

COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES

Thursday, 21st February, 1946

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COUNCIL OF STATE

Thursday, 21st February, 1946

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

MEMBER SWORN

The Hon. Khan Bahadur Karamat Ali (Assam : Muhammadan).

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE RAILWAY BUDGET, 1946-47

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : Hon. Members, we will now proceed with the general discussion of the Budget, Part I. As this Budget is not of a controversial nature, I have fixed today 20 minutes for individual speakers. I also request all Hon. Members not to repeat at great length the remarks of previous speakers. At about 4 P.M. I shall call upon Sir Edward Benthall to reply to the debate.

THE HON. SIR SHANTIDAS ASKURAN (Bombay : Non-Muhammadan) : Mr. President, it is with relief that we are after all able to turn from war budgets to peace budgets, but I am sorry that though the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of Railways has come out again with big income figures and fresh surpluses, there is no sign yet of the long-looked for relief to the general public, particularly to the agriculturist, who has been groaning under the weight of war-time burdens. On the contrary, the Hon. the War Transport Member in his speech has referred to dire possibilities in the future. While on the one hand he claims that financially the position is far sounder than it has been at any time in the history of the Railways he warns us that the need to increase rates and fares in the future may have to be seriously faced. So far as the public is concerned, it is an unwise and short-sighted policy to go on heaping burdens without regard to their effect on the economy of the country and industrial and agricultural development, all of which have suffered, and suffered grievously, as he knows, owing to the high rates and fares charged by the Railways. The time has come to cry halt to this policy of imposing new burdens and think in terms of giving relief to the public, particularly agricultural producers.

I propose to confine myself only to one or two points, but before I do so, may I make a brief reference to the Government's accounting methods. The Hon. the War Transport Member is a businessman and knows a company's obligations to its shareholders. Year after year he has been facing us with estimates of receipts and expenditure, but every time it is the same story—under estimates which are always in their favour. Sometimes the difference is so large that the budget estimates lose all meaning. What will he, as a businessman, feel if he has to face a shareholders' meeting of an ordinary company with figures which are so often out of proportion with actualities? I quite understand war-time difficulties in preparing estimates but this kind of under-estimates is not a war-time phenomenon of the Government. It has more or less become a chronic disease, and the sooner a drastic remedy is found by applying better and more realistic methods of estimating and accounting, the better for them and the public. With all these big differences between budget and revised estimates and actuals, it is never easy to arrive at any correct idea of the position.

At the end of his speech, the Hon. the Chief Commissioner has quoted the tribute of the principal Administrative Officer of G.H.Q. (India) that "the Railways of India have never let the Army down". Even in war-time, the sustenance of the Army is not the only, or even the main, responsibility of the transport organization. What is of fundamental importance is the maintenance of the internal economy of the country. Has he considered what is the verdict of the ordinary man in the street, the agricultural producer, the industrial worker and all those on whose work the economy of the country and also the war effort has depended? If they have a feeling that they have been let down, and are still being let down, the Railways have only to blame themselves, for theirs has been a sad story of neglect,

[Sir Shantidas Askuran]

inefficiency and lack of ordinary forethought. I am not merely referring to the conditions of travel during these war years which have been appalling, to the irregularity of train services, to the continued shortage in stock and equipment and to the rotten condition of the stock in use. That is the least part of the story, though it shows how little prepared the Railways were for war-time demands. I want to refer particularly to the food question which is today uppermost in the public mind. His Excellency the Viceroy is making a gigantic effort to stem the crisis which is threatening to overtake the country. His Excellency has made a special appeal to Indian leaders and has been moving about the country to see for himself conditions in various parts and rouse both the administration and the people to a realization of their duty. I am afraid that, if the Railways pursue their present policy of high freight rates, so ruinous to the agriculturist and the farmer, they will be guilty of letting down the Viceroy. I want to warn them against it with all the emphasis at my command. In judging the Hon. the War Transport Member's Budget Speech this year, at this critical time when the country is faced with the danger of a terrible famine, the first test which we should apply is its effect on agricultural production and the facilities which it offers for the movement of food-grains. The agricultural classes have suffered, and are suffering terribly because of scarcity of fertilizers, high cost of labour, and the big increase in the prices of agricultural implements, the steep rise in the general cost of living and shortage of livestock for agriculture—those available costing as much as five times the pre-war milch and agricultural cattle, and on the top of it, the heavy freight rates charged by the Railways—which is largely responsible for the fall in food production. If at least the Transport organisation of the country had played its part as it should have done during these war years, the public would have been saved much of the suffering. Even the Bengal famine would not have taken so heavy a toll, for it was due to the absence of adequate transport facilities that scarcity conditions were precipitated in many places and agricultural production despite the much-advertised and costly "Grow More Food" campaign in which crores have been sunk, could not develop as it should have. I am surprised, Sir, that despite the warnings of the war period, the Railways are still in no mood to revise their freight policy to help the farmer and the agriculturist and make it possible for them to increase production. I see no reference in the Hon. the Transport Member's speech to these vital problems of growing more food for the people and the provision of cheap and easy transport facilities to save the millions threatened with famine. I had expected that when today the shortage of food is so acute a problem to all, he at least would have given an assurance that Railways would play their part in encouraging agricultural producers and farmers by reducing freights. At this juncture, it is not a question of balancing the budget but of saving people from dying of hunger.

May I make a special appeal to the Hon. the War Transport Member regarding the position of the cattle and the dairy industry? Demands constantly made, for reducing the rates for sending dry cattle to centres where it will be cheaper to maintain them, have also been brushed aside. Owing to this, the cattle and dairy industry has become highly uneconomic. The high freights have obliged *gwalas* of cities and towns to sell their dry cattle for slaughter instead of sending them for salvage to rural areas. The systematic breeding of better cattle has thus been neglected, even useful young cattle have been allowed to be ruthlessly destroyed in the cities from year to year. The result has been disastrous to the agricultural economy of the country. I am glad, Sir, that though Railway authorities have not paid heed to our requests the Government of Bombay have taken the right step in subsidizing the transport of dry cattle for salvage which has definitely increased the number going out. As a result of this measure to subsidize the transport of dry cattle, there has been an increase in the exports from 12,000 to 15,000 per year. I hope the wise step taken by the Bombay Government will be followed by other Provincial Governments and that His Excellency the Viceroy will use all his good offices to persuade them. It will help in some way to fulfil the ultimate objective—the increase of agricultural production.

There is only one other question, Sir, to which I would like to refer at this stage. I am glad to see, Sir, from the speech of the Hon. the Chief Commissioner that a programme of construction of new railways and restoration of the damaged

lines have been tentatively settled in consultation with Provincial Governments and negotiations are proceeding in respect of expansion in Indian States. I trust they will be speeded up with all possible zeal. In many of the Indian States, there are still large undeveloped areas—all sources of great potential industrial wealth. They may offer great opportunities for increasing the supply of raw materials for a number of useful industries. If they are to be properly developed adequate railway facilities should be provided. I hope, Sir, that in framing this programme of new construction special attention will be paid to the needs of these States and the urgency of exploiting these undeveloped areas for increasing the resources of the country.

As regards the question of locomotive and boiler manufacture in India, one of the most urgent questions for railway development, I am sorry that the Hon. the Chief Commissioner has dismissed it in a few lines. I am sure he realises the importance which the public attaches to it and will give to the House more definite assurances about the Government's intentions. In this connection, Sir, may I refer to one point mentioned by the Hon. the Chief Commissioner? Referring to the value of war work done and the sacrifice made by the Railways, he said:—

"Amongst equipment despatched overseas were 8 per cent. of the metre gauge locomotives and 15 per cent. of the metre gauge wagon stock. Broad gauge stock was converted to the standard gauge and similarly released. Some 4,000 miles of track and over 4 million sleepers were absorbed for overseas or for military requirements in India".

There is no purpose now in going into the question whether the Government were right in depleting the country's resources in this manner and so seriously endangering the transport position in the country. War exigencies may have necessitated such risks, but the public in this country is now entitled to know how much of them have been returned and what is now being done to replace them with the help of the Allied Powers. If India's help and resources were taken in this manner during the war, at considerable cost to her economy, she is entitled to expect that some suitable reparation should be made now in the form of replacements to meet the country's urgent requirements.

In conclusion, I only hope, and I take this opportunity to earnestly appeal to His Excellency the Viceroy and his Government, that they will seriously consider all suggestions and call upon the Railways to help in meeting the food crisis.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU (United Provinces Northern: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, the Budget that has been placed before us coming as it does after a series of extremely prosperous Budgets, must serve as a warning to us of the dangers that lie ahead. The Honourable the War Transport Member has in the course of his speech drawn our attention to the growth in the revenue and expenditure of the Indian Railways since 1939. Both have more than doubled and there is no doubt that owing to the phenomenal increase in the traffic caused by the war the Railways have not only been able to pay the contribution required of them to the General Revenues but also to build up the Depreciation Fund and raise the Railway Reserve Fund from about half a crore to nearly 30 crores. War cannot be welcomed in any case and I am not certain that the aftermath of the war will not affect the Railways seriously but there is no doubt that the war, while it lasted, enabled the Railways to build up their finances and reserves. We have however to note that the surplus which was nearly 50 crores in 1944-45 is expected to fall to about 12 crores. Every one here will echo the hope expressed by the Hon. the War Transport Member and the Chief Commissioner for Railways that the traffic in the coming year will come up to the level of the year 1943-44. Indeed, we all hope that our Railways will not pass through the dark and difficult times which they had to face during the depression of the nineteen thirties, but we have to be cautious. I do not accuse the Railway Board of not being mindful of the dangers that may soon confront it but I should like to say a word with regard to the capital programme of the Railways. The situation is in some respects better than it was in the nineteen twenties when nearly 30 crores of rupees were spent annually on railway construction. The rate of interest is much lower now and I believe that there is a genuine demand for railway expansion. Nevertheless, it would be wise at the present time to go forward cautiously and to see that railway expansion proceeds in line with the general growth of economic activity in the country. There is no doubt that the Railways can contribute to the maintenance of employment

[Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru]

and better economic conditions but the ability of the Railway Board to expand their activities, to undertake a large programme of railway construction would depend entirely on the economic conditions prevailing in the country in future. I am personally entirely in favour of a large transport programme because extended transport facilities are necessary in the interests of the agriculturists but the experience of the nineteen thirties ought to be a warning to us and we should see that the expenditure incurred on new construction is not such as to place an unnecessarily heavy burden upon the Railways if depression comes. I hope that the steps that are being taken to develop the agricultural and industrial resources of the country, though not very satisfactory, will prove sufficient to avert depression. The existence of the United Nations Organisation should also prove reassuring to us for we can count in the event of a general slackening of economic activities on the combined assistance of the nations of the world in dealing with the situation. Nevertheless, we have to be cautious in this respect. I should like to repeat that I have no intention of accusing the Railway Board of placing before the public a programme of railway construction without bearing in mind the conditions that may arise in the near future, but I think that as the representatives of the taxpayers it is necessary on our part to place our views on this important subject before the Railway authorities.

Now, Sir, I should like to say one word with regard to the bringing of the main railway lines in the country under State management. Many of the railways which are now being managed by the Railway Board were the property of the State but there is also no doubt that some railways have been acquired which were not merely company-managed but also company-owned. Being one of those members who frequently drew the attention of the Government to the need for bringing all railway transport not merely under the management but also under the ownership of the Government I cannot but feel happy that at least all the important railway lines in the country are now the property of the State, but this addition to our property makes a proportionate increase in our responsibilities and it is necessary for us to consider at this time what steps should be taken not merely to maintain the efficiency of the Railways but to bring about a continuous development in their earning capacity. There are two problems before us in this connection. One is the question of securing the association of public opinion with railway management, of securing that democratic control goes hand in hand with the development of the Railways; and the second is that the Railways should be as efficient as possible. I believe that it is possible to combine democratic control and economic efficiency. But the matter requires careful thought. I know that, had the Federal provisions of the Government of India Act come into force, a Railway Authority would have been set up. But the character of the Authority that was to be set up was such as to cause great and legitimate dissatisfaction in the country. The constitution of the Railway Authority was based on distrust of the Legislature and the people of the country. If we are to have an organisation which will watch over the development of the Railways from a business point of view and at the same time be regarded by the public as its representative, it is necessary that it should be under the control of the Indian Legislature, that it is further necessary it should contain representatives not merely of business but also of other classes including economists and the users of the Railways, who, I have no doubt, will be able to make a valuable contribution to the discussion of problems that might come before them. Apart from this, what I feel is that we need not merely an over-all authority for the whole of India, but also some machinery which will enable control of the kind that I have spoken of to be exercised over each important railway system.

The thoughts that I have placed before the House are naturally of a general character, but I have mentioned them to draw the attention of the Railway Board and the House to this important subject, because the organisation that was proposed to be set up under the Government of India Act, 1935, and the principles on which it proceeded were such as to create constant friction between the public and the Railway authorities. We must in future have an organisation which, while not interfering with the legitimate authority of the Railway Board and the railway managers, while allowing full play for official initiative, and providing for

flexibility, yet provides at the same time for the exercise of that effective control which the Indian Legislature during the five days that it discusses subjects connected with the Indian Railways cannot possibly exercise.

I shall now pass on to the question of locomotive manufacture in which the Indian Legislature has taken no little interest at least during the last ten years. When the subject was discussed about three years ago in this House, the Hon. Sir Edward Benthall assured us that locomotive construction works would be set up in this country, whatever the number of engines available might be. I am glad to see that that undertaking is going to be fulfilled. But I should like to ask for a little more information than has been given either in the speeches of the Hon. the War Transport Member and the Chief Commissioner for Railways or in the Explanatory Memorandum. According to Sir Edward Benthall, we shall have after the war, when all the engines ordered are available, 8,554 engines as compared with 7,279 engines possessed by us when the war commenced. We also learn from him that, of the engines, 29 per cent. have passed the normal age of 35 years, and that it might therefore be necessary to order a certain number of passenger engines from overseas before the locomotive building works now in course of construction in India are in a position to meet the demand. Now, I do not know whether 29 per cent. of the old engines, or 29 per cent. of the stock as it will be when all the engines ordered have been received, will have passed the normal age of 35 years. It seems, however, that the Railway Board will have to replace between 2,000 and 2,500 engines in the near future. I do not know whether my calculation is correct, I hope that my Hon. friend the Chief Commissioner will correct me if I am wrong. Now, the locomotive works to be set up at Kanchrapara will provide for the construction of 80 locomotives only per year. Are Government going to make any other arrangement also for the construction of locomotives? Sir Edward Benthall, in his speech in this House in 1943 in connection with the construction of locomotives, said that another locomotive construction works might also have to be established. I do not know whether Government adhere to that intention. But in any case I should like to know what is the total number of locomotives that would be manufactured here, and during what period it is proposed to replace the over-age engines? I put this question partly in order to know what the exact position in India will be and partly in order to find out to what extent it will be necessary for the Indian Railways to have recourse to foreign agencies for the supply of the locomotives that we shall need. I hope that it will not be necessary for the Railway Board to order a large number of locomotives from outside the country after our own locomotive building works have been set up.

Sir, at a time like this, when the country is demanding that the administration of all important Departments should be in the hands of Indians, indeed that the entire Government should be fully controlled by Indians, I find that since the retirement of Sir Lakshmipati Misra after officiating as Chief Commissioner for a few months there has been no Indian Member on the Railway Board. Government know the importance that Indian opinion has attached to the presence of Indian Members on this Board. At least for 18 or 20 years this matter has been continuously before the authorities. Yet, today when we are told that a Committee of the Cabinet would be coming to this country to settle the constitutional issues, we find that the Railway Board is without a single Indian Member.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW: It will be completely Indianised.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU: My Hon. friend Mr. Thirumala Row says that it will be completely Indianised. I hope that that time will come very soon. But the responsibility of the Railway authorities in allowing a state of things like the present one to arise cannot be minimised. They ought to tell us how it is that they have not considered it fit to appoint a single Member on this Board?

In this connection, Sir, I should like to refer to the question of recruitment for the gazetted services. It was agreed by the Railway Board about 18 or 19 years ago that 75 per cent. of the recruitment for the superior services should take place in

[Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru]

India. But what we are concerned with now is, not whether the number of Indians in the superior services should be increased but whether it is necessary to recruit any of our officers from outside the country except for appointments requiring expert knowledge. No one, Sir, would hesitate to employ experts with the required qualifications, wherever they might be available, and to remunerate them adequately provided steps were taken at the same time to train Indians to fulfil the responsibilities for the discharge of which outsiders have to be appointed. In view of this I suggest that non-Indian recruitment to the superior services should be discontinued. The Indian Legislature is demanding that non-Indian recruitment to all superior services should be stopped. We are, therefore, perfectly justified in asking that the Railway Board should take note of this demand and shape its policy accordingly.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT : You will please bring your remarks to a close now. I have already allowed you five minutes more as Leader of your Party.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : It is very kind of you, Sir. I will bring my remarks to an end very soon. There is one other important matter to which I should like to refer before sitting down, and that is the question of the Betterment Fund. I hope that Government will take adequate steps very soon to provide better facilities for third class travel. I may say, Sir, that no part of the speeches of the Hon. the Chief Commissioner and the Hon. the War Transport Member has given me greater satisfaction than that which deals with their proposals regarding the development of third class travel and the provision of amenities for third class passengers. This is a subject which undoubtedly requires the urgent attention of the Government. It has been under the consideration of the Railway Board for a number of years. But the amount of expenditure incurred on the provision of the necessary amenities and facilities was exceedingly small and I hope that in view of the money now available, a systematic programme would be chalked out and speedily executed. It is extremely necessary at the present time that we should make our Railways attractive to our most important users. It is desirable not merely from the general social point of view but also from the commercial point of view that the Railway Board should take as vigorous steps as possible in order to improve the facilities provided for third class travel.

If I may refer to one more point, Sir, I should like to ask with reference to the disagreement between the Railwaymen's Federation and the Railway Board what are the exact demands of the Railwaymen's Federation in regard to wages and dearness allowance, and what they will cost the tax-payer. The Railway Board, in the lengthy communique which it issued in December last, while it dealt satisfactorily with the question of the retention of employees engaged during the war, and while it was able to assure the public that it would do its best to see that no staff was discharged, was silent on these two important questions. I hope that the spokesman of the Railway Board will throw light on these subjects in his concluding speech.

In conclusion, Sir, I may say that since the principle of the application of continuous mileage has been accepted in connection with goods traffic, I suggest that it should be accepted in connection with passenger traffic too. I have brought this point to the notice of the Railway Board in the past but I have always received a discouraging reply on the ground that if this method were adopted, it would be difficult to know what the exact income of each railway system from passenger traffic was. Since the Railway Board have themselves accepted this system in the case of goods traffic, I hope that no objection will be raised to its application to passenger traffic.

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL (Bombay : Non-Muhammadan) : Mr. President, a significant transformation has taken place after the advent of the war in the nomenclature of the Hon. the Railway Member and the Hon. the Railway Member has become the War Transport Member. This is the last Budget presented by the War Transport Member and he calls it a Victory Budget. Indeed, Sir, it is a victory budget, because the Railways of India have played a very great part in the winning of the victory. A part was disclosed recently only in this House three or four days ago by the Chief Commissioner of Railways. I say it is a part. I feel

he will again some day be able to disclose something more. But, Sir, it gives a grim reminder that the prosperity of the Railways cannot be expected to continue at that rate and we should be prepared for a decline in the receipts of railway revenue. That is but inevitable. I recognise that these war profits which the Railways have made cannot continue when peace comes, and it will require a very close eye to keep to the revenues of our Railways. It is a very big concern where the nation has sunk about 800 crores——

THE HON. MR. M. N. DALAL : No, no. It is 700 crores.

THE HON. MR. G. S. MOTILAL : I have my own figures and I would go by my own figures. I will refer you to the Budget from which you will find that it is 800 crores.

Sir, this year's Budget has several new features which were touched in the speech in this House and in the other House by the Chief Commissioner of Railways and by the War Transport Member. As there are many speakers I will make only a rapid and a brief survey of those points. First of all, I feel that the estimate of revenue is undoubtedly an under-estimate. I am not one of those who would say that if there is no other criticism the cheapest criticism to level is that revenue is under-estimated. I know the difficulties of framing a Budget. I would rather make a cautious estimate than go wide off on the other side. All these years there has been a larger surplus in the revenue than was estimated when the Budgets were presented. This year the revenue is estimated to the extent of 20 per cent. less than last year. Reasons have been adduced for it. But to my mind, taking a very far view of the estimates, of course I do not possess the materials which the Railway authorities have at their disposal, but taking a far view of it, I think the revenue is more likely to exceed than to fall off. We have a large Reserve Fund. That is a feature which is satisfactory. Our Reserve Funds and the Railway Funds come to about 130 crores and this I consider a satisfactory feature.

Sir, in the speech reference is made with regard to the transportation of coal. For shortage of wagons, transportation of coal is not very satisfactory and the proposal to shift it to water transport is one which I am prepared to accept and endorse.

Sir, the question of locomotives has been taken up by other members and will be again taken up. Therefore I shall not lay much stress upon it, but I wish to say one thing, that the people of this country desire that all the railway materials which are required by the Railways of India should be made and manufactured in India—not only locomotives, not only wagons, but everything else that is required. It is such a large concern and the preparations made for it are not really adequate.

Sir, with regard to passenger traffic, I must say that the figures given are not very definite. I asked last year, and I again ask you to separate the figures of local and suburban traffic when you show the increase in the number of passengers for which the railway is serving. It gives a very misleading picture. You should know what the figures of the local traffic passengers are ; for they are a very large number. Has that been taken into account when the Hon. the War Transport Member says that the increase this year is expected to be 6 or 7 per cent.? If it also takes into account the figures of suburban traffic, then suburban travel is certainly very short distance travel and it should not be confused with long distance travel. That will give a more correct picture to the House if two separate sets of figures are given to the Legislature.

Sir, the conditions of travel, as admitted by the Hon. the War Transport Member, are not satisfactory. I hope that every attention will be given to improve the conditions of travel. Overcrowding is a little less now, but it is still very bad, and it requires still greater attention to be paid to it.

Then there is the proposal about the new type of coaches for the use of the third class passengers. We are waiting to see these coaches. If those coaches will give greater comfort to the third class passengers, as it is promised that they will, it will be a welcome feature.

Sir, Indianisation of the staff requires a great deal of attention. By this time the Government ought to have completely Indianised the staff. I hope the authorities

[Mr. G. S. Motilal]

now responsible for this realise the necessity for it and agree with us that this should have been done. We are going to create about 214 new posts. May I ask how these are going to be filled up? Are they all going to be filled up by Indians or not? Temporary posts they are, but even as temporary as they are, can you not find Indians in this country who will be able to discharge the duties required of them? If you say that you cannot find Indians, then certainly it is a state of things for which the Government is responsible and should feel sorry.

Sir, last year I made a point that the Railways are not getting adequate return for the assistance and the services which it has given to the military. I gave my reasons for it. I do not propose to repeat those reasons. I examined the Budget speeches and the Memorandum which we received along with it and going through them I found that my impression is correct, for the increase due to military traffic has not been as much as it has been compared to other traffic. A number of wagons and railway engines are still under the control of the military. One would like to know how long they are to remain under their control. Now that the war has ended and six months have gone by, another six months should be more than sufficient to get control of these wagons and locomotives, but I think, Sir, an expert Committee, an independent Committee, should be appointed to examine very thoroughly whether our Railways have got what they should have got for the services which they have given to the military.

Sir, I know and I am going to bring it to the notice or to inform the Chief Commissioner here that a certain leakage in the revenue is occurring and it will require a very close eye—you will have to keep a very close eye—on the leakage of the revenues in the years to come. One or two instances have come to my notice of a similar leakage in the telephone services. Government does not get the full revenue that belongs to it. It is for them to exercise that scrutiny over it which will bring them the full revenue.

Sir, I would not take more time of this House.

*THE HON. MR. M. N. DALAL (Bombay : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, the lean years of the Railways are over and the railway finances are having today a period of unprecedented prosperity in which the Railways have been able to render substantial service to the General revenues at a time when they are being subjected to considerable strain on account of the aftermath of a total war. We realise, Sir, that the Railways are not earning easy money without strenuous efforts. An efficient communication system, Sir, is the life-line of a modern State and the Indian Railways may well congratulate themselves on the splendid record they have been able to achieve in maintaining an overflowing stream of men and supplies for a population of 400 million people. These, Sir, are great achievements but with these achievements there is also a gloomy side of the picture. The Budget does not hold this time, in spite of the huge surpluses, any reduction in rates and fares and in the words of the War Transport Member we are told—we have been given a warning—of the danger of war-time legacy of a high level of operating costs and commitments of huge post-war plans and amenities in the face of a level of rates and fares out of tune with the level of prices. In addition to this, Sir, there is the steep fall of Rs. 48 crores in the railway receipts for the year 1946-47. A notable feature of the Railway Budget, Sir, is that the Hon. the War Transport Member is going to provide more passenger and goods services for civilian use due to the depletion of such services on account of war conditions. This, Sir, comes to some of us who are used to travel on the Bombay-Ahmedabad section as very welcome news; some of us who are used to the appalling sight of overcrowding and the mad stampede of running to get into compartments.

The Hon. the War Transport Member states that the stocks which were lent to the military have been so depleted that for the most part they will have to be replenished. I wish, Sir, to give a realistic picture of the situation. The Hon. the War Transport Member had put in this particular item at least for accounting purposes to the Defence Services or better still to the South East Asia Command with India as the base so that we should have been able to recover to a certain extent a portion of it from His Majesty's Government or the United Nations. For the year

1946-47 the restoration of the lines dismantled during the war along with the construction of certain new lines will cost the Railways Rs. 2 crores, whereas for the rolling stock which was sent abroad and the engines sent to the Middle East during the war we were only paid their depreciated value.

It may also be mentioned here, Sir, that even with the present manufacturing capacity of 17,932 wagons ordered in India 13,439 have been already on the lines. I think this is a wonderful achievement for our Indian industry. The performance of the Indian manufacturing capacity is out and out better than that of the United Kingdom or of Canada; for out of the 8,000 wagons ordered from Canada, only 6,000 have come in, and out of the 10,000 wagons ordered from the United Kingdom, 3,800 only will have arrived by the end of March. The arrivals from abroad are behind schedule. Out of 934 broad gauge engines on order, only 733 have been put into service. The Government of India have cancelled an order with the United States for 3,410 broad gauge wagons on account of the cessation of lend-lease activities. This, I think, is welcome. But I wonder if it would be possible to cancel the order we have already placed with the United Kingdom and Canada for the broad gauge engines and wagons which are already behind schedule, and to start manufacturing the same in this country, instead of committing ourselves to a very huge import programme and restricting our activities merely to replacements.

There is one other point. I welcome the suggestion of the Hon. the War Transport Member to examine and modify the railway rates structure. I think at this stage it is very necessary that this highly technical subject should be taken properly into consideration. Our present railway rates structure, with its maxima and minima limits, is not to the industrial or economic advantage of this country, and it should be adjusted with a view to helping the greater movement of agricultural products and raw materials to manufacturing centres and of manufactured products to centres of consumption.

Mr. President, finally I would request the Hon. the Chief Commissioner for Railways to see that the highest priority is given for the transport of food, and to spare no effort to prevent the debacle of starvation which is today facing millions of our countrymen.

*THE HON. SAIYED MOHAMED PADSHAH SAHIB BAHADUR (Madras : Muhammadan): Sir, the Railway Budget which has been presented to this House this year may, in my opinion, be termed as a most unimpressive document. There is hardly any feature of it which can be regarded as particularly satisfactory or encouraging. No doubt the financial side of it does arrest one's attention; but here one has to remember that the peak profits which have been achieved by the Railways are not a sign of healthy prosperity. These profits have been brought in by the war, and very soon they will be disappearing, now that the war has come to a close. But, Sir, what one vainly looks for in the Budget is the steps which have been taken to cushion the change from war to peace-time conditions. Here we find that the Railways have again been caught napping. It is a matter of common knowledge that in spite of the warnings that had been sounded and the very salutary advice that had been given in the Central Legislature for years previous to the war that attempts should be made to manufacture locomotives here, that attempts should be made to help the Railways to become self-sufficient and self-supporting, the Railways hardly took any steps in those days in that direction. The result was that when the war came they were found most unprepared and the grim consequence was that this state of unpreparedness did cost the country very dearly. India had to pay exorbitant prices for the locomotives that she had to purchase abroad.

Now that the war is ended, what do we find? Here again we find that the Railways are most unprepared. Apart from some vague, indefinite promises of amenities to the third class passengers, there is hardly any scheme which you find mentioned in the Budget proposals in order to enable the Railways to switch over smoothly from war to peace-time conditions. Promises of some very big amenities have been held out to the third class passengers. Third class passengers have been promised sleeping accommodation. But even this attractive promise suffers from glaring imperfections; for there is nothing to indicate when this scheme is to be undertaken. The third class passenger is not given any indication for him to

*Not corrected by the Hon. Member.

[Saiyed Mohamed Padshah Sahib Bahadur]

hope that a beginning will be made in this direction soon. The Railway authorities have got to realise this, that what the third class passenger now wants is not sleeping accommodation which may be provided next year or in due course when it is possible for Government to provide it, but immediate relief from the utterly inhuman conditions in which he is travelling today. My Hon. friend Raja Motilal expressed his view that the conditions of travel are somewhat better now. With due deference to his opinion, I still hold that the conditions are still inhuman, still intolerable. These conditions were put up with, they were tolerated so long as there was a war on but now that the war has ended, there is no excuse for these conditions to continue. The Railways have got to do whatever is possible to improve the conditions; they have got to bend all their energies, they have got to use all their resources, to see that the conditions of travel of the third class passengers improve, and improve immediately. They need not give sleeping accommodation to the third class passenger immediately. All that he wants now is that those who have to travel might not have to risk their lives by standing on the footboard, and that they should have enough room at least to sit down, or at least to stand in the railway carriages. They do not get even that much space today. We know that even in normal times railway travel for lower class passengers was the worst in the whole world. In no part of the world was there this kind of over-crowding, this kind of huddling together of human beings. My appeal to the Railway authorities is that they should somehow try and bring relief in this direction. They will have to increase the third class coaches and the passenger services. There may be the excuse of bottlenecks. They may say that the coal position does not allow them to increase the services. But, whatever the difficulties, they will have to bring all their resources to the solution of this urgent problem and afford immediate relief to the lower class passengers. A note of warning has been sounded by my Hon. friends who have preceded me. The Railway authorities have to take a long view of things. They should know that if in spite of their warning to the people not to travel there has been this volume of traffic, this is due not to the fact that people are enamoured of railway travel but because of compelling necessity which forces them to undertake these travels even at the risk of their lives, and that it is necessary that every care should be taken to see that railway travel improves, and that at least ordinary comforts are given to the passengers who might have to travel under normal conditions and that Railways have not again to fall back upon those dark days of the preceding years and that they do not become a source of burden to the country instead of being a fruitful source of revenue to the State.

Just a word about retrenchment. A mere promise that there is not going to be retrenchment on any big scale is not very satisfactory. Railway authorities should do whatever is humanly possible to avoid retrenchment. Even if these temporary hands are retrenched, the problem of re-settlement of ex-servicemen is not going to be solved. This policy of retrenchment, in whatever shape or to whatever extent it is effected, is not going to give any substantial relief in the matter of solving the problem of re-settlement. Not only would this prove to be quite an unjust policy but it would also be a very ineffective and a very unsatisfactory method of trying to solve the problem of re-settlement. The Hon. the Chief Commissioner has been kind enough to admit that the temporary railway worker did his bit during these hard times, that he put in very hard and loyal work during this critical period. In view of this, it will be utterly unfair that the temporary worker should now be thrown out of service simply because his brother who had temporarily gone to the war, has got to be provided for. These ex-servicemen, these demobbed soldiers, have got to be provided for. But now that the Government have got such a number of schemes for reconstruction, some alternative avenues of employment should be provided for them. My appeal is that the temporary hands who have recently been employed and who did their level best to rise equal to the occasion and contributed so much to the success of the Railways in doing their bit during these hard times should not be thrown out in the streets.

There is one thing which I would like to bring home to the Railway authorities, and that is, the Muslims have a legitimate grievance against the Department.

Nowhere else have they been so ruthlessly victimised and suppressed as in the Railways. According to the Home Department Resolution, the Muslims should have got 25 per cent. representation on the Railways. But what is it we find now? The whole representation that the Muslims now have on the Railways comes only to 8 per cent. I do not lay the blame on the authorities who now control the Railways. This is a legacy which has been inherited by the Government from the days when Railways were company-managed. It is the callous attitude of the railway companies under the company-managed system that is responsible for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. But now that the railway system has come under the control of the Government, there is no justification for the Government to take things in an easy way, in a spirit of *laissez faire*. They have to do everything possible to see that this grievous wrong is righted. I am one of those who has always been agitating for the Railways to come under the complete control of the State. I am one of those who, even as long ago as 1933, in the Railway Conference which was held in London, recommended that all the Railways in the country should be owned by the State. This recommendation of that Committee was not because that the members of that Committee grudged the shareholders of the railway companies their dividends but because we thought that all the injustices and defects we found on the system could be more effectively solved if all the Railways came under the management of the State. Now that the Government have taken over the Railways, they ought to do whatever is humanly possible that this grievous wrong is righted and that the Muslims are given their due share. In this connection I would like to make this small suggestion. I have just stated, Sir, that the Railway authorities should do their level best to see that no retrenchment at all is effected in the Railways. But if this course has to be adopted, if retrenchment has got to be done even to any small extent in any shape, then the Railway authorities should take care to see that none of the Muslims who began as temporary hands should be retrenched, and that all of them should be made permanent. This will give them a little more of their share on the Railways and will go to redress some of the wrongs that have been heaped upon their shoulders all these years. Even if these temporary hands are retained, even then the Muslims would not get even half of the representation that has been sanctioned by the Home Department.

Just one word more about the food situation. I wish to join my Hon. friends who have stressed that the Railways should rise equal to the occasion and see that transport of foodstuffs is given the first priority. It is not enough that food should be produced in abundance, but it is very necessary that it should find its way from surplus areas to deficit areas. My own province is the most hard hit in this respect. The food problem is most acute in my province. I make an earnest appeal to the Railway authorities to see that they do their best to see that food is transported as quickly as possible, giving it preference over every other kind of commodity.

THE HON. MR. SURPUT SINGH (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, within the time allotted it is neither possible to go through the literature thoroughly nor feasible to engage in a detailed discussion of the Railway Budget. As usual there is the jugglery of figures, too many pious hopes, plenty of platitudes and not a few lame excuses put forward as 'intricate or complicated problems' when referring to essential requirements. Sir, a quite up to date presentation was the need. The Department forgot that we were twenty-five years ahead by reason of the war. Humdrum, desultory and worn-out talks won't do any more. We are in a post-war period and naturally long for post-war reconstruction schemes in our transport systems. The revenue figures presented indicate outward signs of plethora. Revenue obtained from carriage of huge American forces and their military materials created such revenues. Again, there was the revenue obtained from distasteful surcharges levied upon the hard hit civil population. We can therefore very well understand the reasons for the anticipated steep fall in revenues in the near future and for there being no fixed time scale for improving travel amenities.

Sir, I quite appreciate the troubles and difficulties which our Railways had during the stress and strain of the war, but what I resent is the attitude of non-consideration whatsoever for the civil population, whose money has always gone to feed the Railways and Railway Chiefs everywhere so plentifully in years gone by and.

[Mr. Surput Singh]

I may say, will so feed them in years to come. The Railways should take note that times are changing fast. They should fall in line with popular views and sentiments—what the masses really want. The time-worn outlandish mentality won't do any longer.

Sir, the Railways must note that discomforts, inconveniences and disabilities of lower class passengers have reached the breaking point. I say that unless they are removed forthwith, smooth running of trains may be hampered any day. People in desperation may take it into their heads to lie down on the track and stop trains running in protest. So Railways must provide more accommodation, create less worry in booking and transport and afford more amenities to the lower class passengers. What I would suggest is—

(1) to cut down very much the saloon accommodation, air-conditioned cars, restaurant cars in the trains and give all the space thus saved to third and inter class passengers ;

(2) to see that the illiterate, ignorant and poverty-stricken people are not put to trouble and humiliation and extortion at the time of booking and despatch of their goods by the staffs concerned ;

(3) to see that fresh, clean and healthy foodstuff, pure drinking water and cleaned and disinfected compartments are provided for them ;

(4) surcharges in rates and fares adopted purely as a war measure have got to be taken away forthwith. They are aggressively telling upon the hard-hit people. The sooner it is done, the better ; otherwise desperation may run riot and work immense damage and mischief ;

(5) to provide through carriages for lower class passengers from one big junction to another as is being done for the higher classes and not to leave the helpless people to shift for themselves anyhow in those big places ;

(6) to direct the supervising staff to spare some of their time and services for the lower class passengers and not to allow themselves to be wholly monopolised by the upper class passengers ;

(7) to take every precaution to keep down the continuously increasing accidents and derailments reflecting the greatest discredit on the Railway Administration ;

(8) to Indianising the services in the Railways for which much agitation has been going on for the last decade in both the Houses.

Sir, our Railways, becoming a hand-maid of the military during the war, let down those for whom they are made and for whom they exist. Military transport shamelessly superseded supplies for civil population at the time of the greatest scarcity of food and brought about the horrible disaster in Bengal. That war mentality—that all consideration for the civil populations are subordinated to the military—must go altogether now. The private colliery owners with stocks of good cheap coal failed to transport their available stocks to the chief centres of consumption because of the partial treatment of the Railways in providing wagons to the European-owned collieries chiefly. The coal supply position was further worsened by red-tapism, delay, greed, corruption and inefficiency of the railway staff controlling coal transport and supply.

Sir, in such a vast country as India, with so many big, well-equipped and well manned railway and commercial workshops, the potentialities of which have been abundantly made clear during the years of the war, it is unfortunate that we have yet to place our orders abroad for simple under-frames and wagons, reflecting no credit on our Railway Administrations. Sir, it is undoubted that our Railways were put to a heavy strain on account of the war and it is just and proper that a portion of the expenditure of our Railways during the years of the war should be borne by the British Exchequer. It is strange that nothing has been said by our Railway Chief on this important point. Sir, in some places and occasions the Railway Administrations have betrayed a political mentality to the exclusion of the commercial.

A commercial concern operating inside the country and depending upon the good wishes of the people cannot afford to be politically-minded.

Sir, one point more and I conclude. The Railway Chief has been pleased to hold out to us all manner of hopes for affording amenities to third class and inter class passengers without specifying any time. May his assurances come true ! But before all that is fulfilled, let us immediately have arrangements made for reservation of only sitting accommodation for lower class passengers on the lines of reservation of the sleeping accommodation for upper class passengers.

*FLT.-LIEUT. THE HON. RUP CHAND (Punjab : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I congratulate the Hon. Sir Arthur Griffin on the masterly manner in which he has presented the figures of the Railway Budget for the next year. I have a little in common with him inasmuch as he once belonged to Lahore and he was a friend of my late revered father. It is indeed gratifying to find that the Railways have, in spite of the increased cost of operation, shortage of supplies and personnel and numerous other difficulties, shown a surplus in the Budget. I would, however, like to point out that this surplus has been at the cost of the comforts and services to the average passenger. Anyone, who has seen the dreadful conditions in which the lower class passengers have to travel and has also seen passengers dangling precariously on footboards and on roofs of carriages, will realise the cost at which all these profits have accrued. I dare say the Hon. Sir Arthur Griffin has himself witnessed these mortifying scenes and has probably pondered to find out a solution for all these ills. The improvement of the conditions of lower class passengers has been the subject of debate for numerous years in both the Houses, but all that we have said has been of little avail inasmuch as conditions continue to be as disgraceful as they always had been. Sir, the efficiency of the Railway Administration in India has to be judged not by the profits which they can show at the end of the year but by the conditions which they furnish for the ordinary passenger for travelling. The major portion of the revenues are derived from the fares paid by the third class passengers and it is the height of injustice to deny them the minimum facilities. It was during these years of prosperity that Railways should have planned to improve the conditions of third class travel but little appears to have been done nor, it appears, is very much contemplated for the future. The third class passenger is not vocal and I would suggest that instead of providing saloons and first class facilities for railway officers they should all be made to travel in third class, as then alone will they realise what agonies and tortures the third class passenger has to go through. The third class compartments are for one thing over-crowded and I have known cases where people have fainted or even died due to congestion. In a hot country like India one would have thought fans were the minimum necessity which Government could provide for the average passenger. Instead we are told that they will be installed in inter-class compartments. This is little comfort to the third class passenger who above all needs this facility.

Next I come to the deplorable condition of the lower class waiting rooms at big and small stations. I do not have to go far and will invite the Hon. the Chief Commissioner for Railways to go to the Delhi Station where the waiting room abounds with flies and foul atmosphere, and I won't be surprised if the waiting rooms may be the breeding place of some epidemics. At small stations there is no adequate shelter or protection from rain, cold or the burning sun. We know, Sir, that all this prosperity and surpluses are derived from the poor and hungry masses and spent on luxurious air-conditioned coaches for a class which does not in any way help to run the Railways.

Next I come to the Indianisation in the Railways. This matter has been raised several times over in the past. In his speech the Hon. Member has made no reference to this subject. Key posts on most Indian Railways are still held by Europeans. I draw the Hon. Member's attention to the 1924 convention when it was decided by the Legislature that the Railway Board and all the Railways will be totally Indianised. This was twenty-two years ago and I ask my Hon. friend as to what action has so far been taken ? This failure to appoint Indians appears to be a deliberate omission because no one will believe that suitable and qualified Indians cannot be found to fill the posts. Does the Hon. Member also realise that the salaries of the subordinate staff are extremely low to let them barely make their both ends

[Flt.-Lieut. Rup Chand]

meet? If a portion of this surplus was spent in raising their salaries and providing amenities for them and their families, the Railway Department would be doing a real service.

The Hon. Member has made no reference to any proposal to reduce railway fares. From year to year they have gone up and now when prices are expected to fall and a famine is staring us in the face, the Government should consider a reduction in third class fares at least.

I would also like to point out the urgent need of further development of Railways in the country because with railway development is linked India's economic and industrial progress. The feeder lines and the gaps in the network of railways should be rapidly filled. As an example, Europe without Russia has almost five times as many railways as we have in India. In executing new projects it must be borne in mind that all the capital is found in the country and foreign vested interests are no longer given any quarter.

Last point before I close. We were told last year that plans had been finalised to manufacture locomotives in India, but this year from the memorandum placed before the Railway Standing Finance Committee I find that the plans have not yet reached the stage when they could be implemented. This is indeed a distressing state of affairs because the poor Indian tax-payer will have to pay more for the locomotives which will be imported from abroad. Thus the position of locomotives as revealed by the Hon. Member is most disappointing from the Indian point of view. All this represents a huge economic drain on Indian revenues.

THE HON. KHAN BAHADUR KARAMAT ALI (Assam : Muhammadan) : I have not had time to go into the Budget and therefore I hope the Hon. Members will excuse me if I do not dabble with figures or do not go into the intricate question of policies involved in the Railway Budget. I will only make some general remarks.

Now in the Budget which the Hon. Member in charge has been pleased to place before this House he has tried to give the impression that the Railway authorities have in their minds the grievances of the lower class passengers and the railway employees. But later on, when developing his scheme of helping inter and third class passengers, he hinted that such improvements would be carried out provided these people were prepared to pay higher fares. This price that is being asked for from these poor people for any improvement that may be made or any relief that may be given to them is not justified on account of the fact that for many, many years they were travelling under very disgraceful conditions and they were not given the facilities to which they were entitled in return for the fares they had paid. I can safely say without any fear of being contradicted that in no other part of the civilised world are passengers made to travel under conditions under which they are forced to travel on our Railways. I wonder whether in European countries even dogs are carried in the way in which human beings are carried in our Railways here. You have for years refused to give facilities to these passengers commensurate with the fares they have paid, and now, when you are going to give them some relief, you want them to pay more ! These passengers travel third class because they are poor. So long you did not do justice to them. And now that you are going to give them some relief, you want compensation. This is an attitude which this House should not support. If the Hon. Member in charge wants to give any relief to these passengers, he should give it immediately, but he should give up the idea of asking them to pay higher fares.

As regards railway employees, it has been said that a large number of employees who had to be employed during the war will have to be discharged. A protest has been submitted by these poor railway subordinates. As the Hon. Member in charge suggests that improvements are going to be made on the lines mentioned in his Budget speech, I hope more people will have to be employed. Therefore, the question of discharging the temporary people should not arise. It was pointed out by one Muslim member that as yet Muslims have not got their due share. Even if the question of discharge has to be taken up, I hope the case of the Muslims will be remembered.

Now, to come to my own Province, I would request the Hon. Member in charge to see if the line between Gauhati and Tinsukia can be improved. This line was operated by the Assam Bengal Railway before the war. The conditions then prevailing were not encouraging. But after it was taken up by the B. & A. Railway the conditions became worse. The coaches reserved for the third class and inter class passengers are not fit even for lower animals. They are always congested; there are no lights, no water, and no facilities whatsoever which ought to be provided to passengers travelling by train. Not to speak of third or inter class passengers, even the upper class passengers are denied the ordinary facilities that are given on other lines. I think all the rejected coaches of the B. & A. Railway have been transferred to that line. Upper class carriages also have no lights. The cushions are all rotten. The bath rooms are dirty and unhealthy. Complaints are made by upper class passengers, but nobody listens to them. It is high time something was done to improve at least the conditions now prevailing on this line between Gauhati and Tinsukia.

Another thing that I would like to bring to the notice of the Hon. Member in charge is that when the Jorhat Provincial Railway was in existence, there was a line between Jorhat and Nimati station. When war came, this line was made over to the B. & A. Railway under certain directions given by the Railway Board. At a meeting held in Shillong the Railway gave the promise that after the railway is taken up by the B. & A. Railway, the public will have the same facilities as they used to have when the railway was run by the Jorhat Provincial Railway. But now, after the war is over, it is understood that the B. & A. Railway is not going to maintain that line. There has been a great clamour raised over this matter and I hope the Government of Assam have also approached the Railway Board in this matter. Sir, the public will suffer very badly if this line is not maintained according to the promise made by the B. & A. Railway at the time the line was taken from the hands of the Provincial Railway. I therefore hope that the Member in charge will kindly remember this matter and try to help us so that the line may be maintained and people are not put to any inconvenience.

Sir, in Assam much was heard about the bridge on the Brahmaputra between Azimgunj and Pandu. Matters went so far that we were expecting daily that the work was going to be taken up. But I do not know why this has been abandoned. Much improvement has been made on the Assam Railways as a result of the war and I think that if this bridge is built, these improvements will be worth something. Otherwise, the improvements so far made will not be of much help.

That is all I have got to say, Sir.

* THE HON. MR. SUSIL KUMAR ROY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, the Hon. the Railway Member and the Chief Commissioner of Railways have chosen to call this Budget a Victory Budget. For us, men in the street, there is no difference between this Budget and war-time budgets. There is still overcrowding, and the fares and freight charges have not been reduced. May I ask the Hon. the Railway Member and the Chief Commissioner that if it is not possible to reduce the fares, they should at least restore the return journey tickets at concession rates?

Now, Sir, I come to another point. All the important Railways are now State Railways. Then why is this difference between the coaches of E.I.R. and the B. & A. R. and B. N. R. ? I would ask the Chief Commissioner to travel in a first class compartment of the B. & A. R. and B. N. R. The condition is simply horrible. The cushions are dirty and torn, and the condition of the lavatories is worse, with filthy basins and water closets which, I believe, are never cleaned.

Then, may I ask the Hon. the Chief Commissioner why the B.N.R. charges different fares for the third and intermediate class in passenger and express or mail trains ? I think the fares charged by the passenger trains are quite high enough and that should be the fare for all trains whether passenger, express or mail.

I now come to catering. Sir, Moghalsarai is an important junction but there is no non-vegetarian restaurant for Hindus in that station. I think that the Railway authorities should see that those Hindus who want non-vegetarian meals do not

[Mr. Susil Kumar Roy Chowdhury]

suffer. I assure the Hon'. Member that there is a genuine demand for this. Non-vegetarian Hindus suffer great hardship on account of the absence of a non-vegetarian Hindu refreshment room at such an important junction like Moghalsarai.

May I bring another fact to the notice of the Railway authorities and the Food Department. Passengers arriving at a station after 8 P.M. cannot on many occasions get their food from the refreshment rooms as they are told that all the food has been consumed before that time as the ration supplied to the caterers has been reduced by one-third. Sir, this is a serious matter. You cannot allow a large number of passengers to go without their food by reducing the ration supplied to the caterers and cause great inconvenience to the travelling public.

Lastly, Sir, I urge that the State should immediately acquire all other small and light railways now managed by companies so that there will not be any railway in India which is not owned by the State which I hope before long will be an independent State.

THE HON. HAJI SYED MUHAMMAD HUSAIN (United Provinces West : Muhammadan) : Sir, the Hon. the War Transport Member and the Chief Commissioner of Railways have brought forward this Budget immediately after the war is over and this is the occasion when after the inconveniences and a good deal of trouble which the travelling public went through during the war, they can ventilate their views on post-war improvements and in view of the experience they have, make suggestions as to what improvements are necessary. We have been hearing criticisms and we will hear more, because sometimes any stick is good enough to beat a dog with. Sometimes the dog bites and people have to howl and shout. This is the occasion for ventilating the grievances of the general public in the House. But, before I actually shower my own criticism, I would like first to congratulate the Hon. Member that, in spite of the most terrible time that this country has seen, the very great difficulties which the Railway Department have had to face, they have steered through it very well. The Railway Department is not an independent Department in any way. It is so closely associated with so many other Departments that it has to consider the needs in so many directions, and it is impossible to please everyone. Above all, the general public has suffered almost in every direction all these years ; and hence a good deal of criticism can be made but the Hon. Members can justify many of them on those grounds. There were times when Burma had fallen ; then the evacuation of Burma was a very gigantic thing. It concerned not only this Department but other Departments like the Overseas Department and so on. Then there was bombing in the south and in the east in Calcutta and the panic-stricken crowd was so nervous and frightened that it lost its head. They had to leave the place and evacuate the area. Passengers were put to many difficulties. This Department—when I say the Department I mean the officers, men, labourers, coolies, all of them—stood by and did their very best under most difficult circumstances. They went through that. Now that the war is over, we now expect that we would be compensated for all that we have suffered owing to the priority given to war material and men ; we would not in the future have the same reply as in the past that all the trouble is due to war conditions and they are doing their very best. We have got to direct our attention to real improvement, improvement in the direction of comfort, convenience and amenities to the travelling public. We are to face a catastrophe—I hope it is not as bad as we anticipate—in this country even this year, namely, the food situation. This will again be a difficult time for Railways. Railways will have again to consider the transportation of eatables and their priority. They will undoubtedly have a difficult time. But their hands will not be as full as they were during war-time.

So far as Indianisation and the manufacture of locomotives and other necessities of the Railways in this country are concerned, my Hon. friends have spoken and I entirely agree with the views expressed by them. They should see that even an ordinary nail and everything that is required for our Railways is made in India as much as possible and when it is only absolutely impossible then they should import the things from outside. As far as Indianisation of the services is

concerned, I have very little remark to make after what my other friends have said. I think it is high time that the Railways gave serious attention to this subject and tried to fill not ordinary posts and offices, but key position posts of responsibility. I hope the Railway Department is not going to plead that we have not got sufficient men. That would reflect upon their competency in not being able to train people. A good many railway men who have been lent to the Military Department will come back in the near future. I hope they will prove themselves an asset to the Railways. The evil—I call it undoubtedly an evil—of giving extensions after extensions to people should definitely be stopped, whether it is to Europeans or to Indians. It does a good deal of injustice to the people waiting below, and if an attempt is made to justify it would amount to incompetency of the Department in not being able to produce enough men to take the places above. I hope there will be no occasion or ground for discrimination between Europeans and Indians. Sometimes one finds that there is some Indian high up the list and some Britisher, down below the list. It is so manoeuvred that the man higher up somehow or other comes down below.

THE HON. SIR EDWARD BENTHALL: Sometimes you find the opposite.

THE HON. HAJI SYED MUHAMMAD HUSAIN: I point out to the Hon. Member that sometimes it has been noticed that a person who is not connected actually with a particular railway is made General Manager of that line superseding an Indian. That was with a view that in time to come he may succeed as General Manager of another line on the ground that he held the post of General Manager somewhere else and the man who is above him has no chance. I only say this in the hope that these things should be watched and occasion should not be given—for the impression that it is a question of discrimination and favouritism.

The other thing with which I am most concerned, and I think most of the non-officials ought to be concerned, is the amenities to the travelling public. It is really one of the things that the Railways are bound to pay their attention to and look into. I do not say they neglect it but we are primarily concerned with it. The condition, as has been pointed out by many Hon. Members, of third class passengers not only during these abnormal days but in normal days is pitiable. The water which is supplied to them during the hot weather, the cleanliness of the vessels in which the water is kept, the dirty condition of the floors of the coaches in which they travel—I admit that they are liable to be made more dirty than those in the higher classes but this is no justification that they should remain dirty—all provide a sorry spectacle. Well, I see on some of the lines a person walking about asking whether Flit is necessary? Surely it is more necessary in the third class lavatory and bathroom than in the upper class? I only hope that the authorities will pay serious attention in post-war reconstruction to the amenities of the travelling public. We have had this matter discussed and as I happen to be a little more closely associated with the Railway Department I know that these matters have come up before the Advisory Committee and that the advice of the members of the Committee has been sought and that their views are being considered. I only hope that this heavy purse which the Railways are showing to us in their Budget will be properly and usefully spent. It is only then and then alone that this saving would mean anything, otherwise, if it is wasted or not spent on the proper and necessary things then it is a sheer waste which we hope will not be done.

Then among the amenities to be provided for the travelling public and one which is of the utmost importance is food and catering on the Railways. What we feared and what has happened, as has been pointed out by the last speaker, is that owing to food scarcity the ration has been curtailed and it has been curtailed to the same extent as the ration of an individual person. I hope that this Department will approach the Department concerned and make it possible that particularly in Indian catering the ration should not be drastically curtailed. It happens like this that the third and inter class passengers await their reaching some big railway station to get their meals and when they reach such a station at the meal time and ask for something they are told by the caterers that they have not got any *roti*; as they do not get enough wheat; they have not got even rice. Well the poor fellow starves. He is not like a

[Haji Syed Muhammad Husain]

person living in the town who can go to another shop and get something to eat. This passenger has got to travel till he reaches another station at another meal time and gets the same answer! He with his family and children all have to starve. Therefore, I would request the Hon. Member to get something done by the Department concerned and to equip their refreshment rooms with sufficient foodstuff which they may be able to give to the people who are already on the train, and, as was pointed out, the number of passengers who travel now has abnormally increased while the ration which would be reduced for refreshment rooms according to the ordinary percentage will undoubtedly starve more people on the Railways than in their houses.

The other thing is that the position of food this year is such that at least the vendors or those contractors who will supply food to the railway passengers today should be allowed at least sufficient time to collect the material and continue during the most troubled days in their profession and not be left at the mercy of short-term contracts, the termination of some of which may be due three months after, or one month after and so on.

The other point about which I wish to draw the attention of the Hon. Member is the system of taking royalty from the contractors on the tender basis. The House is aware that some time ago the tender basis system, that is to give the contract to the highest tender, has not been approved by the Members of the Legislature and the Railway Department had to accept that recommendation and stop contracts being given on tender basis system. Now it is most remarkable that in some of these cases the royalty has arisen from Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 7,000 and from Rs. 7,000 to Rs. 70,000. The last speaker was mentioning Moghal Sarai. If one happens to pass Moghal Sarai and there tries to purchase a *surahi* the one which you could get for two annas in the city you would not be able to get under eight annas.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT: Your time is up. Will you please close your remarks?

THE HON. HAJI SYED MUHAMMAD HUSAIN: I am closing within five minutes. Now, who pays this royalty? It affects our pockets, not the contractor's pockets and the railway makes money not as a commercial institution but it makes money doubly on that: firstly, from our pockets in the shape of railway fares and amenities which are included in those railway fares, and, secondly, on those amenities itself. Well, that is very unfair.

With these remarks, Sir, I resume my seat.

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

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

THE HONOURABLE MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW (Madras: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, Sir, these are days when one has to be extremely grateful for small mercies, and so far as the present Railway Budget is concerned, we should thank Providence or the compilers of this Budget that it is not worse than it is. I know that they are working in circumstances over which they have no control, but still I would have felt glad if they had been able to give some more details in their figures with regard to the method by which they have arrived at them. From their own figures, it is clear that the Railways have experienced, like any other businessman during the last six years, an extraordinary war boom on account of India being a base of operations and also an object of attack by the enemy. In 1938-39 the gross earnings of Railways were Rs. 107 crores; they have gone up to Rs. 232 crores in 1944-45. That means they have made nearly Rs. 125 crores more than they were able to make in 1938-39. For the coming year they have budgeted for a fall in income to the tune of Rs. 48 crores. I have rummaged all the books supplied to us by the Railway Board, but I have not been able to arrive at the exact figure which they were able to earn on account of the war. What is the difference in their income, and what is the amount that should properly be credited on account of services rendered to the war effort during any of the last five years? All the figures are

jumbled up. Even with regard to passengers carried and goods carried, they do not seem to have separately taken account of the exact income which they were able to earn extra on account of war operations. But since the war has come to a sudden close and they are budgeting for the coming year—though certain of the war conditions are still presumed to exist—I take it that the loss of Rs. 48 crores is the loss which will accrue to the Railways on account of the sudden cessation of hostilities.

With our income, our working expenses also have increased enormously. But they have not been able to add much to the coaching stock. It was our criticism last year that we had not made any provision for bringing more passenger coaches into existence. You wanted to order thousands of wagons to move your goods. New wagons were ordered to be manufactured abroad. You wanted to get new engines from abroad. But you never ordered one coach that will carry passengers and increase the amenities for the passengers. From the figures given here, it appears that during the last year the passengers carried were about 90 crores. The passengers carried in 1938-39 were about 50 crores. That means that the number has nearly doubled, but the accommodation has not at all increased even by one-twentieth. According to some figures which I managed to get from previous reports, every seat that is provided for a third-class passenger in all the coaches combined in India used to carry 500 passengers before; now the very same seat is called upon to carry nearly 1,000 passengers! Without incurring any expenditure on the provision of extra accommodation, they have been able to earn more than double the income. That is my complaint against the Railway Board. Therefore, it is not a question of wiping out the deficit and so on. You have, by an arrangement of your figures, wiped out the previous deficit which the Railway Board owed to the General revenues to the tune of 35.4 crores. You have liquidated the loss in the Depreciation Fund to the tune of 30.29 crores. You have made up the loss on strategic lines to the tune of 6.01 crores. Not only that, but you have given a contribution to the general tax-payer to the tune of 123 crores. It is all very good, but I am not an orthodox financier who is always out to exploit the Railways in favour of the general tax-payer. I cannot understand why you should heap inconvenience upon inconvenience on the passenger, disability upon disability on the crores of passengers who travel, merely to make a few crores of rupees of profit and make a present to them by contributing to the General revenues. I cannot also agree to the proposition to set up a Betterment fund. Our orthodox financiers are very capable men so far as giving new names and setting new precedents are concerned. Why do you want a Betterment Fund if betterment is inherent in the system itself? What is the whole system for if not for the betterment of amenities for passengers? I maintain that the Betterment Fund is a sort of subterfuge to avoid expenditure on improving the railway system. We have created the Betterment Fund this year, and we are paying 15 crores into it, with the result, of course, that the conveniences and the amenities to be provided for the passengers this year will be correspondingly reduced.

But what I say is that all the improvements that are to be carried out in the Railways should form a charge on the Railway revenues. It must be in the regular revenue account, because it is a concern in which you invest and then again you take more out of it. I am not very much enamoured of the so-called convention which lays down that a certain amount of money should be contributed by the Railways to the General revenues. I claim that whatever profit accrues from the working of the Railways should be spent on Railway improvement, on the provision of amenities, and so on. The position here is the same as in the case of the accumulation of sterling balances. Do you mean to say that 1,500 crores of rupees have been accumulated in England on account of the prosperity of the poor tax-payer in India? They have been accumulated out of the sweat and blood of the toiling millions who have deprived themselves of many a comfort during the last five years. So also your accumulated profits, your contributions to the General revenues from Railways are the outcome of all the hardships which you have imposed upon the third class passengers and the other travelling public and the business community on account of the pressure of war.

Then, Sir, there is another suggestion made by the Honourable Member for Railways that rates and fares may have to be increased. Last year they tried to do it, and the country bestirred itself in time. In 1944 the Government of India

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wanted to increase passenger fares by 12½ per cent., but they had to give up the idea in response to agitation in the country. I am not one of those who would support any further increase in rates which affect the ordinary man in the street. As it is, his cost of living has increased by leaps and bounds, and it is no use trying to extract something more from him.

I want you to improve the conditions of service of the railway employees. I want you to have closer control and check over the inexhaustible multiplication of the officer cadre and the expansion of the highly paid, top-heavy administration. I want you to improve the train services. I want you to give more passenger trains and see that amenities are provided for the large volume of passenger traffic. In spite of the end of the war the pressure on the trains has not appreciably decreased. On the other hand, it is going to increase. There must be co-ordination between the development of the railway system and the post-war development of industry, business and agriculture. Sir, the Government of India have planned for an all out expenditure of about 3,000 to 4,000 crores of rupees which is intended to improve agriculture, the educational system, and the industrial tempo and also to help to put more rupees, annas and pies into the pockets of the ordinary labourers. If you effect an all round improvement in the standard of living of the masses, then railway travel will automatically improve and the railway earnings are also bound to improve. Not only this. You must create an effective attraction for the higher classes all over the world and attract a tourist traffic that will pay very well. We have been advertising in all the important cities of America and Europe and we have to do that now with greater intensity provided you are prepared to lay out more money on this.

One remark with regard to locomotive construction. Sir, I do not want to trot out the same old arguments. I will draw attention to one little passage in the Humphries-Srinivasan Report which was issued as early as 1940. I was a member of the Standing Finance Committee which sanctioned the formation of these two gentlemen into a Committee to report on the manufacture of locomotives. They have made out a case that the manufacture of these locomotives could have been started even before the war because that would have been profitable. In the other House the Hon. Member for Railways said that the few locomotives that are planned to be built may come into existence either by the end of 1948 or in the beginning of 1949. Well, while the house is on fire, the water experts are called in to find out where water is or where wells can be dug. That is the leisurely way in which this particular item has been handled by the Railway Board and they deserve every censure. Sir, during the war, when every other industry in Canada and America has assumed war production, we have placed an order for 900 engines and about 18,000 wagons abroad. I will just quote one sentence from the Humphries-Srinivasan Report :—

“The present war has served to emphasize the opportunity that has arisen for the expansion of the locomotive industry in India. During this war, the financial prospects of the locomotive industry, based as they are on the economic advantage enjoyed by this country, are naturally brighter than in normal years”.

The Railway Board has let slip such a good opportunity to start this industry, as the other Departments prevented the starting of the aircraft industry, the ship-building industry and the other heavy industries. When Canada, Australia and the United States of America could build up all these industries as subsidiary industries of their war effort, I do not see any reason why the Railway Board should have let go a great opportunity to bring this locomotive industry into existence during the war. The point was made that they will not get sufficient material. It has been pointed out here in this Report produced by two Government nominated members, that all the necessary engineering material is available in India. I can read that sentence for you :—

“All the steel work for the building, and some of the plant and equipment, that would be required, can be supplied by the engineering industry in India. Local representatives of three important manufacturing firms of machine tools, who have generally supplied the requirements of Indian Railways in this regard hitherto, have given us assurances that even under existing war conditions, deliveries of the machine tools that would be required for the new workshops could be guaranteed within the 15 to 18 months necessary for the new workshop to begin to function.”

This Report is dated 12th January, 1940, and if action had been taken promptly, the railway workshops would have come into existence in 1942-43. The countries which were able to give ready made locomotives would have supplied you with machine tools also. This has been raised in another part of this Report. Therefore, I lay this charge to the people in charge of the management that the interests of the foreign industry, especially those of the British and Canadian industry, had more weight with them than the real interests of this country.

With regard to coal supply, last year I made a suggestion. The Government of India are having a general survey of power development in the country. The development in the Railways, the development of irrigation and the development of power should be on a co-ordinated basis. What has the Railway Board done in regard to exploring the possibilities of minimising the use of coal, which depends on the vagaries of the coal mines, and trying to electrify their system and depend on electricity? I do not find a word about it here. I want the Railway Board to own its coal mines. They have paid nearly Rs. 10 crores for freight alone on coal. The cost of coal has gone up from Rs. 2 crores to Rs. 12 crores. I suggest that the Railway Board should own its own coal mines and work it as cheaply as possible.

I am afraid my time is getting short but I crave your indulgence, Sir. There is only one day allotted for the discussion of the whole Railway Budget and we are not given the privilege of voting on Demands for Grants. Therefore I crave your indulgence for a few more minutes, Sir, to conclude my speech.

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

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : My request is that a little more than four minutes may be given to me.

I suggest that this matter should be looked at as an all round proposition. There is no use giving us this win low dressing of an expert business man. When it comes to the question of amenities of third class passengers, he says the coaches are being remodelled. I saw a coach which was being remodelled in 1939, and I saw another in the recent Exhibition in 1945. This will go for a number of years more. The whole thing is in an experimental stage. They have no idea. The point was raised at the meeting of the Advisory Council for Railways last year and I told them that they were tinkering with the problem. The Hon. Member for Railways agreed with that description of mine. The point is that you have no programme. The model which has to be brought into existence is still in a state of experiment. There is no use of showing the model to the third class passenger and asking him to be satisfied with that. You must treat the thing more seriously. I want you to consider this aspect of the case and see that definite improvements are brought about within the year 1946-47 and see that new coaches are put on the wheels. You have not set a target of putting some hundreds of new coaches on the rails.

Sir, the Railwaymen's Federation has been agitating not to retrench any of the workers. They have stood by you as much as the men in the field. Despite the strain and stress of the patriotic fervour of 1942, these people have desisted from joining the movement and have pulled you out of your difficulties. Once you are out of your difficulties it is not good for you to retrench them. I want you to send out people who are superannuated, who have reached the age of 55, compulsorily retire them and create opportunities for others. There is no use of keeping these people and blocking the way for others. Also reduce the hours of work according to the International Labour Convention, about which you are bringing legislation in the other House. Make the hours of work 48 a week. That will create more employment. I suggest that there should be no retrenchment anywhere.

In regard to Indianisation, after the two Indians, Sir Lakshmipati Misra and Mr. Zahid Hussain were sent away, there is an all-white Board. I hope for the day, in view of the constitutional changes that are being advertised so loudly by the powers that be from Whitehall, that there will not be any need for further criticism on this point by the time the next Budget is presented to us. I hope a completely Indianised Executive Council and an Indian Member for Railways, with the staff Indianised, will present the Budget next year and give us more concrete proposals for improvement in the condition of the railway system.

[Mr. M. Thirumala Row]

I have come almost to the last point. With regard to food, my Hon. friend has said a great deal about it. Nowadays food is the question which is on everybody's lips. Whether a man is comfortable enough to have five meals a day or one meal a day, everybody is talking about food. Every man knows the trouble. Every man who leaves Madras and travels for 2½ days to reach Delhi knows that the food problem is a very serious problem, whether he is an upper class or lower class passenger. Arrangements on most of the Railways are woeful. If you travel from Madras to Calcutta, the B. N. R. is one of the most callous railways with regard to food and I want the Railway Member to take note of the fact.

Last year you have carried nearly 93 crores of passengers on all the Railways. Taking the ration at 12 ounces per head per day, assuming all these passengers have travelled one day, their food requirement comes to 3,08,036 tons of grain. You know that food is not available in the homes; it is not available in the market. All the hotels are flooded. In a place like Madras or the mofussil, a man who is not able to get off from his office and get his ration at the proper time, goes to a hotel, has his meals and goes to his office; so also they go to railway refreshment rooms. People have to take recourse to railway refreshment rooms. I will tell you an incident which happened in Bezwada. During the recent cyclone when all the rice had been washed away, people inundated the railway refreshment room run by the M. & S. M. Railway for three days; for every meal there were 2,000 people coming there for food. Under normal conditions I want you to pay greater attention to the catering on Railways and see that experienced contractors and caterers are not disturbed because war conditions have not ceased. Last year the Central Advisory Council has passed a resolution that such of these people who were giving satisfaction should not be disturbed. I know the favoured treatment which European contractors, Brantons, Spencers and Kellners, get. They pay a nominal rent of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 for refreshment rooms, whereas for the same area I know Indian contractors pay more than a lakh of rupees for the same amenities. Therefore, Sir, I request you to bear these suggestions in mind—amenities of the third class passenger and the ordinary man in the street.

Lastly, Sir, I come to a local point. Last year I mentioned the question of the restoration of Cocanada-Kotapalli railway in which I am interested in my part of the country. You were consulting the Provincial Government. But the Provincial Government is woefully out of touch with public opinion. There is an Advisers' regime, which does not know what the people's wishes are. I do not know in what stage this is. I also requested that Cocanada should be brought on to the main line. It will conduce to the improvement of trade and communications, because it is going to be one of the important ports on the East Coast and it was used as a training centre for amphibian operations during the war. I suggest that the Railway Board should give consideration to all these points.

On the question of Advisory Committees, I have got a grouse against the B. N. Railway. Only one meeting of the B. N. Railway Advisory Committee was convened. Perhaps they found it too hot. They have not convened another meeting. In spite of my reminder, they have evaded convening even a second meeting. The Advisory Committee is the one possible means of liaison between the public and the Railways. They are trying to evade this. Let them be less bureaucratic and more responsive to public opinion.

THE HON. RAJA YUVERAJ DUTTA SINGH (United Provinces Central: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I do not find many striking features in the Railway Budget worth commenting; and most of the points have already been touched upon, more or less, by previous speakers. And so I will not take up the time of the House by covering the same grounds over again.

With regard to the proposal of providing better amenities for lower class passengers, I note that a new design of passenger coaches are to be constructed, which will provide sleeping accommodation so far as possible, to inter and third class passengers, the number of lavatories is to be increased, the water supply is to be improved, so also the lights; and fans are to be provided in inter class compartments. All this is no doubt pleasing features; but when will these improvements actually be carried

out I do not know. There are some other points also which call for an early improvement with the approach of the hot weather, the question of an ample supply of cool and wholesome drinking water at railway stations, assumes an added importance. The position in this respect at comparatively small stations is, I regret to say, extremely unsatisfactory, and every effort should be made to ensure an adequate supply of this prime necessity of life to the passengers. This inevitably involves an increase in the number of watermen at the stations. At present, the waterman has to perform other duties also. The third class lavatories at railway stations are also kept in an insanitary and dirty condition. About overcrowding in the trains, the less said the better. No civilised Government would tolerate a state of things like this. This overcrowding is not confined only to third class or even to inter class passengers. Second class passengers have also to go packed up like sardines, and this calls for speedy remedy. More second class compartments must be provided. On the Lucknow-Bareilly section of the O. T. Railway, with which I am somewhat more familiar, only one first class, and only one second class compartments are provided, with the result which can better be imagined than described. I had put down a question on this subject; but the reply was as usual evasive and extremely unconvincing. There again sleeping accommodation for second class passengers at night must be provided for; but there are some Railway administrations which do not provide for this elementary amenity to second class passengers, who have to pay much more than lower class passengers. I will give only one instance. In the current time table of the B. B. & C. I. Railway, it is distinctly noted as follows:—

“Second class passengers will not be allowed sleeping accommodation by No. 1 Up and 2 Down Sind and Delhi Mails, 3 Up and 4 Down Delhi Express Trains, and 35 Up and 36 Down Agra-Kathgodam Fast Passenger Trains”. This restriction is now meaningless, and ought to be removed at an early date. Every result of bungling and mismanagement is attributed to the war. But the war has done at least one good to our Railway. As admitted by the War Transport Member in his speech in the other House, “there is no question of course, that the Indian Government Railways have prospered financially in many ways as the result of the war”, and that there has been “an increased volume of passenger and goods traffic, largely on account of war conditions”. We are also told in the same speech that financially the position is far sounder than it has been at any stage in the history of the railways”. So the plea of want of money should not stand in the way of carrying out necessary improvements in different directions in the railway system.

Sir, one word more, and I have done. Instead of announcing any decrease in fares, the War Transport Member has held out a threat in his Budget speech that “the need to increase rates and fares in the future may have to be seriously faced”. This is an alarming portent, which will give rise to uneasy feelings in the country.

The service conditions of railway employees also call for substantial improvement; and I hope this matter will be taken in hand by the authorities concerned at an early date.

THE HON. MR. V. V. KALIKAR (Central Provinces : General): Sir, I know that the Railways had a tremendous task to perform during war days. I do not want to analyse the Budget figures but I propose to look at this Budget from a layman's point of view. During the war, the Railways have taxed the patience of the travelling public too much; and I thought that after the cessation of hostilities immediate measures would be taken to afford some relief to the travelling public. But I am surprised to find that nothing is coming out of all the plans and proposals for relieving the sufferings of the travelling public.

In India, public opinion has been for very long time in favour of completely Indianising the railways. I expected, Sir, that my Hon. friend the War Transport Member, who came to the Government of India from public life, would have taken steps at least to Indianise the key positions on the Indian railways but to our great surprise and sorrow we find that even there does not exist one Member who is an Indian on the Railway Board. A reference to this point was made by my Hon. friend Pandit Kunzru this morning and I am constrained to say that if the usual

[Mr. V. V. Kalikar]

argument is advanced that there are not suitable men for managing the administration of railways in India—I am constrained to state that if after 200 years of rule in India you have not been able to train men for managing Indian railways—then the fault lies with you. If there are really trained men and able men to manage the administration of railways then I submit you are making invidious distinctions even now when you know that in a very few days time the constitution is going to be changed and the administration is going to be handed over to the Indians. I could have appreciated this sort of attitude of eliminating Indians from key positions from a Member belonging to the so-called steel-frame but I am really surprised to find, Sir, that my Hon. friend Sir Edward Benthall who came here from public life in India, should not have had any regard whatsoever for the keen public opinion that exists on this point. I may ask him, Sir, how many Agents of the Railways in India are Indians. I find only one. Could he not during his tenure of three or four years find other Indians who can properly manage the administration of the Railways? Could he not find capable Indians and could he not appoint them to those jobs? I think, Sir, my Hon. friend must find out some argument to satisfy public opinion on this point. Sir, the Indianisation of the railway services has been the cause of grouse for a very long time. The Central Legislature has been discussing this matter a very long time and nothing appreciable has been done in this matter. I hope, Sir, that before he leaves the Railway Department he will take some steps so that this complaint will be removed.

Then, Sir, we find in his Budget speech and the papers that have been circulated to us that a fund is to be created called the Betterment Fund. I have already stated before the House in the beginning that I do not propose to examine it from a financier's point of view but the public is entitled to know what for are you creating that Betterment Fund and what amenities are you going to give to the travelling public from that Betterment Fund. If you are not giving any amenities to the travelling public from that Betterment Fund then as some of my friends say it is merely a book adjustment, it is merely the creation of another fund which will be of no use to the public—then I would submit that you had better not create that Betterment Fund.

Sir, much has been said about the necessity of providing amenities and comforts for third class passengers. I do not agitate for amenities. I know that third class passengers are not to get amenities for some years to come. I am only asking you to look to the necessities of the third class passengers. If you could not supply sufficient coaches or carriages during war-time; if you could not supply sufficient engines and if you had to cut down the trains, the fault lies with the Government of India and not with the people. This Central Legislature has been agitating for the last 25 years to construct locomotives in India. Resolutions after Resolutions in this House as well as in the other House have been passed but for years together you tried to put off that question under some pretext or other and when the report referred to by my Hon. friend Mr. Thirumala Row was out you had no other alternative but to accept it because it was the report of your own experts but you then delayed implementing the recommendations of that report and now here is the sorry figure of so many engines to be imported from abroad; so many wagons to be imported from abroad and during war-time you could not get engines and wagons and you put the travelling public to the greatest inconvenience. My only suggestion is that in regard to the annual normal requirement of 200 engines you must take early and immediate steps to manufacture the needed number of engines in India so that you should not have to depend for your requirements on other countries.

Sir, my Hon. friend Mr. Thirumala Row has stated the complaints of his Province. I think my Province is the most neglected Province so far as the railway post-war schemes are concerned. I know my Province is less noisy. I will not quarrel if you lay out more lines in other Provinces. But I want to impress on my Hon. friend Sir Edward Benthall that mine is an agricultural province, and in your post-war plans you must prepare schemes for my province which will provide for the laying out of new lines and thus enable the produce of the agriculturists to be brought

to the market. All these proposals are going to involve heavy expenditure. I am quite sure of it. But, Sir, I know that during the last three or four years you have had at your disposal a large amount, and instead of holding out a threat that the fares and freights will be increased, you must try to manage things without in any way offending public opinion in this matter. You tried your best to increase rates, but ultimately you had to submit to the public agitation which resulted from your proposal. The travelling public is taxed too much. They are paying more now than they were paying before the war, and if you or your successor brings forward any proposal to increase freights and fares, there will again be an agitation against it and you will have to submit to public opinion. I therefore submit that before taking up the proposal to increase freights and fares, you must first try to meet the demands of the travelling public.

You must give the third class passengers at least seating accommodation. Take the case of my Province. Between Nagpur and Bombay there are only two trains—one running from Nagpur up to Bhusawal, and another from Nagpur to Bombay. Before the war there were five trains between Nagpur and Bombay. People are huddled up like cattle in the carriages. You have to see that these necessities at least are met. I do not ask you to provide comforts or any extensive amenities. But I ask you in all earnestness and with all the emphasis that I can command: why don't you treat them as human beings? If you want to take money from them, if you want to run your railway administration not only as a commercial concern but as a public utility concern, you must at least take this matter into consideration.

I hope my Hon. friend Sir Edward Benthall, before he leaves office, will frame a scheme by which he will see that the Railway Administration is completely Indianised and the grievances of the public are remedied.

THE HON. MR. N. K. DAS: (Orissa: Non-Muhammadan): Sir, I believe the Hon. the War Transport Member does not stand in need of felicitations from our side on his performances in the past, for he has been congratulated well enough by G.H.Q. But his professions in the past and those for the future are so vague and indefinite that I am afraid one can hardly sympathise with him, far less congratulate him on that score. In spite of the fact that the war has ended and the abnormal pressure on railways has been very much relieved, the Railway Member would still leave the third class and inter class passengers to travel in the same crowded and insanitary compartments. There is no standardisation of fares even among the different railways which are under State control, and there is even the prospect of fares being increased. The freight charged for the transport of agricultural commodities and cloth and yarn and raw materials continues to be high. It is neither just nor defensible to inflate the Government of India's coffers at the cost of the poor agriculturist and industrial worker of the country. I myself think that the benefit of concessional freight rates should and must go to the agriculturist first and foremost in order that the country might prosper.

The Indianisation of the Railway Board and of the superior services in the Railways are matters on which no thought has been bestowed for the last two decades. Believe me when I tell you that all the best efforts of many public men of Orissa have utterly failed to remedy the callousness and systematic neglect of the B. N. Railway authorities in the matter of appointing a few eligible Oriyas in the superior services in that Railway.

Just another point I would like to make, and that is about the rail-road co-ordination scheme, about which the Chief Commissioner for Railways has chosen to be entirely silent. It has, however, been brought forward by the Hon. the War Transport Member in another place. Sir, when these plans were formulated and discussions were going on for almost two days, I thought that this scheme was really based on higher considerations, namely, that "All public utility concerns should be nationalised." But, Sir, the almost desperate and unwarranted hurry with which this scheme is being pushed through in many provinces in spite of very strong opposition savours very much of a suspicious design. The War Transport Member now seeks to take shelter in the name of "protecting the interests of the travelling

[Mr. N. K. Das]

public who urgently demand better services". But he does not look to his primary and more urgent responsibility, namely, the amenities that should be provided to the lower class passengers in the Railways. We are told that rail-road co-ordination is a provincial subject. It should therefore be left to the provinces to formulate the scheme, as best as they can. Why should the Centre worry so much about it and heap on the provinces its recommendations, directions and warnings in season and out of season? In the provinces, in my opinion, the method of approach has been very wrong. Negotiations do not succeed among parties who distrust one another. This has been unfortunately so in almost every province. The existing transport operators do not trust the Government, and *vice versa*; and the result has been that no agreed scheme has so far materialised in any province. Why not leave things as they are until popular Provincial Governments have come into being? What is the desperate hurry about putting forward these schemes here and now? In my opinion the scheme should be left to be brought into being by popular Provincial Governments which will soon take office, which Governments, in their turn, will take their directions from the National Government at the Centre, the establishment of which is bound to come in a few months. I would like to sound a note of warning, in conclusion, that the Government will not be helping their schemes in any way, by hurrying through them. In order to popularise these schemes, they will have to wait until the National Government has been established, for then alone can public utility concerns be really nationalised in a proper form and spirit.

THE HON. RAI BAHADUR SATYENDRA KUMAR DAS (East Bengal: Non-Muhammadan): Mr. President, as many speakers before me have dealt at length with the subjects of public amenities, locomotive manufacture, supply of food to passengers, etc., I need not deal with these questions again. I will confine my speech to some railway projects in our part of the country, Eastern Bengal. I had no intention of participating in this debate had the Chief Commissioner of Railways while delivering his speech the other day, given an indication as to the fruition of schemes under the head "Post-War Development" and in the list of Survey Projects under Bengal Assam Railway. Sir, the Chief Commissioner of Railways knows very well that there is an agitation from the Pabna District as to the taking up of the project of Ishurdi-Pabna-Sadhuganj Railway. This survey, Sir, is being pressed by the Pabna District Board, the Pabna District Peoples' Association, the Pabna Municipality, the Pabna Passengers' Association, the Government Storing Agent, the Pabna Civil Supply Syndicate, the Pabna Mahajan Samiti and others. There are also other schemes for the acquisition of River Steamer Services by the Railway Department. This matter was taken up by Mr. K. C. Neogy while moving a cut motion on the 23rd February 1945 on the floor of the Assembly. In reply, the Hon. the Railway Member gave an assurance that the matter will have his best attention. As regards the Dacca-Aricha Railway, that is also hanging fire for the last several years, and for the survey of this scheme, Government spent Rs. 2½ lakhs on survey but it was dropped on grounds of public health. But this objection does not exist now. At the instance of the Dacca District Board a malaria survey was made and a recommendation has been made to the Bengal Government for withdrawing this objection.

As to the linking up of the Ishurdi-Pabna-Sadhuganj Railway, I must submit, Sir, that in linking this up, there will be substantial benefit to the Railways as also to the civil public because it will develop trade and leave the Pabna people free of the higher prices which they have to pay for their necessities of life as there is no service connecting these two places owing to the discontinuance of the regular steamer service with Pabna.

As to the purchase of steamer companies, there was a time when this question had to be dropped because Government had very little funds with which to purchase these private steamer companies. Now that the sterling balances are in our favour, the Railway Board can give effect to the assurance given by them on the 23rd February 1945 for the purchase by the State of these steamer companies.

As for the linking up of Dacca with Aricha, this will not only help passengers to reach Calcutta from any part of Eastern Bengal at least within eight hours,

but it will also give shorter access to the business people. I had intended to move a Resolution on the subject of the Ishurdi-Pabna-Sadhuganj Railway but as ill-luck would have it, I had no time to move it which was fixed for the day before yesterday. That is why I had to encroach upon the valuable time of the House and deal with this matter in connection with the Railway Budget.

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN (Chief Commissioner of Railways): Sir, it is a little difficult to reply adequately to a debate such as the one we have had today, in which various speakers have spoken and a variety of subjects have been touched upon. I will do my best to deal with most of the points that have been raised. I hope I will be forgiven if by any chance I omit some but I will leave one for the Hon. the War Transport Member to speak on. I would first like to make a general survey of the comments as they have been made. The Budget, as a Budget, has not been attacked except to the extent that two Hon. Members considered that our general budgeting had been unsound or unusually conservative. In the past it was alleged that we have consistently under-estimated, and the Hon. Mr. Motilal stressed that we have done the same in respect of the year 1946-47. It is very difficult to estimate in the times that we have been passing through and in which we are still. During the war we were estimating on a rising market, when it was almost impossible to tell where your figures of revenue would come to, and unfortunately equally difficult to estimate where your figures of expenditure would rise to. We are now on a falling market and it is equally difficult. We have experience to guide us. We have the revenue under the various heads as they are now. We have the individual Railways' estimation of what they consider will be their future receipts. All those are in front of us. But really they are not a very great deal more than what can be in front of anybody who studies the figures of the revenue of the various Railways. We have no magic procedure whereby we can arrive at our figures. I personally would prefer to see the Budget on the safe side; and if there are any errors, I personally would incline to say that we have perhaps been a little too optimistic in our revised estimates of the present financial year and we have perhaps played safe or soft-pedalled a little for the next year. I believe myself that is a wise and prudent thing to do.

My next comment is this. Several members have complained—in fact almost every member who has spoken has complained—that there are no proposals for reduction in rates and fares. Neither the Hon. the War Transport Member nor myself in our Budget speeches have said that we contemplate increases in rates and fares. We have drawn attention to the stark reality of the figures as they present themselves, and as they are presented to the Hon. Members in the Budget itself. There are the figures. We have estimated, as I have just said, as best as we can on our revenue side. On looking at the expenditure side, we find very few tendencies of our expenditure falling. If those symptoms, as we see them, turn out to be correct, then your margin is getting less and less; and what we have drawn attention to in the warning specifically given by the Hon. the War Transport Member is that, if those conditions persist, then inevitably one must look to see where the gap is going to be met. The gap can only be met in two ways. It may be met by increasing your revenue or decreasing your expenditure. Increasing your revenue inevitably means the raising of rates and fares, either or both; and decrease in expenditure is a very difficult thing to foresee at the moment. The first speaker, Sir Shantidas Askuran, said that we should call a halt to imposing burdens. But, Sir, we have imposed no burdens on rail transport. The only increase that was made was in 1940 when a 12½ per cent. increase was made in freight rates and a very small, 6½ per cent., was made in fares; and be it noted, Sir, there are many exceptions to these increases. I would particularly draw attention to this, because the same speaker has alleged that it was owing to our high level of freight charges that the grain and the food-stuffs of the country did not move. The increase of 12½ per cent. was not imposed on foodstuffs; grains and manure. In regard to passengers the increase did not apply to the very low zone of the one rupee in which a very large number of people travel. The rates have not in any way affected the movement of foodstuffs. I will deal with the general question of movements of foodstuffs later on under another heading.

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Now, to deal a little more particularly with the items. The Betterment Fund: I personally as a mere railway man look on that with considerable satisfaction. The railway man is just as anxious as the public that development and improvements and betterments should take place. The Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row was a little sceptical about the Betterment Fund, and he even went so far as to say that he thought it was a device to avoid betterments. It is I who have myself pressed for the Betterment Fund, because I believe it is the one thing which will help us and help the Railways to plan steadily and coherently in provision of betterments. There is a long history behind the Betterment Fund. There is no need for me to repeat it here. I think a complete statement is in the proceedings of the Standing Finance Committee which is in the hands of all Hon. Members. But it is sound and prudent finance to charge these betterments, which are neither revenue-producing nor expenditure-saving, to revenue as you go along; but it is not easy to plan if you can only budget as you go along. It is difficult for all Railway Administrations to work with the years chopped off into financial years. They never know whether they are going to have their funds for the next year, and carry-forwards which are inevitable may upset the planning for the following year. It is for these reasons that we hope the Betterment Fund will prove a measure of considerable benefit to the Railways.

The Hon. Pandit Kunzru drew my attention—with approval of the Betterment Fund—but he drew particular attention to the necessity for systematic planning. That, Sir, is what we are aiming to do. We wish to have systematic planning. The quinquennial programmes which are now with the Railway Board, those are the programmes of each of the Railways, are under close scrutiny. But in order to ensure that there shall be coordination not only of types of work but between the various railways' activities, it is necessary to examine these proposals carefully and draw up a coherent and complete plan for all the Railways. We shall have in the Board's office under the Member, Engineering, a Planning Directorate, which will go into all these programmes and they will plan ahead, plan ahead not only merely for betterment but for modernising the whole of the systems. We do not want to return, as the Hon. Pandit Kunzru said, to the troubles of the 1930s. No, Sir. As a railway man again, and as one who has been General Manager, I have seen the consequences of not planning and in not being sure that your plans are on a firm foundation. That is why in my Budget speech I gave the warning that a little patience must be exercised before we go ahead into our bigger schemes, so as to make sure that they are sound not only financially but sound in every way for the good and the development of the country.

The next point I will deal with is loco. manufacture. Several questions have been asked and some accusations have been made. Mr. Thirumala Row read from the Locomotive Building Committee's Report, but he did not make clear that the writers of that report claimed that some only of the materials might have been available even during the war. That was their opinion at the very beginning of the war, because, after all, although the report was produced in 1940, it was under examination and preparation in 1939. Machine tools would not have been available from abroad. Steel was not available in the country. It was used for other things, and the machine tools which were in the country at that time had to be used for other purposes, and at that time more urgent purposes. We have now progressed. Singbhum is now working. It is producing boilers, and by October this year they are to produce for us a plan and a lay out for developing into the complete building of locomotives. Their consulting engineers are in the country at the present moment. As regards Kanchrapara, we have the plans. We received them from the consulting engineers last year. They have been examined and officers have been put on special duty to draw up estimates and statements of all the machinery and plant that is required. Orders for some of the plant were placed some time ago and others are being placed now. But the Kanchrapara Workshop is required to overtake, as I said in my Budget speech, some of the arrears of maintenance, especially of locomotives. I hope—I sincerely hope—that the work that will

have to be done there will not interfere with the development of the workshops for the production of locomotives. I think and hope that these two processes will go forward simultaneously and that we shall not be held up.

The Honourable Pandit Kunzru asked what we are faced with in the way of renewals or replacements of locomotives. It is estimated, or has been estimated, that our requirements are approximately from next year onwards 200 locomotives a year, broad gauge and metre. That, of course, is on a time basis though you may go, of course, from time to time beyond that age limit. It is inevitable and there is nothing wrong with it from the point of view of efficiency. But on the time basis 200 is the annual requirement. Kanchrapara should, when it comes into being, produce 80 and Singhbhum could produce 50 and can be developed still further to produce more. We should be self-supporting. The Hon. Member asked if I would give a categorical assurance that once we have got locomotive manufacture completely established in the country we should not need to go overseas. It is difficult to look right into the future, but one hopes that that definitely will be so. I must qualify that however with just one comment. Our replacement of locomotives during the war years has been of the goods type, of the common utility type, that is the type that was urgently required. We still have a considerable number of passenger locomotives which are due replacement. Now the trouble there is that we are really only feeling our way at the moment technically as to the type that we really will have to have. It is affected by very many considerations. One consideration is the type of traffic—air traffic will possibly take away from Railways a certain portion of its upper class travel. What is to be our speed for the future? What is to be our general composition of, say, mail or heavy express passenger trains? Coupled with that, what coal shall we be able to obtain? We are told that metallurgical or cooking coal must be reserved for metallurgical purposes. If that be so, what are the Railways to be given to burn? On that depends the design of your locomotives. So, if we are to have a type which will be satisfactory in the future, and which will meet our demands, then we shall probably for the first few have to go overseas for them to be supplied, for one thing, in order that we may have a prototype which can be tested and also that we take advantage of the experience of manufacturers who have been building such engines for years. Having got the prototype we shall later copy it in India. That will not interfere in any way with the locomotive production in India. There will be sufficient work for the industry, as we conceive it, in building approved and tested types of locomotives.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : I should like to ask one question about locomotives. I wanted to know what was the total number of locomotives which would have to be scrapped according to the War Transport Member. He said 29 per cent. of the engines were over-age. Will they be scrapped now at the rate of 200 a year or will all of them be scrapped, say, in the next three or four or five years?

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN : No, Sir. Scrapping is only connected with age—over-age does not necessarily imply scrapping. The mere fact that an engine has reached its age of 35 years—35 years we take as the age of a locomotive; it is based on two boiler lives—the mere fact that a locomotive reaches the age of 35 does not mean for one moment that that engine will then be scrapped. It may be necessary to scrap it for two reasons. One might be that it is inefficient and obsolescent and the other that it has worn out; but there are engines at the present moment, Sir, which have been repaired near the age of 35 and will go on for some years afterwards.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Will engines be of all types, both heavy and light or only light?

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN : They will be of several types, to suit the types of traffic.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Are heavy engines going to be manufactured?

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THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN : According to our present programme for building locomotives in the Singbhum Workshops we expect that they will first be put on to building the standard type of metre gauge locomotive, which is an approved and accepted type of which we have all the working drawings.

As regards wagons, Sir, the wagon industry in the country can quite well compete with all our requirements. The Hon. Mr. Dalal this morning said that the wagon manufacturers ought to be congratulated for what they have done. I would associate myself with that but at the same time they could not have taken on any more as they were working to their maximum output. It was absolutely impossible to avoid placing orders overseas. He asked why it was that we did not cancel the orders overseas. As I have said in my Budget speech, those which were provided under Lease-Lend were cancelled. The reason for that was that there were no compensatory charges to be paid by us. Others were in such a full state of production that we would very nearly have had to pay the value of the wagons by way of compensation. Moreover, the wagons were very urgently required and as a matter of fact still are urgently required. So, although at the time we were playing and toying with the idea of cancelling the orders, I think the events have shown that we were probably wise in not doing so.

In respect of coaching stock the Hon. Mr. Thirumala Row complained rather bitterly that we had not placed orders for coaching stock in the same way as we had placed orders for locomotives and wagons. It was quite impossible. Certainly no Allied country would have supplied. All demands for locomotives and wagons were placed by us on the Allied nations—not on individual firms—so that the best of their productive capacity could be utilised. They would have looked askance if we had asked for carriages and they would not have supplied them ; and there was no capacity available in this country either. In fact underframes we had to get made overseas. Those underframes are now just coming into the country. The programme we have in view involves the construction of about 800 coaches a year. It is a big programme but it is not, I hope, beyond our combined capacity in the country—that is the capacity of the Railways and of the indigenous manufacturers. We shall have to place orders outside because the full programme will be beyond the capacity of the railway workshops on their own.

I now come, Sir, to a very important point. The Hon. Pandit Kunzru asked if I would state what the position is in respect of railway labour and of our relations with the Railway Federation. Our relations generally with the Federation have been excellent in the past. We have had many meetings ; and when I say that they have been conducted with good manners on each side and with a due appreciation of each other's point of view, it is a tribute to the members of the Federation. Now, at the last meeting the Federation had with the Railway Board, they had three points. Those three points were : retrenchment, scales of pay, and dearness allowance. As regards retrenchment, Hon. Members, I think, know fully what the position is now. Railways have no desire whatever to retrench men, and they will do all they can to make sure that no man is put out provided fruitful and proper work can be found for him. We hope that with the plans of development as they come on and with the quantum of traffic which is moving—it is as high as ever at the present moment—it will not be necessary for these men—except relatively a few of them perhaps—to be retrenched. But we are, after all, custodians of the public purse as well as large employers of labour, and there cannot be charity entering into it to keep people doing nothing ; besides, the demoralising effect that that would have on the rest of the staff cannot be ignored. So much for retrenchment for the moment.

As regards the scales of pay, as Hon. Members are aware, it has already been announced that Government is setting up at once a Commission to go into the whole question of the scales of pay of Government servants, and they will take into consideration the question of the railway scales together with the others. But the Railway Board has for some long time been working on the structure of the pay scales. The structure is extremely complicated ; indeed, it is almost chaotic, owing to the large number of Railways, their varying pay scales, and the considerable variation there has

been in respect of the company lines. Although one cannot expect complete uniformity over a continent, we do hope for a greater measure of uniformity, and we certainly hope for a considerable degree of simplicity. We have been busy with that examination for some time, and we have mentioned it to the Federation. At their last meeting with us some of the points and difficulties with which we were faced were mentioned to them. Tentatively they gave their views, but they expressly said they were only their tentative views. We want to get on with this revision of the structure because we feel that it will be essential to help the Commission, when they start their work, in the fixation of the pay scales. We asked the Federation to meet us again when we hoped to discuss more finally some of these rather intricate points which are involved in the pay structure. They failed to turn up. They claimed that the memorandum which was sent to them did not carry them very much further, and they drew attention to their previous demands.

Now, their demands, Sir, these were given at the meeting that they had in Moghal Serai last November.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Did they not discuss those demands with you ?

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN : Not specifically. Their demands—at least their ideas of their demands—were that they would have a scale for unskilled, a scale for semi-skilled and one for skilled staff, and ministerial. They stated the scales as they thought they should be. In addition, they asked that there should be a flat rate of Rs. 45 per month dearness allowance. That, although it was not specifically mentioned, was presumably inclusive of the relief in kind which is now given.

Now, the results of those proposals would be that although we are at the present moment paying Rs. 14 crores a year in dearness allowance and Rs. 13 crores a year in relief in kind, which is equivalent to 21 per cent. of our ordinary working expenses, this total amount of allowances would rise from Rs. 27 to Rs. 48 crores. In other words, the dearness allowance as they proposed, would mean a further expenditure of Rs. 21 crores a year. As regards their proposals for pay, these are rough calculations only, but that would be equivalent to another Rs. 57 crores a year. The total of the two would be Rs. 78 crores a year more. Well, I think those figures have only to be stated to remove the proposals or anything like them from even the realms of possibility. Assuming they were to come into force next year, you have got a 12 crore surplus estimated in 1946-47, and you would convert that into a 66 crore deficit. On our anticipated passenger and goods earnings, we should have to look for a 40 per cent. increase in rates and fares.

THE HON. PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU : Did the Federation actually send those proposals to you ?

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN : Yes, Sir.

Now, Sir, another very important point is this. They have frequently stated that there would be no retrenchment and that things would be a great deal better if the 16 points which they had put forward were adopted by the Railways. As this is important, if it does not tire the House, I would very briefly mention the 16 points. The first related to the reduction in hours of work. The proposed reduction in hours of work is an amendment to the Factories Act to 48 hours. We are already, on most railways, working below that, and we have under consideration investigation of the hours of employment rules generally so as to give some measure of relief.

Their second point was a weekly calendar day's rest for all railwaymen. Seventy per cent. of continuous workers already enjoy a calendar day's weekly rest, and the provision of a weekly rest for all, instead of the 24 consecutive hours which we give in some cases, is under investigation. But, Sir, I cannot believe that it would be suggested that a full calendar day's rest is necessary for every single railway worker. Many of the branch lines possibly have one or two trains a day; the work for most of the day is negligible. There is perhaps an hour and a half's work for a day. I do not believe myself that one could justify a complete day's rest for all of these men. When you also consider the provision of relieving staff—because the railway must

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still work, trains must still run on Sundays and on any other day—the provision of relieving staff to move over the whole railway system, relieving people to give them their day's rest—when you consider all this, you will agree that it is a very difficult proposition.

The next point is that the leave reserve should be increased to 25 per cent. That is being examined as a long term policy. But there again there are very many difficulties. But we have told all Railways that if it will help in absorbing staff, they need not take account of any limitations imposed by their leave reserve. Their next point was the reduction of rail lengths for engineering purposes, that is, the length that a gangman or gang may look after. That will probably help in no way as most of the Railways at the present moment are deficient in their gang strengths, some very badly deficient. Leave facilities for daily rated staff and workshop staff was their next point. These have already been liberalised. Their next point was that contract work should be done departmentally. There are limits, as I am perfectly sure Hon. Members will agree, to the extent to which you can adopt that, although there again we have told Railways to go as far as they can if it will help in absorption. Expansion of workshop capacity was mentioned in four of their so-called points. The workshops are up to their eyes in work and will, I estimate, be in that position for the next year or so. Reopening of dismantled lines is another claim. That is already under investigation and the work will be taken in hand as soon as possible. Another point concerns quarters for railway staff and I cannot see that that will be of any assistance, because, I am sure that existing service staff cannot actually do all the building construction. Development of rail motor transport was mentioned. So far as that is possible, the Rail-road Company will absorb existing workers, but not necessarily railway workers. Finally, they claimed that, workshops which are doing work for outsiders like the R. A. F. should continue for other similar purposes. That, I think, is quite unacceptable.

Those, Sir, are the 16 points. We are told that had they been adopted by the Railways, we would have saved all the trouble in regard to retrenchment. That is the position so far as labour is concerned. We have the question of dearness allowance always under observation. But, since the revision of dearness allowance last year there has been no change in the cost of living. As regards a revised scale of wages, it is impracticable at this stage to devise a completely new scale and we do not know the basis on which we could do so. Those are their claims. I do not think that anybody can justly say that negotiations have, so to speak, broken down, or that we are to blame.

Several Hon. Members have mentioned the question of food supplies and have asked for a definite assurance that movement of grain in case of shortage will be carried out by the Railways. I think that we can claim justly that the whole of the programmed movements in the past have been carried out without exception and I do not anticipate that there will be any difficulty in the future. High priority is given to the movement of all such things.

It was said this morning that the Bengal famine was accentuated by the lack of rail transport. That, Sir, is quite incorrect. If the Woodhead Report is read, it will be found that there is not one criticism of railway transport or of the railway position. Even during the period when the East Indian Railway was severely affected by the Damodar floods, it was a great tribute to the Railways concerned that every thing was carried into Calcutta and into Bengal. Not one criticism was made of shortage of rail transport. Unless causes beyond our control intervene, I am convinced that all the efforts which are being made to avert any famine will be fully assisted by the Railways.

As regards third class travel, one expects these criticisms and one appreciates them. It is difficult to know really what more we can do, or could have been done, than what we have done. The coaching stock which is still in use by the Army must stay there until their repatriation and until their demobilisation and other movements are more complete than they are at the moment.

THE HON. MR. M. THIRUMALA ROW : What is the number of passenger coaches still with the Army ?

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GRIFFIN : Approximately I think it is about 1,290 broad gauge and about 400 metre gauge. It is about that. If those coaches come back and if the military movements still have to continue, what should we be up against ? We should be up against the whole of the civilian service being besieged by the army moving, and I think that will be even more objectionable than their travelling distinct in their own mails and their own military specials. We will press to get stock back as quickly as we possibly can and we shall press on as fast as we can with putting bodies on to these underframes as soon as they arrive. Provided supply of materials does not interfere, that work shall go forward as fast as we can possibly make it. We are distributing these underframes among the various Railways so that we can absorb the very maximum building capacity. It does not necessarily mean that wagons built on one Railway will be kept by that Railway.

As to cleanliness, there has been a campaign—I have seen it in force myself—in many places and I am sure the Railways are doing their utmost to improve the position. I believe, from independent evidence that I have had, that the position has improved a very great deal.

Lighting is improving and the stocks of bulbs as they are coming forward now should mean there will be a considerable improvement in the relatively near future.

The programme that we have in front of us for rehabilitation and betterment involves, as I quoted in my Budget speech, considerable sums for improvement of amenities to the public,—not only to the passengers but to the public generally. They are tabulated in the Explanatory Memorandum. When those are taken in hand, I hope that perhaps some of the annual criticisms that we get on this account will disappear.

The question was raised by the Hon. Mr. Motilal—and I think one other Hon. Member—that the Military have not paid sufficiently for the use of the railway services, and it was also claimed—I think by the Hon. Mr. Dalal—that when the coaching stock comes back from the Military, we should charge them the repair charges. That, I think, would be altogether little unfair. After all, although these coaches are being used by the Military, they are paying full contract rates for them. The army rates for movement are most of them on a contract basis, which was fixed some years ago, and from the other side it has been alleged at times that we are over charging our biggest customer, the Army. As regards a considerable number of the movements such as ammunition, full public rates are charged. So when the stock comes back, I do not think you can expect them to pay for the normal repairs. But when they have been converted for their own particular purposes, then they have paid for the conversion and they have to pay for the reconversion.

I was asked why it was—I think it was the Honourable Mr. Chowdhury—why it was that the B. N. Railway charges different fares for mail trains. That is a practice which is not uncommon on the Railways. It is intended of course to relieve the pressure on the important mail trains for long distance traffic. The same effect is produced by having mileage distance limits. Actually I hope that in the future any such differentiation in charges will disappear. But there may of course have to be differentiation from the point of view of distance.

Vending contracts were dealt with eloquently by Mr. Muhammad Husain. The one point that I would like to mention is his complaint that we should not call for tenders for vending of ordinary articles other than food at stations, as he claimed that as a result of the price that is paid by the vendors the prices of the articles are excessive and a long way above the ordinary market price. That may or may not be so. We have this question under examination now and I hope that that particular complaint may be removed in future. As regards catering generally which has been mentioned, I think the subject is coming up for the Central Advisory Council where it can be considered in all its bearings.

It has been represented that we have not improved train services. We have put back a considerable number, but that is up to our limit. Until the coaching stock

[Sir Arthur Griffin]

comes back or can be produced, we are short of stock. At the present moment the supply of coal is a particular anxiety—not only the quantity of the coal but the quality of it—and that is interfering and will interfere, I am afraid, with getting back to our normal fast services. Mr. Thirumala Row suggested that we should cultivate tourist traffic. A Committee has been sitting under Sir John Sargent and they have made a report and that is now being examined. Just at the moment I do not think there will be any point in attempting any propaganda or advertisement for tourist traffic from overseas. Nor at the present moment would I accept as desirable any suggestion that we should try to stir up tourist traffic in the country. We are up against the problem of overcrowding and I do not want—in fact I prefer to discourage—tourist traffic for some little time to come. But the ground has been prepared. He has mentioned the Cocanada-Kotapalli line and Cocanada connexion and I can assure him that I was not quite satisfied myself with the replies that I received and I have asked that they should be brought under investigation again.

The last speaker asked about the Ishurdi-Pabna Railway. I thought that that was to be the subject of a Resolution, but I gather that it has lapsed. If you will give me one moment, Sir, I will reply as briefly as I can to that request. That line has been examined four times from 1928 onwards. Each time it has been turned down as definitely unremunerative. The Sub-Committee of the Bengal Government to go into the question of post-war planning did not recommend that that line should be built. In the course of our negotiations and discussions with the Bengal Government we raised the question of this line and the Bengal Government were not in favour of it, and they produced a reason which for me is a very important one. They said that the construction of this line might have a serious effect on the general health of the countryside. The type of country is difficult. Several times in the year it broadens into one complete lake. The bank of that railway would be, I think, about 20 to 24 feet high and it might result in considerable water-logging of the country. I should not like the Railway Administration of the future to be blamed, or may be to have compensation claims against it, for a reduction in the general level of health of the countryside. I do not put the line aside from the point of view of its being unremunerative. Our conception of the construction of the lines in future is that the remunerative ones will come first. That after all seems common sense, because if a line is remunerative, presumably there is a public need for it. But we do not bar the unremunerative or the immediately unremunerative line and many of our proposals include items which would come within that category. But I cannot hold out any hope for the construction of the Ishurdi-Pabna line. If the Hon. Member could convince the Bengal Government that they are wrong and they come to us, I should not mind having the case being re-opened when we have time.

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT THE HON. RUP CHAND : May I know why there is no Indian Member on the Railway Board ?

THE HON. SIR EDWARD BENTHALL (War Transport Member) : Sir, I must apologise for not having been able to be present throughout the whole of the debate owing to my duties in another place. But after listening to the masterly thoroughness and ability with which the Chief Commissioner has dealt with all the points which were raised, I can assure you that you have not missed anything. I propose therefore to deal with only one point, the point of Indianisation. I would like to begin by saying that had this House been meeting last year, in July, August and September, it would have been addressed on railway matters by the first Indian Commissioner ever to hold the post, Sir Lakshmipathi Misra. That officer was—I think I am correct in saying—the first Indian officer ever to have been appointed as a permanent occupant of the post of Member, Engineering, and he subsequently rose to a post which has also never been held by an Indian, the Chief Commissionership. It is true that at the moment the Board is entirely European. But that is an accident of the moment, for had Sir Lakshmipathi Misra not retired, he would still be saving as Member, Engineering. Similarly, we had an Indian Financial Commissioner up till fairly recently, when he took a post in an Indian State and left us ; and it so happened that the next senior financial officer who could be made

available was an European. During the course of the year also we have had an Indian gentleman as Staff Member of the Board and the Secretary of the Board is also an Indian and so I maintain that during the recent regime there has been a degree of Indianisation which has never existed before, in spite of the fact that at this precise moment that tendency has been, purely temporarily, entirely reversed and the Board is entirely European.

Now, Sir, this does not go by way of favouritism to Europeans. I can assure the House that it has been my desire always to help Indians where I possibly can but I cannot do that while doing an injustice to Europeans. Now, Sir, I have said before, I think in this House and certainly in other places, that the difficulty of Indianisation in the higher grades is primarily due to historical circumstances and today I have brought along some figures which illustrate what I mean. In the year 1924—which is the earliest year for which I have figures here—there were 1,888 officers of whom 1,510 or 80 per. cent. were Europeans. On the 31st of March last there were 1,784 officers of whom 586 or 32 per cent. only are Europeans. If you went back further to about the time when my Hon. friend Sir Arthur Griffin came out to India, to say, 10 years before 1924, you would in all probability have found that not 80 per cent. but probably very nearly 100 per cent. of the officers in those days were, for historical reasons, Europeans. Now, Sir, all those officers who joined 25 or 30 years ago have now reached the top of the tree and it so happens that for the reasons which I have given the majority of them are Europeans and there are relatively few Indians. We are, therefore, faced with the position where out of every ten senior officers probably nine are Europeans, and, provided their ability is equal to their seniority they naturally qualify for the posts and it would be an injustice to turn them down. But, Sir, from the figures I have given Hon. Members will observe that the process of Indianisation is going on pretty rapidly and that though it has been somewhat retarded owing to the fact that a number of European officers have stayed on to help through with the war it is probable that the figures for the future will show a very steep further decline. Many of these European officers who stayed on during the war are only too anxious to go and in order to accommodate them we have lifted the ban on their taking leave preparatory to retirement from the 1st of April this year. On the Madras and Southern Mahratta and the South Indian Railways there are 25 or thereabouts officers leaving on the taking over of their railways by the State and I think it is more than probable that about a year from now onwards the figures will be well down to about 400 or somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 per cent. of the total number of officers and, of course, in view of the fact that we have taken on practically no officers—there has been very little recruitment of European officers since 1934 and none at all since the war—they are gradually fading out altogether and European railway officers will become extinct in this country. Sir, that is the position. I cannot help feeling that many Hon. friends who cry for Indianisation do in their hearts nevertheless appreciate the good work that these men have done for this country and I would go further. I can quite imagine my Hon. friends when they come to sit on these Benches saying to themselves: "Yes, you remember when we were sitting on those Benches we did not like European officers. We frequently asked them to go but perhaps after all they were not such bad chaps. You remember that fellow Griffin—I wish he were here now—he did quite a good job of work." That, I think, Sir, will be the verdict of many Hon. Members who now are asking for a more rapid Indianisation of the railways.

THE HON. THE PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, I would like to take this opportunity of associating myself on behalf of the Council with all that has been said by the Hon. the War Transport Member this afternoon with regard to the services rendered by the Hon. Sir Arthur Griffin to India. His speech this afternoon was a most illuminating speech—not only illuminating but I think as was rightly stated by the Hon. the War Transport Member a masterly performance—and as this will perhaps be the last occasion when he has addressed this Council, I express the thanks of the Council for the great services he has rendered. We hope he will enjoy his well-earned rest after his laborious work on the Railway Board, where he has spent a good many years of his life. We wish him farewell and godspeed.

The Council then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, the 27th February, 1946.