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COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

Thursday, 21st March, 1946

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COUNCIL OF STATE

Thursday, 21st 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.

MOTION *RE* FOOD SITUATION—*contd.*

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : We will now resume yesterday's debate.

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH (Education, Health and Agriculture Member) : Sir, my eye is giving me a good deal of trouble and I would therefore ask your permission for the Hon. Mr. Dhar to read my speech. Before I do so, there are one or two points raised by Hon. Members yesterday with which I should like to deal. It has been said that the "Grow More Food" campaign has not been a success. I should like to draw the attention of Hon. Members to two facts. Nine million acres from cotton have been put under foodgrains. Hon. Members can calculate the amount of grain that these 9 million acres are likely to yield. If the "Grow More Food" campaign had not been there, then the situation would have been far worse than it is today. "Grow More Food" campaign has met the situation to a great extent. It is true there is a certain amount of deficit at present. But if this plan is continued for another one or two years, it is my hope that we should meet all our requirements in the country itself. The idea that India can continue to import food from outside is altogether impossible. We must produce all the food that we can and we hope to do so. What has been lacking is leadership. Leadership is needed to promote agriculture, leadership from people who sit in this Council going out to the villages and telling them how to grow. India can grow all the food that it needs only if we can supply good seed, and good manure for all our irrigated area and good market.

The Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row spoke regarding the co-operative societies. I am entirely in agreement with him. Co-operative societies in India, both for agriculture and marketing, can fulfil a great purpose. So far, in some provinces, co-operative societies have made some progress, while there are other Provinces where the co-operative societies have done very little.

Another point that was raised was that all culturable land should be taken under the plough. Culturable land, so far as water irrigation is available, is already under the plough. The population in the villages is so strong that they will not leave even half an acre of land any where if it can properly be put under the plough. There is land unprotected either by rain or by irrigation which can be taken under the plough, but that can only be done if sufficient irrigation is available and for that we are trying to introduce long-term irrigation schemes which will take a very long time. But, in the meantime, tube wells can be started to put new area under cultivation. In my speech I deal with this particular point.

The Hon. Sir Shantidas Askuran spoke regarding cotton prices. I am one with him that in the case of areas which have been taken away from cotton and put under seed grain, the cultivator should get the best price he can get for his produce. He has reduced the land under cotton. Therefore, so far as increase of cotton price is concerned, I am one with him and I will take this matter up with the departments concerned.

The Hon. Sir Shantidas Askuran also spoke regarding the use of tractors. I am placing a statement* on the table giving the details of the tractors which we have been able to obtain and the other arrangements we have made in the matter of takavi loans, tube wells and other things. The position regarding tractors is this. I am personally using a fair amount of tractors on my own farm. Tractors cannot be used in villages as they are at present unless the holdings are consolidated and bigger fields are available for traction ploughing. But where large areas are

*See Annexure A at end of the proceedings.

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available, tractors are useful and we are doing the best we can to get tractors. We sent one of our officers not long ago both to America and England and he has come back with a definite scheme to get tractors out. But tractors are being used by the people both in England and America and there are not a very large number of them available at present.

The Hon. Mr. Dalal spoke regarding the loss of milch cattle. Orders on that point are already out. Some provinces are following them, while other provinces are not following them, but this is a matter again for the provinces to carry out. I do not think that we have lost cattle to such an extent as to cut short our supply of milk. Indeed, what we need is feed for cattle. The cattle that are not fed cannot give you any milk. Take Bengal, parts of U. P. and parts of other provinces where food is not available for men. Then food is not available for cattle also. A smaller number of cattle, properly fed and properly looked after, will give you a greater supply of milk than we can get at present. In the matter of Mr. Pepperall's report, to which the Hon. Mr. Dalal drew attention, we have already issued our decisions on that report. It is true that milk is not supplied pure. Pure milk supply is the very great need of our country and to that end we are also proposing to start dairies wherever possible to have processed milk, powdered milk, etc., for the purpose. May I, Sir, ask the Hon. Mr. Dhar to read my speech?

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA (Bihar: Non-Muhamadan): Will the Hon. Member say something about irrigation plants?

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: I am going to deal with it in my speech. For tube wells, I hope to announce in a day or two that the Government of India would be prepared to give at least 50 per cent. of the cost of the tube well to any private owner who wishes a tube well, but this matter has not been finally settled.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA: During the course of this session I went to Calcutta to buy irrigation plant. I met Martins and some other companies and I was informed by all of them that in India there was only one plant available at that time for irrigation, that is, lifting water out of a river and drawing it into the fields.

THE HON. SIR JOGENDRA SINGH: There are now one or two firms in India who are making pumps and engines. You can get a supply from them. I just forget their name.

THE HON. MR. S. M. DHAR (Nominated Official): I feel diffident to speak on this Resolution for it would have given me great pleasure if today I was supporting a policy of abundance. I do believe that with consistent drive we can raise India's production up to the standard required for its present population.

In reviewing the whole agricultural situation we find that there are three primary needs of agriculture without which it is impossible to raise crops to full maturity. Given good cultivation, the first need of agriculture is good seed, proper amount of manure and the requisite water supply. So to help the provinces to provide these needs, we have granted loans amounting to nearly Rs. 5 crores and grants amounting to Rs. 4 crores. I may say that it will need a great deal of leadership and drive both on the part of public men and the Government to provide even for the already irrigated lands the full supply of good seed, manure and water. Such leadership has so far not been forthcoming as men of light and leading are deserting the villages and settling down in towns. It is not so much a change in the tenure of cultivation that is needed as leadership in demonstrating and providing these essential needs of agriculture.

Regarding seed, we have given loans to the extent of Rs. 253 lakhs, that is 2½ crores, and grants of Rs. 87 lakhs. These are expected to produce 700,000 tons of extra foodgrains per year. I am afraid we have not been able to place seed growing on a proper basis. Seed growing, when it takes its proper place, will have to be in three stages: as a mother farm, then a State-controlled multiplication farm and then seed farms in every village under proper arrangements. It would be necessary for each village to have an adequate area under seed grown under the direction of men

who have been trained to produce good seed. I think there is great room for demobilised soldiers to be given land for seed growing by hiring it out from the villages. Till each village has its own multiplication farms, it would never be possible to provide seed for the whole area available. I think the best way is to follow Professor Hill's idea and to set up throughout India some 20,000 to 30,000 'groups,' each with a centre, the groups being units of about 10 villages or covering areas with a population of about 5,000. These groups should in the first instance be limited to those areas estimated at approximately 80 million acres which from considerations of water supply, etc., will give a maximum return over a five-year period. Demobilised soldiers and emergency commissioned officers could be employed for this work.

Then again, India's greatest need is manure and it is my view that if we make use of all the manure that is available in the country, we can supply manure for the bulk of our irrigated cultivation. In this connection we have been drawing the attention of the provinces to provide for village forests so that these forests can supply the fuel and the cattle yard manure could be saved for cultivation. We have also taken up the question of composting town refuse in some of the towns and it is our purpose to take up 5,000 towns—big and small—available for composting. We have so far distributed something like 330,000 tons of town refuse compost and we expect to have compost every year 2 million tons from this source when all the towns are brought under the scheme which would be sufficient for 500,000 acres. We have also arranged for the necessary transport of compost and I am now trying that this manure may be taken to the villages so that its use may be more generally recognised. In addition, we have recently started a scheme for the composting of village refuse by co-operative action among the villagers. In addition to improving the cleanliness and sanitation of villages, we expect an additional 50 million tons of manure to be prepared from this source, which would be sufficient for about 10 to 12 million acres. More important than the extra manure produced, the village kamdars are now training the farmers in improving the quality of the manure produced by adopting simple methods of urine conservation. We expect highly useful results from this work, since even a partial conservation and utilisation of cattle urine would help to double the percentage of nitrogen in our farm manure and add about one million tons more of nitrogen to the soil. We are also exploring the use of water hyacinth in Bengal by composting and if the work that is now in progress succeeds it will be a useful source of organic manure for the rice fields of Bengal, provided that the hyacinth seed which is very obstinate is satisfactorily killed in the process of composting.

In the matter of fertilizers, as against a quantity of 70,000 tons obtained last year, for the year 1945-46 we have been allocated 154,000 tons. A factory at Sindri in Bihar has been planned and will soon be under construction, and another factory for making fertilizers has been set up in Travancore. But it needs proper instructions for cultivators to use them to the best possible advantage.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What will be the total production of these factories ?

THE HON. SIE JOGENDRA SINGH : They have not started yet.

THE HON. MR. S. M. DHAR : The total production of the Sindri factory is 350,000 tons, and that of the other is 50,000 tons.

I may say that though compost manure and fertilizers show a great increase they do not even now touch the fringe of the problem, i.e., adequate manure needed for all our irrigated areas. When we do that, we can definitely depend at least on 25 to 50 per cent. increase in production.

In the case of oilcakes, some ground has been covered and 262,000 tons of oilcakes have been distributed but I have every hope that this supply will be multiplied when all of our oilseed is crushed in the country itself and only oil is exported.

We have also taken up the question of increasing the water supply and have given loans amounting to Rs. 62 lakhs and grants of 145 lakhs for emergency and minor works. These grants provide for the construction of 34,500 wells, 4,500 tanks, 7,700 other minor works in addition to repairs to 4,600 wells and 2,000 old tanks. I am afraid some of the provinces have been rather slow in carrying out the

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work, but it is expected that when these works are completed, they will add something like 700,000 tons of foodgrains per year to the annual production.

The greatest need of a dry country where rainfall is scanty is an assured supply of water and during the year, Sir William Stampe, our Irrigation Adviser, has been examining the subsoil water supply available in some Provinces and States. About 2,500 tube wells have so far been sanctioned in the different provinces and these when completed will irrigate an area of about 800,000 acres. We have now with us Mr. Roscoe Noss, an American engineering expert, who has been going further into the matter of using deeper subsoil supply and his assurances provide another source of exploration. We have agreed to give to the provinces 50% of the cost of a tube well. I am now examining in consultation with Provincial Governments the question of going further and making available up to 50% of the cost of a tube well to any private agriculturist who can show that he has sufficient area of land which he can water and that the subsoil supply of water is within reasonable limits. I hope to be able to announce the decision shortly. These tube wells will naturally have to be according to the standard fixed by our experts and will have to be executed within a fixed number of months. The Department will do its best to procure the tube wells, engines, etc., and the equipment for the sinking of the wells. Applications for these should be submitted through the provinces specifying the area that has to be irrigated.

Then again mostly in the Bombay Presidency for anti-erosion works, etc., loans amounting to Rs. 48 lakhs and grants amounting to 56½ lakhs have been made. They cover an acreage of more than one and a half million acres and they are expected to produce 200,000 tons of extra food a year.

To sum up, during the war period which has just passed, we have by diverting areas from cotton into food crops and by other means put 9 million acres under food crops. These statistics are accurate except for the permanently settled areas as we have now proved by definite experiments carried out under separate arrangements and the increased yields have gone to feed the increased population. We are now starting a Directorate of Economics and Statistics at the Centre. Sanction for this has already been obtained and Mr. Natu will be the first Director.

The present food situation has been causing great anxiety to the Government. Personally I feel that it is the responsibility of the Agriculture Department both at the Centre and in the provinces to produce all kinds of food for our population and it grieves me to think that we have done so little to make an abundant supply of food available. We are also planning to increase the supply of milk, fish, poultry, etc., and plans for these are under preparation. In the matter of research and for the provision of properly trained agriculturists, plans are under preparation for the starting of an Agricultural College and an Animal Husbandry College at Delhi.

So far we have done little to explore deep sea fishing. It is a source which has been greatly developed in some of the Western countries and I remember at one time Japanese trawlers were fishing in the Bay of Bengal. We are proposing to start a Fisheries Research Institute—one Marine Station and the other Inland fisheries Station, and I am at present trying to negotiate for the supply of trawlers and fishing tackle from countries where it can be obtained as soon as possible.

We are also arranging as soon as possible to have (1) a Rice Research Station in a selected rice-growing area, with sub-stations if and where necessary; (2) a Central Potato Research Institute; and (3) a Central Pasture Research Institute. Potatoes give the highest yields and it is hoped that the area under potatoes would be increased to feed our increased population. Commodity Committees have been set up to develop the cultivation, marketing and utilisation of sugarcane and coconut which have great food value. A Bill for the constitution of an Indian Central Oilseeds Committee is under the consideration of the Legislature.

Some work on fruit was done in the Punjab. Not only in the development of commercial orchards but also in fruit products it has made a great success. It is now proposed to start an Institute of Fruit Technology with a Fruit Institute to help India in the matter of fruit-growing and making standard fruit products.

We have been trying to do all that we could within the resources of the Provinces and the States and in this I have received every support not only from the Hon. the Finance Member but the unstinted support from His Excellency the Viceroy himself. All I can say is that Agriculture is slowly coming to its own. For the first time Government has recognised its responsibilities to maintain remunerative prices for the agricultural produce and to aid agriculture by such means as I have indicated above. In the meanwhile I feel that though production may be adequate, its distribution requires the selfless assistance from grain merchants who have for centuries handled the distribution of production. I am sorry to say that so far the grain merchants have not shown the way how the procurement and distribution could be so arranged as to the supplies in all places as they were before the war. With inter-provincial trade and railway communications providing food even in the worst affected areas there was famine in money but there was no famine in foodstuffs.

BRIGADIER THE HON. SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR (Nominated Non-Official) : Mr. President, Sir, I have heard with great attention and deep interest the speech of the Hon. the Food Member and I have no doubt that I am voicing the feelings of a vast majority of our countrymen, when I say that we are thankful to him and his Department for the gallant efforts that are being made to combat the great debacle of famine. Their's is a difficult and overwhelming task, and they are entitled to the co-operation of all those who have the welfare of their countrymen at heart.

I have also to express our deep appreciation of the keen interest that Lord Wavell has taken in the Indian food problem, not only now, when through an unprecedented drought, vast areas are threatened with starvation, but also for his efforts during the tragic days of the Bengal famine. Bengal went through what I consider to be an unparalleled situation, but that was during the period of a war of unparalleled intensity, when problems of transport and administration could not be tackled on a peace-time basis. Conditions today are different and there is no reason why the crisis cannot be successfully met.

I must pay my humble tribute of thanks to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief for the lead he has given in austerity to the Army under his control. Might I utter just one word of caution to those who are demanding the army services for the civil administration in meeting the food crisis? There is a grave danger of soldiers getting mixed up with party politics and this must be avoided at all costs. I shall say no further.

I have paid great attention to the criticisms levelled by some of my friends against the Food Department and I have tried to visualise what some of them would have done, were they in charge of the Food Department. Could they have secured better procurement, would they not have introduced and expanded rationing, would they not try and secure imports from abroad and finally would they not have attempted to get the co-operation of Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi? Let us criticise by all means but let us be a little more considerate, a little more charitable and a little more fair-minded to those who are trying their hardest to save this country from one of the greatest dangers that the world is faced with.

A large number of demobilised soldiers will soon be available, and I can think of no better method of making use of their services than by giving them lands, and affording suitable facilities for cultivation. Wells can be dug and reservoirs constructed which can be of use for the resettled men and the agriculturists. They will confer a lasting benefit on the country.

The Food Department plans have been drawn up, but I presume they are only to meet the present crisis, which may last for a few years. I am dead opposed to controls, to the severe regimentation of our food, and therefore hope that we will not be forced to stick to these controls any more than is absolutely necessary. India will have to draw up long-term plans to meet the ever recurring fear of famines, and

[Sir Hissamuddin Bahadur]

we will have to leave much to Nature and God. I am here reminded of a Persian couplet which states—

“Sham-i-raze mokhur, basham mizan aaraq-i-doftar ra

Ki peah as tife ezad, pur kumad pistau-i-madar ra

“Worry not over problems of life's existence nor engross yourself in offices and files for God, even before he creates a new life, provides milk for the babe through its mother”.

Now let me make a few concrete suggestions, which I have no doubt the Hon. the Food Member will seriously consider. It is admitted on all hands that corruption steps at the root of all administration, much more against food administration. I suggest therefore that those who have offered bribes should be protected against the legal consequences of their foolish actions, if they volunteer information on the corrupt officials who have accepted bribes. That should serve as a deterrent to those who have gained at the expense of the sufferings of their own countrymen. While on this question, might I state that corruption and bribery is not a disease peculiar to India, it exists in every country in the world. But that is no reason why we should not eradicate it from our land.

I have a few points on the “Grow More Food” campaign. Government cannot expect unqualified success in their endeavours if they have one set of laws for the landlords and another for the tenants. While the former are harassed to pay their dues to the tehsildars, very often they in turn have no remedy against defaulting tenants. This must be remedied without delay. Further, land revenue and water tax is too high and must be reduced. If the landlord is not assured of his recovery from defaulting tenants, he prefers to let his land be uncultivated. You cannot expect more food under these conditions.

Finally, I am afraid effective steps have not been taken to prevent the slaughter of cattle which are vital for agriculture. Looking at the question from a purely economic viewpoint, I as a Muslim urge upon the Government to ban the slaughter of all cows only for the next 20 years. This is not a religious question at all—it is just plain commonsense. Already there is no ghee and what is available, is out of reach of the ordinary men, and very little milk, and prices of bullocks are 400% of pre-war years.

In conclusion, I would like to make an appeal to the leaders of the two great political parties to sink their differences in this hour of national crisis. The eyes of the world are on us. What will history say—while millions faced starvation and death, we could not forget and forgive our mutual hostilities? The next few months are going to be crucial in our history. The challenge of death from hunger will have to be faced and I have no doubt that that challenge will be met by our political leaders in the only way such a challenge can be met, by willing co-operation and mutual trust.

The arrival of the Cabinet Mission within the next few days will offer us a golden opportunity for turning over a new leaf not only in the history of India and British relations, but also the Hindus and Muslims inhabiting this great land of India.

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN (Leader of the House): Sir, I think it would be better for me at this stage to make the position of Government clear so far as the amendment moved by my Hon. friend Mr. Thirumala Row is concerned, so that it may facilitate the debate. I would first like to say that the amendment as it stands is not at all acceptable to Government. As a matter of fact, I do not see any necessity for this amendment, because we all know that the British Cabinet Mission has already left for India, and they will be here in a few days, and they, in association with His Excellency the Viceroy are going to tackle the political problem of this country. One of the questions to be solved is the setting up of a new Executive Council. That being the case, I do not see any reason why this amendment should be moved at all.

I am sure the House would wish His Excellency the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission every success in their most difficult task. What is needed is a just solution, a solution which will bring peace and prosperity to the country. His Excellency the Viceroy has also made it very clear in one of his speeches that the members of the present Government are ready to retire when a new Government is formed and would wish them every success.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW (Madras : Non-Muhammadian) : On a point of information. Where is the difficulty for the Government in accepting this amendment ?

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : The Hon. Member can have his say afterwards. What I would like to emphasise is this, that we all expect a just solution, a solution which will bring peace and prosperity to the country. Further I cannot accept the terms of the amendment as it stands. The Hon. the Mover here wants a national Government at the Centre composed of popular representatives which alone can tackle the food situation successfully. I do not agree. If there is no national Government formed, the present Government will certainly tackle the food situation, and we have confidence that we shall be able to meet the situation, successfully. The amendment further says that the new Executive Council should be set up immediately. After all, there is no point in asking for this knowing full well that the Cabinet Mission are coming here to tackle this problem. I am sorry, therefore, that I am unable to accept the amendment as it stands, and the Government will oppose it.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : The Hon. the Leader of the House said that he had some objection to the exact wording of this amendment. I want to know if he is willing to agree to a slight modification which may be agreed upon in consultation by both sides.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : But the Hon. the Leader's point is that the Cabinet Mission is coming out to India to settle that question, and that it is not possible immediately to set up the new Government. They are going to decide the question. In view of that, the Hon. Member can think over the matter. He has got the whole afternoon in which to think over this matter. My advice to the Hon. Member is to accept the advice of the Hon. the Leader, because this matter is under consideration. The Cabinet Mission is going to consider the matter carefully. I therefore think that the amendment is inopportune at present.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : I am prepared to change the wording and put it in an acceptable form ; and, as you have said, there is the whole afternoon yet.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : I am afraid it is too late for that. The amendment has already been moved, and the Hon. Member cannot change the wording.

***THE HON. MR. N. K. DAS (Orissa : Non-Muhammadian) :** Sir, although the Hon. the Food Member has a little too much trumpeted his own achievements, I feel that he nevertheless deserves a large measure of credit for having handled the food problem more or less on an equitable all-India basis, and if he has failed to foresee the vagaries of nature that befell Madras and almost the whole tract on the East Coast, we have still to make allowance for his limitations, as he is no more than an ordinary human being, who cannot look far ahead into the future.

The Hon. Member, Sir, in the course of his speech yesterday has enunciated many very high-sounding, almost socialistic, principles. He has said, for example, that the "lowest in the land must have a reasonable share of food". He has set his target very high indeed when he said that "there must be adequate and balanced food for all". It has still to be seen how far and how soon he will be able to achieve these high objectives. To my mind, Sir, these progressive ideals can only be achieved

[Mr. N. K. Das]

in a free country, where the State and the people have absolute and unswerving confidence in each other. These principles cannot be worked out with an alien Government dominating the country when distrust and mistrust surcharge the atmosphere. And it has, therefore, been very rightly observed by my friend from Madras that in order that this great catastrophe of impending famine may be averted in this country a fully responsible National Government must be set up at the Centre at once. Let us hope and trust that this will come to an actuality in the course of the next few weeks. All our sincerest good wishes go out to the Cabinet Mission and we wish their negotiations all-round and speedy success.

Sir, Orissa, the province I come from, is listed as a surplus province. And whenever I have tried to make out that the crop statistics are not reliable and that all our exportable surplus is made up of large quantities of foodgrains that used to flow from the neighbouring States, which in area make up about two-thirds of British Orissa, and that these having completely stopped, Orissa is not in the fortunate position of being termed a surplus province today, I have been looked at with a large amount of incredulity. But the fact remains and I make bold to assert still that British Orissa is not a surplus province in the matter of essential food grains, namely, rice and wheat. Therefore, Sir, a compulsory levy on Orissa for the all-India pool is, on principle, inequitable.

Let us look at it from another angle also. The *per capita* production in Orissa is taken to be 5·45 maunds in terms of paddy, which is the principal food crop grown there. And the *per capita* consumption in Orissa is taken to be at 3·61 maunds. If we analyse the latter figure, we find that it works out at barely 17 ounces per day per head of population. And whereas the *per capita* consumption in other provinces ranges between 22 to 27 ounces, in the case of Orissa figures have been worked out at starvation levels of 16 to 17 ounces and a surplus has been fabricated, so to say.

Sir, as a result of the annual visitation of floods and occasionally of droughts large tracts of lands have gone to waste and produce nothing. For example, in Balasore district, nearly two thousand acres of lands have been sand-ridden due to havoc wrought by the Baitarani and Brahmani rivers. In Puri and Cuttack large tracts of excellent arable lands have been laid waste due to identical causes; yet for the last 25 years or more rent and revenue is being levied and collected on these lands and I daresay that these lands figure also in the computation of crop statistics year to year. The land revenue policy, Sir, is so inelastic that you cannot escape the levy of rent and revenue even when your land yields nothing due to natural calamities.

A compulsory levy on Orissa, therefore, Sir, has to be very carefully made and cautiously worked out. It may, in fact, lead to great hardships. I have in some cases watched and followed up these compulsory levies on producers in Orissa, made by executive authorities and very often these are based on very wrong calculations of their total outturn and very, very scant attention is paid to their actual needs, which comprise of food, wages, fodder for cattle, clothing and other bare necessities of life. The compulsory levy of the Centre is reflected in the compulsory levy in the Provinces on the producers and the producer, finding himself helpless against the unsympathetic attitude of the Executive or of the Police, hides and hoards or black-markets his produce and the vicious circle or cycle goes on and on.

A word about the "Grow More Food" drive, Sir, and I have done. The "Grow More Food", Sir, has so far achieved no tangible results in my Province. People charged with such work, especially during a time when the whole country is heading for a calamitous famine, should be more practical and realistic. They should watch that the money advanced for bringing wastes under the plough are properly employed. They should appreciate the difficulties of the grower and advise and assist him in every possible way. They should find out potential and practical growers and not waste their money on insincere amateurs. Collective farming should be encouraged and the Department could usefully employ their energies in collective

farming on large waste or jungle lands of which there are plenty in Orissa and do more by way of example, so that these might serve as positive sources of encouragement to others.

To conclude, Sir, I am glad that the response to our Food Delegation to the U. K. and U. S. A. has been fairly fruitful and we could reasonably expect large consignments of wheat from these countries and from Canada soon enough. But the short supply of rice in this country is still unremedied and unless we have a wind-fall either from our early variety paddy or from imports from Burma or Siam, we shall still be helpless on that count.

Sir, the prospect of a calamitous famine in the months to come has set everybody thinking and I am confident that with the National Government set up in a few days and with the Viceroy, all attention to the seriousness of the situation, and with the Army personnel fully prepared to play a heroic part in the matter of distribution of foodstuffs, as they did during the Bengal famine, the clouds will clear and the great catastrophe averted.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, my Hon. friend the Food Member began yesterday on a note of self-congratulation. I wish that he had left it to us to estimate the achievements of the Food Department and to give it full credit. Instead of choosing this modest and wise course, he unfortunately prided himself almost in every sentence of his speech on the results obtained through the efforts of the Food Department under his leadership. I am sorry that the manner in which he presented his case will prejudice the Food Department in the eyes of the public and prevent it from giving the credit that the Department is justly entitled to. If the first person singular had been used by him less frequently in his speech, it would have been better both for him and the Food Department.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I never used the first person singular.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: When the Hon. Member spoke of the achievements of the Food Department he referred to them as something that had been obtained under his leadership. I do not want to do him any injustice at all, but I must say that that was the impression left on the entire House both by the manner and substance of his speech.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I am sorry if there is a misunderstanding. I never wanted to blow my own trumpet. I only wanted to make a statement—it was a statement of fact—about what the Department has been able to do during the last three years. I had to relate it because there is some misunderstanding and it was done in all humility.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: I will accept the Hon. Member's assurance now. In any case, Sir, this is a smaller matter than the catastrophe which we are faced with and which must immediately receive our attention. If the Hon. Member, while detailing the achievements of the Food Department, had at the same time taken care to impress on us the gravity of the situation and the tremendous effort that must be made both in order to meet the present crisis and to get the help that we urgently need from outside, I for one would not have taken any exception to his frequent references to the great achievements of the Food Department. But the main fault of his speech, in my opinion, was that he diverted our attention from the principal problem that we have to tackle, and tackle immediately. I am sure that the Hon. Member did not want to do it. He is anxious, we may be certain, to obtain the foodgrains that are necessary to prevent deaths by starvation from taking place in this country. But his manner was such as to make us feel that—

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT: He has given his explanation. I do not think you should harp on it. He has given a thorough explanation on this point.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I have accepted his assurances so far as he himself is concerned. But I cannot help referring to the fact that his speech did not emphasise the gravity of the situation as it should have done.

There is just one more thing that I should like to say in this connection before I deal with the situation itself. In the last debate that took place in this House on the food question in November, 1944, I ventured to suggest to Government the desirability of supplying us with full information, at the commencement of every winter session, with regard to the food situation in the various provinces. I suggested, for instance, that we should be told what the procurement policy of the Provincial Governments was. I also suggested that the memorandum or the pamphlet that the Government should supply to us should inform us both of the prices of the foodgrains in different parts of India and the prices of the articles required by the cultivators, because it is only in this way that we can intelligently appraise the situation as a whole. Again, I asked that we should be informed to what extent ration cards were being regularly made use of; and in this connection I suggested that special efforts should be made to subsidise the poor man's food. I gathered from what my Hon. friend Mr. B. R. Sen told me and from the communications that I received from him last year that the information that I had asked for would be supplied. But I am sorry to say that in spite of the promises that were made, Government have failed to carry out their obligation in this matter. They have again prepared a memorandum giving us information only on some aspects of the food situation. This memorandum was laid the other day on the table of the House, but it was not circulated to the members. I have got a copy of it in my possession, because I asked the Council Office to give me one. The statement of policy prepared by the Department of Agriculture has been circulated to the members. I do not see why the usual practice of circulating to members all documents in connection with the food position and the agricultural policy of the Government which are prepared about this time should have been departed from.

Now, Sir, coming to the food situation, there is no doubt that the position is a critical one. It has been computed by Government that the deficit amounts to about 6 million tons. I should like to know what is the method that has been adopted to calculate the deficit in rice? I understand that it is estimated to be 3 million tons. Does it take account of the practical stoppage of imports from Burma? We used to receive about a million and a half tons of rice annually from Burma. We have this year got only 75,000 tons of rice and I am not at all sure that we shall be able to get a substantially larger quantity next year. Our ability to get more rice from Burma will depend on the area under rice there. On account of the peculiar situation prevailing in that country, the area under rice last year was only about 6 million acres which I understand was, roughly speaking, about one-third of the area in which rice was normally grown before the war. I know that the Burma Government is trying to bring a larger area under rice this year. But I think it will be too optimistic of us to place any reliance on this and to imagine that we shall get a substantial quantity of rice next year from Burma. Now, Sir, as I have said, we used to receive normally about $1\frac{1}{2}$ million tons of rice from Burma. We lost about half a million tons on account of the cyclone which affected the East Coast. That is, before the failure of the monsoon, it was known that the shortage in rice would amount to 2 million tons. Has the failure of the North East Monsoon caused a reduction only of about a million tons. The total rice production is in the neighbourhood of 26 million tons, and although the rice crop in Bengal may not have been seriously affected, yet it is difficult to believe that the drought which affected the rice-growing tracts of our country has diminished our rice resources by only a million tons. Sir, this is an important point. I should like my Hon. friend the Food Member to tell us how he has estimated the deficit in rice.

In order to deal with the present situation Government have taken two steps. One is to reduce the ration allowed per head till a few weeks ago and the second is to send a Delegation to Washington to plead our case before the Combined Food Board. Taking the first point first, we understand that the daily ration of an adult is going to be reduced throughout India to 12 ounces. This is a serious matter to all those who are engaged in manual work, whether heavy or light. I know that the Government have agreed to increase the ration of the heavy manual worker by 4 ounces. But even so the total quantity that a heavy manual worker will get will

be quite insufficient to maintain him in full strength. I mention these facts, Sir, to bring out the seriousness of the situation and also to ask whether in deciding to reduce the daily ration of an adult to 12 ounces, due regard has been paid to the requirements of the cultivators. This is a question of importance, because every Provincial Government, according to the information that has been given to us, is going to take more stringent steps to collect the surplus foodgrains from the cultivators. On what principle will the amount to be left with the cultivators be calculated? Will the cultivator be allowed only 12 ounces of food daily or will he be allowed at least 16 ounces? To treat the producer on the same footing as the ordinary consumer will I think be a serious mistake. It would be antagonizing him and make him resort to all manner of tricks in order to defeat the policy of the Government. Indeed, he might be so far antagonized as to turn his attention from foodgrains to other crops. This is a serious matter and while I sympathize with Government in their efforts to meet the present situation as far as possible within the resources at their disposal they cannot use methods which might in the long run defeat their purpose and be injurious to the country.

Sir, as regards the efforts of the Delegation that has been sent to Washington to enlist the support of the Combined Food Board, I am sure that it has the good wishes of all of us in carrying to a successful issue the task that it has been entrusted with. Yesterday we learnt from the papers that the position was not very hopeful but the message that has been given by the President of the United States to Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar is a heartening one and we hope that with the combined assistance of the United States and Britain we shall succeed in getting the Combined Food Board in Washington to accede to the requests put forward by the Indian Food Delegation. If, however, these requests of ours are not complied with it is easy to imagine how greatly the seriousness of the situation in the country will be increased. The rains that we had a few weeks ago might have improved the position slightly in the Punjab or in the western parts of the United Provinces but they have not made any serious difference, in my opinion, to the over-all situation. We must continue to use our best efforts to get at least 4 million tons of foodgrains from the Combined Food Board in Washington.

Now, Sir, while this year we are unfortunately faced with a situation in which we have to be dependent on the charity of outsiders, we hope that this will not normally be the case and that the present crisis will soon be tided over. I cordially agree with my Hon. friend Sir Jogendra Singh that we cannot expect generous assistance from outside year after year. We have to depend ultimately on our own resources and the present situation shows us that we have to depend on ourselves not merely for our current requirements but also for building up reserves against lean years. The Foodgrains Policy Committee recommended that we should import a million tons of foodgrains annually from outside and that we should in addition to this import for current purposes have a reserve of half a million tons. We have so far not been able to do that. We have not yet been able to obtain the quantity that we should have received in accordance with the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee. These facts show that we shall in future have to depend on our own efforts not merely to meet our current requirements but also to build up reserves which will be indispensable when we are threatened with a famine. This being so, Sir, the importance of the problem of increasing our internal food resources would make one naturally like to know what it is that has so far been done by Government in connection with this problem and what it is that it plans to do in future. The Famine Enquiry Commission devoted considerable attention to this matter. Its recommendations are of two kinds: short-terms and long-terms. Its short-term recommendations, roughly speaking, cover a period of 15 years, that is the Commission proposed that these recommendations should be carried out within the next 15 years. Questions relating to the reclamation of land and the extension of irrigation engaged the attention of the Commission,

"But it is clear" it said, "that the potential increase in production from these sources cannot fully meet future requirements and that strong emphasis must be placed on increased yields from land already under cultivation, as the foremost means of meeting these requirements. It has been estimated that rice yields can be increased by 30 per cent. namely, 5 per cent. by improved varieties, 20 per cent. by increased manuring and 5 per cent. by protection from pests and diseases. This has been described as a conservative estimate and it has been said that a 50 per cent. increase can be achieved without, difficulty, that is 10 per cent. by improved varieties and 40 per cent. manuring."

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru]

Now how is this potentially to be translated into actuality? The Commission said that it would be possible to increase production to the theoretical limit indicated by it if a large quantity of manure and artificial fertilizers was available. With regard to farm-yard manure alone it said that according to Dr. Burns about 30 million tons would be needed. Now, Sir, the Agriculture Secretary, Sir Phiroze Kharegat, stated in another place on the 1st of February that about 300,000 tons of compost had been prepared in this country. How small the quantity is compared with the needs of the country must be apparent to the House. Now, while I am disappointed that more has not been done in this field I am more concerned with the future than with the past and what I should like to know is not what schemes Government have in view for increasing the production of farm-yard manure and artificial fertilizers but what are the stages by which they hope to reach the maximum. Can they tell us how much they would be able to achieve, say, during the next five years and the next succeeding quinquennium? Unless such a programme is laid down the achievements of the Food Department and the Agriculture Department will not savour of a well thought-out plan and we shall not know when we may expect our present difficulties to be substantially overcome. We can not be satisfied with the arrangements that are being made unless a definite programme is laid down for progressive increase in the production of cereals and of manure to the extent suggested by the Famine Inquiry Commission.

Another point to which the Commission directed the attention of Government was the need for growing vegetables, particularly tubers,—potatoes, sweet potatoes, and so on. It also asked that the Government should undertake the intensive cultivation of plantains. Some other fruits and vegetables might be added to this list. We were told this morning by Sir Jogendra Singh that the quantity of potatoes available to the country would be increased. But here again, we want more definite information. We want to know what the plan as prepared by the Government is and what is the period in which they hope to achieve a definite result. Unless such a programme is placed before us, any increase that may take place in respect either of the growth of vegetables or that of cereals cannot make us feel that adequate and systematic efforts are being made to achieve the goal placed before us, for the next 15 years, by the Famine Inquiry Commission.

There are several other recommendations of the Famine Inquiry Commission to which attention can be drawn at the present time, but there are two or three very important recommendations which I think I must refer to before I sit down. The Commission devoted a great deal of attention to the question of increasing foods known as protective, and it came to the conclusion that the quantity of protective foods could be substantially increased within a measurable distance of time only in the case of fish. We have been given some information on that subject, but, again, there is no scheme before us showing within what time what results might be expected to be achieved. The absence of this information is a cardinal defect of the programme prepared by the Food Department and the Agricultural Department, and I hope that, if the information at his disposal permits, my Hon. friend the Food Member will fill up this lacuna so that the efforts that are being made by Government may be more fully appreciated than they can be in the absence of this information.

The Commission attached a great deal of importance to milk, but it said that its supply could not be immediately increased to the extent desired. This does not mean that the question of increasing the milk supply should be ignored or should be tackled in a leisurely manner. Even if the milk supply will take time to increase, we have a right to ask that the quantity available should be properly distributed. This has been done in Bombay. Has this been attempted in any of the other bigger cities of India? Has this problem been approached even in New Delhi which is the seat of the Government of India? If no attention has been paid to the question of the organisation of the milk supply in towns, I should like to know what is the reason for it. The Government of India to day are giving advice to the Provincial Governments on many matters in connection with the growing of more food, procurement, rationing, and so on; why do they not give a

lead to the Provincial Governments in the matter of setting up an organisation for the distribution of the available milk in the larger towns? If the milk produced in the villages were consumed by the village people themselves, that would be a matter of considerable satisfaction to us. But it is a fact that the standard of living in villages has not risen to such an extent as to permit the villagers to use the milk that they have. They take it to the towns. We get it now, and we shall continue to get it. Is it not the duty of the Government to make every effort it can to organise its distribution so that it may reach the vulnerable classes whose case, my Hon. friend the Food Member claimed yesterday, was receiving the attention of the Government?

The last point that I should like to draw the attention of the Government to in this connection is the observation made by the Famine Enquiry Commission with regard to the importance of industrial development:

"Improvement in diet and a rise in the standard of living are very nearly equivalent objectives. In order to increase agricultural productions and improve the national diet, simultaneous industrial development to augment the total wealth of the country is essential."

There can be no question that India possesses great potentialities for industrial development which have as yet been utilised only to a small extent. Just as the Government should recognise their responsibility for providing food for all, so also they should recognise their responsibility for developing the economic resources of the country to the fullest extent. Now, Sir, when discussing the food question either yesterday in this House or previously in another place, hardly anything was said by the spokesman of the Government on this connected question of industrial development. It is well known to every member of the House, and it is even better known to the Government, that the question either of the production of food or its proper distribution cannot be properly tackled unless our economic resources are fully exploited. It is necessary, therefore, that when a food debate takes place in this House or in another place, we should be told what are the correlated efforts that are being made in other connected spheres in order to increase the resources of the country and raise the standard of living of the people. So long as no information is given us with regard to the question of industrialisation, so long as we are not told what are the 5 or 10 yearly plans that have been formed by Government for the development of industries and the economic resources of the country in general, then, in discussing the food question with reference to the activities of the Agriculture and Food Departments alone, we shall be dealing only with half the question that we have to tackle or even with less than that.

Sir, I have only one or two more brief remarks to make before I sit down. In view of the policy laid down by the Famine Enquiry Commission and the responsibility which it has laid on the Government for feeding the people, a responsibility which the Hon. the Food Member told us with some pride yesterday had been accepted by him, it is necessary that the poor man's food should be subsidised. The Food Member told us yesterday that this question was being considered by a Committee. We were told at least 15 months ago by Mr. Sen that this question was under the consideration of the Government. Have Government taken all these months to consider this question without arriving at any result or have they really taken it into consideration only during the last few weeks? I hope that my Hon. friend the Food Member will be able to tell us when this question came to be seriously tackled by Government.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT: May I ask you, as regards this subsidy, where you will draw the line of demarcation?

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: When the question is fully considered, we shall know the limits within which it can be made. It is a question connected with the price of foodstuffs with which I was going to deal and the question of the price of foodstuffs is also connected with the desirability of giving a fair return to the grower.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT: You do not have in view the question of free grain supply?

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: No, Sir. This is not what I have suggested. What I have referred to is the opening of subsidised shops on an adequate scale in order to enable the poor man to buy his food cheaper than a man with resources of his own can do in an urban area.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : You had some kind of this in U.P. in some places.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : We had it in the U. P. Government suffered a loss of 2 or 2½ crores. A part of this was borne by the Central Government.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Cheap grain shops, I may say, are not the same thing as a subsidy for the poor.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Sir, the poor man will have to buy his food somewhere. Subsidy may take various forms. I admit. Whether you give a certain amount to the cultivator in order to reduce the price or open cheap grain shops in order to supply the poor man with the food that he needs or adopt any other method of cheapening the cost of the poor man's food is immaterial so long as we achieve the agreed purpose of enabling the poor man to get the food that he needs within the resources available to him.

Sir, one other point that I want to refer to is the question of the price of the foodgrains. This is a very important question. The Hon. the Food Member told us yesterday that a Committee had been appointed to consider the stabilisation of the prices of foodstuffs. This is a very important matter and I hope that the Committee will consider what are the levels at which the prices should be fixed so that they may be remunerative to the grower. The Famine Enquiry Commission has made certain recommendations on this question. I hope that the Committee that has been appointed by Government will consider the matter further in the light of present day facts and arrive at a conclusion which would remove the complaint coming from many parts of the country that the prices now fixed by Government do not give an adequate return to the grower. Government are in a difficult position. They have, on the one hand to take steps to grow more food and on the other hand to see that the food that is grown is within the reach of the consumer. I do not envy them. But they have to hold the balance even and adopt methods which would enable us to expect a continuous increase in the supply of the foodgrains needed by us at a reasonable price.

Just one more remark before I sit down, Sir. I have already said that Government have reduced the adult ration to 12 oz. a day which is extremely inadequate for all workers, even for our domestic servants. If this ration remains in force for a year we may be certain that the health of the whole nation will suffer, and that no class of the population will suffer more than children above the age of 8. It has often been assumed that children between the ages of 8 and 12 need only half the quantity of food required by an adult. But I believe, Sir, that this is a fallacy. In October and November last I went to Bengal, Orissa and Madras and everywhere I was asked to plead for increase in the ration of children between these ages. Everywhere the people pleaded that children between these ages should be allowed the full ration of an adult. I bring this point with all the earnestness that I can command to the notice of the Government and I hope that they will raise the ration of children between 8 and 12 from 6 oz. to 12 oz.

Sir, I am grateful to you for the time that you have allowed me to place my views before the House and I hope that the Hon. the Food Member, when he gets up to speak, will at least try to deal with some of the points I have raised; particularly in connection with the recommendations of the Famine Enquiry Commission to which he repeatedly drew our attention yesterday.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR (Central Provinces : General) : Sir, at the outset I must assure my Hon. friend the Food Member that I do not stand here to throw brickbats against him, but if he succeeds in averting the famine in Madras and Bombay and if he succeeds in saving the lives of his countrymen from this catastrophe I will certainly shower bouquets on him.

Sir, we have debated so many times the food problem and the food administration in this House and in the other House. The Government on their part have appointed Committees and Commissions and they made recommendations. But I submit, Sir, that a hungry man does not care for the debates or for the recommendations

of Committees and Commissions but he wants food, and if any Government—whether responsible or irresponsible—if any Government is not in a position to give food, then the hungry man says that his needs are not satisfied by this Government or that Government and therefore he would not give credit to any Government. Sir, I do not know what will happen afterwards. I know that if certain measures are taken by a National Government in those measures that Government will have the support of the public. But, Sir, I am of opinion that the food problem is of such importance that the present Government, however irresponsible it may be, must deal with it squarely and fairly. Sir, they have got their basic plan; they have got their schemes of distribution. They have got their schemes of procurement. They have got their schemes of rationing and price control. If one applies one's mind and finds out whether they have succeeded in all these schemes, and succeeded efficiently in the way of giving sufficient food to the people of India, one has to come to the conclusion that they have not succeeded in those schemes. The Provincial Governments may not have followed your schemes or there may be corruption in the Department or you may not have been able to get food from outside; but the fact remains that in spite of your efforts to bring these schemes into operation you have not been able to satisfy the hunger of the hungry man.

Sir, it was stated in the other House by the Secretary of the Food Department that his basic plan was not successful because there is no reliable agricultural statistics. If there are no reliable agricultural statistics, why should not the Government of India enforce Provincial Governments to collect reliable agricultural statistics if they really want to carry out their schemes? The other day I read in the press that the Under Secretary of State for India stated in the House of Commons that the loss in Bombay and Madras on account of the vagaries of nature would come to about 400,000 tons in Madras and 500,000 in Bombay, a total of 900,000 tons. But here is a statement made by a responsible officer of Madras, Sir S. V. Ramamurthi, who says that Madras needs one million tons of food. This is exactly what he stated:

"If the present scale of daily rations, 1 lb. of cereals per head, was to be maintained, about a million tons of cereals—rice, wheat and millet—had to be imported into the province. If Madras was not able to obtain this quantity, the scale of rations would have to be reduced. But it could not be reduced in the case of agricultural producers, because such a step would give no incentive to them to grow more food. If the ration in respect of non-producers was cut, this would produce economic disturbance and suffering."

That shows that His Majesty's Government is not correctly informed about the situation in Madras and Bombay.

Sir, my friend has put forward very ambitious claims in his speech yesterday. He stated that he would not let one man starve in this country. He stated also that he would give a balanced diet; and on this point of balanced diet I want to put in a word. I am not giving you the views of non-officials. I am giving you the views of experts in this matter, your own experts. I may remind my friend that if he refers to the Jail Manual of my province or if he refers to the old Famine Relief Code, he would find that 1 lb. of ration has been fixed for convicts in jail and 1 lb. ration was fixed long ago in the old days when famine used to occur in our province. He wants to reduce that 1 lb. ration. My question is a straight question, whether he wants to treat us worse than criminals in jail? He has already cut down our ration and we are now getting 12 ounces per day. We were getting about 18 ounces. Now we are getting in Delhi 12 ounces. I understand he has issued orders to all the provinces to cut the ration. That means we would get less, and on that ration he wants to maintain the health of the people of India.

Now, Sir, I want to bring to his notice the fact that his very experts have stated that for a grown up man something like between 2,600 and 2,800 calories of food are necessary to keep him fit. Another expert of the Government of India, Mr. Kirby, has stated that 1 lb. of cereal yields an average of 1,600 calories. There is already a deficit of 1,000 calories and with this further cut in the ration I do not know how, by what magic wand, he is going to maintain the health of the population of India.

Sir, I do not want to bring to his notice—he knows about it—what a balanced diet is but I may tell him that his own experts say that for a balanced diet 18 ounce

[Mr. V. V. Kalikar]

of cereals, 3 ounces of pulses, 2 ounces of sugar, 6 ounces of vegetables, 2 ounces of fruits, etc., are required. This is what his experts say but our friend the Food Member says that—leaving aside milk, fruits and other things—even in cereals you won't get 18 ounces but you will get 12.

Sir, that shows how far the Government of India is serious to maintain the health of the people of India and how far the Govt. of India is serious about avoiding troubles in India which are likely to happen if no real steps are taken by Government to supply sufficient food.

Sir, my friend told us yesterday that he will see that the producers get remunerative prices. Well, I do not know whether he knows the conditions obtaining in villages. He is a big industrialist I know. I think also he is a big zamindar too and he is expected to know the conditions obtaining in villages.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : His agents may know ; not he.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : Well, I think, that a skilful and a serious master is entitled to know everything.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Hear, hear.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : Well, Sir, I do not know whether he knows, but he must know.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I do know.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : If he knows, Sir, then I will just read a sentence or two from the speech of his Secretary made in the other House and I will ask him whether these are remunerative prices. He says :—

"In order to protect the producers against an uneconomic fall in prices Government have given an undertaking to purchase all wheat offered at Rs. 7-8-0, *bajra* at 5-4-0 and *jowar* at 5-4-0 per maund."

That means that the Govt. of India is going to purchase wheat at the rate of Rs. 7 8 per maund. If that statement is correct I challenge anybody, Sir, to prove on the floor of this House if this price is remunerative, if this price will give incentive to a farmer to produce more crop and if this price will help the farmer to produce more crop and give more food to the people of India. A pair of bullocks which I used to purchase six years ago at the rate of Rs. 200 is not available in the market even for Rs. 750 now.

BRIGADIER THE HON. SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR : The price of bullock is between Rs. 500 and Rs. 600 now-a-days.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : I am speaking not of the quality that is available in your part of the country. I am speaking of the quality that is available in my province. What about fodder ? What about the daily wages ? We used to engage agricultural servants at the rate of between Rs. 12 and Rs. 15 in pre-war times. Now we have to give them between Rs. 35 and Rs. 40.

BRIGADIER THE HON. SIR HISSAMUDDIN BAHADUR : Yes, quite true. That is what we are suffering from.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : This price which the Secretary has stated in the other House may be double but the cost of agricultural operation has increased four times over the prewar rate, and if you stick to it I assure you that the Grow More Food campaign will not be successful and you would not get sufficient food in this country which will help you not to import food from abroad. You must find out methods to grow food sufficient for your people in India and this is not the method by which you will be able to succeed in that matter.

Sir, the Hon. the Food Member has talked about schemes for distribution. We have had enough of sufferings on that account and the less said about them the better. Let us take the case of one district and another adjoining it. If two districts adjoining

each other and if one has to take food from one district to another district at a distance of half a mile he cannot do so. He has to go to the district office and wait there for 15 days or he has to pay a bribe to the policeman or watchman.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : And smuggle it.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR : Personally, Sir, I have come to the conclusion that all these controls must go. The war is over. The emergency is over and all these controls must go but if you cannot do that then at least implement fully the recommendations of the Woodhead Committee and the Gregory Committee and then you can tell us that you are carrying out the schemes in the interests of the people of India. You are not in a position to get food from abroad. Your Secretary goes there and doors are banged against him—of course, today's news is somewhat consoling—if the doors are banged against him and if you cannot get anything let the private trade channels work, but it is no use telling us that we are starting such and such department. We have already spent a lot of taxpayer's money over the working of this Department and still the sufferings are there. If really he wants to do something in the interests of the people of India, if he really wants to avert famine in Madras and Bombay, he should see that he gets sufficient stocks from outside; he should see that he does not alienate the sympathies of the producers of food; and if he succeeds in doing that, then and then only will he be in a position to avert famine in those two provinces. Otherwise I see absolutely no hope. Let me make one suggestion to him. I understand that there are many prisoners in India. Italians, Germans and Japanese. He must bring pressure to bear on the authorities concerned and see that these prisoners are repatriated. Whatever my personal opinion about it may be, if really he wants to carry on the administration of the Department efficiently in the interests of the people of India so that their hunger is satisfied, then, he must implement the recommendations of the Gregory Committee. So far as my experience goes, this Government has not been able to do it during the last three years, and I would certainly, therefore, urge that some of these controls must be removed.

***THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KARAMAT ALI (Assam : Muhammadan) :** Sir the Hon. the Food Member, while making his statement yesterday, said that the Government of India had taken the responsibility of providing everybody with adequate and balanced food. The two words "adequate" and "balanced" may be noted. Sir, this statement surely sounds very happy, but the question is, whether this responsibility is being discharged by the Food Department in a responsible way. He thinks that he has done very well so far, but if you take the trouble of consulting public opinion as to whether he has discharged this responsibility in the way he should have done, the opinion will be that this responsibility has been discharged in the most irresponsible way.

The Hon. Member talked of adequate and balanced food. In my own province of Assam, the total population is about 12 million. Now, the sugar quota for this province is only 19,000 tons a year. This means that less than one chhatak has been allotted per capita. May I ask the Hon. the Food Member whether less than one chhatak of sugar per capita per annum is sufficient and can be called adequate and balanced food? This quota, I understand, is again going to be reduced. This quota was perhaps fixed on the last census figures. But the Hon. the Food Member should remember that the population of Assam increased by leaps and bounds during the war, and therefore the quota should also have been increased according to the increase in population. This was not done, and the result is that our people are going practically without sugar. Again, the quota that has been allotted to us is distributed among tea plantations and private individuals. So, Sir, as far as sugar is concerned, it is neither adequate nor balanced so far as my province of Assam is concerned.

Then, as regards atta, in Assam there is a very large population coming from up country, especially from the Punjab. These people depend mainly upon atta. But as Assam is a rice-eating province, a very nominal quota was allotted for Assam.

[Khan Bahadur Karamat Ali]

The result was that these up-country people, especially the Punjabis, have to go without atta. And now that quota has also been reduced. So I submit that in the case of atta also the Province of Assam is not getting adequate or balanced food.

Then comes the question of mustard oil. That is another problem in Assam. There are two districts in Assam—Kachar and Sylhet—where neither mustard seed is grown, nor are there any mills to produce mustard oil. These two districts in the year 1945 went without mustard oil for about nine months. The Government of Assam approached the Government of India, and the Government of India said that owing to transport difficulties no mustard oil could be sent to Assam. This was the responsibility taken up by the Government of India, and this was the way in which that responsibility was discharged.

I therefore submit that if the Government of India want to take up the responsibility of providing food to the different provinces of India, they should discharge the responsibility in a responsible way, and if they cannot discharge it, let the provinces themselves take it up, and let not the India Government interfere, and, as my Hon. friends have already said, let all controls be abolished and let normal trade go on. If that is done, perhaps there will be some relief for the people. The Hon. the Food Member was praising himself all the time for the success he has achieved in discharging his responsibility. I can tell the Hon. Members of this House that in New Delhi, the capital of India, although the controlled price of gram is Rs. 8-8-0, it is being sold in the black market, before the very eyes of the Food Member, at Rs. 20 or higher. If this is the responsibility with which he is discharging the duties which he has taken up, and if this is the way in which he is discharging his responsibilities, the sooner he gets out of the responsibility the better. I therefore repeat, Sir, that either the responsibility which the Government of India has taken up should be discharged in a responsible way, or the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of the provinces.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SATYENDRA KUMAR DAS (East Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I appreciate very much the statement of the Hon. the Food Member, especially the assurance he has given us as to the proposed increase of rations for the labour class. I believe the entire House will agree with me when I say that menial servants, whether serving in private houses or in Government offices, should also be taken under the category of labour class because, Sir, they have to perform more or less the same duties or undergo the same amount of labour for the duties assigned to them. I wish the Hon. the Food Member will confirm this view in his reply.

Sir, I would like to be enlightened as to the steps, if any, the Hon. the Food Member has taken to counteract the effects of the panic created by the official statements in the Assembly regarding the threatened famine in the different parts of the country. Sir, in Bengal and in other Provinces, in rural and other areas where rationing has not been introduced, the prices of foodgrains have gone up. I would like to know whether the Government will be pleased to state the action they are going to take in the non-rationed areas for the protection of the consumers of those areas against the high prices caused by panic or scarcity, solely due to the official statements made in the Assembly about the threatened famine. Sir, our esteemed leader, the Hon. Pandit Kunzru has stressed very much on the need for subsidising the food of the poor. Sir, 90 per cent. of the population in India are poor because the middle class people, who are not drawing decent salaries, are the worst sufferers. They should come under the category of poor people. I am suggesting how to subsidise all men's food. There is such a difference between the price which Government pay through their purchasing agency to the grower of food and the price fixed by the Government for the retail sale of this food through ration shops. Sir, Government should effect economy and retrenchment in the handling of these foodgrains. If necessary Government should pass a measure to give something to the poor cultivator or reduce their cost in such a way so that all people may get their food at reasonable prices.

Sir, before I conclude, I would like to deal with the maladministration of the distribution of foodgrains as I saw it in our territory. Sir, there are two ways of controlling food supply—(1) procurement and (2) distribution. I shall not say anything about the procurement of foodgrains which is being done by Government very efficiently with success. But I cannot help telling you something about the maladministration of the distribution of these foodgrains as I found it in our territory. Sir, I hail from Dacca city, which is the second city in Bengal in population, consisting of 57 per cent. of Hindus and 43 per cent. of Muhammadans. Sir, when rationing of the city was decided upon, the Government could not find any man suitable to take up the office of Rationing Officer. Against public opinion the Government imported a Muhammadan from the Punjab, an ex-military man, who had got no experience of the people and the place. The first exploit he did on his arrival was to introduce the communal ratio in the selection of persons for appointment as stockists. When he found there were no men available for taking up the post of stockists in his community, he distributed the posts to some Punjabi Muhammadans with exception of one who wore dealing in hides, who did not even hold a licence for the storage of foodgrains and who had no experience in the trade for generations. He appointed a stockist of U.P. who had no experience in foodgrains, who was a dealer in mustard oil, and he appointed one of his friends, who had no stake in that city and who had no experience of foodgrains. He was more a billiard player. When an appeal was referred against his decision by a disappointed candidate, he realised his shortcomings and he had to satisfy him by appointing him at the next opportunity, when one of the hide merchants had to resign for his inefficiency. This is what we enjoy under this benign Government! (*An Hon. Member* : "When was it done?") This was done when the rationing of Dacca was started. He took advantage of a new Magistrate, Mr. The former Magistrate, Mr. Bell, was on leave, in spite of agitation from the Bar, the People's Association, the Landholders Association and even from the Muslim community. These hide merchants were not looked upon with good grace even by the local Muhammadans of the city. Then he came to his senses. The Food Controller had to go to Dacca for enquiry. I take this opportunity of bringing all this to the notice of the House. I do not think the Hon. the Food Member will raise the question of constitutional impropriety for making mention of these incidents relating to a province, because I know that the Central Food Department has got control over the Provincial Departments in this matter.

THE HON. MR. SURPUT SINGH : (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I have listened with great interest to the statement on our food situation. But the statement has impressed me as sketchy and thus incoherent, apologetic yet boastful, without any substantial achievements—the whole trend thereof being summed up as being a story of "Too little and too late". The Food Member's past forecasts have evidently belied him, while his future hopes seem to be quite mystifying to us. Sir, of the many problems of life none is perhaps more important than our food. But when I reflect on the food situation in the country, I cannot but conclude that power without responsibility has demoralised our food officials and has made their entire administration corrupt and dishonest. In fact, unbridled exercise of power in such an essential matter as food without the slightest responsibility to the people has been the fundamental cause of our present troubles. Again, food is so very vital to one's existence that one cannot account for those troubles only by the ignorance or the perversity of the people. I cannot, therefore, but welcome the considered attitude of Mahatma Gandhi in refusing to co-operate with the present irresponsible and unresponsive Government in their food policy and programme, as that would have served no useful purpose, when wholesale bungling of the food situation has already been made through the combined efforts of our brown bureaucrats and white imperialists both of whom have been driving a coach and four over the national wishes and sentiments.

Sir, from some interested quarters there has recently come up a fervent appeal that food should be dissociated from politics. But food can now hardly be kept aside from politics, when politics has already been mixed up with our food problems.

[Mr. Surput Singh]

Our Government ever knew well that India was never self-sufficient as regards her food production. According to the telling statistics given by a former food chief, Sir Aziz-ul-Haque, to the Legislative Assembly in 1943, I quote his words :—

Rice production in India from 1911-12 to 1942-43 has remained nearly constant between the figures of 25 million tons to 27 million tons. As compared with three pre-war years, the combined acreage for our basic foodgrains, rice and wheat, is almost constant, viz., 108, 109, 108, 108, 107·5 and 109 million acres as from 1937-38 to 1942-43 respectively. In the meantime population has increased from about 311 million in 1910-11 to 388 million in 1941 with a corresponding increase of the rice-eating population. The main foodgrains production of India has also remained practically constant between 50 million and 51 million tons with small variations from year to year ”.

According to some recent authorities who have published their researches, the total production comes up to 60 million tons, which with another 14 million tons make us self-sufficient. But still when this Government brought huge armies, two to three millions, and stationed them within the country, they did not make the least endeavour either to bring in food from outside or to increase the existing production. The whole brunt of feeding the armies was thus thrown upon the country's resources. There was already in the country a population of 400 millions of which 30 per cent. did not get enough to eat ; approximately 3 out of every 10 suffered from under nutrition. How limited those resources were, an interesting table of statistics, compiled by Mr. A. N. Krishnan Nair and published in *Commerce* of July 1943 will show that from a yield of 1,963 lb. per acre in the first five years of the present century rice production has fallen to 785 lb. per acre in 1935—1940. Moreover, the diminution in the productive capacity had gone on fairly progressively over the intervening quinquenniums. The yield of wheat has also showed a slight fall during the period. Then, Sir, we must not forget in this connection that the daily ration of a British or Allied soldier was nearly three times that of a civilian. Besides most of the protective foods like milk, green vegetables, fruits and the like, which could have made good the main food deficiency, were allowed to be drained away from the civilian use by the array of military contractors. In this way, Sir, during the years of the war when imports of foodgrains to the country were almost nil (inasmuch as even in normal years India had to replenish her food stocks with imports from Burma, Siam and some countries in the Far East) India had to feed not only her steadily growing population but also the huge armies inflicted upon her. Again, not satisfied with meeting those heavy demands for the military, the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation was allowed at the instance of the British Ministry to send abroad huge consignments of our foodgrains to the Middle East in order to fulfil Britain's political commitments there in total disregard of the country's vital needs. Sir, on the top of this, large dumps of foodgrains were built up at numerous strategic places for the use of the fighting forces. Most of those dumps were either plundered by the invading armies or were scorched in pursuance of the denial policy. Then, Sir, after the tragic fall of Malaya in 1942, Ceylon was asked to grow rubber intensively to remove the rubber deficiency caused by the loss of Malaya and to abandon her rice cultivation being promised in return that her rice requirements would be met from India, such supply still being continued. Our Food Secretary, when confronted with such and similar exports in view of the dismal existing food situation, would promptly explain such depletions with the plea of replacement. Exports of foodgrains have gone on despite the pious protestations of the Hon. Food Member—as will be borne out by the Government publications and Customs figures. Such were then, Sir, some of the causes which have directly contributed to the deterioration of our food situation in the country rendering our peoples distracted and half-ruined. Then, Sir, I shall recount a few of the indirect causes which have led to the same unhappy result. *First* is the total apathy of the Government to increase the food stock of the country in face of the steadily mounting growth of the population despite timely warnings from authoritative quarters. *Next* is the Government's utter indifference in the matter of encouraging the people in the right way to bring under the cultivation all culturable waste lands in the country, which, according to an eminent authority must be about 100 million acres. *Thirdly*, the inexplicable attitude of the Govern-

ment in affording no incentive whatsoever to the agriculturists by bringing within their reach healthy seeds, cheap fertilisers, simple implements, cheap credit, better marketing facilities and necessary information and knowledge. *Fourthly*, absence of irrigation facilities through reservoirs, wells, dams, embankments, canals, etc., and failure to reclaim such waterways as can help irrigation. And lastly, the wanton slaughter permitted by the Government of our cattle-stock so essential for agricultural operations. All those acts of commission and omission on the part of our Government have combined to make India, principally an agricultural country, remain so woefully behind the world in agricultural progress and uplift. These are some telling facts. India grows from 750 to 900 lbs. of rice per acre compared with America's 1,500 lbs., Egypt's 2,000 lbs., Japan's 2,300 lbs. and Italy's 3,000 lbs. and Spain's 5,000 lbs. Wheat yields per acre are : India 650 lbs., Australia 710 lbs., Argentina 780 lbs., U.S.A. 850 lbs., Canada 975 lbs. and Europe 1,150 lbs. Much the same story can be told of every other crop. Sir, by the way who is responsible for this poor crop output in India? The Government may say the people of India, but I say it is not correct. The British Government is wholly responsible. It is really shameful that after the British Government's rule in India for over two centuries India continues to be in the same primitive or even worse condition. The Government should bring the Agricultural Department to adopt the same methods as have been done in U.K. which some years ago produced only 30 per cent. of her needs and now is producing 60 per cent. by the improved methods. Sir, by way of tinkering with the distressing situation brought about by the Government's want of foresight, neglect and apathy, the Grow More Food campaign was hastily launched and large subsidies were thrown away here, there and everywhere, without any plan or programme beforehand, in order to effect any improvement in the sagging situation. But the enthusiastic promoters forget that the only solution of the situation lay in assuring abundant supplies for all, which under existing conditions, was feasible only by increasing the production in the country itself. How the campaign has belied the expectations of the people will be evident from what Sir Manilal Nanavati said about it at the Sixth Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economists held in Benares in December, 1945. He said :—

" Grow More Food campaign is practically a failure and was bound to be so because no attention was paid to the parity between the prices of non-food crops and those of food crops ".

Then, Sir, I beg to read a few lines from page 4 of the Famine Enquiry Commission¹ Report of which Sir John Woodhead was the Chairman further to illustrate my point. The passages are :—

" The results achieved by this campaign has not been spectacular ".

" The lesson to be drawn from the experience of the Grow More Food campaign stands out quite clearly. It is this. A large increase in agricultural production in India by the extension of the area of cultivated land and an improvement in the yield per acre of crops through irrigation and other measures, will not be achieved without intensive and sustained effort on the part of both Government and the people. There is, therefore, need for laying down a clear agricultural policy and providing administrative machinery for its execution ".

Then, Sir, the policy underlying the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee contain no recommendation about production targets. Instead they call for unlimited production drive. To my mind, Sir, the campaign has become another name for wilful waste of money and encouragement of corruption with practically nothing doing. The austerity diets accepted by the already well-fed and well-nourished by way of a gesture could have been avoided if only that campaign had proved a success.

Sir, in my judgment if there had existed complete co-operation and co-ordination between the Government and the people from the very beginning with an all-party organisation to create confidence and to lead to effective action by genuine intellectual planning, such as is now sought for when the bungling is past cure, the situation would not have become so hopeless. But it is now too late. Only political power vested in the hands of people's representatives through an all-party Govt. can only take us through the rigours of the situation. Over-population and under-development of natural resources and their inadequate realisation are the main factors which must be borne in mind for an effective solution of the problem that faces us.

[Mr. Surput Singh]

Sir, the food rationing system is unhappily based upon no intelligent plan—

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Please bring your remarks to a close now.

THE HON. MR. SURPUT SINGH : On no knowledge of the nutritive values of foods or the real needs of the different peoples. Next, whether control will go or not in the future scheme of things must have to be decided by a representative committee of all parties and interests concerned. But as it is, the present control policy and system have become insufferable. Control has impeded the normal flow of trade and commerce in the country. Control has kept away multitudes of people from their hereditary avocations in life. Control has bred (i) inefficiency ; (ii) corruption ; (iii) jobbery ; (iv) obtuseness ; (v) exclusiveness and (vi) arrogance.

Sir, I may refer to what once Sir Ziauddin Ahmed publicly declared in the other House that due to control food traders had paid in one area known to him Rs. 6 crores in bribes.

Sir, the Food-Begging Mission, as I should call it, is just a creation of our Govt. to conceal a lot of their past sins. Some food may come after those wailings abroad, but at what national cost and humiliation has only to be realised and then, as Sirdar Patel has said, there is no certainty that all that is given will be available to the hungry millions in the long run. The current unreasonable prices prevailing for the rationed articles really give us absolutely no hope.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : You have exceeded your time. Will you please stop ?

THE HON. MR. SURPUT SINGH : I will finish in two minutes.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : I cannot give you any more time.

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

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

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL (Bombay : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I should like, with the permission of the House and of yourself, to move an amendment to the Motion which was tabled in this House yesterday.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Has a copy of the amendment been supplied to the Hon. the Leader of the House ?

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Yes, Sir. The amendment reads 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 an early setting up of a National Government at the Centre composed of popular representatives of the Congress, the Muslim League and other important interests will greatly help in the solution of the food situation.’ ”

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Yes. I think it represents generally the views of the members, and I will allow the Honourable Member to move it.

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Yes, that is so. We have put our heads together, and after discussions, this is the amendment which, as far as I gather, is acceptable to the members of the House.

Sir, the situation, so far as the deficit in the food supply that has occurred is concerned, is too grave for minor issues to interfere, for, if any one suffers, it will be the people of this country. Every section of this House has got to do its duty to the people of this country. The Government as well as the people both owe a duty, and it is a very sacred duty, and on an occasion like this, with all our differences, we have to do our part, and we wish that the Government also do their part. Mistakes may have been made in the past, but this is not the time to dilate or harp upon them or

even to refer to those mistakes, unless it is for the purpose of rectifying those mistakes. Unfortunately this country, which has had sufficient foodstuffs to cope with the imports which it has been receiving in recent years, is today placed in a position where it is falling short of one-tenth of the grain required and we are faced with a very serious situation which everybody in the country is anxious to do everything he can to help to avert. We have got to see that every pressure that we are capable of is put upon the other Governments. I am glad that this morning we read that President Truman has said that the United States of America is going to help this country, and that he will do more than he has promised. We do not know definitely what promise has been made by the United States, but we want the Government not to be complacent in this matter. We have already paid a very heavy toll, some three years ago, in the Bengal famine, and every pressure that we can bring to bear should be put and they should be told the bare facts of the situation. During the war India denuded herself of a great deal of the foodstuffs which used to be stored in the country by the people. Ordinarily, the people of India try to lay by some store of grain to last at least four or six months, if not more. But the demands of war were so pressing, and the Government thought so much about the demands of war, that they pressed the people and got as much as they could out of them.

In this state of affairs, when there is scarcity, when there is panic, when there are reports going round that there will be a serious shortage of food, people naturally begin to think whether they should part with everything that they have got, and to ask who will take care of them when they are in difficulties. For that, what is required is a Government which enjoys the confidence of the people. I have known cases where not ignorant persons, not persons of average education and intelligence, but men who are well fitted to occupy the highest positions in the Government of this country, suspect that all that the Government says and all their reports about exports and other things are not based on correct information and they cannot be trusted very much. Such a situation will be met if we have a representative Government in this country which will enjoy the confidence of all sections.

I say, Sir, that we shall be very happy to have the co-operation of every important interest, including the Muslim League. I should not be understood to say that there will be no difficulties. There may be difficulties, but the patriotism and the sincerity of our people are compelling and will compel all sections to sink their differences and work together in the interests of the country.

Sir, in spite of the measures which the Government have taken, I know there is a certain amount of black marketing still continuing in the cities and in various other parts of the country. These black marketeers can only be the people who resort to hoarding. Hoarders and black marketeers should be ruthlessly stamped out and put down. But when you have a national Government, they will realise that they can be put down much more ruthlessly than in the past, and it will help in bringing out stores from those anti-social elements. There should be no quarter shown to these anti-social elements. If not only the Government but every section of the people, those who know and who offer their services in the black market, all do their part, the black-marketing should be a thing of the past. Unfortunately, a certain amount of food is also wasted in various ways. Particularly on ceremonial occasions such as marriages and others we should cut down the requirements to the absolute minimum. There should be no parties now. Not more than 5 persons should be fed on such occasions. If I had my way, I say that there should be no parties at all, for when a country is faced with such distress, who can at all contemplate with equanimity the over-feeding of a few and the starvation of the many? It is due to these starving millions that this should be voluntarily done. If it is not done voluntarily, then Government ought to provide that there shall be no more parties, and no more feeding. Can we not forego this luxury for a few months or for a year? Is it asking too much? Let Government take the initiative. A National Government would be best suited to take the initiative in a matter like this. We seek the co-operation of all elements. We want Government also to give their utmost co-operation to the people in helping those who are likely to suffer, in pooling together all the resources that are at the command, both of the people and the Government. It is on that the measures which the people and the Government have at heart

[Mr. G. S. Motilal]

can be successful. Suggestions have been made that all cultivable land should be brought under the plough. There will be Provincial Governments coming in very soon. On this question there can be no two opinions. Of course it is a question which will take time. We have not been very mindful of this difficulty in the past. Otherwise we should not have been faced with this situation. We have got to prepare beforehand. As the proverb runs, you cannot dig a well when the house has already caught fire. You have to dig the well before that. If that had been done, the situation would have been very different today. However, it is not merely the tiding over of the present situation. If a situation like this arose again, then we must be thoroughly prepared to meet the position. It is those measures which are necessary.

I was not here yesterday but from what I have heard it seems that some of the Hon. Members think that the removal of the controls and removal of rationing will bring food into the markets. We have given our very serious consideration to this problem. My experience and that of those who have really moved the Government to take the initiative in this matter has been that the controls are necessary. You have anti-social elements. You cannot ignore them. If you decontrol, they will hoard the foodstuffs. Then will be brought out the law of demand and supply. If you decontrol, how will you get the hoarded goods from them? It is necessary, therefore, that the controls should continue.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : What about corruption ?

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Certainly corruption should be put down and let us help that way. Wherever we find corruption, let us drive it out. Let us not be content with saying that control has brought about corruption. Rationing is absolutely necessary. If you do not keep up rationing, the situation will go out of hand and then we will repent that a measure like rationing, which has been so successful, has been given up. I know that at any rate in my province it has been successful and this has been due largely to the help which the people have been giving to make it a success. Therefore, if we come across any instance of corruption, let us see that this Government also takes steps against it and we also take the initiative in it. I do not wish to take much more of the time of the House. With these words I move my amendment.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM (Bihar and Orissa : Muhammadan) : Sir, I regret that I was not here when my Hon. colleague Raja Govindlal Motilal moved his amendment. Sir, before I commence my remarks on the Motion and the amendments I should like to have a little indulgence to have a few digressions on subjects which are not strictly within the bounds of the Resolution although they are germane to it. I refer first of all, Sir, to the fact that the first volume of the Report of the Famine Enquiry Commission was placed in the hands of the Government of India on 10th April 1945 and the second volume on the 1st August 1945. Such a long time has elapsed without any action being taken on a matter that was urgent. We had asked for an inquiry in order not only to find out who was responsible for the Bengal famine, but also for instruction in the methods which should be adopted to face a situation of that kind. Government have not circulated that important Report even to the Leaders of Parties and members of the Food Committee. We have not so far learnt what has been the Government's decisions thereon. This shows how scant respect has been paid to a non-Royal Commission's Report. You will remember that when we were discussing this subject in 1943 I had urged that a Royal Commission should be formed in order that it may be in a position to give judgment on the high personages who were concerned. I have no time to deal with that Report in detail in the manner which it deserves ; but I do find that it has scope for improvements. It has not made any direct remarks on the administration of the Food Department at the Centre during the critical period—10th February 1943 right up to 6th May 1943—the crucial period when there was no Member in charge of Food and was held by the head of administration. Sir, I will not spend my time in dealing with this Report. I hope, however, that the Government will give us a day to discuss the subject which requires further deep consideration. It would be a very unkind cut

on the part of the Government to ignore that Report in the manner in which they have been ignoring it so far.

Sir, the light-hearted manner and the complacent attitude which the Hon. the Food Member took when he was delivering his speech on this subject has been commented upon by other colleagues of mine, and especially by Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru. I shall not therefore stress much on it, but I would like to say that if this attitude had been shown to outsiders, to the United Nations Food Council, I am very much afraid they would have got the impression that there was no famine, that the situation in India was not at all as serious as it has been painted outside. The manner, the almost dramatic manner, in which the Hon. Member stated that on the 20th January all of a sudden he got a revelation, or perhaps in the night he had a dream, that a famine is going to stare us—

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I never said that.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : You stated in so many words that on the 20th January you were the first person to diagnose that a famine would come—

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I will repeat what I said in my reply.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I thought that we were in the old regime and Pharaoh had his dream, and instead of calling Joseph to interpret it, we had the duality in the Hon. Member himself. His "J" stands for Joseph and "P" for Pharaoh. "J. P." is a combination of Joseph and Pharaoh.

Sir, as far as the political background of this question is concerned, I was rather pained when I found that the Congress and its High Command was not willing to co-operate with the present Government in ameliorating the difficulties of the situation. But I was surprised when the Hon. the Food Member expressed his gratitude to the Congress Party. I thought perhaps he felt like "God save me from my friends". Perhaps he did not want to have their co-operation.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I never said that.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : He also appreciated the League attitude.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : That we could understand because we offered our co-operation ; but he thanked the Congress because they had refused co-operation and that made me think perhaps he felt in that manner. I personally think that the co-operation which we have offered is not offered to the Food Department or to the present Government of India. It is offered in the interests of the suffering humanity and that is a case in which we should be prepared to co-operate even with our enemies. A famine situation is not one that we should use as a ladder to attain our objective, and I must explain the position of the Muslim League on that point very clearly. The Muslim League is not prepared to join any Government until and unless the question of the future is justly settled—I will not go further than that—to the satisfaction of the peoples of India. This method, Sir, of making this an occasion for the establishment of a Government was really to bypass the League because the League would not have joined without the Pakistan issue being settled to our satisfaction.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : It was not final.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Now that the excuse of war has disappeared there is no reason why the fundamental issues should not be decided once for all. I do not, Sir, think that anyone in his senses would dream that we are so foolish as to regard that the question of the frontiers and other questions of Pakistan and Hindustan are so easy matters that they can be decided tomorrow and we can come into office day after. The fundamental issue should be decided first and then the details of the picture can be filled in as and when the time comes. We are in no undue hurry for that. But without a decision on the major issues we are not going to take part in the Government. I therefore welcome the substitute Motion which

[Mr. Hossain Imam]

the Hon. Raja Govindlal has moved which is not capable of being misinterpreted in the manner in which the former amendment could have been interpreted by those who had designs against the League. I do not say that my friend Mr. Thirumala Row had any such desire, but I wish to be careful and protect myself. I therefore welcome the substitute Motion which has been moved—

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA : How does the alternative Motion help you ?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I have a very short time and my friend knows that if I am drawn that may take up my time.

Coming to the Motion before the House to consider the food situation, I shall deal with this matter at some length, but I do wish to endorse first of all and give my entire support to the principle which Dr. Kunzru enunciated that children above the age of 8 should be treated as adults for the purpose of rationing. As you have reduced the ration it is very necessary that children in the formative period of 8 to 12 years should have not less than adults.

Another subject which I wish to stress is that this Government usually takes half measures ; it can never do things completely. In the note which was placed by the Hon. the Food Member on the table of the House, as far as army demands are concerned, on page 12 a statement was made that " Government schemes for production have been curtailed or terminated. Three vegetable dehydration factories, and the concomitant vegetable production scheme in the U. P., have been closed down ". May we ask, Sir, what was the reason for closing the production of vegetables ? Is that the way in which you are going to fight famine and scarcity in India—that you are going to stop your aid to agriculture, for the production of vegetables ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : What is the Hon. Member reading from ?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : From the statement which you yourself laid on the table of the House. We do not object to the closing of dehydration factories, but production has also been closed.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That was done some time ago when the war demand ceased. Since then we have encouraged the growth of vegetables again.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Had the Famine Enquiry Commission reported by then or not ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Yes.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : How could you allow the U. P. Government to abandon the scheme ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : There was no demand for potatoes, etc., which were being taken by the factories. The dehydration factory had closed down and some of the production had to be reduced. There was no demand for it at all.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : There was no demand for dehydrated potatoes—you had not got to export them for the Army—but how does the Hon. Member say that there was no need for potatoes in the country when the Commission says that both potatoes, sweet potatoes, etc., are needed ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I will deal with that in my reply.

THE HON. MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY : Does the Hon. Member know that Bengal was having a potato famine for the last two years ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am not talking of Bengal. I am talking of certain areas where these factories had been set up and there was special production of potatoes for these factories. When the factories closed down naturally the demand for potatoes ceased there.

THE HON. MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY : Could not that potato be taken to Bengal ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : It could not be exported from these far-off places.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : The Food Member has given a glaring example of the incompetence of the present executive to deal with national question on the level at which they should be dealt with. With a short-sighted policy which has been the guiding star of the Food Department we find that this is not the solitary instance in which production and abundance in one province has existed simultaneously with scarcity in others. Those who live in Delhi, Sir, know that parts of the Punjab in the Ambala Division produce a large amount of potatoes but the Provincial Government did not allow potatoes to come into Delhi and we had a scarcity. Prices in Delhi for rotten potatoes bloated whilst good quality potatoes were selling at cheap rates in adjoining districts. If you examine, Sir, the figures of the amount of rotten foodgrains which have had to be destroyed in different parts of the country—of course, the Food Department has always refused to give those figures—you may be surprised at the wastage which could have been avoided. Well, Sir, if we were to examine all the inequities and bad management of the Food Department I would have no time to discuss the real solution of the problem which is before us.

Sir, to my mind, food being an agricultural product not capable of being intensified by mass production, as industrial goods are ; it is necessary that we must make a sustained and planned movement for its development. You cannot have even for a short period a change over from, say, 50 crores to 55 crores without putting very great labour and planning on a large scale. I am, therefore, Sir, constrained to say that the Government of the present day has dealt with this question in a very haphazard and cavalier manner.

I was gratified, Sir, by the statement of the Hon. the Agriculture Member in which he stressed on the steps which he has taken or he proposes to take, but I regret that though they are good steps they fall far short of the magnitude of the situation with which India is faced. I do not wish, Sir, to express any opinion of my own, but I should like the House to read a very useful book, a small book but a very useful one, written by an authority : Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee, M.A. of Lucknow, who has dealt with this question in a very good manner. The problem of food is a chronic problem. The population is far outstripping the productive capacity of India. We do not wish, Sir, to remain like England, ever dependent for our food supplies on foreign countries. We would rather, Sir, produce all that we require in our own country and for that reason it is necessary that we must have a regular programme. Firstly, the reason why agricultural production does not increase is that you have not made arrangements for irrigation. Irrigation plays such an important part that no scheme of expansion can prosper without irrigational facilities and irrigation is a subject of long-drawn process. If you decide to have one large canal you have to build it up in five or six years. A factor which has a psychological effect is the price factor. No amount of patriotism or appeals to the sentiment will play that part as an incentive to production and increased production which price can and does play. As long as we are, Sir, on the profit incentive as our method of operation it is necessary that we must assure the producer that he will get a fair deal and that he will not be penalised in future as he was in the past. Being dumb, unorganised, he is unable to stand out and fight for his cause as these big industrial magnates can.

Sir, in this connection I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the parsimony of the Finance Department which this year has removed altogether the grant for Grow More Food campaign. The revenue expenditure estimates do not provide a single penny for expenditure on Grow More Food campaign. Is this the method to fight famine that in this year of grace you have not placed anything for the

[Mr. Hossain Imam]

Grow More Food campaign? Secondly, Sir, I find that repeated requests by the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, in which the Ministers and Advisers of all the Provinces are associated, for an increased grant in order to facilitate their work have always fallen on deaf ears. If this is the method, Sir, I am afraid that the Government of India has no intention of fighting the famine.

Sir, I would especially draw the attention of the House to the fact that the present peasant has to carry on his work with very aged, decrepit and exhaustive cattle because of the fact that cattle prices are so high, and in this connection I would draw the attention of the House to the statement which Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee has made. It is a very instructive one. He says that—

“Cattle population in excess of 25 per hundred acres of sown area should be regarded as uneconomic and superfluous and could safely be reduced for the use of agriculture”.

He has advocated, Sir, that out of our cattle population almost 60 per cent. is superfluous and only 40 per cent. is useful. What he really means is that if you have a good breed of cattle 40 per cent. of them can do more than cent. per cent. of the inferior quality of cattle which is a drain on our land: on the grass as well as on the grain. It is, therefore, very necessary that Government should take lessons from Russia and start cattle farms of the scope and with the methods which Russia has adopted to meet the needs of its population. India's population is three times as great as that of Russia and yet we always feel the deficiency and cannot do anything. It is necessary that we must have a Government farm or aided farm in order to produce cattle, both milk and draught, of the order of thousands a year, in every province; not one model farm in one place in the whole of India to serve as showpiece. Our needs must be met. In this connection, Sir, I should like to draw the attention of the House to a very surprising thing which we are having at the present moment. While we are told that our garden plots should be utilised for the purpose of growing vegetables and food, millions of acres of cultivable land are kept fallow by Government order.

THE HON. SIB JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Where is it?

THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KARAMAT ALI : Assam.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I would request the Hon. Member to consult the very useful Report which has been prepared by my Hon. colleague Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar, in which he would find, on page 9, that the area of culturable waste land in Assam is 20 per cent. of the total culturable area of India. Think of it—twenty per cent. of the whole culturable area. The area under cultivation there is about one-fourth of the culturable land. The area which is lying as culturable waste in Assam is 19 million acres, and is equal to 80 per cent. of the area under rice in Bengal. Gross negligence of this nature can only come from a Government as irresponsible and unmindful of the public interest as the present Government.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : When was that Report written?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : This is the Report of the Central Land Utilisation Sub-Committee of Policy Committee No. 5 on Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries of the Reconstruction Committee of Council, and it was presented about a year ago. It contains certain statistics. Whereas Bengal is suffering from a huge population of 60 millions, this Province of Assam has got a population of about 10 millions, and yet it purposely keeps fallow an area equal to 80 per cent. of the area under rice in Bengal.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : May I ask if the reason why such a large area is not cultivated may be lack of man-power?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Sir, the miseries of Assam are peculiar, and I am very much pained to state that in that matter it is not the Government of India alone which is responsible.

THE HON. SIB JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Hear, hear.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : The Congress is to blame for what is happening today.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : It struck me that there was something wanting there. (*Laughter.*)

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Sir, the fact of the matter is that the magnitude of the problem has always been hidden, and it has been paraded that the area is kept for cattle grazing. The cattle there are one of the poorest in India: even Bihar and Bengal produce better milch cattle than Assam does. Not only that, but the cattle which comes into Assam for grazing is not indigenous; it comes from Sikkim and other places during the winter and returns home after the winter is over. It is a chapter in our life which is very painful, and to a certain extent shameful.

THE HON. SIB JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : May I point out, in this connection, that there has been a Ministry in Assam all the time? Why did not the Ministry tackle it, and how does it fall within the sphere of the Government of India to reclaim that land and cultivate it?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I am very grateful to the Hon. the Food Member for having put a leading question to me. Is he not aware of the constitution? Is he not aware that in a House of 108, Muslims number only 34? The iniquities of the present constitution have placed us in a difficulty. We have been unable to form a Government which can work under the orders and superintendence of a political party. A coalition Government is only a Government in which you have compromises.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SRI NARAIN MAHTHA : What is the population percentage in Assam?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I can give the Hon. Member all the figures. Muslims are over 34 lakhs. Caste Hindus are 35.76 lakhs. Scheduled Castes are over 6 lakhs. Aborigines are over 24 lakhs.

THE HON. MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY : Muslims are 36 per cent. only. They are in a minority.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : The question is not of Hindus and Muslims. I will quote from the book written by Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : My point is that Assam is for the Assamese. Why do you bring in Hindus and Muslims?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : And it is open for the Chhatisgarhis to come and settle there in their thousands every year, and you are prepared to spend Rs. 50 for each Chhatisgarhi. But you burn the houses of Muslims. This is "Assam for the Assamese", as my friend says? I know the subject, and I can talk on it with authority.

Sir, this is what I was referring to. I was reading from a non-controversial book written by Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee. This is what he says:—

"Large-scale planned migration and agricultural settlement in the unused or inadequately used tracts in Assam, the Central Provinces, the Punjab, Madras and Sind will materially improve food production in India under the stimulus of an unremitting population pressure. But provincial jealousy and exclusiveness stand in the way of smooth and peaceful colonisation".

This is not the opinion of a Muslim Leaguer or of a Muslim. We are not talking on that plane. I only ask, in the name of humanity, whether, when you find that the pressure of population is nearing 800 to a square mile, you should not allow the people to have a place under the sun where they can live peacefully?

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : During the Bengal famine, those who could not get anything to eat found shelter, not in Bengal, but in Assam.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : My Hon. friend does not understand what I am talking about.

[Mr. Hossain Imam]

Sir, I can mention one or two facts about specific actions of the Government of India in the Food Department. I am indebted to this very statement which was laid on the table of the House for the fact that the Bihar Government had asked for an increase in the price level of rice, but this benign Government refused it. Even a section 93 Government considered that the prices were inadequate and wanted to increase them, but this Government, which is presided over by a national of India would not go as far as even a section 93 Government. I cannot say anything stronger than that.

Look at the method of procurement which they have adopted. Anyone who has any knowledge of agriculture knows that rice is harvested and threshed before the 15th and 31st of January.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : May I draw attention to the fact that the Hon. Member has already taken more than half an hour, and there are other members wishing to speak ?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I have not much to say. I have made all the preliminary remarks, and now I have to deal with one or two small points. Rice is harvested in December and the beginning of January, and it is threshed by the middle of January, and by the end of January it is usually in the hands of the traders. Now, the Government of Bihar starts the procurement scheme ; it comes to the decision to procure on the 11th February, and this decision gets publicity on the 25th February. How are you going to get hold of the rice which has already been sold away, unless you take punitive measures against producers and penalise them for no fault of theirs ? As regards the procurement of wheat also, you must do it in time, otherwise wheat also will disappear.

I have got several other points but I shall not deal with them now. Sir, I want to say a few words about the remarks of my Hon. friend coming from Dacca. He accused of communal bias if in the whole of India a place is found where an officer wants to do the just thing. He needs must describe it as a great calamity that a Mussalman has been forced in the trade. (*An Hon. Member :* " He did not say that ".) What he said was that Punjabis and U. P. Muslims were given permits. Is it only the monopoly of Marwaris or of the indigenous people of Bengal, Bihar and other Provinces ?

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Why do you follow his bad example ? Why don't you set a good example ?

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Mr. President, I want to reply to all the criticisms which are shed from the right, from the left and from behind.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : You have no time to reply to all that.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Mr. President, in conclusion I should like to say that the help which we are offering is not a certificate to the Food Department that all is well with it. This should not be regarded that we take the responsibility for the misdeeds of the Food Department of the past or the present or the future. We have offered our hand of help in the hope that thereby we will be able to save the lives which are very precious and which should be saved at all costs.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR (Madras : Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, I shall in the few remarks I propose to address to the House be as brief as possible. I do not propose to touch on all the issues arising out of this debate which has now extended over nearly two days. I listened, Sir, yesterday to the speech of my Hon. friend the Food Member with great interest. He related to us the things that had been done under his leadership by the Food Department. He took us over the ground from 1943 up to date. He placed before the House a few days ago, a statement of what had been done by the Food Department. But, unfortunately, it represented the state of things only on the 21st of January last. Two months have elapsed since and having gathered here to discuss the food situation one would have expected that the information in that document had been

brought up to date so that the House might be in possession of what the food situation today is like. While we heard a great deal about items of policy, the ideals that both the Food Department and the Agriculture Department placed before themselves and some of the targets which they proposed to reach in due course, the Hon. Member's speech did not relate to anything that could be considered particularly relevant to the debate that we are now engaged on. I say this deliberately because we did not get from him a picture of the actual situation as it is today. I should have expected, Sir, the Hon. the Food Member to have told us what the situation is like in different parts of the country, what the deficit in particular areas is and what the total deficit of foodgrains in the whole country is like. We should also have liked information as to what the total production in the country is like, what imports we had actually received and what imports he was pressing for or the Food Delegation on behalf of this country had been instructed to press for by him and his Government. Unfortunately, he left us to gather all this information from sources other than his own speech or the documents which he has made available to us. That is my main grievance with his speech. As to the Food Department itself, I think it has done a great deal since the Foodgrains Policy Committee reported. As I have said once before in this House, that Committee gave this Government a policy and the Government have tried to translate it into practice to the best of their ability. But the Food Department, I think, could have done more.

I shall now proceed to deal with some of the matters that arose out of the discussions we have had. This food problem has both a long range aspect and an immediate aspect. The long range aspect was the one to which the Hon. the Food Member devoted himself almost entirely. I do not say he altogether neglected the immediate aspect but I do say that he did not give it the emphasis and the importance which the present situation demands. Now, Sir, with regard to the long range aspect, the joint statement of policy which he and his colleague, the Hon. Member for Agriculture, has issued contains unexceptionable dicta. They enunciate principles to which few could take real objection. I do not today propose to deal with the issues that arise out of that statement. That, I think, Sir, may well be taken up on a day which, if my Hon. friend Mr. Hossain Imam's suggestion is accepted, I hope Government would give for a discussion of the more important recommendations in the Report of the Famine Enquiry Commission. I shall today confine myself only to what I might call the immediate aspect. We are now faced with a scarcity and a threat of famine such as we had not feared would occur so soon after the war. This, Sir, is a problem the solution of which depends upon our capacity to increase the quantity of foodgrains that could be made available for consumption, and secondly, the problem is one of equitable distribution of the quantity that is so made available. With regard to the first point, Sir, the main thing that I should like to refer to on this occasion is the "Grow More Food" campaign. My Hon. friend Mr. Hossain Imam drew attention to a circumstance of which I was not quite aware, I confess, namely, that the Budget for the coming year contains no revenue provision for a grant for this purpose. If that is so, Sir, it is a matter to be regretted. But, when we are considering this question, should we not look at what has happened or what has not happened under this "Grow More Food" campaign? In the statement that was placed before the House a few days ago to which I have made reference already, I do not think I found any reference to the "Grow More Food" campaign, nor did the Hon. the Food Member refer to anything connected with that matter seriously in his own speech. I find, however, Sir, that the Food Secretary made a reference to it in the other House and I could well understand the very apologetic manner in which he made a reference to this "Grow More Food" campaign. In fact he started by saying—

"The House will no doubt like to have a clear statement from Government on the question to what extent the results of the Grow More Food campaign have kept pace with the increasing needs of the country and whether the claims made by the Government of India in the Agricultural Department under the Grow More Food campaign can be justified by actual results".

He then proceeded to give a few figures, which indicated that as a matter of fact no appreciable progress had been made. In fact after giving those figures he proceeded to say—

[Sir N. Gopalaswami ayyangar]

"On these figures one's first reaction would be that the claims made under the Grow More Food campaign are unsustainable. The discrepancy, however, is capable of a logical explanation".

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : What does he say about rice there ?

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : He says :—

"During 1943-44 and 1944-45 the rice acreage as published on the authority of the Government has shown an increase of 7 million acres over the five-year average and rice production an increase of 5.8 million and 2.8 million tons respectively".

What follows is a really more significant remark—

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : May I ask if the Food Secretary has said anything with reference to the observation of the Famine Enquiry Commission that the figures for 1940-41 or 1941-42 cannot be compared with the figures for the years 1942-43 and the succeeding years ?

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : No, he has not said anything about that. But one significant fact he does point out, namely :

"That the rice surpluses declared to the Food Department under the Basic Plan, however, have shown an increase of only 3 lakh tons over the pre-war internal surpluses known to have been available for inter-provincial distribution".

The whole blame for the poor results of Grow More Food campaign he places on the seasons, the want of rain.

I have been trying to find out what exactly has happened in my own province under this campaign. The campaign really started in 1943-44. Up to the 30th September 1945 the additional extent that had been brought under cultivation was 180,233 acres. The net area sown in 1944-45 was 31.5 million acres against the pre-war triennial average of 31.7 million acres. Actually therefore there was a drop of 200,000 acres after two years of the Grow More Food campaign. The area under foodgrains was shown in 1944-45 as 28 million acres, while the pre-war triennial average was only 22.8 million acres. One would imagine from this that about 5.2 million additional acres had been brought under foodgrains. The question will be asked, when there was a diminution of 200,000 acres under total area sown, how is it that 5.2 million acres are shown as having increased under food crops? The only other source from which this could have been obtained was the area under non-food crops. Let us examine those figures. The area under non-food crops in 1944-45 was 9 million acres. The triennial pre-war average was 9.4 million acres, so that really the decrease is only about 400,000 acres against an increase under food crops of over 5 million acres. The only explanation that the Madras Government could give for these figures was that possibly this increase under food crops was due to the area under second crop cultivation on a larger extent of land. From my own experience it seems to me very doubtful whether an increase of 5.2 million acres could have occurred in second crop cultivation even in the whole Province of Madras. I mention these figures to the Hon. the Food Member. I should have mentioned them—if he had been present—to the Hon. Member for Agriculture for him to investigate really what has happened. As regards these figures, are we really growing more food or are we really showing more area under cultivated extent? Now if in spite of these figures there was an increase in the net production of foodgrains, it must be attributed only to the diversion of part of the area under non-food crops to food crops and to second crop cultivation; but as a matter of fact what one finds is that there is a net drop in production also. The average for five years ending 1939-40 was 78,98,660 tons under both rice and millets. In 1945-46 it is estimated at 58,87,000. In 1943-44 it was 78,12,500 and so on.

AN HON. MEMBER : Decreasing ?

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : In any case there is not anything like a noticeable increase. That is one point, and a very important point, which I think those who are enthusiasts over this Grow More Food campaign might well investigate. Personally I do not think, as I said once before, that we are going

to grow more food on plans of this nature, much less on plans which are put out for the purpose of converting gardens attached to houses into fields for cultivation of vegetables, potatoes, and possibly maize. I do not think they are going to affect appreciably this problem of the quantity of grains available for consumption at all.

Now, Sir, the other point with regard to the quantity available for consumption is that having reference to imports. It has been difficult for me to find out what exactly the deficit for the whole of India is like, that is to say, the deficit comparing production in this country with the needs of consumption. The figure, which I take from my Hon. friend Pandit Kunzru, is said to be 6 million tons for India as a whole. I do not know where he got that from ?

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I think it was stated by the Food Department in a Press Conference recently. Probably the statement was made on the 1st or 2nd February.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Well, if that is 6 million tons, of which rice accounts for 3 million tons, we have got to ask the Hon. the Food Member what steps have been taken by him and his Department to fill up this gap between production and the needs of consumption in this country. I remember to have read in the papers that our Food Delegation at Washington pressed for 4 million tons for the whole year and wanted 2 million tons to be sent to this country within the next few months. Well, as a matter of fact the latest information we have is that we have been promised 1,250,000 tons of wheat for this country. Now, I ask, Sir, what has become of the question of rice ? Some time ago we were told that Siam had a surplus of 1½ million tons.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Of reparations rice.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : That goes to Malaya.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMY AYYANGAR : Well, there was a race for a share in that surplus and I know as a matter of fact Madras asked for about 750,000 tons out of that. We were told that the allotment was somewhat about 400,000 tons but we do not know really how much has really been got out of Siam. I remember it was said, on the authority of very responsible persons, that two vessels sailed from Goa, a Portuguese port, to Siam for the purpose of carrying a load of rice from Siam to India. They went there, did not find the rice, put a quantity of sand as ballast into the vessels and came back to India. (*Laughter.*) That is the information which I have received. I do not know how far that is correct. Even today we are ignorant as to what the position as regards Siam rice is. Now, so far as Madras is concerned, that is a very important thing. Even if we get all the 1½ million tons of wheat Madras cannot, I am afraid, consume more than the 300,000 tons of what it has asked for out of the 1 million ton total that it has applied for. As the House knows, Madras cannot consume anything like even those 300,000 tons of wheat. Now if Madras must get rice, what are the arrangements that the Food Department has made for our getting the rice we need ?

Now, Sir, in the course of the Hon. Member's speech—I think the Hon. Mr. Hossain Imam referred to it but in a way somewhat different from how I understood the Hon. Member's speech—he referred to the Madras famine. I thought he claimed credit for having discovered famine in the Madras Presidency himself and that no Madras officers were aware of it till he or somebody under his orders went to the Province, saw things for himself and came back and said there was going to be famine in Madras.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, I said nothing of that kind. Perhaps I have been misunderstood by my friend.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : I think the Hon. Mr. Hossain Imam mentioned the 20th of February, 1946.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Please bring your remarks to a close now.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Yes, Sir, I am going to do that presently.

Here, Sir, I have got the cutting of an interview which was given on the 19th of January by Sir Sonti Ramamoorthy whose administration of the Food Department in the Madras Presidency has been of outstanding merit. He told people in Madras, I mean the Press people in Madras :—

“ Our ability in the coming months to maintain the 1-lb. ration of cereals depends upon the aid from the Government of India and His Majesty's Government . . . ”

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : What date is that ?

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : 19th of January.

“ and I am going to Delhi to urge that it be given ”.

He came to Delhi. I believe he created quite a furore at a meeting here, which was duly publicized in the papers. He came back and met the Provincial Food Council, of which I am also a member, and made a statement which made a stir not only in India but outside India.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I do not deny that.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : You do not deny that. What I wish to say is that I do not think the Food Department need claim the credit for having discovered famine for us.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : But did he tell us that before the 19th of January ? That is the point. Did he say that previously anywhere ?

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : 19th of January was the climax of a series of talks and correspondence which he had had with the Govt. of India.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Exactly, that is my point.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Well, Sir, I do not wish to go into other questions. I would only refer to one point and finish and that is about this amendment. We are all very grateful to His Excellency the Viceroy for the hand he has taken in tackling this very important problem, but judging from what is happening it looks to me as if the Food Department has in some ways and in certain aspects been put aside in the course of these happenings. Now, let us take, for instance, the first occasion on which His Excellency the Viceroy sent somebody to see Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha soliciting his help in connection with the food situation. The Mahatma told the emissary that the proper thing to do was to establish a Government at the Centre which would be responsible to the Legislature. The thing dropped there. In the last few days we have had two alternative proposals : one was that there should be a Committee of 12 to 14 to sit over the food administration. Now, Sir, I think the Hon. the Food Member has got the assistance of four different committees already. I need not name them. I think he gave the number in answer to some question sometime last year. Well, this was to be another Committee and this was put before the Congress Working Committee which turned it down on the ground that it was going to be merely advisory. Then came another proposal that there was to be a super-authority consisting of four persons, at a very, very high level indeed, and this Committee was to have plenary powers ! I do not know where the Food Member and where the Food Department was in all this.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is wrong.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Whatever it is, that is the impression that has gone abroad.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Could the Hon. Member say what is wrong ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA ; Plenary powers.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Was the Viceroy only to be an Adviser ?

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : I think the Hon. Member's contradiction in this House would have to be taken as official contradiction as there has not been any official contradiction before.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I will officially contradict it in my reply.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Now, Sir, the point for me to urge in this connection is that all this shows that the present Government, or whoever are responsible for food administration in this Government, feel that they had not got the support of the country-----

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Hear, hear.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR —and, therefore, efforts have been made both by the Hon. Member in inviting a number of non-officials to join his Government Delegation to Washington and also by His Excellency the Viceroy. He is trying to gather support for whatever he proposes to do in this connection.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Every constitutional Minister wants to do that.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : I do not think so. A constitutional Minister will take the responsibility of taking action and rely upon his party or the country supporting him, which is a very different matter.

Now, Sir, the point for us to realise, particularly with reference to the amendment moved by the Congress Party in this House, is that after all, if you are going to have food administration conducted with the support of the people, the proper method of doing it would be to instal in office a Government which can command all that support, and not let the present Government carry on and seek the support of all and sundry for backing whatever it does. That is, after all, at the back of this amendment, and I should think that in view of all the declarations that have been made from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State downwards by His Excellency the Viceroy and others, and, I believe, even by Hon. Members sitting on the front Benches, everybody is agreed that a new Government at the Centre—National, if possible—in order to deal with a food situation of this magnitude should be set up in the very near future, and the sooner it is done the better.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Does the Hon. the Food Member wish to speak now, or after the speeches of the two or three members who wish to speak ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I will take about 40 minutes to reply to the debate ; and I would speak last.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : I will give the remaining speakers ten minutes each, not more. Everything that could possibly be said on this matter has been very clearly and fully said, and Hon. Members should confine their remarks to any new points they wish to make and not repeat the previous arguments.

THE HON. MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, speaking on a similar Resolution during the period of the Bengal famine, the Hon. the Food Member said that in order to improve the food situation what was of primary importance was the restoration of confidence among the people. May I ask the Hon. Member whether he is satisfied that his Government has won the confidence of the people ? The Government has thought fit to choose as a member of the Food Delegation a gentleman during whose Premiership the man-made famine in Bengal took place. The picture would have been complete if the chief procuring agents had also been associated with the delegation.

[Mr. Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhury]

Sir, I hope the Government will see that the food situation is not mishandled in the way it was done during the last famine in Bengal. I hope that there will not be a single death in any part of India this time from starvation. And even if deaths occur, the Central Government should instruct the Provincial Governments to keep a record of such deaths. During the last famine in Bengal the Bengal Government did not keep any record whatsoever.

The Hon. Member wants the confidence of the people. How can you have the confidence of the people when you have all around you men corrupt to the core? Sir, I was one of those who thought that direct procurement of foodgrains by the Government would help to improve the situation. But I have been disillusioned. I shall state the reason why. In some parts of South Bengal the crop has not been very bad this year. Now, the licensed traders who used to purchase paddy direct from the cultivators are harassed by the river police in such a way by the misuse of the Food Grains Control Order that they have stopped going about in different villages for their purchases, with the result that an agriculturist who wants to sell, say, 50 maunds of paddy has to carry the same to the Government purchasing centre, where he is often told that paddy is not required on that day or that the paddy tendered is of very poor quality and unless he is willing to forego Rs. 50 over the 50 maunds he will have to take the paddy back, which means extra expense to him. The poor cultivator has no option left but to pay this price for selling his paddy to Government, as he cannot sell it to anybody at home. That is how corruption is going on. I hope the Hon. Member and his Secretary will exercise stricter supervision and root out all corruption so rampant in the matter of procurement and distribution of foodgrains.

Sir, I do not find anybody representing the Food Department on the Government benches. I must strongly protest against this. What does the Hon. Member think we are here for? For show or what?

Sir, I suggest that the Government agent should go to the producers for purchasing the surplus stock and carry the same at Government expense. The Government should not force the agriculturists to bring his surplus stock to the Government purchasing centre, situated at a far distance place, and make him a "pheriwala" of foodgrains. I suggest also that the producers should be apprised of the minimum and ceiling prices by beat of drum in every market place.

Then, Sir, I ask the Hon. Member not to fix the ration of agricultural labourers at 16 oz. I know an agricultural labourer in Bengal takes at least one seer of rice every day. The Hon. Member may not know this, but I am sure his Secretary, my friend Mr. Sen, knows this very well. If you reduce the quantity of food of an agricultural labourer, he will refuse to cultivate the land for growing foodgrains and will take to other kinds of labour, which will seriously affect the food situation in the coming year. Then, Sir, all menial labour, such as domestic servants, sweepers, peons, etc., should be regarded as manual labour and should be entitled to an increased ration, because these labourers do not take things like eggs, meat or milk.

As regards your question to Pandit Kunzru regarding subsidising foodgrains I have already suggested in my Budget speech that this can be done by opening subsidised food stores in every village union where foodgrains below cost price may be made available to persons having an income up to a certain level and to agriculturists who do not possess more than five acres of land and who have minors and female and infirm dependants to maintain. Sir, I support the amendment.

FLY-LIEUT. THE HON. RUP CHAND (Punjab : Non-Muhammadan): Sir, India's food problem is now on the map of the world. For the first time the statesmen of all countries have joined heads to consider the food crisis that is threatening the world. It will have to be admitted that a combination of unfortunate circumstances has led to the present state of affairs. The failure of rainfall in the South, Central India and the winter rains of North have brought about a state of shortage in foodgrains. The total production of foodgrains in the country will have to be very carefully distributed in order to tide over the approaching famine. It will have to be minutely watched that the distributing agencies are able to feed the poorest

sections of the population, because it is here that there is chance of the food not reaching in sufficient quantities.

Sir, food shortage in India is becoming a chronic malady. Even in normal times there is not enough to go round for all the 400 million people of India. A substantial part of the population lives permanently on the verge of starvation. This is the reason why the consequences of food shortage are felt very quickly in India.

It is not very long since the seriousness of the food situation in India was recognised. The recent Bengal famine made every one conscious about the urgency of the problems of production and distribution of food in India. The problems of under-feeding and malnutrition have not been sympathetically taken into account until the Government of India was faced with the war-time problems.

The Food Member, in a recent speech, admitted that the situation can be tackled effectively and in better way only if the Government receives the full and hearty co-operation of the people.

I ask you, Sir, what has the Government done to inspire confidence amongst the people? Corruption and malpractices have been the order of the day and the mismanagement which took place in Bengal is too well-known. The Government will have to admit that their arrangements for meeting the crisis of Bengal famine fell far short of the requirements and this along with bad distribution of whatever food got to Bengal, brought about the unhappy results. This failure on the part of the Government caused an unprecedented loss of confidence among the people in this respect. The Government must now start with this handicap and will have to put in far greater effort in order to meet the present situation.

I submit that it is necessary that, apart from temporary solutions like imports of food from abroad, long-term and permanent remedies to solve the food shortage should be resorted to. The population of India increases every year by about 50 lakhs, but the food resources of India are at present limited. It should be the duty of the Government to make India entirely self-sufficient in the matter of food supplies. Is it not a tragedy that being predominantly an agricultural country, India should beg for food from other countries? The only way to be independent of others help is to increase the food production in India by improved methods and by effectively tackling the problems of food distribution. I would advise the Government that they should lay great stress on the question of distribution of food during the coming crisis. Of course, any amount of food we are able to get from countries outside India would be welcome, but unless very efficient distribution agencies are established no amount of food would be enough to go round particularly on account of the scare which has been created about the coming food shortage and its consequences of developing black market.

I would now like to mention briefly, Sir, the methods by which we could all co-operate and relieve the food situation in the country.

(i) The Government are already making desperate efforts to import foodgrains from the United States, Canada and Australia and giving the highest priority to this matter in shipping.

(ii) Every effort should be made to grow crops which produce higher food value per unit, for instance, it is estimated that an acre of wheat feeds about twenty people while an acre of potatoes is sufficient for forty persons. In this connection I may also quote the recommendation of the Famine Enquiry Commission Report, 1945—“Crops such as potatoes and bananas give larger returns of food energy per unit area than cereals”. It is needless to say that more attention should be paid to the growing of the crops.

(iii) I am distressed to note that the Hon. Member has made no mention of the storage facilities for foodgrains in India. The storage facilities in India are deplorably inadequate and most defective. It is a matter for regret that the Government of India, even after the establishment of separate departments of Agriculture and Food, have not been able to prevent the colossal wastage of foodgrains in India as a result of faulty storage, damage by rats, insects and other pests of stored crop and diseases. Sir, it may seem unbelievable, but it is nevertheless true, that almost 1/10th of the total food production of India is destroyed by these pests. The quantity of foodgrains which can be saved by providing up-to-date storage facilities

[Flt.-Lieut. Rup Chand]

and modern elevators, as are provided in Europe and America, is substantial and may amount to lakhs of tons.

(iv) Government should acquire all surplus available stocks from the military authorities, including grain, tinned foods, vitamin tablets, concentrated foods, powdered milk, etc., and allot them for civilian consumption. Active military operations are now over and the rations of military men should also be reduced as has been done in the case of civilians.

Long-term measures to increase India's total food production should also be taken in hand immediately and the recommendations made by the famine Committee should be adhered to for the future. The supply of water and extension of irrigation facilities by wells, tanks, dams, and canals; increase in production and utilisation of all resources of manure and fertilizers so that the yield per acre (which is quite low in India at present) may be increased; with the distribution of improved varieties of seed.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS (Nominated Non-Official): Sir, it seems the debate on the question of food has become seasonal. The reason for the discussion of the food problem again and again in the House seems to me that the real causes that are likely to lead to famine have not been traced out. Sir, the Government of India have accepted the recommendation of the Gregory Committee for Grow More Food campaign. In order to avert the calamity of famine the Gregory Report has recommended "Grow More Food" campaign as one of the measures. The Government of India adopted that recommendation and circulated throughout the whole country that people should grow more food. Now the Government Member says that the "Grow More Food" campaign has been partly successful, while the other non-official members have said that the campaign is not a success. To me it appears that the "Grow More Food" campaign has not been a success; otherwise, Hon. the Food member would have had no occasion to send a Food Mission out of India with a begging bowl to America for some millions tons of foodgrains. Sir, it is really regrettable that a vast country like India with so many resources has got to play the role of a beggar—the sending of a mission out of India to a foreign country for a morsel of food is certainly a dignified form of begging—I would call it. It is no credit to the Food Member to say that he has been able to secure some millions of tons of food from the Combined Food Board. To my mind the real causes of this prospective famine is that India has ceased to be a land of plain living and high thinking. In India practically we have no standard of living. There are certain intellectuals—I may call them trained intellectuals—without trained hearts. They are simply taking advantage of the present policy of supply of Government. Sir, the Supply Department has been introduced for the benefit of the people and a machinery has been set up for the working of the Food Department. But how is that machinery working? It is all full of corruption, it is all full of dishonesty, it is all full of evils. If the Hon. Member would simply examine the bank balances of those who form part of the machinery of control, and supply he would be able to realise how the machinery is working. Until and unless this corruption is rooted out, until and unless individual trained intellect with a trained heart is allowed to carry on the food administration, I would emphatically say that this problem of food shortage will ever continue—

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT: God forbid.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS: I would say one thing, Mr. President. The Hon. the Food Member is here in New Delhi. New Delhi is the capital city of the whole of India. Let any of my Hon. friends go out and examine the Delhi streets, he will find lot of people dying there for want of food.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: Where?

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS: In Old Delhi streets.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA: I have not seen one.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : On the Victory celebration day I did not get out in the morning out of fear, but in the evening I had a round, and near the Town Hall just in the streets a man was lying dead. There was no movement. The passers-by there asked a beggar to remove the cloth and see whether he was living. The body was examined and he was found dead there. What is this? This is simply callous disregard of human life. So I say, Sir, that a trained intellect without a trained heart cannot achieve anything. (*Laughter.*)

The next point is—there is no question of laughing it away. You are all Hon. Members here, big people. You can talk a lot here. Your talk will not help those poor people.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Mr. Das, don't take any notice of that. You go on.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : Another reason leading to the food problem is the whims and vagaries of nature. Take for instance, drought or flood affecting or interfering with cultivation. We, human beings, have no control over that. But we can help by co-operating to move things from surplus to deficit areas. More or less it depends on the co-operation between the provinces. This is being done. The other day I read in the papers—I forget in what connection—that 10 lakhs maunds of rice were sent out from Assam through Chittagong to Madras. Assam is not so very hard-hearted as to allow people to die of starvation. Hon. friends on the opposite side have made various suggestions to solve the food problem so that we may have ample to eat. The formation of a National Government has been suggested. But I do not see how a National Government would lead to the solution of the food problem. Will the National Government make the whole lot take to the plough? It is impossible. My Hon. friend Mr. Thirumala Row, who is not here just now, said that food is life and life is food. But he did not mention how food is transformed into life and life transformed into food. (*Laughter.*) What is the agency behind that? What is the Supreme Power behind that?

Now, Sir, I presume everyone of us here is an Theist. Theist or atheist? I want some answer on that point.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Never mind about that; please go on.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : My Hon. friend Mr. Thirumala Row said yesterday that food is life and life is food, but I should like to know how food is transformed into life and life is transformed into food. There must be some unseen power which does that—(*Some Hon. Members :* Yes)—and unless and until we rely upon that unseen power, Sir, your planning business, your policy-making business, will not come to your help with regard to the solution of the food problem.

This reminds me, Sir, of a certain story, a significant story.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : You have got two minutes more.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : A very short story, Sir. Of course, my friend the Food Member knows the King Ravanna, and how powerful a king he was.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, I don't know him. (*Laughter.*)

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : As a Hindu—I think, you claim to be a Hindu, isn't it?—I am sure you know him. One day that mighty King was having a tour round his country. In the course of his travelling he found the Hindu God, Vishnu, sitting on a mound weighing sands.

Now, Ravanna asked: "Well, Vishnu, what are you doing here; you are playing like a child?"

Vishnu replied "I am not playing like a child. I am allotting rice to the creatures in the world. There are birds, there are beasts and other animals, and there are human beings. To every one I am allotting his quota." (As my Hon. friend the Food Member is doing now!)

Now, Sir, Ravanna was thunderstruck. He said, "What is this. I am a mighty king. I have everything in my possession. You say you give me food. Are you really giving me food?"

Vishnu said, "Yes, it is I who gives you food."

Ravanna said: "All right, then just tell me the particular day on which I shall have no food."

[Mr. M. L. Das]

Well, Sir, that particular day was named and Ravanna on the day in question found every thing all right. All sorts of nice dishes placed in front of him in right royal style.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : You have now exceeded your time.

THE HON. MR. M. L. DAS : Let me finish this story, Sir.

Now what happened. The food was there and he was about to eat and was saying, "Oh, Vishnu must be wrong. He said that I would not get my food on this particular day. This is food just in front of me and I am going to eat it" and looking at the food he was smiling. Just about that time, Sir, Indrajit, his son turned up. It had been his wife's turn to cook on that particular day. Now when Indrajit came into the room he found Ravanna smiling and thinking that Ravanna's smile indicated immoral intimacy with his (Indrajit's) wife at once jumped on his father. Now you can imagine what happened to the food before Ravanna. Every thing was upset and he did not get the food to eat on that particular day as no food was allotted to him by Vishnu. Therefore, Sir, I say that unless you have faith in that unseen power, whatever planning you do it would be of no avail.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Mr. President, Sir, I will try to be brief. This debate has gone on for two days and numerous points have been raised. If I fail to reply to all of them it will be only because of want of time.

Sir, I will try and deal with some of the salient points raised during the debate. First of all, Sir, my friend the Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row in moving his amendment raised the question as to whether prices should not be raised. Sir, we have gone carefully into the question of prices and we consider the present level of prices to be fair, both to consumers and producers. If my friend will refer to certain paragraphs of the report of the Famine Enquiry Commission, which I need not quote here, he will find that we have regulated the prices in accordance with the principles laid down there and I claim, Sir, that it would not be right at this stage for us to raise the prices. In conditions of scarcity, Sir, the raising of prices may involve serious consequences, because, Sir, in those conditions the raising of prices generates the psychology of greed and fear which involve hoarding on a large scale and thereby intensify shortage.

Sir, the next point that was raised by the Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row was that we should use co-operative societies for purposes of procurement. Sir, this is an accepted policy of Government. We have been using co-operative societies wherever we can possibly do so but as the House knows co-operative societies are not all good and efficient.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Are many of them, or very few of them, good ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Now, Sir, I will refer to remarks made by my old friend Sir Shantidas Askuran which astounded me. I do not think he was present here when I made my opening speech, otherwise he would not have said that we were found unprepared for the calamity. I related at length the developments in the food situation since August last, and I claim, Sir, that in this case at any rate we have not been caught napping. We have been alert all the time, and we could not have done any more than what we have done.

Sir, I would like now to deal with some of the points raised by my Hon. friend Pandit Kunzru. He felt somehow that my speech did not emphasise the gravity of the situation. I have got here the transcript of my speech, and I confess, Sir, that I do not see what more I could have said to stress the fact that the situation in the country is grave. I cannot talk irresponsibly and cause panic. But the Food Department in this instance have stressed all along that the situation is grave. They have kept nothing from the public or from the Legislature, and they have done all that it is possible to do to secure supplies, to tighten our belts, and to help others in improving the situation. My friend also said that in my speech I used the first person singular all along. I have read the transcript of my speech and I do not find that I have

used the first person singular. I have made a factual statement of what the Department has done to deal with the food situation both in its long-term and short-term aspects, and I have nowhere used the first person singular. The circumstance that I happen to be the leader of the Department is, to my mind, a fortuitous one; the credit goes entirely to the Department and those who have worked in it to ease the food situation in the country. And I maintain that still. I hope that when the present Government goes and a National Government, or whatever it may be, comes along, they will still find that machinery extremely useful, I would like to see in what respects they would be able to change it.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : But his more serious point, as I understood it, was that in 1943 and 1944, he asked for some information from the Hon. Member and the Hon. Member promised to supply it, but the Government has not supplied it to him up to date. What has the Hon. Member got to say to that ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am coming to that. Dealing with the complaint to which you have just referred, we have been supplying all possible information, as far as I know, and I have asked my Secretary, and my Department has the greatest respect for Pandit Kunzru and the other members of this House, and they have never refused them any information. I do not know what particular information has not reached him, and I shall take that matter up at once if he will kindly let me know what points he would like statements on.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I gave all the points to Mr. Sen in November, 1944.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I shall look into the matter. There has been no desire on the part of anybody to withhold information and I was under the impression that Pandit Kunzru, of all persons, was in the closest touch with my Department.

Sir, the Hon. Pandit Kunzru has again referred to certain recommendations of the Famine Inquiry Commission and has asked what action we have taken on them. I thought, Sir, that yesterday I took some time in the House in dealing with this matter. I have stated that we have set up a special division in the Food Department to deal with the recommendations of the Famine Inquiry Commission, and the statement of policy that we issued the other day represented the decisions reached on its recommendations.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : May I interrupt the Hon. Member ? What I asked was whether Government had fixed any time within which certain results were to be achieved. To set out a policy and say that certain proposals of the Commission had found favour with the Government is one thing, and to fix the stages by which those recommendations are to be realised is quite another thing. To do the latter thing would be to put forward a practical programme.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I will explain that. The first thing to do is obviously to sift the recommendations and to discuss them with the Departments concerned and also with the Provincial Governments and the Indian States. We have got an organisation working at it. The Special Commissioner who is dealing with the matter has toured several provinces already. He is going to continue this during the next two or three months, and then he would be able to give me a considered plan as regards time and so on. It is not possible for the Government of India to lay down a target time without consulting the provinces on whom will fall the responsibility of doing the work. Most of the recommendations of the Famine Inquiry Commission pertain to the provinces. We from the Centre can do very little except perhaps co-ordinate and give directions. It is the duty of this Special Commissioner to go round and get all the Provinces and States in a line with that policy. He is doing that for what he is worth, and I hope that in the near future we shall have a plan ready which I shall be glad to place before the House. Sir, the Hon. Mr. Kunzru has inquired as to how we have computed this 6 million tons deficit which was given out to the Press a short while ago by an official spokesman. Sir, 3 millions of that pertains to the deficit in Bombay, Madras and

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava]

Mysore, and the remaining 3 million tons has been roughly computed to be the deficit due to the failure of the winter rains and other factors in the rest of India. It is a rough figure. There is no formula for computing these deficits but I think we are not far off.

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Is it guess work ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, Sir, it is not guess work. It has been computed on the basis of such information as is available. Sir, my Hon. friend Mr. Kunzru, and I believe also the Hon. Mr. Hossain Imam, inquired about the age-limit for children for rationing. I would like to inform them and the House that this Government issued a circular to all the Provincial Governments and Administrations telling them that the age-limit of a child who was to receive a child's ration was to be reduced to 8 some time ago. I will now inquire as to which provinces have given effect to this instruction of ours.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : When was this letter issued ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : It was issued on the 23rd of March, 1945.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : Afterwards the ration has been decreased.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : We said in that letter that the definition of a child should be " from date of birth to the age of 8 ". We have to define a child which is below age.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Is the Hon. Member aware that even in Delhi this is not accepted ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I would not like to say that, Sir, but I will inquire. It is the accepted policy of the Government that a child should be one who is below 8 years of age. That matter has already been dealt with by us.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : May I request the Government to be more persuasive with the Provinces ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Well, Sir, the Hon. Mr. Kunzru next raised the question —

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : May I interrupt the Hon. Member ? The Hon. Member was going to give us the names of the provinces that had carried out that proposal of the Government of India.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, Sir. I said that I have not got the names but I will inquire.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I am sorry.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I will inquire. We issued that letter and we will now inquire as to the provinces which have not carried out that order. I will make that inquiry. I undertake to do that.

Sir, the next point that was raised by the Hon. Mr. Kunzru related to subsidised food. My friend knows probably that in every province there are a large number of cheap grain shops. I do not know whether that is what he means.

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : Not that I know of in Bombay.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : In many provinces, I would like to say that as the situation demands Provincial Governments open out cheap grain shops.

AN HON. MEMBER : Not in Bihar.

ANOTHER HON. MEMBER : Not in Bombay, not in Madras. I would like to know where this has been done ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : This is in the interest of the poor.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : We are interested as much as you are. We want to know which province has adopted that, and where cheap grain shops are existing ?

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : Probably, in the case of industrial areas, railway servants and others, cheap food is available. Not in Madras.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Wherever there has been need at the time of distress there have been cheap grain shops. I have seen many of these in Bengal myself.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : May be in Bengal which is a favoured province.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Where the Provincial Governments have not felt the need for them, they have not opened them naturally. But, at the time of distress I am quite sure that a large number of these shops will be opened.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : What percentage will be —

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : My time is short ; I would not like to be interrupted.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : I only wanted to know. It will help us a great deal —

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Will you please let me go on ?

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN : I only wanted some information.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : You all had your say. Let him now have his say.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I have said what I had to say, Sir.

Now, Sir, with regard to the general question of subsidy for the poor, that is a big question and that, as I said, is under examination. It is a very vast question. It has made a good deal of progress. The House knows what it means. The Committee which is sitting and examining that question has been charged with examining in all its bearings, financial, administrative and social, the principle of subsidy in the matter of both distribution and production of foodgrains and other foodstuffs, whether with a view to bringing down the cost of living or raising the standard of living or aiding in the solution of the price problem and agriculture, and to make recommendations to that effect. The great difficulty just now in that matter is that prices are so unstable and unrealistic. If we accept the general principle of subsidising food for the poor at this stage we may be letting ourselves in for something we do not know. But, at a time of distress, I wish to assure the House, as a temporary measure, as an emergency measure, we shall see to it that the poor get food at prices which they can afford. The larger question will take a little time for examination. It involves huge sums of money and is subject to a lot of difficulties.

Sir, my friend Raja Motilal rightly drew our attention to the black marketeer and the hoarder. I am entirely at one with him that we should root out these social pests ; and I want the co-operation and the help of the House and the public at large in doing this. It is not possible for Government alone to stop black marketing or hoarding. The problem is a tremendous one.

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava]

Now I turn to my friend Mr. Hossain Imam. He has as usual thrown a few brickbats at me, but as I said I do not mind them. He has accused me of dealing with the food problem in a light-hearted manner. Now, Sir, I would ask any impartial judge to read my speech in cold print and then say whether I dealt with the problem in that manner. I say I could not have been more serious than I was.

The next point that he raised was what action has been taken on the Report of the Famine Commission. I have already dealt with that. We are examining the Report in consultation with the Provinces and the States. There is an officer and a full Secretariat busy on that job. But he said—perhaps I did not make myself clearly heard—he said that I suddenly woke up on the 20th of January to a famine in the country. I said nothing of the kind. I said the exact magnitude of the disaster with which we were faced was made known to us at the Conference of Provincial Representatives on the 22nd of January. We had known for some time that there was going to be scarcity. There were different figures given to us by the Provincial Governments. The loss was a progressive one. But it was only on the 22nd January that we knew that Madras alone was going to be short to the tune of nearly 2 million tons. It was only then—my friend Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar was quite right when he pointed out—that Sir Ramamoorthy came with the figures and told us on the 22nd of January. He had not given those figures for before that.

An astounding statement has been made by one or two Hon. Members that there is no provision in the Budget for the Grow More Food campaign—

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Under Revenue head.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I do not know under what head. But I can assure the House that there is provision for Grow More Food in the Budget. I would like the Hon. Member to refer to Major Head 88, Capital Outlay, Sub-head, Grants-in-aid to Provinces for development. The demand put down is Rs. 35 crores, out of which I am informed by the Agriculture Department that they have so far asked for 150 lakhs for Grow More Food.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Is it contained in the book of Demands for Grants ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Yes, I believe so. I have not got it here. I made enquiry and I am informed that under Major Head 88, Capital Outlay, 35 crores have been provided.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : 150 lakhs for Grow More Food. Is it printed or is it given in any book of expenditure ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I thought members ought to know that themselves.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : It is not in the book.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Provision has been made and there will be plenty of money for Grow More Food. There will be no shortage of money. But the difficulty has been to get schemes from the provinces, schemes on which money could be usefully spent.

There was also some criticism about the discontinuance of vegetable production in U. P. My attention was drawn to the memorandum which we circulated a few days ago. I have read it. On the cessation of the war with Japan we stopped the cultivation of potatoes which were grown entirely for these two or three factories which the U. P. Government had set up for supplying war needs. That land did not lie useless after that. I suppose foodgrains were grown on it. But since then, Sir, we have started two of those factories in order to dehydrate potatoes for the use of the famine-stricken areas. The information contained in the memorandum related to a period before the famine scare was on.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SATYENDRA KUMAR DAS : With the permission of the Chair, may I know from the Hon. Member whether menial servants will be entitled to get more food like labourers? He was not replied to that point.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : My friend wants to know whether menials will be treated as hard manual labourers.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : The next item which I took a note of arising out of Mr. Hossain Imam's speech related to the Assam Land Line system. I know the problem very well. I have been at it for the last three years.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : I wish you every success.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I was surprised that nobody seems to be keen to get that land under cultivation. I went myself to Shillong at a time when the Saadulla Ministry was there, and I offered them every kind of help. I even said I would send them labourers from the U. P. But the land is very malarious and it is not so easy. It has got to be cleared. There is a lot of jungle. I have flown over it and I have seen it. It was not the responsibility of the Government of India anyway. We were keen that that land should be brought under cultivation and I wanted to do what I could in the matter. But it was the Assam Government itself that never got a move on and, for some reason—I do not know whether it was inter-provincial jealousy or what else—they never got a move on. Sir, I now turn to the able speech of my friend Sir Gopaldaswami Ayyangar. He has complained that I have not supplied relevant information in regard to the current food position. Sir, I have looked up my speech and feel that I have given as much as I could. It may be that my speech was short of statistics but at a time like this statistics are of little use. They keep on changing from day to day. That is my experience, but if he wants statistics we shall give them to him. I have not wasted a lot of breath on the long-term aspect. I only dealt with it because I thought it was necessary to do so in order that the House may know what the background of our policy is. I will briefly summarize what we have done and now, Sir, there I am not indulging in any self-praise and I am not being egotistic, but what we have done, again it is not the 1st person singular who has done; I say "we" the Department have done since that emergency has made itself felt.

We have tightened up and extended rationing—that is No. 1.

No. 2 : We have tightened up the Food Control Orders and they are being enforced with greater rigidity. We are thinking of increasing the minimum penalty.

No. 3 : We have taken up with all the provinces the question of improving their procurement machinery. The question of levy system, as I stated in my speech, is being discussed with certain Governments which have not seen their way to take it up so far.

No. 4 : We have stopped all exports of foodstuffs of any kind. Even food parcels of any kind, even the exports of ground-nuts, have been stopped.

No. 5 : We have done our best to secure as large a volume of imports as possible.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : How much?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Well, I am coming to that later, but by sending this Delegation and by using every kind of weapon that we have tried to secure whatever we can from outside.

No. 6 : Now we have encouraged the growth and we have got a regular drive on the growth of short-term crops. We have tried to maintain the prices which is very important in times of scarcity.

No. 7 : We have secured the full co-operation of the Army in numerous measures which I related yesterday. One member here suggested after my speech that we should ask the Commander-in-Chief to give us his help. Perhaps the speech was pre-conceived.

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava]

No. 8 : Sir, we have got the Indian States in a line. There has been a Conference between the Department and the Princes and they have agreed to fall into line with us and they have issued orders that the steps which we are adopting should be adopted in their territories too.

No. 9 : We have mobilised transport to the largest extent possible. When we start getting the imports in, it must be realised that we shall need all the transport that we can lay our hands on.

No. 10 : Sir, with a view not to keep anything from the public, we hold weekly Press Conferences and we tell the Press what the chief events of the week have been in connection with food.

No. 11 : Sir, we have a Relief Co-ordination Committee consisting of the Secretaries of all Departments of the Government of India working at the Centre. This Committee meets once a week and discusses all matters concerning food supply and relief measures and important decisions are taken which bind all the Departments of the Government of India. So that I can claim that it is not only the Food Department that is tackling the food problem just now but it is the Government of India as a whole.

No. 12 : We have tried our best to enlist popular support. We have gone out of our way to do that and nobody can blame us that we have fallen short on that score. We may have failed to secure some of that support but we have done our best.

No. 13 : Then, Sir, we are doing a lot to increase the supply of protective foods like milk, eggs and poultry and fish and other things of that kind.

Sir, I do not know what more can be done. If there is anything which we have failed to do so far I should be very glad to have any definite concrete suggestions—

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Organise the milk distribution in towns.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am coming to that in a minute.

Now, Sir, two days ago here we held a Conference of the Indian Red Cross, Marwari Relief Society, Friends' Ambulance Unit, Rama Krishna Mission, the W. V. S. and the Indian Women's Civil Corps of Madras, and they discussed measures to protect the vulnerable classes in the scarcity areas. This conference was attended by various officials of the Government of India and the background of the food situation was given to the representatives of these bodies. In this conference we stressed the question of milk distribution, and we told them that we had approached the Combined Food Board for 10,250 tons of milk powder. Sir, the question of milk supply is engaging our most serious attention. But the difficulties in the way are well known and I need not go into them.

I do not think I have got much more to say, except on a point made by my Hon. friend Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar about the approach made by His Excellency the Viceroy to Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah. That was done with my full concurrence; and there was no idea of giving the committee plenary powers; it was to be an advisory committee. What appeared in the press was obviously wrong. It is not that the Food Department has been put aside, as Sir Gopalaswami put it, but we felt that in an emergency like this the co-operation of the country's leaders would be extremely useful.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Will the Hon. Member also explain the purpose of the committee of 14 ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : The same purpose. That was one suggestion, and the second suggestion was to have a small committee. There were two suggestions. Somebody suggested that 14 was too many and it should be four.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : Did the proposal come from the leaders or was it made by the Hon. Member himself ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I would not like to go into all that here. But these were the two proposals.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : No one is prepared to father it ?

THE HON. MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY : The Hon. Member has not told the House whether he is willing to consider the suggestion which I have made about increasing the ration of domestic servants, menials, sweepers, peons, etc.

THE HON. MR. HOSSAIN IMAM : We all join in it.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : That is a question I am prepared to examine as soon as I can, but with the supplies which we have available at the moment, it is difficult. But I did consider it and we had to give up the idea as we thought that the heavy manual worker alone is just now entitled to the extra 4 oz. But I appreciate the force of the remark of my Hon. friend and I will look into it and see what can be done.

Now, Sir, with regard to imports, I have already stated the position in my opening address. There are still talks going on. The Delegation has not finished its labours. But I hope that within a very few days we shall have news as to what we are going to get. As my Hon. friend Sir Gopaldaswami has pointed out, we are likely to get a substantial quantity of wheat. As regards rice, the position in Siam is a little difficult at the moment. I have this morning sent one of our Joint Secretaries to Singapore, and the whole matter is under active consideration and examination. As my Hon. friend probably knows, Lord Killearn has just taken over in Singapore; and one of his principal jobs is to deal with the food situation in South East Asia. We have got now to deal with him. The difficulty in Siam just now is procurement. India is prepared to pay a price for the rice, though, according to the Treaty, that rice is to go to the Combined Food Board as reparations—rice free of charge. But I have made it plain that India is prepared to pay for that rice if we can get it in time.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Is it not the London Food Council's business rather than the Combined Food Board's ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : No, it is the Combined Food Board's business.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : I thought it was a British Empire business. I thought we got 1,500,000 tons as the British share of the reparations.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : According to the Treaty the disposal of it rests with the Combined Food Board in Washington.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : The amount of the surplus is yet to be decided by the committee that has been set up to consider this question. But may I know whether the British Government have allowed India to purchase rice in Siam ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Not yet. They have themselves not purchased yet, as far as I know. Negotiations are still going on as regards the terms of the Treaty and so on. I have a man of the Food Department sitting in Bangkok for the last six weeks, and I have sent another Joint Secretary to Singapore. A conference is being called there in a day or two, and perhaps there will be another conference in April, which I might myself attend.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : By that time people here will die.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I hope not.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : Are we getting any millets from the Argentine ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : Yes, Sir ; we are trying to get a quantity from the Argentine.

THE HON. SAJYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR : Is the shipping position easier now than it was previously ? A very considerable amount of help that was promised from abroad could not reach India on account of the difficult shipping position. Is it easier now ? Would you be able to get all the supplies that were promised to us from abroad ?

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I am aware of it. We are trying to do what we can.

Sir, it may interest the House to know that we have extended an invitation to Mr. Hoover, who may come to India shortly. He has not yet said yes definitely, but I think he will be of great assistance to us in settling the Siam rice business.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : What about Australia ? Australia has promised a lot of rice.

AN HON. MEMBER : Wheat.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : Rice also.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I do not know about rice.

Then, Sir, one or two speakers — I do not think they have done it seriously — have suggested that all controls must go.

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : We were quite serious.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : I refuse to believe they could be serious, at a time like this. It is an extraordinary statement to make. I would say that the removal of controls in conditions of scarcity like the present, when demand exceeds supply, would only result in black marketing, hoarding, prices shooting up —

THE HON. SIR DAVID DEVADOSS : There would be no corruption. That is what stands in the way.

THE HON. SIR JWALA PRASAD SRIVASTAVA : — and it would bring in chaos which overtook Bengal in 1943.

I maintain, Sir, that a good deal of trouble was at any rate due to free trade which was introduced in Bengal for 4 months in that region and I do not think, Sir, this is the time to give up the controls. If we give up the controls, then we give up Government's responsibility to feed the people, which of course nobody wants to be done at a time like this. Sir, it may interest the House to know also that we are setting up a Co-ordination Committee at Bangalore consisting of the Advisers and Ministers from Madras, Bombay and Mysore to deal on the spot with all matters concerning the scarcity in those areas. I think that would lead to a good deal of co-operation between these three areas.

Sir, I have nothing more to say except to thank the House for the consideration which they have given us and I hope that they will continue to support us over the very difficult task that we have in hand. I would have dealt with one or two other points which were made by one or two speakers concerning the Agriculture Department, but as time is now late, I prefer not to do so. They are not points of any great consequence. I thank the House once again. The Government have no objection to the amendment proposed.

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN (Leader of the House) : Sir, just a word about the amendment. As I said this morning, Government are opposed to the amendment of the Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row. The Hon. the Food Member sees no objection to accepting the amendment moved by the Hon. Mr. Motilal and therefore the Government will be neutral, leaving the issue to be decided by the non-official members, both elected and nominated.

Just one word, Sir, about what the Hon. Sir N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar said. In his speech he practically found fault with the Viceroy for not responding to Mr. Gandhi's suggestion to form a responsible Government at the centre—

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : I did not say that.

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : You said some such thing. The whole world knows.

THE HON. SIR N. GOPALASWAMI AYYANGAR : I only said that Mahatma Gandhi suggested this.

THE HON. SIR MAHOMED USMAN : The whole world knows the difficulties. The two main Parties won't come together on that question. The Muslim League is opposing it. The Viceroy, therefore, could not be blamed. The Cabinet Mission is coming to tackle that question.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row, I understand you are agreeable to withdraw your amendment in favour of the Hon. Mr. Motilal's amendment.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : Yes, Sir.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : I will first ask the leave of the Council to allow Mr. Thirumala Row to withdraw his amendment.

The amendment was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : I shall now place the original proposition and the amendment before the House.

The Motion is : {

"That the food situation in India be taken into consideration and after having considered the situation in all its aspects this House is of the opinion that an early setting up of a National Government at the Centre, composed of popular representatives of the Congress, the Muslim League and other important interests, will greatly help in the solution of the food situation."

The Motion was adopted.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, the 26th March, 1946.