I conceived the idea of a Delegation to London and Washington immediately and I thought that a Delegation consisting of, say, the Advisers of Madras and Bombay and the Dewan of Mysore as representing the principally deficit areas and nine non-official representatives of the principal Parties in the country would be able to place our case with great emphasis both in London and at Washington. I made an offer to get these non-official representatives from the two main Parties in the first instance. I made the offer on the floor of the Assembly, but so far as the Congress were concerned, they rejected that offer. The Muslim League—I gratefully acknowledge this—accepted my offer and they nominated two representatives. I had to nominate three other people who I thought would best represent the country on a Delegation like this. I shall come a little later to what the Delegation has been able to do. But I wish here to acknowledge the valuable cooperation and support which both the Congress and the Muslim League have extended to the Food Administration. They have placed food above politics, and that is as it should be. In this connection I am grateful to His Excellency the Viceroy who has carried on the negotiations with the Leaders and who has taken the keenest interest in the food problem of the country.

I would like, now, Sir, to refer to the Resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee setting out a 15-point programme to meet the present food crisis. I welcome the statement made by the Congress Working Committee that "the policy of the Government and the people should be one at this time of crisis," and I shall show now how most of what has been proposed has already been implemented by us. The points which they have laid down have been pursued by us all early and we have achieved good results.

The first point of the Congress Working Committee's resolution advises people not to lose heart but to act in cooperation. We have always attached the greatest importance to the maintenance of public confidence in a situation of this character—in fact in all matters pertaining to food administration; and I am very glad that the lead so clearly given by the Congress Working Committee will greatly strengthen

our position. Sir, I would refer to the speech which I made in this House on the 13th of August 1943 when I called myself a "two-day old baby in the Food Department." In that speech I said :

"In this task without the help of my colleagues here, without the fullest co-operation of the public and their leaders, without the wholehearted support and assistance of the Provinces and their Governments, without the help of the States, without the goodwill and patriotic sense of individuals, nothing can be accomplished and in the name of our country, I appeal, nay I demand, Sir, that co-operation and help."

That is what I said then, Sir.

Point 2 advises that all waste and surplus land should be brought under the plough. Both the Food and the Agriculture Departments have been actively encouraging the growth of short-term crops and productive foods like vegetables. It is not possible as yet to estimate the short-term crop production that will result. But I may mention that both in Madras and in Bombay a subsidy of Rs. 15 per acre of short-term crop harvested has been announced and Madras estimates that over 600,000 acres will be put under short crops. We have asked Provinces to take over and continue the various excellent vegetable farms which were started during the war to meet the needs of the services.

Point 3 of the Congress programme advises the individual producer to make all his surplus available. I claim that our levy and monopoly procurement schemes are administrative measures aimed at the same end.

Point 4 recommends food crops in preference to money crops. And again I should like to state that we are doing everything possible to restrict the area under money crops. For example, the area under jute and cotton has been severely curtailed.

Point 5 advises the people to sink wells and dig tanks. I should like to draw the attention of the House to the many grants made in this behalf both by the Central and the various Provincial Governments. My colleague Sir Jogendra Singh will deal more elaborately with this point.

Point 6 advises the rich to live simply (*Laughter.*) I would like to give that advice to my friends.—

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : As you entertained your guest at the time of marriage so poorly ! You want us to live like that !

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am referring to the Congress point which advises the rich to live simply. I entirely agree with that. I hope my colleagues will start living as simply as I do. The House knows that we have instituted various austerity drives like the curtailment of entertainment, turning of gardens over to vegetables and foods and cutting down of supplies to catering establishments and so forth.

Point 7 refers to the securing of supplies from abroad. On this I shall have something to say later on.

Point 8 advises economy of food on ceremonial occasions. Our general policy is to discourage any extra allocations in respect of such ceremonies.

Point 9 refers to the processing of fruits, a matter which the Food and the Agriculture Departments have now been dealing with for some time. In fact a flourishing fruit canning industry has grown up during the war.

Point 10 says that the State should put all its resources of skill, manpower and mechanical appliances, civil and military, to the task of preserving and transporting food. We have been fully alive to this and all the resources of the Army will be available to us if and when required. I have the authority of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief for saying that. Point 10 also speaks about the prohibiting of export of cereals and foodstuffs, and to this I shall refer later in my speech.

Point 11 refers to the sinking of wells by demobilised service personnel. I may inform the House that the War Department has given us the fullest co-operation and, even to the detriment of normal military training duties, His Excellency the

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Commander-in-Chief has ordered all units to grow as much food as possible. Practical schemes for the sinking of wells in the United Provinces and the Punjab with the assistance of troops are under consideration.

In point 12, the Congress Working Committee asks the nation to co-operate in schemes of rationing and procurement and in measures for checking hoarding, black-marketing and corruption. I heartily welcome this for I strongly feel that the administrative measures that are being, and may have to be, taken to secure an equitable distribution of our available food supplies to every man, woman and child, are fully deserving of the honest and loyal co-operation of the people as a whole. As regards corruption, I am as anxious as members opposite to suppress it with an iron hand. But corruption cannot exist without the acquiescence of the people, nor can it be eradicated unless it is brought to notice.

Now point 13 says that measures for meeting the serious situation cannot be fully successful and effective unless power rests with the people. I have every sympathy with this view and I say, even today so far as I am concerned, the power rests with the people and with you, gentlemen. I am prepared to do anything that you may want me to do.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : In May.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : If there is not a so-called popular Government today on these benches it is no fault of those who have tried to bear the burden in the heat of the day and in very difficult circumstances.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : What about the deep-sea fishing by the Navy ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is being taken up. *(Laughter.)*

I have, Sir, dealt seriatim with the Congress programme because I wish to show to the House that the Government has been trying to do everything practical to meet the present situation and that it is willing gratefully to accept advice whenever it is offered.

I should like now, Sir, to refer briefly to the famine relief measures which the Army has adopted. The Army has in order to conserve the food supplies done the following things amongst others. The ration of troops has been reduced. The ration of Government animals has been reduced. All units have been instructed to grow such food as is possible, particularly vegetables, potatoes, maize, wheat, etc., and, in suitable areas, rice. Troops may be employed on this work even if necessary to the detriment of normal training duties. Units are being encouraged to start poultry, eggs and rabbit production activities. Commanders have been instructed to visit food stores, depots and installations more frequently to satisfy themselves that loss of foodstuffs through deterioration, damage by insects, etc., does not occur. Officers commanding units have been instructed to devote special attention to the messing system so that meals may be made more attractive and palatable, thus reducing waste. Hints on avoidance of food waste have also been issued to units. Military officers living in bungalows are being encouraged to grow in their private gardens and compounds vegetables, potatoes, etc., and for servants maize and other useful crops. His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief has expressed a personal wish that menus in hostels, messes and private houses should be reduced to a maximum of two courses, apart from soup, and that none but the most sparing quantity of rice and wheat products should be served, and that on social occasions, such as tea and cocktail parties, the consumption of pastries, cakes and biscuits should be drastically reduced and even prohibited sometimes. Those who are able to obtain alternatives have been advised to avoid drawing on the over-all resources of wheat products and of rice which are the basic foodstuffs of the bulk of the population. It is proposed to carry out a publicity campaign by means of broadcasts, articles in Army newspapers and posters for display in unit cook-houses and dining halls to observe real and rigid economy in consumption of foodstuffs and to avoid waste.

Now, Sir, I hope the House will realise what amount of co-operation we have received from the Army in meeting the crisis.

Well, Sir, I should like now to turn to the question of imports—I call it the vexed question of imports—which as the House knows is of the greatest importance to us all. It has been, and might again be, asked as to why we did not obtain sufficient imports in the past years and build up substantial reserves for contingencies like the present. Sir, the answer must be found in the insuperable obstacles introduced by a global war, involving jeopardy to shipping from the western hemisphere and the complete stoppage of supplies from the rice-growing granaries of Burma and Siam. Sir, the figures of imports during the last three years were given by me in answer to a recent question in this House and the quantum in each year was naturally enough a reflection of the varying fortunes of the war. If these imports were not in greater quantities I can assure this House that this was not due to any lack of importunity on our part. In this matter at least I shall be perfectly satisfied to abide by the verdict of my successor when he comes. He will be able to see from the confidential files the efforts that we made to secure the largest quantity of imports and the difficulties which prevented our getting those quantities. As I have already said, Sir, as soon as indications of the impending disaster were clear I sent my Secretary, Sir Robert Hutchings, to London and Washington to press India's claim for import of foodgrains on the highest priority. Sir, the Delegation which left later has done good work. It went first to London. Unfortunately through illness I was prevented from going with the Delegation and I am grateful to Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar for having stepped into the breach. Both he and all the members of the Delegation have done exceedingly well and I pay them a well-deserved tribute. I am grateful to the Leader of the All-India Muslim League for falling in with my appeal and nominating two gentlemen to join the Delegation. The present position with regard to the efforts of the Delegation is that they pressed our claim for large imports during 1946 before the London Food Council, and they were able to get the London Food Council and His Majesty's Government to accept that claim as reasonable. They were also successful in persuading the Food Minister, Sir Ben Smith, to accompany them to Washington and support their case before the Combined Food Board in Washington. It is too early yet to assess the net results of their efforts. I am in daily communication with them. Wrangling is still going on; arguments are still being advanced by various starving nations. But I hope that the Delegation will come back with a substantial quantity of foodgrains, which India would not have got if this Delegation had not gone.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : What about the deadlock which has been reported in today's papers? Does that not affect the situation?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is only about Argentina. It is not a general deadlock. I hope that the imports that the Delegation are able to secure will be of material benefit to us in fighting this emergency.

I should now like to deal with the question of export of foodstuffs about which there has been a good deal of talk. I must categorically and emphatically deny that we are permitting foodgrains to go out of the country. I have repeatedly said that, but there are still some people who go on doubting our statements. For example, recently my attention was drawn to charges that shiploads of grain have gone from Karachi and Calcutta to destinations abroad. These have been fully investigated, and I will tell the House what they were. The shipload from Karachi was intended for Bombay and was unloaded at Bombay.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : The customs figures show that.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : And yet, when I was in Bombay last time, several people came to me and said, "Such and such a ship has taken so much rice out of India," and they would not believe me when I told them what the correct state of affairs was. The shiploads from Calcutta were intended for and went to Ceylon on loan. The full quantity involved has since been replaced by His Majesty's Government. At that time there was more rice in Bengal than they could store, and there was some rice required by Ceylon. Bengal themselves wanted to send some of the rice, on the condition that in three month's time it should be replaced by His Majesty's Government, which was done.

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I may inform the House that, in addition to prohibiting the export of foodgrains we have also prohibited the export of pulses, sugar, gur, fodder, bran, potatoes, coconuts, mustard, rapeseed and oil, except for very small quantities required for special purposes, like the provisioning of ships sailing from Indian ports.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : What about groundnuts?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We have stopped its export. As regards groundnuts, in which my Hon. friend seems to be interested—

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I am.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : As regards groundnuts and groundnut oil, the exports have been suspended, and the whole position is under review, and every effort is being made to prevent the export of any quantities that may be required for consumption in India.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Are they only suspended ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : People have entered into contracts. But we have stopped it now. Some people are under legal contract.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Most of the contracts have been fulfilled.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : In the matter of exports, I claim we have gone as far as to prohibit even small food parcels, and in this we have received the fullest co-operation from the Services.

Sir, I will not take up any more of the time of the House. I feel I have said enough to indicate that the Food Department is not oblivious of its duties at the present moment, and that in fact it is trying to give practical shape to every possible suggestion. The House must remember the magnitude of the problem and the difficulties of administration. It is true that the Central Government has accepted responsibility for the food of the people, but it has to implement its policy through the agency of the Provincial administrations. These have, as I have already stated, given us so far the fullest measure of co-operation. But the House should not forget that there are limits beyond which no Central Government of the present or the future can go. We have asked for popular support, and I recently tried to obtain the help of an all-party standing committee in our day to day administration. I invited the parties to join the food delegation. I have been eager for such help, because I strongly believe, as I have said before, that we need the support of everybody in fighting the demon of starvation. Sir, I hope that this House will discuss this problem in a sober and constructive spirit.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Hon. Members, I propose to adjourn the House at this stage. But before I adjourn the House, I want to announce that an additional day has been allotted for discussion on this Motion, which is no doubt a most important subject. We have got also the annual meeting of the Empire Parliamentary Association this evening, and many of our members here have to attend that meeting, which is being held at about 5 P. M. Therefore, after we reassemble after Lunch, we shall proceed with the debate, and I shall stop the debate for the day at 4-30 P. M. But tomorrow I propose to devote the whole day and all Hon. Members will have opportunities of representing their views before the House. At the same time I must say that I have received information from many Hon. Members here that they all want to speak. So I shall have to confine the time limit to 20 minutes, but in special cases, where the discussion is very interesting, I shall allow Hon. Members further time.

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

The Council re-assembled after Lunch at a Quarter to Three of the Clock, the Hon. the President in the Chair.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Mr. Thirumala Row, you better move your amendment and speak now. Afterwards I will request Hon. Members who desire to address the House to rise and try to catch my eye.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW (Madras : Non-Muhammadan) : Mr. President, I rise to move my amendment which runs thus :—

‘That at the end of the motion the following be added, namely :—

“and after having considered the situation in all its aspects, this House is of the opinion that a National Government at the centre composed of popular representatives which can alone tackle successfully the serious food problem should immediately be set up”.

Sir, I can assure you at the outset that I can command enough detachment not to mix up with this problem any unnecessary politics. Sir, Food is such an important thing that we were very much instructed and amused to hear the Hon. Member for Food today deliver to us a lecture which is more a piece of autobiography with a little of modesty and self-praise—not a little of modesty and self-praise. But still the floor of the Government of India is paved with good intentions and he has trotted out a series of good intentions which he conceived in his mind as the head of the Department and he intends to hand over the intentions to the Government that may have to come in the near future. I do not know how far this Government can be credited with any such credit as the Hon. Member claims.

Before entering into the merits of the question, Sir, I want to say one thing, that for all life food is an essential thing. Stomach is the basis of life and food is the origin of all life. I want to quote one Sanskrit verse from our ancient seers, from the Upanishads. We have always said that life is food and food is life, that life has sprung from food and food has sprung up from the five elements.

To quote from Taittiriya Upanishad, Brahnavalli, second chapter. ‘Anna dwiprajah prajayante—yah Kasoha Prithivim Sritah. Adho Annenaiva Jeevanti—Adhaina dapiantyan—tantaha—Annadhbhutain jayante—gatanyannena vardhante.

Out of elements food is created and by food life is sustained. Therefore, Sir, there is such an inseparable cycle of connection between food and life that it is no wonder that it should form the basic problem for any Government and every Government which is worth its salt. Nations have marched on their stomachs ; wars have been waged on stomachs and if there is no food there is no politics, there is no life, and there is no administration. It is in that spirit that I conceived my amendment today and I want to assure the House that if you want a real food administration in this country, the people and the Government must be one. That proposition has been considered by my Hon. friend the Member for Food. But the essential thing he is lacking in is that there is a lacuna that himself and the people are not one. I want to supply that lacuna by my amendment by creating a situation or an atmosphere in this country whereby the Government and the people will be one. Sir, as I have told you, after 150 years of British rule, my friend has come to take credit that the Government of India has taken Food as their sole concern. They have woken up very late in the day. Even as recently as August 1943 when there was no separate Food Department the then Viceroy of India thought that he could manage the Food Department by himself and how woefully he has mismanaged and starved this country history has recorded in the blackest chapter. Now, Sir, I shall deal with the present situation. On request I have been supplied with a copy of the report of the Famine Enquiry Commission set up after the recent Bengal famine. When I asked for the report I got only the First Part. The second part I have now seen in the Library. I thought that the Food Department would be more responsible in seeing that the members of these Houses are educated as to their activities. In that report we see the conditions set out that have precipitated the famine in 1943—the attack of Japan on the eastern frontier, the failure of the crop, the cyclone and the tidal wave and inefficient procurement and supply and breakdown of the transport system of the province. Those are set down as the reasons for the Bengal famine. With the exception of war conditions on the frontier or in any part of India, almost all the other conditions seem to have recurred in the year 1945 November and 1946. I charge the Food Department that they had not been sufficiently vigilant nor had they the foresight to profit by the tragic experience of 1943 and prepare far in advance of any such situation which Nature might have brought about in this country. As recently as 1945 November, prophet as he claims to be, the Hon. Member and his Department were trying to dispel any

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doubt in the minds of the nation that there is no fear of famine or any such thing. But, Sir, 1946 has seen a grave situation in the country. The northern districts of Madras which were supposed to be the granaries of the province, East Godavari, West Godavari, Kistna and Guntoor that lie in the Deltas of Godavari and Kistna rivers have suffered a terrific cyclone the like of which has not been seen in the recent past. Crops that were standing and about to be harvested have been smitten down and nearly 400,000 tons of paddy has gone to waste. Huge coconut gardens, sugar cane gardens, plantain gardens, involving crores of rupees of loss, have been completely razed to the ground and a tidal wave about 11 feet in height has come into the country about 10 miles inside and deposited salt silt on fine paddy lands—Sir, this area comprises about 350 miles in length on the east coast running about 15 to 20 miles into the interior—and the mighty storm has played a great havoc on the economy of this area. Again in the south of Madras, there was an unexpected failure of the south west monsoon and in the crop the Cauvery delta has also failed. The water in the Cauvery has gone down by several feet and there was no water sufficient for the second crop and in the Mysore plateau the failure of rains has created a serious disturbance of the economy. Five districts, called the Coded Districts, in Madras which are famine-stricken usually almost every year have also suffered the same fate for want of rain. Madras, Sir, has been the worst affected part of the whole of India this year and the deficit has come up to nearly 5,00,000 tons of rice. Normally, Madras was never a surplus province as a whole. We had been always importing rice from Burma and Siam. The Japanese overran Burma in the war and our supplies of rice suffered a serious handicap and with those deficits in production Madras Presidency is experiencing a very serious hardship and if sufficient quantity of rice is not forthcoming in the near future I have no doubt that a very serious situation will be created in the Southern Presidency which will be greater in its tragic effects on the population than was the Bengal famine. According to an article of my friend, Sir S. V. Ramamurthy, who has gone to America as a representative of the Government of India and of the Madras Government in an American paper 10 million will have to face starvation if no help comes.

"Now the people who face death belong to all ranks of the population, vocal and intelligent people. They will not die easily and as the food supplies fail, they will bring down the whole fabric of life and administration and life in India."

This is the opinion of the Second Adviser to the Governor of Madras who is an experienced bureaucrat and who is not an enthusiastic extremist. India has a minimum need of 20 lakh tons of rice and 30 lakh tons of wheat and about 1 crore of people are likely to die if this deficit is not made up. That is what Sir S. V. Ramamurthy has said in an article in the Washington Post of America very recently and we find, Sir, the disconcerting news from America that this Conference which is composed of the representatives of the nations of the world is facing a deadlock. Perhaps from the speech and from the demeanour of the Hon. Member in charge of Food one is led to believe that he does not take a serious notice of the deadlock that is created in America but we cannot share the easy optimism which he has given expression to in his speech.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM: It is irresponsibility.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW: My Hon. friend Mr. Hossain Imam says it is irresponsibility. I have no objection to that term being applied. If the cap fits it is all right.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I did not use it.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW: Sir, this is the situation in which we are finding ourselves today and the reason why I have proposed my amendment is this. You require a countrywide organisation to face the situation. I think from the very frequent reports and the publicity that is given by the Madras Government one can say that the Government of Madras is putting up heroic efforts to face the situation. The procurement plan which is given in very great detail is worth studying in every part of the country. I have seen, Sir, with my own eyes and known personally how the Madras Government have procured their foodgrains during the last two years. They were perhaps the first in the field in organising rationing in all the important towns. No doubt there are certain defects which an Adviser regime

is bound to have. In the matter of procurement they have said that they will employ village *karnams* to collect all the surplus grain from the villages. Madras fortunately has got a system of village administration where the *karnam*, or *kulkarni* as you call them in other parts of the country and the village Munsiffs are hereditary officers and they have been brought up in a tradition of centuries. They are the natural leaders of the people in all crises. Therefore, you can get immediately on the spot and know the amount of acreage each ryot has sown and reaped and what his average necessities of life would be in every village. From that knowledge extending over a long time it will not be very difficult for the village headman and the *karnam* to assess the requirements of every village and find out the surplus that is available for being given over to the Government. The Government have established now a system of businessmen for every *firka* of 15 to 20 villages to collect all this extra grain and hand it over to the Government, but I must say, Sir,—I have known personally—that there are grave abuses also in this system. One has to minimise them. I know when Deputy Collectors were appointed as procurement officers they helped themselves not only with both hands but with all the hands of their relatives together. I know, Sir, when you have appointed middlemen as procurers and agents of Government the Tehsildars and Deputy Collectors they instituted a very close and searching enquiry through the C.I.D. whether certain people had had anything to do with the Congress in their lifetime or the lifetimes of their forefathers. They made them the instrument of their patronage. During the last two years these agents of Government have earned a lot by these procurement methods and by running ration shops. Practically a levy was collected from the ration shop licences for war funds. I think we should do away with all this and must try to minimise these defects to the extent possible. When the Government is responsible to the people, when there is fear of popular opinion on the executive these defects will certainly be minimised. I know, Sir, the Hon. the Food Member may say that these abuses were also rampant when there were popular Ministries in the Provinces. I do not minimise that. The human nature and the general character of the people also should be taken into consideration and we should try to minimise the evils that are inherent in the system of wholesale procurement.

Then, with regard to price, there are differences of opinion with regard to the selling price fixed. There is a clamour on the part of the producers that the price of paddy as fixed in Madras is not sufficiently remunerative and that the cost of production has gone up by 200 per cent or 250 per cent. A ryot who could get a pair of bulls for Rs. 250 before is not able to get the same quality of bull for Rs. 500 or Rs. 600 even. The labour charges have gone up by nearly 150 per cent. or 200 per cent. Those people who used to get 10 annas a day are paid Rs. 1/4 a day as daily labour of 6 to 8 hours. Therefore, Sir, it is a very difficult problem from the literature that has been supplied by the Famine Commission report and from the Gregory Report to come to a definite conclusion as to which is the fair price having regard to the production charges of the producer and to the consumption charges of the consumer. But still, when you see the prices of other industrial articles and compare them with the prices of agricultural produce, you will agree that there is injustice done to the agricultural producers.

There is an argument that food should be subsidised. I have noted here that my Hon. friend the Member in charge of Food has said that subsidising of food is one of the items in his programme. In a crisis like this, you have to encourage people to produce more food. The Madras Government have already started subsidising the producers—or rather, they have announced a scheme to subsidise agricultural producers at the rate of Rs. 15 per acre if the agriculturist produces within the next two or three months short-term crops like jowar or bajra or groundnut. If you give greater inducement to the producers by raising the price of the produce and if you subsidise the poor consumer by reducing the cost of his articles of food until the crisis is tided over, that will be a good scheme. In Madras, the ceiling price of paddy is about Rs. 11, but nobody gives the producer that ceiling price. A bag of 166 lbs. is sold generally between Rs. 10-4-0 and Rs 10-12-0 in different districts.

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But there is also the point that the producer is also the consumer. Nearly 75 per cent. of the producers are also the consumers. If you benefit the producer, you will also be benefiting the consumer. Therefore, I suggest that a careful examination should be made with regard to prices with a view to seeing that the industry of agriculture is made more worth-while in an atmosphere of an all-round rise in prices showing no tendency of going down in the near future.

Then, Sir, with regard to distribution a great organisation has to be built up. We have to avoid the black market. I am reminded in this connection the great abuses that have crept into the distribution of cloth. I will give you a parallel here. Suppose some fine cloth, or some tussore, or some other cloth comes here. A certain number of *thans* is delivered to a shop. I know that control officers of the Civil Supplies Department go and monopolise the pieces and take them out under false vouchers. Their kith and kin and near relatives will take away the consignment of cloth, and when an ordinary consumer who is not so influential or connected with any dealer comes to the shop, he is told that all the cloth is sold out. With regard to distribution of food also, unless the system of rationing is effectively organised in every nook and corner of the country, the articles of food procured are bound to go into the black market. I want the Department to take full advantage of the co-operative societies. The co-operative movement has a good record in the Madras Presidency. I am told by a friend, who is in the very thick of it, that about 1,100 or 1,200 societies have been organised in the last two or three years specially for the distribution of food. There are district agricultural marketing societies in all district headquarters, with lakhs of rupees as capital. They buy all the essential food requirements and distribute them through their agencies. This is a time of stress and difficulty so far as food is concerned, and this is the time when you can bring into existence a widespread organisation based on the co-operative movement which will gradually eliminate the abuses that a middleman is bound to create in the machinery of distribution. In Madras there is one co-operative Society, called the Triplicane Urban Co-operative Society which deals annually in Rs. 50 lakhs worth of foodstuffs. The outturn of this one society alone, which was started nearly 30 years ago in Madras City and is which has several branches, nearly Rs. 50 lakhs a year. I think this is the time when a central marketing organisation or co-operative organisation should work hand in hand with the Food Department.

Coming now to the question of digging wells and deepening tanks and otherwise exploiting all sources of water, there is a proverb: When the house is on fire, the water-diviner is called to ascertain the spot which is likely to yield water; then the mason and the builder are called and asked to build a well; and then you start on the job of extinguishing the fire which is consuming the house. That is the policy which this Government has been pursuing, because its only function all these years has been to maintain law and order in this country. The distribution is a gigantic scheme which requires a parallel organisation. I am adducing every argument in support of my amendment. If you have got a Government here, it is not enough. If you have got a paid staff, it is not enough. You must have an organised following in the country. There are only two parties which have got an absolutely organised following—the Muslim League and the Congress. The Congress organisation is carried to every corner of the country—to every town and to every village. I may tell you that in every district, in every village, there is a Congressman to carry the message of the Congress. You must trust the popular leaders. What is the reason that has led to the Congress Working Committee to turn down the proposal to join the Food Board at a high level? Because it is merely an advisory body. Congress does not want to take the responsibility of tendering advice when it has not got the responsibility of making that advice effective. Therefore, the time has come now in this great crisis, when a famine on the scale of the Bengal famine is about to sweep the whole country, when the House should vote for my amendment and tell the world what the Government of India is doing. This is the most opportune time, when in three days time the British Cabinet Mission is due in this country, to tell Britain that if this machinery is handed over to popular representatives it will be possible for the Government of India to solve this food problem which is staring us in the face today.

These are all important constructive suggestions. It is not a question of Hindu or Muslim, or Congress or League. All of us are prepared to join to see that this nation first lives, and then we shall fight for dividing the doles of office, or the fruits of office, whatever they may be. I appeal to my Hon. friends to understand the spirit in which the amendment is moved. He should see that there is a constructive side to this question which can be tackled only by a popular Government. There is the great question of controlling our rivers, of bringing uncultivated land under cultivation, of handling other great agricultural projects which will bring millions of acres under cultivation and banish famine for ever. Therefore, I appeal to the Hon. Member to see that there is no question of party or government in this matter, and to accept this amendment and tell the world that at a critical moment like this the people and the leaders of this country are one in solving the food problem. With these words, I move my amendment.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Amendment moved :

"That at the end of the Motion the following be added, namely :—

"and after having considered the situation in all its aspects, this House is of the opinion that a National Government at the Centre composed of popular representatives which can alone tackle successfully the serious food problem should immediately be set up".

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN (Bombay: Non-Muhammadian) :
 Sir, I have heard with great interest the statement which my Hon. friend the Member in charge of Food Department has made at great length. It was complimentary in a way to himself and his Department for what they have done in the matter of food. We are all anxiously waiting for the realisation of the hope which he has created in our mind, though I hesitate, and people also hesitate to believe that the difficulties can be overcome so easily as he thinks. I am afraid neither myself nor His Excellency the Viceroy is so hopeful; otherwise, he would not have been going from door to door and to every nook and corner to see the situation for himself and be so anxious about it. With this impression in my mind, I say it is unfortunate that though the food problem has been discussed so often and so fully, the gravity of the famine crisis facing this country is still not sufficiently realised in certain quarters. And though many of the remedies which should be applied to save the people seem quite obvious, a good deal still remains to be done. It is not my purpose to take up old controversies or blame anyone. The imminence of the crisis demands that instead of indulging in futile wranglings and controversies, we should apply ourselves to the immediate needs of the present and the future. I shall only say this. That there has been bungling throughout—not only in this country but outside also—admits of no doubt. I was only reading this morning an editorial note in a well known London paper, the "New Statesman and Nation" in which it says: "No real explanation has yet been given of the extraordinary miscalculation that appears to have been made, not only in this country but in the world as a whole, about the prospective supplies of wheat. Unexpectedly short harvests explain something; but they cannot possibly explain the whole. The other part of the explanation appears to be that wheat stocks on the American continent have been quite recklessly dissipated in feeding pigs and chickens and that this misuse has continued right up to the present despite the increasing danger of world famine. The Argentine, it is said has consumed its spare wheat because it will not take any more payments in blocked sterling or other unrealisable currencies. North America has done the same because it seemed, for the time being, the most profitable course to take. But surely someone must have known that was happening and must have been in a position to warn the world's Governments including our own". That is what a London paper says. Our own Government will have also to explain many things. The suddenness with which the crisis has developed finds them unprepared, but even now something can be done to avert the disaster if the Government agencies and the people's leaders work with one mind and unflinching determination. All credit is due to His Excellency the Viceroy for the efforts he has been making in this direction. I was interested to read his proposal to have a small, compact food council at the Centre with full plenary powers consisting of Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah, the Nawab of Bhopal and himself. In the absence of details it is difficult for us to say why the Congress found itself obliged to reject the proposal, but I hope these efforts will be pursued and that in the next few days some such highpowered

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body will be set up here to accept complete responsibility and direct food policy and administration. It must be something of a super government—strong enough and able enough to have its way and see that both the people and the administration play their part.

It was with a heavy heart we read, Sir, in the morning papers that the Combined Food Board meeting at Washington has run into a severe deadlock. It is to be hoped that it is only a temporary phase and that, in any case, whatever may be the stumbling blocks in the way of complete agreement at the moment, the needs of famine threatened countries like India will receive due consideration. No country in the world has suffered so much during these war years as India—with a half famished population faced with continued food shortages and prices rising as much as 200 to 300 per cent. I may also point out to my Hon. friend that England, though not producing even enough vegetables for their own country, has been able to feed their people with a rise in price of 50 per cent. over the pre-war level, while we here who are producing everything, have a rise in prices of 200 to 300 per cent. and yet you want us to give you compliments. It has gone through the terrible Bengal famine which took a toll of over two million lives followed by widespread epidemics causing further heavy mortality. Now that we are threatened with a more terrible calamity—according to an official estimate, as many as ten million people may die of starvation during the coming months if immediate help is not forthcoming, are we not entitled to expect help from those countries which used our resources during the war. It is not mere sympathy we are asking for. We want justice and fairplay. I am not unaware of the general food position in the world, but it seems incredible that those nations controlling the Food Board would deny us this reasonable request of ours in the present crisis.

I am glad that the Government of India have announced a number of measures during the last few weeks to help agricultural production and are also holding weekly Press conferences to place as much information as possible before the public. In such matters as food which concerns the very life of the people it is bad policy to withhold information or lull the people into a false sense of security. Let me confess, however, that I have my doubts about the Government's plans and intentions. We heard a good deal about the "grow more food" campaign. Crores were spent on it. But what is the result? It is a sad story. May I hope that now at least the Government will profit from the lessons of their past experience and approach this task in a different way and in a different spirit. Departmental plans will be of no good unless they associate the people with it, they take the advice of the people's leaders, they set up food committees in every town and village and work through these committees who will see that the money is well and usefully spent. In my speeches on the Railway Budget and the General Budget, and also in a statement which I issued to the Press a few days ago, I made certain appeals to the Government which I hope the authorities have taken into consideration. I do not want to repeat them, but on this occasion I would like to make a few concrete suggestions.

Firstly, may I ask the Government to pay special attention to the problem of uncultivated land. There are millions of acres which though cultivable are still uncultivated. In dealing with this question—in fact, I may say, in dealing with every aspect of the food question—the Government should have both a long-term and a short-term view. I read the other day the statement of a meteorological authority that this country should be prepared to meet scarcity conditions and the threat of famine once every twenty years. We have had serious set backs in the first half of this century, but it may be remembered that even during the second per-war years half of the last century there were as many as 24 famines—big and small. In the pre-war years we have made up our shortages through imports, but now at least a determined attempt should be made to make the country self-sufficient. The causes for large tracts of land remaining uncultivated are many.

Sometimes it is due to differences between landlord and tenant, sometimes to heavy Government assessment or official harassment and sometimes due to lack of facilities or because the growing of foodcrops has become uneconomic. Let me call attention to one point. Not only has the growing of food crops become uneconomic but even the chance to recoup through other crops like cotton has been lost to the agriculturist. There is an announcement today about future arrangements about cotton. The Government of England is going to buy all the cotton for their industry through proper agency appointed by the Government. That means the U. K. C. C. They will take all our cotton and we will be starving for cloth, but we will have to sell our cotton at the lowest fixed rate of the Government. I had given a warning in my Budget speech. Again I ask the Government members present here to tackle this question seriously and see that the result is not so disastrous. The Government have fixed the prices of cotton, for instance, so low compared with world prices that the agriculturist suffers there also. The Government should examine every one of these points and see what should be done to bring all this land under cultivation. Subsidies, reduction in assessment or total exemption of revenue for some time if necessary, free grants of land to tenants these and other measures may be adopted as an inducement to agriculturists to cultivate these lands and increase our food production. Whatever the cost may be it is the Government's first duty to increase our production and see that there is sufficient food for everybody. If our land tenure laws or similar difficulties stand in the way, they should be immediately changed in national interest. Our production figures show that we have not paid adequate attention in the past to the urgency of increasing production. Let me refer to rice, for instance. The total production in British India was said to be 28.2 million tons in 1911-12 which dropped to 21 million tons in 1940-41 and afterwards to 23 million tons in 1942-43 hardly enough for the population particularly when we take into account the increase in the population.

My remarks apply also to Burma which in pre-war years was importing rice to us. The Government of India should prevail upon the Burma Government to see that production is rapidly increased. If owing to political or other troubles or threatened lawlessness in rural areas or wrong economic policies they allow production to fall not only they but we also in this country will suffer.

I am glad to see, Sir, that the Government have taken up the question of importing tractors and other agricultural machinery. There has been considerable delay in getting them with all the necessary implements, but now that the war is over, the Government should speed up the process and arrange their distribution on proper lines. But let us not forget that the mainstay of our agriculture is cattle. If there is dearth of cattle, it will have its inevitable effect on our production. The last Cattle Protection Conference held at Agra in December presided over by His Highness the Maharaja of Bharatpur (a Conference convened both by Hindus and Muslims) called the Government's attention to the big deficiency in our cattle wealth. The resolution further said :—

“ Notwithstanding the fact, that there is a great deficiency in the number of cattle, the Government did not undertake any special measures to check its slaughter. The Government of India's Notification, dated the 26th July, 1944, is only an eye-wash. The Punjab and Frontier Governments did not, in spite of the repeated popular demands, give any legal shape to this Order. Even the Provincial Governments which gave effect to this Order did not make proper arrangements for the inspection of slaughter houses. The result is that the slaughtering of cattle is still going on as before. In spite of the fact that the Slaughter Control Instructions were published with the concurrence of the Military authorities, the young ones of cows and buffaloes kept in the Military Dairy Farms, though of very good breed and numbering not less than 30,000, are slaughtered mostly two weeks after their birth or in some cases even soon after their birth. According to the Report of the Economic Inquiry Committee of the Punjab Government, No. 65 of 1937, it is not only goats that are slaughtered for the purpose of soft skins, but also pregnant cows

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The fact remains that the indiscriminate manner and quality and quantity in which cattle are being slaughtered during the time of the present Government, surpasses all the previous periods. This Conference expresses its deep sorrow at the Government's policy encouraging such indiscriminate slaughter of cattle. In the interest of the public it is considered essential that not a single useful cattle be slaughtered and that a special provision be made in the Indian Penal Code by which slaughtering of useful cattle be considered as an offence for which punishment should be fine and confiscation of cattle". I shall only ask, in addition that the administrative arrangements everywhere should be tightened up in such a way that further slaughter of useful cattle becomes impossible. This is an order by His Excellency himself after he was convinced that agriculture suffers owing to shortage of animals for agriculture. He also got the agreement of the military to this.

One word, Sir, about rationing and the way it is being administered. Are the Government unaware of the corruption and inefficiency of the system? The sufferings to which the poor people and the illiterate are so often subjected by subordinate officials are pitiable. They are made to wait for hours and unless a secret fee is paid they do not even get the ration card. I do not say that this kind of thing is happening everywhere, but I want to impress upon the Government that unless they take steps to stamp out corruption and prevent official high-handedness, rationing will only impose additional hardships on the people. I am in favour of the extension of rationing to as many areas as possible, but at the same time the Government should ensure its proper working. One way in which it can be done is the setting up of popular food committees everywhere to supervise general distribution arrangements and enlist public co-operation in the fullest measure.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Is this not being done in Bombay?

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Bombay is the only province where they have done it from the beginning and has been most satisfactory. Others have followed the example of Bombay. The Government of India have learnt a lot from them.

And before I sit down, Sir, let me refer to the fifteen-point resolution on food issued by the Congress Working Committee. There is nothing in it which is inconsistent with or essentially different from the policy announced by the Government. That is all the more reason for demanding that in meeting the food crisis the two—the Government and the people's representatives—should come together as close as possible and ensure its proper working. Let it be remembered that the task of tiding over the threatened famine crisis, however important in itself, is not the only end in view. It should be looked upon as the starting point for building up a comprehensive food plan for the future which will save the country from these continued threats and provide at least a sufficiency of food for the population.

One word more, Sir. I am very glad to have an assurance from my Hon. friend, the Food Member, that the poor will be subsidised in the purchasing of food at cheap rate and that the unemployed and disabled will be fed free.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS (Nominated Non-official) : I have listened very carefully to the able speech of the Food Member who no doubt patted himself on the back and ended up by saying that everything will be all right. I am afraid, Sir, this optimistic view should not make him feel complacent about the conditions.

Sir, coming from Madras, I wish to point out that nature has been very unkind to us. First of all the south-east monsoon failed. In addition, we had a cyclone and a tidal wave. Sir, they did extensive damage. Now, the people are suffering greatly. They have not got enough to eat and the prices are so high that even ordinary people find it difficult to get as much food as they want. That being so, Sir, it is the bounden duty of the Government, both provincial as well as Central, to provide Madras as much as one million tons of cereal, whether it be rice or whether it be wheat. Sir, it has been always said that Madras people are mild people. It is not so. There has already been rioting in a well-known place called Conjeeveram

in front of the Rationing Office and there will be riots all over the Presidency. The Madras man is not likely to lie down to die as the Bengal people did. He would rather go to jail because he knows very well that he will be fed there, because the jail food is always good and very healthy. Now, what I want to say is that we should try to prevent rioting and upsetting of all ordinary life and that we must do it as quickly as possible. No doubt, the Madras Government in the beginning till the end of last year was rather complacent about the thing. They said it is not so bad, we may get on and so on, as my Hon. friend thought that they will be getting rain from the north-east and things will be all right and so on, but it is only after, I believe, one of the officers from the Centre went to Madras that he really found the situation to be very bad* and that induced His Excellency the Viceroy to visit Madras which showed really how things were. He went from place to place and found the withered crops and the dry tanks, which were not ordinary tanks—we call them tanks no doubt but they are very huge reservoirs which ordinarily irrigate not hundreds of acres but hundreds of thousands of acres. Well, he was so impressed by what he saw that he at once made arrangements to send people to England and America for the purpose of getting food. We hope, Sir, that the Government will spare no efforts to get as much wheat and rice as possible from not only America and England but also from Australia. There is no use in saying we will be getting them. What is the good? When a man is actually dying for want of water or when a house is actually burning it is no use of saying we are sinking a well. They would be dead by the time help comes and then you may get any amount of cereals and millions of tons of rice and wheat but they will be of no use. Therefore, I say what you have to do do it at once.

Sir, instead of simply blaming the Government I would suggest a few remedies. The first is, as I have already said, get cereals from outside. Then prevent export of cereals from India. No doubt a statement was made that no cereals were exported, but, Sir, the papers speak differently. It seems a large quantity of rice was exported from Bengal and I know Madras cereals are being exported to Ceylon. No doubt the Ceylonese are also South Indians—they must be fed—but charity begins at home.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : It is entirely incorrect that exports are going on.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : I will take the Hon. Member's word.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Is the Hon. Member aware of the smuggling that takes place to Ceylon?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : Well, we get our information first-hand while your information comes through your offices. I would ask the Hon. Member not to rely upon the official reports. For once I will give a personal instance. In Madras vegetables are selling not at 25 per cent. of pre-war prices but 300 per cent. Brinjals were selling for 3 annas a seer; now it is being sold at 15 annas. I hope the Leader of the House will bear me out. When I put a question whether the prices had not gone up the Secretary referred the matter to Madras who replied that there had been only a slight increase in the prices! Well, Sir, I live in Madras and I know what my servants are buying and at what prices. What is the report of your officers? They will simply report as you like.

I do not want to go into further details. I have been drawn away from the course of my speech. Sir, when the Bengal famine was on we were all crying here—

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Will you give me a definite case and I will look into it?

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : I could give you one tomorrow if you want. I am speaking from experience.

Sir, when Bengal was without food they imported an expert. Of course the Government of India always import experts whenever a question is raised but when the expert landed he said there was no want of food in Bengal and the Secretary

[Sir David Devadoss]

of State was instructed to say on the subject of shortage of food that it was on account of people eating too much or having too much money or they are wasting everything. Sir, I should like to know which wiseacre instructed the Secretary of State for India to say that, because he could not have known it out of his inner consciousness. He must have been informed by someone and who was the person who informed him that the people were eating too much in Bengal, that they had got too much money and that they were wasting and some people were not selling.

Well, Sir, the Hon. Member cannot say that the information which is given by the Government of India to the Secretary of State and the information which the Government of India receives from its officers is correct.

Now, Sir, the point which I was making was that Government should stop all exports, whether legal or illegal. As my Hon. friend, Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar, interjected, a good deal of smuggling is going on to Ceylon. It is a well-known fact. I have only heard today that a lot of useless or spoilt rice has been thrown on Tinnevely—about 10,000 maunds or tons I forget now. Well, Sir, that is from Travancore. That is what they are doing. Things are happening like that but you cannot prevent it. I will come to that point why you cannot prevent it.

Then, Sir, we must stop waste. Take, first of all, the large quantity of rice that is boiled in the temples. I am not against Hindu temples. I am mentioning this only for the present purpose. Large quantities of rice are boiled in temples every day. Let the gods also have a little less quantity. There is no harm in that.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Who eats that rice ?

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOS : All useless people, all idlers. Not the halt, not the maimed, not the blind, but all the temple servants. The food is wasted. Why not cut down the rations ?

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : But they do want something to eat.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADAS : I quite agree. But not everything. Temples have got large stocks of paddy and other grain. So also the so-called Maths. Why not commandeer them ? Why should you not do it ? This is a matter of emergency. This is not an every-day occurrence. Again, a large number of people are fed at marriages and such other occasions. That should be prevented by some means or other. Eating-houses also should not supply a large number of courses. You may have seen a recent cartoon in "The Hindustan Times": you cut down the number of courses, but then one course was so big ! What is the good of saying "Cut down the food" ? It is not the number of courses—it is the quantity that is eaten. Therefore, wherever waste is possible, you must stop the waste.

Then, Sir, they are going to have a "Grow More Food" Campaign. I want that whatever loan is given, it is given directly by the Collector. It is no use giving it through local officers ; not even 75 per cent. will reach the ryot. Then, the revenue officers also—I am talking of Madras—must be kind to the ryots and try to help them. The officers think their job is to get as much as possible, squeeze as much as possible, out of the cultivators, to say, "We have collected so much," and so on.

The next point I want to refer to is this, that the controls must go. Of course it may be asked : "If the controls go, do you think things will be better ?" I think so, because the corruption that prevails is awful. Where does all the money come from which is given in the form of bribes ? It must come from the cultivator or from the poor man who has to buy the thing. I will give you one or two instances. I have here a paper which mentions the case : it refers to the Textile Commissioner of Madras and his friends. One man is the head of a certain society or sabha, and the other man is the secretary. Would you believe it, for one performance, for one so-called music concert, they collected Rs. 82,000 ? From whom ? Who would purchase the tickets ? Textile people, who deal in textiles.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Licence-holders.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : There was a complaint about them and now there is a case going on. What I say is that all this money comes from the men who have to buy—from the poor men. Therefore, I say, all controls must go. Corruption must be put down. For the purpose of putting down corruption, you must see that people have a voice in the matter. These licensees are persons who pay any amount in order to get licences. These licences should be stopped.

I will give one or two instances. Every Jack-in-office thinks he is an autocrat. You cannot do anything. If you ask for a licence, you are told, "You have not been in the trade before; therefore, I won't give you a licence." And if you are a trader, you are told, "No, you are not in the good books of the Government." There is no appeal against that decision. Take one instance, of which I am personally aware. In Kodaikanal, which, as you know, is a hill station, ordinary people grow vegetables; they grow potatoes and so on. One fine morning an order is passed that the price of potatoes is only Rs. 3. They have already paid Rs. 5 per maund of seed potatoes which they purchased from the Agricultural Department. Then the Collector or some other officer says, "You cannot sell potatoes at more than Rs. 3 per maund." And who is the loser? The poor grower. The same is the case with regard to vegetables—cabbages, carrots, and so on. You must sell only to the licensees, and what do the licensees do? They get these things very cheap from the poor grower, and, going down some sixty miles or so, on the plains to Madura, for instance, they sell at double or treble the price. Therefore, I say that all controls must go. If the controls are removed, I do not think we shall be in a worse position, because these controls are the source of corruption, and corruption means suffering to the people. Therefore, I strongly recommend that, if the Hon. Member is intent upon really benefiting the people, he must remove the controls and see that corruption ceases.

THE HON. MAHARAJADHIRAJA SIR RAMESHWAR SINGH OF DARBHANGA (Bihar : Non-Muhammadan) : Mr. President, the gloomy picture of the food situation in this country which the Food Department has presented to us has filled the entire country with dismay. Nature has been blamed for it. But in the present age, when science has made such a rapid progress, Government cannot altogether escape the blame for allowing India, having such vast resources, to remain dependent on Nature for the bare necessities of life.

Thanks to the leadership of Lord Wavell, India did not suffer devastation in the last war in the same measure as many other countries in the world. Still her sacrifices for the successful prosecution of the war were enough to exasperate her. She tolerated all the privations during the period of the war in the hope that after the termination of the war she will live comfortably in peace. But the present condition of life and the prospect of famine have shattered that hope to pieces. Naturally, we see shadows of restlessness and strife. It will, however, not serve any useful purpose to apportion blame on this factor or that now, when we are face to face with this grim situation. The question of the hour is: what should we do to meet it?

Both the Central and the Provincial Governments bungled during the last Bengal famine and that is now an established fact. The draw-backs of operations of the control departments in different provinces are also well-known. The first thing that a Government ought to do is to take lesson from its past mistakes.

Procurement and distribution are the two important things which should be carefully handled.

In the matter of procurement it is necessary for the Government to see to it that the growers are not harassed and sufficient quantity of grain is left to them to meet the needs of their family, dependents, and future cultivation. Conditions vary from locality to locality and individual to individual. Therefore, the local officials should examine every case individually before deciding what quantity of grain a cultivator should be made to part with. It should be recognised that all the necessities of life of cultivator are met by what he produces. He feeds so many labourers by paying them in kind, he maintains his cattle, he feeds the members

[Sir Rameahwar Singh]

of his family and his dependents and converts his grain into cash for buying clothes, medicines, kerosene oil, paper, etc., besides such eatables which he does not grow. The education of his children and the social obligations also depend on the produce of his field. This, therefore, also raises the question of fixation of the price at which the surplus grain should be purchased. If an adequate price is paid, the propensity for hoarding and black-marketing will be greatly checked. Government should not make profit out of the growers' helplessness and whatever relief has to be given must go to the cultivators and consumers.

It should further be ensured that the grain is stored and looked after in such a way that they may not rot in granaries. No benefit will accrue to the consumer if the storage is not done in the proper manner.

The unexpected announcement about famine condition has, I am afraid, upset the market. The hoarders have found time to drive the stock underground and in certain places the shopkeepers have refused to sell grain on the ground that stock was not available. It may be that some growers have either concealed their surplus or sold it to profiteers. If precautions had been taken before making the announcement this dislocation would to a great extent have been prevented. But the mischief has been done and I think it will not be advisable at this stage to take harsh measures and thereby aggravate panic indiscriminately.

Government should arrange to have correct figure about the quantity it can reasonably hope to procure without causing undue hardship to the growers and traders and if that does not suffice to meet the situation it should arrange to import foodstuffs.

I congratulate Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar on the powerful speech he made in the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation a few days back appealing to the world for helping India. India strained herself to the utmost during the last war to supply men, money and materials to other countries and now when millions of people here are threatened with starvation will she be denied their help to escape the catastrophe? If it be so, I would think that humanity has deserted the world and the war was fought in vain.

Coming to the question of distribution, I would urge upon the Government to take effective steps to ensure fair distribution in the simplest possible manner. Our past experience is that in actual practice the work is done in a haphazard manner and it causes great hardship to people. The whims and caprices of the distributing authority coupled with his succumbing to undue influence play an important role in frustrating the noble intentions of Government. Machinery of distribution should be so perfected that the chances of these defects may be reduced to the minimum. The distributing authority should also take into consideration the requirement of each class of consumers in determining the quantity. For instance, the quantity of cereals that may be enough for men of the upper and middle classes may be insufficient for those doing manual labour. Further, provision should be made for that class of people in villages who are neither growers nor labourers but depend upon the stock of grain in village markets. If foodstuffs become scarce in village this class of people will be hit the hardest. The plan of feeding the entire population can be successful only when the distribution is according to needs. For this purpose non-official co-operation is very essential. His Excellency The Viceroy has done very well in inviting Gandhiji and Mr. Jinnah to help him in the task. I think that the co-operation of all other organisations including those of the Landholders (who will be mostly affected) be enlisted in this gigantic task. This is a matter which is above all party considerations. Every well-wisher of the country should do what he can to ward off the impending calamity.

Sir, I need not say more at this stage. It is not the general principle that matters. All of us recognise the need of economising consumption and fair distribution of foodstuff. What matters really is the way in which the scheme is actually worked. I hope I shall have further occasions to refer to this subject specially after we have seen how the Food Department's work both at the Centre and in the

Provinces is carried on. For the present, I hope that the entire energy of India will be directed to ward off the crisis and nothing will divert her attention to other matters until this problem is solved.

THE HON. MR. M. N. DALAL (Bombay : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, the gravity of the present food position is so grave and sinister that it has completely overshadowed our normal difficulties of malnutrition and deficiency of the pre-war years. The reports that have appeared regarding the consequences of the vagaries of the monsoon, natural calamities like cyclones, crop failures and shortage in yield have given rise to fears that if immediate and stringent measures are not taken, the country may have to go through the ordeals of misery due to starvation. The famine threatening India to-day is the greatest in the last 50 years, greater than that of Bengal or of the year 1900. It will serve no useful purpose, Mr. President, at this stage to apportion the blame either to Government or to any particular Province or State for its acts of commission or omission at this critical juncture. What is required is a spirit of co-ordination of all parties. In this moment of crisis let not our leaders fail us.

The immediate causes of the famine were severe droughts throughout India, want of proper irrigation due to war years and the special requirements of the Army. It is a truism therefore to say that this famine is as much the result of India's war efforts as of Nature's malignity because, for in certain districts, the crop yield this year is only 15 per cent. of the normal yield. The agricultural efficiency of this country has gone down materially precisely to what extent we are not in a position to say at the present stage. The reasons are paucity of able-bodied labour diverted to the armed forces and high prices of cattle, agricultural implements, manure, etc. Further, the efficiency of production, apart from the mere quantum of the food-grains produced, has been seriously affected by the fact that the population has been increasing at the alarming rate of 5 million people every year. The apparent prosperity of the cultivating classes, as a result of the high commodity prices, is neither reflected in greater productivity nor in the greater efficiency and higher standard of agricultural produce. Therefore, a smaller amount of food has to suffice for an ever-increasing and a larger number of people every year.

The Hon. the Food Member and the Acting Food Secretary have made innumerable very useful suggestions to meet the crisis. The Provinces are alert, energetic and alive to the situation. This is particularly so in the Province of Bombay which has made a competent job of rationing in all its phases. In no Province of India has there been such rigorous rationing rules and control as in Bombay. To talk only of a few, there is prohibition of service or distribution of foodgrains, eatables, milk and any beverage excepting tea and coffee, to more than 24 persons only at any function. The possession in your own house of more than 1 9/16 paili per unit of ration is an offence. In addition to the three course meals at controlled rates, we have meatless and chickenless days, and no eggs are to be served after 10 or 11 in the morning in any catering establishment. In contrast to this Sir, we have in Delhi all-white bread and rolls in wasteful quantities, porridge, fresh milk and cream seem to be unlimited. There appears to be not much of austerity in catering establishments in this part of the country although there is some austerity in Government hostels in Delhi. I wonder, Sir, how many of our bourgeois class in Delhi will relish the brown bread that we have had in Bombay for the seven years of war, or for the matter of that, the controlled powdered milk. Mr. R. A. Popperall, Chief Regional Officer of the Milk Marketing Board, says in a London message, "London sewage is three times as safe as the Bombay milk supply", and yet, Nature has played a luckless part in our part of the country. For, the most severely affected areas are the districts of Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwar, Sholapur and Satara of the Bombay Presidency.

Coming, from an industrial province which is naturally not self-sufficient in foodgrains, a province which has inflicted upon itself one of the most rigorous rationing systems and controls, we have a right to ask Government to see that the surplus provinces do not adopt too parochial an attitude towards us. If the surplus provinces refuse to give us the surplus food, I think it is Government's duty at least now to retaliate and stop their supply of cloth or any other commodities. I welcome

[Mr. M. N. Dalal]

the suggestion of the Government of India for monopoly procurement compulsory levy and an all-round reduction in the basic rationing on an all-India scale including the provinces of the Punjab and Sind. Special care should be taken to see that the administrative machinery at the Centre and the Provinces is properly co-ordinated as there is a possibility of its breakdown due to constitutional changes, provincial rivalries, party politics and disgruntled officers.

During the last 5 days we have heard of innumerable suggestions, both from the Agriculture and the Food Departments, suggestions for the increase of agricultural efficiency, of vegetables, fruits, tractors, ploughing fertilisers, irrigation, boring wells, to the manufacture of dehydrated foodstuffs, food yeast and other by-products, development of fisheries, import of milk powder and products, complete ban on the export of food parcels, foodgrains, edible oils and innumerable other long-term and short-term measures, which will go a long way to solve the food debacle. The suggestions by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief which were read out by the Hon. the Food Member are really welcome.

But there is only one way to tide over the immediate emergency and that is by the maximum possible imports that we can get from abroad. The countries that can come to India's aid are just a few. An estimate of the United States Agricultural Department of food supplies for 1945-46 says—Ceylon food prospects are critical. For the same year rice production in Burma is creating an actual deficit. British Malaya is facing a cereal shortage due to absence of its imports from Burma and French Indo-China. And in Hongkong a 50 per cent. cut in rice rations has just been enforced. Therefore, Sir, the only country that can come to our aid is Siam. Siam has a certain amount of exportable surplus and, Mr. President, it must be remembered that India was the principal importer of Siam's rice in the pre-war days and therefore it should have the highest priority and a prior claim on its entire exportable surplus. This fact, Sir, should be driven hard and driven home before the Combined Food Board at London and Washington. But the substantial imports to tide over the difficulties of the immediate emergency can only be had from bigger countries like the United States of America, Australia and Canada, and there His Majesty's Government are in a better position to exert their influence to save the millions in our country. The message that 4 lakhs tons of wheat have been allocated to this country during the first half of the year 1946, if true, is very welcome news. Whatever we can get from abroad must be promptly and efficiently handled for which we should have the machinery, especially with regard to storage, transport, distribution and distributional agencies.

Finally, Sir, the Central Government is composed of a highly trained military personnel which did memorable work in the dangers and tribulations that effected the unfortunate Province of Bengal in the second half of the year 1943. Let us mobilise the same army again. Let us at one stroke convert this great engine of war into the greatest instrument of peace and constructive effort. Its ample resources, both in the matter of discipline, technical equipment and capacity to work to a time-table, must obviously be the spearhead of an all-India drive to meet a national crisis. This would be, Sir, the greatest post-war constructive work in which our soldiery will be called upon to fight a national emergency.

There is a world shortage of food and supplies of wheat, sugar, meat, rice, oil and fats in the year 1946 are 10 per cent. below its pre-war level. The position of India with its 400 teeming millions is far worse. The year 1946, Mr. President, is the year of our destiny and we can still save millions of our countrymen if we forget our political bickerings and work in a spirit of co-operation. In this dark hour of national peril it behoves all Political Parties, their leaders and all citizens, to sink their differences into the waters of oblivion, close their ranks and offer united resistance to this pest of a food debacle, destroying our peoples, our hearths and our homes. I only hope, Sir, that there will not be separate Food Control Boards of the Government, the Congress and the League. If our leaders will cultivate the virtue of tolerance towards all and be prepared to discharge their responsibilities, comradeship in crisis, common achievements and common sufferings would help in revealing the essential unity of purpose for which providence has brought us together.

THE HON. RAJA CHARANJIT SINGH (Nominated Non-Official) : Mr. President, before I speak on the motion before the House, I would like to say, with your permission, how sorry we were to hear of the sad bereavement which His Excellency Lord Wavell has sustained in the untimely death of his able son-in-law. He was a promising young man and had a bright future before him. We sympathise most sincerely with Their Excellencies Lord and Lady Wavell, and the Hon. Mrs. Astley in their irreparable loss. I would request you, Sir, to tender to them the heartfelt condolences of this House.

I am glad the Government have brought the question of Food situation before the House. The food situation in the country is serious beyond words. It concerns every hearth and home, from the highest to the lowest. Its gravity and importance demands careful consideration and immediate action. I would earnestly request all my countrymen to sink their party and political differences and join in this stupendous task for the benefit of humanity and the preservation of civilisation which is our common heritage.

You know, Sir, what happened in Bengal in 1943. The loss of life was appalling. The Woodhead report shows a very sorry state of affairs indeed. Still rumour has it that some people made millions at the cost of the dead and dying. What saved the situation at that time from deteriorating still further? As you know, Sir, and as Hon. Members know, it was not notes and minutes which are generally left in archives for future historians to judge. But the prompt and personal attention of Lord Wavell. He went into the matter himself and secured the help of the army. I should like to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude to His Excellency for his noble efforts which, by the grace of God Almighty, were crowned with success. Not only India, but the Empire, has every reason to be grateful to him.

The present situation from all accounts is worse than what it was in 1943. It came as a surprise to hear the other day that thousands of tons of wheat flour, if not more, were allowed to deteriorate for one reason or other and had to be destroyed. This is not the time, Sir, for things like that. I hope my Hon. friend the Food Member will see that this performance is not repeated.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Where was this?

THE HON. RAJA CHARANJIT SINGH : You yourself said so the other day in the Council. I don't remember the name of the place now. We cannot really afford to lose a single ounce, what to say of thousands of tons.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Not thousands of tons anyway.

THE HON. RAJA CHARANJIT SINGH : Theories and dogmas are all right in times of peace and plenty, but now is the time for practical work. I hope our Allies, who take interest in this country, and also other units of our Commonwealth of nations will be able to divert their surpluses to India.

I am glad that Local Governments in the United Provinces and the Punjab and other provinces are doing all they can for grow more food. But all this would take time to bear fruit. What is wanted now is proper control and equitable distribution. But in my humble opinion strict care must be taken that these measures do not become by any chance instruments of oppression. Human nature is human nature all the world over. It would be too much to expect the services to remain unaffected if their families, their own kith and kin, are in any way harassed and dissatisfied. To tide over the present difficulty I would therefore strongly suggest that we should fall back on the previous plan, and request His Excellency the Viceroy to get the help of the Army again. With their sense of discipline and duty they can render invaluable help at this juncture. I have no doubt that our popular Commander-in-Chief will be only too glad to lend his helping hand.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is being done.

***THE HON. SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR (Madras : Muhammadan) :** A discussion of the food situation has come to be a hardy annual. Always during the Budget discussion and sometimes twice a year we have this question discussed in the Legislature. Several suggestions are put forward by Members on this

[Saiyed Mohamed Padshah]

side of the House and many promises given by Government, but the despondent feature of it is that after all is said and done the situation does not show any sign of substantial improvement but on the other hand it has been steadily deteriorating in spite of all that is said to be done to cope with the situation.

Sir, for one like me who comes from Madras it is surprising to believe that the authorities at the Centre had no inkling of what was going to happen in the country as regards the food situation. I know I can speak from personal knowledge of the way in which the Madras Government has been trying to keep itself alive to the situation. In this connection, I should like to appreciate the vigilance of Sir S. V. Ramamurthy who is the second Adviser to the Governor of Madras, who all along has appeared to have been quite alive to the situation. At the meetings of the provincial Council he never made secret of the fact at least during the end of last year that the situation of food in the country was going to be very serious and I thought, Sir, that realising the situation as he did he should have taken steps to inform the Central Government of the crisis that was impending. It is, therefore, Sir, very surprising that the Central Government did not take the steps which it ought to have if not to avert at least to mitigate the danger that was coming. Besides these warnings, Sir, there were also other portends which should have made the Government of India more alive to the situation. In our Province, Sir, most of the southern districts depend upon the south-west monsoon for their paddy crop. The district of Tanjore, which is supposed to be one of the chief granaries in our Province suffered because of the failure of monsoon in June last. The fact, Sir, that the south-west monsoon was on the whole a failure should have opened the eyes of the authorities that everything was not all right in our Province at least. There were some rains just at the beginning of south-west monsoon season but afterwards the monsoon failed and then again there were belated rains just at the end and then, Sir, there was also the failure of the monsoon in the northern districts. The north-east monsoon on which Kistna and east and west Godavari and Tanjore depend for cultivation ultimately failed. Besides that, Sir, there were cyclones and flood in those parts. The result of it all was that Madras is now the most seriously affected Province in the whole of India.

Sir, as I have said it passes one's comprehension how such a situation could not make the Government of India realise the seriousness of the danger that was impending.

Now, Sir, we understand that ration in Madras has been cut down recently—already the ration was very low; it was not up to the standard recognised by the nutrition authorities. If the ration has been cut down again it is obvious, Sir, that people there would not have the stamina, the strength to resist any diseases that might visit our Province on account of malnutrition and want of food. The better course for the authorities would have been to try and bring some other parts of the country under ration. As the Hon. the Food Member stated this morning, only 53 millions in the country are now under ration and what about the other 350 millions? Should not some attempt be made to try and see that this sacrifice, this task of dividing the burden on the country is equally placed on the shoulders of all in all parts of the country. It is therefore necessary, Sir, that instead of trying to cut down the ration in Madras Government should control things in other Provinces which are not now rationed so that instead of burdening Madras which is already on the verge of starvation those parts of India which have not yet come under ration should also come under ration, so that all the parts of this vast country may bring the same sacrifice to bear to the task of meeting the danger which now faces the country.

I am glad, Sir, that the Hon. the Food Member has given some good account of what the Central Government is doing to increase the production of food in our country but I say, Sir, even in this connection we do not see much evidence of any substantial measures being taken in this respect. The Hon. the Food Member said that the acreage under jute and cotton production has been decreased but has he got reliable information that the decrease in the area which was cultivated with cotton and jute has resulted in an equal increase in proportion to the increase of the acreage

under rice and wheat cultivation? Unless this is done, Sir, the mere fact that there has been a reduction in the acreage of cotton crops does not warrant the inference that paddy crop has increased.

Again, Sir, as has been observed by some of my colleagues there is a lot of land in the country which is lying waste. Much of this land is covered with scrub. It has got first to be cleaned up, and to do this it is not possible for the ryot to provide the means. He has got to be provided with ploughs and mechanical instruments. For this purpose it is very necessary that tractors, for which this country has been clamouring for such a long time, should be got from abroad. In this connection I am sorry to note that Britain did not assume that attitude of help and co-operation which it should have done. I understand that recently an order was placed by the Government of India in the U. S. A. for the supply of 500 crawler tractors. In connection with this order, it seems that the vested interests in the United Kingdom, the manufacturers of agricultural implements, have been able to superimpose a condition that all the accessories for these tractors should be obtained from Britain, and that unless this is done the tractors should not be available for export to India. It is very sad that such a step should have been taken by the British Government, and that, in the face of the fact that India had made every kind of sacrifice in men, material and money to go to the aid of Britain during the war. If this condition is adhered to, it is very doubtful whether we would be able to get those tractors which have been promised to our country, because we know that in Britain the labour problem is acute, that they do not have enough of labour which is required for switching the industries from a war-time basis to peace-time needs. Unless this condition is waived by Britain, it is very doubtful if India would get the tractors which she needs. And without these mechanical implements it is very difficult to bring back to cultivation all the waste land which is now lying idle in many parts of the country.

Just a word about transport. The other day, "*The Statesman*" devoted a full leading article to the subject of transport. From that we gather that the bulk of the rice surplus in Siam which is intended to be sent to India for consumption in this country is lying there idle, awaiting shipment. It is strange how, even after the war is over, after all the necessity is over in which all the available shipping space was required for being used for military purposes,—after all that is over, that even now there should be lack of shipping space which should stand in the way of the transport of such badly needed food to our country from abroad.

Just one word about the grow more food campaign. I am glad that such useful instructions have been given to the military, and we are grateful to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief for the instructions which he has given which would go to help the grow more food campaign. But so far as the civilian population is concerned, this grow more food campaign can never become a success unless at least two conditions are satisfied. One is that it should be made a paying proposition to the cultivator. Secondly, the price of the foodgrains should come within the reach of the common-man of the country. These two conditions seem, on the face of them, to be irreconcilable. But if we only make a real effort in this direction and do it in right earnest to solve the problem, it would be very easy to reconcile both these interests—the interests of the cultivators and those of the consumers. For this purpose one thing is necessary, and that is that the Government should subsidise food. We were very glad to learn from the Food Member this morning that a committee was examining the question of subsidising food. But my earnest appeal to him is that the committee should not be allowed to waste much time over it. Already we have precedents in this respect in some of the Indian States. In some of these States cheap grain schemes have been afloat for some time. Indore seems to be the pioneer in this respect; it appears to have started this scheme as early as 1942. And this attempt on the part of this State was responsible for converting it from a deficit territory into a surplus one. This is the one and only method by which you could induce the cultivator to grow more food. The cultivator must be given his implements; the cultivator must be supplied with the seed that he requires—improved strains of seeds wherever possible—and then the cost of production would go

[Saiyed Mohamed Padshah]

down, and the result of this would be that the price of foodstuffs would not be quite so high as it is today and would be such as to be within the reach of the poor man in the country.

Before I conclude, I would only make an appeal to the Government of India that they should not continue to adopt the same attitude of indifference to my province. As we are far away from the capital of India, it is very difficult always to make the voice of Madras heard here. I would, in this connection, repeat what my Hon. friend Sir David Devadoss said, that Madras cannot be neglected, as it has been all along, especially in this matter. Madras would not take this neglect lying down, and if the Government does not want to give any cause for any trouble in our country, it should see to it that the very badly needed food that Madras requires is supplied as early as possible.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, the 21st March, 1946.