

9th November 1944

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

Official Report

Volume IV, 1944

(1st to 13th November 1944)

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1944

Chamber Fumigated 18.10.73



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

President :

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

Deputy President :

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

Panel of Chairmen :

Mr. ABDUL QAYUM, M.L.A.

Nawabzada MUHAMMAD LIAQUAT ALI KHAN, M.L.A.

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

Sir HENRY RICHARDSON, M.L.A.

Secretary :

Mian MUHAMMAD RAFI, Barrister-at-Law.

Assistants of the Secretary :

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

Khan Bahadur S. G. HASNAIN.

● *Marshal :*

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

Committee on Petitions :

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

Nawabzada MUHAMMAD LIAQUAT ALI KHAN, M.L.A.

Mr. GOVIND V. DESHMUKH, M.L.A.

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

Sardar SANT SINGH, M.L.A.

CONTENTS:

Volume IV—1st to 13th November 1944.

	PAGES.
WEDNESDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 1944—	
Members Sworn	1
Starred Questions and Answers ...	1—30
Unstarred Questions and Answers ...	30—36
Statements laid on the Table ...	36—61
Death of Mr. Abdur Rasheed Choudhury	61—62
Motions for Adjournment re—	
Failure to supply adequate petrol to the Karachi Municipal Corporation—Disallowed ...	62
Failure to assure Termination of Services of the U.K.C.C. with the Termination of the War—Ruled out of order	63
Refusal of Permission for Publication of Correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and H.E. the Viceroy—Disallowed ...	63
Government Communication describing Mr. Phillips, Personal Representative of President Roosevelt, as <i>Persona non-grata</i> —Disallowed by the Governor-General	63
Dismissal of Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, a Minister in the Punjab—Ruled out	63—65
Failure to apply in time for help for India to the U.N.R.R.A.—Ruled out of order	65—66
Failure to make proper arrangements to prevent destruction of A.I.C.C. Records at Allahabad—Ruled out	66
Misuse of the National War Front Organisation by Malik Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana, Leader of the Punjab Branch—Negatived	66—68
H.E. the Governor-General's Assent to Bills	68
Amendments to the Insurance Rules	68
Notifications under the Destructive Insects and Beasts Act	69
Statements laid on the Table re—	
Net Earnings of New Railway Lines	70
Appropriation Accounts, Audit Reports, etc.	70
Objects on which the Aviation Share of the Petrol Tax Fund was expended	70—71
Amendments to certain Motor Vehicles Rules	71—74
Election of a Member to the Standing Finance Committee ...	74

	PAGES.
WEDNESDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 1944—contd.	
Election of Members to the Advisory Board of Archaeology	74—78
Indian Rice Committee Bill—Introduced	78
Indian Patents and Designs (Temporary Amendment) Bill—Introduced	78—79
Public Debt (Central Government) Bill—Continued and Referred to Select Committee	79—80
Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	79
Coffee Market Expansion (Second Amendment) Bill—Introduced ...	79
Insurance (Second Amendment) Bill—Introduced	79
Delhi Joint Water and Sewage Board (Amendment) Bill—Introduced	79
Factories (Second Amendment) Bill—Discussion on the Motion to refer to Select Committee not concluded	80—82
THURSDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER 1944—	
Starred Questions and Answers ...	111—84
Unstarred Questions and Answers ...	134—86
Motions for Adjournment re—	
Unsatisfactory Character of Railway Board Notification re revised Rates of Dearness Allowance—Disallowed	136—37
Failure to provide adequate Facilities for Safe Travel of Civilian Public—Not moved	137
Failure to check Epidemics like Cholera, etc.—Disallowed ...	137
Position of Indians in Natal under Natal Occupation Ordinance—Not moved	137
Death of Mr. Srideo Suman, an Exile from Tehri State—Disallowed by the Governor-General	138
Inadequate War Allowance for Non-Gazetted Officers—Not moved	138—40
Hunger Strike by Political Prisoners in Bhagalpore Camp Jail—Disallowed	140
Discontinuance on Racing Days of Restaurant Car on the Poona Express—Disallowed	140
Non-Representative Delegation to World Monetary Conference in America—Not moved	140

	PAGES.
THURSDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER 1944—contd.	
Motions for Adjournment <i>re—contd.</i>	
Central Provinces Government Servants' Aid to Conversion of Gonds to Christianity—Disallowed ...	141
Ban on Publication of <i>Panchangas</i> —Not moved ...	141
Forcible Entry by Police at the Lahore Meeting of the General Council of All-India Railway-men's Federation—Disallowed ...	141-42
Running of Competitive Road-Transport Services by Railways for Monopolising—Ruled out of Order ...	142-43
Stopping the Booking of Passengers to Nankana Sahib on Guru Nanak's Birthday Anniversary—Disallowed ...	143-44
Frequent Disallowance by the Governor-General of Motions in the Assembly requiring his previous consent—Ruled out of Order ...	144-45
Ill-treatment meted out to Mr. Ram Charan Agarwal by the Delhi Police—Postponed for next day ...	145
Death due to an Accident at Bakhtiarpur Junction Station—Adopted ...	145-46 & 164-75
Nomination of the Panel of Chairmen ...	146
Committee on Petitions ...	146-47
Presentation of the Report of the Public Accounts Committee ...	147
Motion <i>re</i> Food Situation—Discussion not concluded ...	147-64
FRIDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER 1944—	
Starred Questions and Answers ...	177-210
Unstarred Questions and Answers ...	210-13
Short Notice Question and Answer ...	213-14
Motions for Adjournment <i>re—</i>	
Ill-treatment meted out to Mr. Ram Charan Agarwal by the Delhi Police—Ruled out of Order ...	215
Failure to make Arrangements for carrying Haj Pilgrims to Hedjaz—Ruled out ...	215-17
Economic Sanctions against South Africa—Ruled out of Order ...	217
Failure to frame and enforce Rules under Reciprocity Act—Not moved ...	217

	PAGES.
FRIDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER 1944—contd.	
Motions for Adjournment <i>re—contd.</i>	
Appointments to Superior Revenue Establishment of Indian State Railways, Stores Department—Not moved ...	281
Refusal of Permission for Republication of <i>National Herald</i> and <i>Forward</i> —Not moved ...	218
Unconstitutional Conduct of Government in appointing Adjudicator in Trade Dispute between Shahdara (Delhi), Saharanpur Light Railway and its Employees, etc.—Disallowed ...	218-19
Sinking of the S. S. "Cormorant"—Disallowed ...	219-20
Inaccurate Government Reply <i>re</i> Government Contribution to Indian Labour Federation—Disallowed ...	220-21
Resolution <i>re</i> Protection of Mosques in New Delhi—Negatived ...	221-33
Resolution <i>re</i> Fifteen-year Plan prepared by Capitalists of India—Discussion not concluded ...	223-47
MONDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER 1944—	
Starred Questions and Answers ...	249-60
Upstarred Questions and Answers ...	260-64
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> Sind Government's Ban on Chapter XIV of Satyarth Prakash—Postponed ...	264-65 & 285
Election of a Member to the Standing Finance Committee ...	265
The Hindu Code, Part I (Intested Succession)—Petitions laid on the table ...	265-67
Motion <i>re</i> position of Indians in South Africa and East Africa—Adopted as amended ...	267-208
TUESDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 1944—	
Starred Questions and Answers ...	309-41
Unstarred Questions and Answers ...	341
Election of Members to the Advisory Board of Archaeology ...	341
The Public Debt (Central Government) Bill—Presentation of the Report of the Select Committee ...	341
Statements laid on the table ...	341-57
The Factories (Second Amendment) Bill—Referred to Select Committee ...	358-75

	PAGES.		PAGES.
TUESDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 1944—contd.		FRIDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER 1944—contd.	
The Indian Rice Committee Bill— Discussion on motions to refer to Select Committee and to circulate not concluded	375—82	The Muslim Personal Law <i>Shariat</i> application (Second Amendment) Bill—Motion to continue adopted	576
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> Sind Government's Ban on Chapter XIV of Satyarth Prakash— Negatived	382—95	The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Amendment of Sections 162, 438 and 496— Passed as amended	576—73
WEDNESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 1944—		The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Bill—Discussion on the Motion to refer to Select Committee not concluded	578—604
Starred Questions and Answers ...	397—425	MONDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER 1944—	
Unstarred Questions and Answers ...	425—27	Member Sworn	605
Statements laid on the table ...	428—89	Starred Questions and Answers ...	605—47
Motion <i>re</i> Food Situation—Dis- cussion not concluded	439—74	Unstarred Questions and Answers	647—49
THURSDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER 1944—		Motion for adjournment <i>re</i> Failure to give relief to Weavers in Burbanpur and other places in the Central Provinces—Dis- allowed	649
Starred Questions and Answers ...	475—84	Election of Members to the Central Advisory Board of Education ...	649—54
Unstarred Question and Answer ...	484	Election of Members to the Indian Coconut Committee	655—58
Motion <i>re</i> Food Situation—Adopted as amended	485—537	Election of Members to the Stand- ing Committee for the Industries and Civil Supplies Department...	656—59
FRIDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER 1944—		The Indian Patents and Designs (Temporary Amendment) Bill— Passed	660
Starred Questions and Answers ...	539—73	The Coffee Market Expansion (Second Amendment) Bill— Passed	661—62
Unstarred Questions and Answers	574	The Delhi Joint Water and Sewage Board (Amendment) Bill—Passed as amended	662—64
Motion for Adjournment <i>re</i> surrepti- tious opening of private letters by the Postal Department— Ruled out of order	574—75	The Public Debt (Central Govern- ment) Bill—Discussion on the Motion to consider not concluded	664—83
The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill—Amendment of Sections 386 and 539-B— Motion to continue adopted ...	575		
The Indian Penal Code (Amend- ment) Bill—Insertion of new Section 93-A—Motion to continue adopted	575		
The Code of Civil procedure (Amend- ment) of Section 60—Motion to continue adopted	575		

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 9th November, 1944

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

†STARRED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WRITTEN ANSWER

COMMUNAL COMPOSITION IN HIGHER POSTS OF THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT.

204. *Sardar Sant Singh: Will the Foreign Secretary please state the number of posts carrying monthly salaries of Rs. 500 to Rs. 750, Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000, Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500 and Rs. 1,500 and above, in his Department, and the number held by (i) Europeans, (ii) Anglo-Indians, (iii) Muslims, (iv) Hindus, (v) Sikhs, and (vi) others under each category?

Sir Olaf Caroe:

First Part—

(i) *nil*, (ii) two, (iii) *nil*, (iv) two, (v) *nil*, (vi) one;

Second Part—

(i) *nil*, (ii) three, (iii) *nil*, (iv) one, (v) and (vi) *nil*;

Third Part—

(i) one, (ii) one, (iii) one, (iv) two, (v) and (vi) *nil*;

Fourth Part—

(i) three, (ii) to (vi) *nil*.

COMMUNAL COMPOSITION IN HIGHER POSTS OF OFFICES UNDER THE WAR TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

205. *Sardar Sant Singh: Will the Honourable Member for the War Transport Department please state the number of posts carrying monthly salaries of Rs. 500 to Rs. 750, Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000, Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500 and Rs. 1,500 and above in (i) the War Transport Department, (ii) the Regional Priority Authorities, (iii) the Coal Control Organisation, (iv) the Country Craft Organisation, and (v) the Major Port Authorities? How many of these posts under each category are held by (i) Europeans, (ii) Anglo-Indians, (iii) Hindus, (iv) Muslims, and (v) Sikhs?

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

Statement

	Euro- peans	Anglo- Indians	Hindus	Muslims	Sikhs	Other Communi- ties	Total
I.—WAR TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT							
(i) Posts carrying salaries of Rs. 500 to Rs. 750.		1	10				11
(ii) Posts carrying salaries of Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000.	1†		5	1		..	7
(iii) Posts carrying salaries of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500.	1		4			..	5
(iv) Posts carrying salaries of Rs. 1,500 and above.	11+4†	..	2			1	18

[Note.—The posts against which a double dagger is shown are in the Regional Port Directorate Calcutta.]

†The question hour of today having been eliminated, the answers to starred questions were, in pursuance of convention, laid on the table of House.—Ed. of D.

	Euro- peans	Anglo- Indians	Hindus	Muslims	Sikhs	Other Commu- nities	Total
II.—REGIONAL PRIORITY AUTHORITIES.							
(a) Office of the Regional Controller of Railway Priorities, Calcutta (West).							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(b) Office of the Regional Controller of Railway Priorities, Calcutta (North).							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(c) Office of the Regional Controller of Railway Priorities, Bombay.							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
(d) Office of the Regional Controller of Railway Priorities, Madras.							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(e) Office of the Regional Controller of Railway Priorities, Lahore.							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	1	..	..	..	..	1
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(f) Office of the Deputy Regional Controller of Railway Priorities, Gorakhpur.							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
III.—COAL CONTROL ORGANISATION							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	3	7	5	1	3	19
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	5	2	6	..	1	..	14
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	4	2	2	1	..	..	9
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	16	..	1	2	..	..	19
IV.—COUNTRY CRAFT ORGANISATION							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	..	1	1	..	..	..	2
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

	Euro- peans	Anglo- Indians	Hindus	Muslims	Sikhs	Other Communi- ties	Total
V.—MAJOR PORT AUTHORITIES							
(a) Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	2	44	16	1		1	64
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	20	36	4		1		61
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	55	26	6	2			89
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	19	1	1				21
(b) Commissioners for the Port of Chittagong							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	1		1				2
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	2		1				3
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	1						1
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	1						1
(c) Madras Port Trust							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750		2	2			2	6
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	1		1				2
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	6		1				7
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	3						3
(d) Bombay Port Trust							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750	11	7	12	6		10	46
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	6	3	3	1		5	18
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	27		9	1		9	46
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	7		1			2	10
(e) Cochin Harbour							
(i) Rs. 500 to Rs. 750			2	1		1	4
(ii) Rs. 750 to Rs. 1,000	2		2				4
(iii) Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,500	5						5
(iv) Rs. 1,500 and above	1						1

Note.—Figures for the major ports are based on the maximum pay of each post. Information regarding Karachi Port Trust is not available.

SINKING OF THE S. S. "CORMORANT".

206. *Mr. K. C. Neogy: (a) Will the Honourable the Railway and War Transport Member be pleased to make a statement relating to the circumstances under which the O.T.R. steamer "Cormorant" foundered in September last while on ferry service across the Ganges between Patna and Palezaghat?

(b) Has any enquiry been held into the causes of this incident? If so, by whom and with what results?

(c) What is the number of casualties that occurred in this connection?

(d) When was the S.S. "Cormorant" built, and is the Honourable Member satisfied that its repairs and renewals were being properly carried out during the last few years, and that the vessel was in every way fit for service?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) to (c). In view of the length of the statement for which the Honourable Member has asked and of the fact that I have already stated the main facts when dealing with the adjournment motion moved by Mr. Mohd. Abdul Ghani on November 3rd, I will, Sir, with your permission and in order to save the time of the House, lay the statement on the table.

(d) S.S. Cormorant was built in 1883 and has been maintained in a good state of repair. The vessel has been laid up for survey every year and dry-docked every four years. The last date of survey was 8th January 1944 and was last dry-docked on 10th December 1942. Government are satisfied that the vessel was in every way fit for service.

Statement

On the 12th September 1944, the *Steamer Cormorant* was proceeding along the usual main channel from Dighaghat to Palezaghat. When opposite the Paleza village and about the 800 ft. from the northern bank of the Ganges the bow of the steamer suddenly struck against some hard substance—supposed to be a submerged tree trunk—there was a severe bump, and suspecting that the Steamer had collided with some submerged object, the Commander ordered the steamer to be stopped and backed towards the bank and, at the same time, sounded the danger whistle. The steamer was moved backward to the northern bank which it not only touched, but the stern penetrated to a distance of about 6 to 10 ft. into the bank. While the steamer was being backed all the pumps had been put into action to empty it of any river water that had got in. It remained in contact with the bank for about 20 minutes during which period the lower deck was on the same level as the bank. This enabled the passengers to land without difficulty. The fact that all the 37 lifebuoys which were on the steamer were subsequently found intact shows that the passengers found no need to use them, and, there was no occasion for any one to jump into the stream. The country boats in the vicinity immediately came to the rescue and were wedged in between the steamer and the bank thus enabling all remaining passengers to get ashore safely. They were later picked up by other Railway steamers and taken on to Palezaghat.

The danger whistle was heard both at Palezaghat and Dighaghat and the Railway, the Police and the Medical staff quickly arrived on the scene and rendered all possible assistance. The only loss of life which has so far been reported was that of a girl of about six years. The girl got separated from her mother in the confusion which followed the accident and fell into the river. The fact that no one has so far come forward to enquire about any missing friend or relation, although several passengers subsequently came in search of their belongings amongst the salvaged property, also goes to show that no one other than the child mentioned above lost life.

S.S. Cormorant had a carrying capacity of 1,000 and, at the time of the accident, was carrying about 600 passengers.

On the 18th September 1944, a joint enquiry was held which consisted of the Divisional Traffic Superintendent, the Divisional Loco. Officer and the Resident Engineer, Gorakhpur. The enquiry was also attended by the Superintendent, Government Railway Police, Samastipur, and the Sub-Divisional Officer, Chapra. The enquiry committee, after inspecting the site of the occurrence and examining a number of witnesses, came to the conclusion that the accident was not due to any rash or negligent act on the part of the Commander. It is reported that there are some submerged tree trunks in the bed of the river. The channel is swept every now and then and dangerous spots are buoyed. These submerged tree trunks gradually roll on, and if the water level is high it is difficult to locate them. There was no such obstruction in the route when the previous steamer had passed. It is believed that the force of the current moved the tree trunk from its position during the interval between the passing of the previous steamer and the arrival of the *Cormorant*.

In these circumstances, Government are satisfied that the accident was an accident and no one could be held responsible for it.

TELEGRAPHIC DELAYS.

207. *Mr. O. P. Lawson: (a) Will the Secretary for Posts and Air be pleased to state whether he is aware of the considerable telegraphic delays which are occurring particularly between Delhi and Calcutta and whether he is prepared to give the House information as to the causes and as to the steps now being taken to improve matters?

(b) Is it a fact that telegrams are despatched through the post during periods of congestion although the full telegraphic costs are collected?

(c) Would it not be correct for telegraph offices to refuse to accept telegraphic charges in cases where the telegram will be despatched through the post and to provide facilities for the posting of the original telegrams by normal means?

(d) Would it be feasible during periods of congestion to divide destinations into regions which could be closed for telegraph traffic according to the extent of the congestion, i.e., bar telegrams for the nearer destinations to which postal communication takes only a few hours more than telegraphic communication?

(e) Would it be correct to say that a very large number of telegrams are now delivered so late that refunds of telegraphic charges on a very large scale would require to be made if demanded, and, if so, what steps are being taken to remedy the situation?

Mr. W. H. Shoobert: (a) I am aware that there have been serious delays in the past but in recent months there has been substantial improvement generally, and it is hoped that the improvement will be maintained.

(b) Yes.

(c) The question of suspending acceptance of telegrams during periods of delays on telegraph circuits has been carefully considered from time to time, and it has been decided that such suspension is undesirable except in very special circumstances. The situation fluctuates rapidly and usually telegraph communication is established within a comparatively short period, on a limited scale at least, either directly or by alternative routes. The public is advised of interruptions and serious delays to traffic on all main circuits and more precise information is available at telegraph offices. If senders tender telegrams in these conditions they must accept all risks arising from delay.

(d) and (e). No.

BRINGING OF THE OUDH AND TIRHUT RAILWAY INTO LINE WITH STATE RAILWAYS.

208. *Mr. Badri Dutt Pande: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state whether the Bengal Nagpur Railway and the Robilkhund and Kumaon Railway which have been purchased by the Government and transformed into the present Oudh and Tirhut Railway, have been brought into line with the other State-owned Railways?

(b) Have the pay and emoluments of the subordinate staff been brought up to the standard of the other State Railways?

(c) How many officers of the old companies have been retired, and how many of them are still in the employment of the Oudh and Tirhut Railway?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) The Bengal and North Western Railway (not the Bengal-Nagpur Railway) and the Robilkhund and Kumaon Railway have been merged in the Oudh and Tirhut Railway. If the Honourable Member means the status of the Railway for administrative purposes, after coming under State-management, the reply is in the affirmative.

(b) I would refer the Honourable Member to my reply to part (c) of Mr. N. M. Joshi's Unstarred Question No. 146 asked in this House on the 21st March 1944.

(c) The total number of officers of the two late companies re-employed by Government was 90, out of which five have since retired and the rest are still in service. In addition, Government did not re-employ five officers, who had already attained the age of superannuation.

RAISING OF EMOLUMENTS OF SUBORDINATE POSTAL STAFF

209. *Mr. Badri Dutt Pande: (a) Will the Secretary for Posts and Air be pleased to state if there is a scheme under active consideration to raise the pay and allowance of the Subordinate Postal Staff?

(b) Did the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs recommend a sliding scale of Dearness Allowance to these low paid officials? If so, why has it not been given effect to?

(c) Have any provisions been made for such low paid Postal employees to get their supplies of cheap grain and cloth from the cheap grain control shops?

Mr. W. H. Shoober: (a) The reply is in the negative.

(b) The Director General did not recommend a sliding scale of dearness allowance. The second part of the question does not, therefore, arise.

(c) Wherever Provincial Government employees are getting supplies of grain at concessional rates, the concession has been extended to the P. & T. staff who obtain supplies from the Local Government shops or from departmental shops. Where the benefits of sale of grain at controlled rates are extended to all local residents in any area, the P. & T. staff can of course take advantage of them. It is understood that standard cloth is freely available at all places.

BOMBAY EXPLOSION.

210. *Mr. K. S. Gupta: (a) Is the Honourable Member for War Transport aware that the fire and explosions in the Bombay docks in April last were an avoidable tragedy?

(b) Are Government aware that carelessness and ignorance on the part of individual officers resulted in the serious tragedy? If so, what is the action taken by the Government of India against the offenders, and what precautions were taken to avoid such calamities?

(c) Is the Government of India satisfied that there was no lack of co-ordination between the various authorities, and that there was no serious lapse in the relevant rules and regulations?

(d) Is it not a fact that the burdening of key-personnel with dual responsibilities came in conflict with each other and resulted in the avoidable tragedy?

(e) Is it not a fact that when the fire broke out in hold No. 2 of S.S. "Stikine" on April 14th, neither the N.O.I.C., nor the Commodore, R.I.N. was informed of it all, though the Deputy Conservator of the Port Trust happened to be at the spot at 2-30 P.M., that is, more than an hour and a half before the first explosion took place?

(f) Are not the following serious lapses contributory to the lamentable and avoidable tragedy—

- (i) non-hoisting of red flag on the ship entering the dock,
- (ii) disorder in the fire brigade cutting apparatus,
- (iii) non-observance of rules against smoking,
- (iv) absence of proper liaison between the Civil and the Military police on the one hand and the civilian watchmen on the other,
- (v) absence of arrangements to clear the docks of non-essential personnel or to give general warning of the impending explosion,
- (vi) the absence of the centralised executive control with power to issue paramount orders and co-ordinate the various authorities and services concerned; and

(vii) the presence on board of such a highly inflammable material as cotton that precipitates the accident?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) I would refer the Honourable Member to "the First Report† of the Commission of Inquiry on the Bombay explosions", copy of which was laid on the table of the House on November 6th.

(b) I would refer the Honourable Member to the Resolution† of the Government of India dated September 12, 1944, copy of which was laid on the table of the House on November 6th. As regards the precautions taken, the Honourable Member may also refer to the press-note issued on October 28th, setting out the main lines of action taken to prevent a repetition of the occurrence.

(c) The rules previously in force were reasonably comprehensive in the circumstances existing prior to the explosion, but the Government of India agree that they might have been better co-ordinated. As a result of the accident, the rules and regulations have been exhaustively examined, revised and co-ordinated.

(d) It is not a fact that this was a contributory cause.

(e) Yes, except that the Deputy Conservator was not on the spot until 3 P.M. Further in view of the fact that scuttling or beaching the ship was proved to be no remedy for the situation, the presence of the naval officers would have been of no value from this point of view.

(f) The Government of India agree generally with the findings of the Commission regarding the inadequacies referred to in this part of the question. Although the Commission have found that the bringing of explosives into docks in war-time was a primary cause of the explosion they have stated that there was, in their opinion, no practicable alternative to it.

DISCONTINUANCE OF DIRECT TRAIN BETWEEN ALLAHABAD AND SAHARANPUR.

211. *Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi: (a) Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state if it is a fact that prior to the disturbances of 1942, a passenger train used directly to run between Saharanpur and Allahabad via Unchahar?

(b) Is it or is it not a fact that this was the only train which connected Rae-Bareilly with Allahabad via Unchahar?

†Not printed in these debates, but a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.—
E. of D.

(c) Is it or is it not a fact that now only one passenger train runs between Saharanpur and Lucknow, and another between Lucknow and Allahabad via Unchahar, but these two trains have not got the old connections?

(d) Are the Government aware that the discontinuance of the direct train between Allahabad and Saharanpur is causing great inconvenience to the public in general and to the litigant public in particular?

(e) Have the Government considered the advisability of restoring the old passenger train between Allahabad and Saharanpur?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) and (b). Without the time tables of the period, which are not readily available, I am unable to verify these statements, but am prepared to accept them as correct.

(c) Yes, one passenger train runs between Saharanpur and Lucknow. There is a connecting train from Lucknow to Cawnpore which in turn connects with the train at Unao for Allahabad via Unchahar. The train from Lucknow to Allahabad via Rae-Bareilly and Unchahar does not provide direct connection at Lucknow with the Saharanpur-Lucknow Passenger.

(d) The curtailment of any passenger service must necessarily entail a certain amount of inconvenience to the travelling public.

(e) No. The discontinuance of the old train is part of the general curtailment of all but the most essential passenger services in the present emergency. I am, however, bringing this question to the notice of the General Manager of the East Indian Railway.

PRODUCTION CESS ON DESPATCHES OF COAL.

212. *Mr. K. C. Neogy: (a) Will the Honourable the Supply Member be pleased to state the objects with which a production cess has recently been levied on despatches of coal?

(b) What is the approximate annual income expected to be derived from this cess?

(c) What proportion of the income thus derived will approximately be spent on different heads appertaining to the development of the collieries?

(d) To what extent will the different grades of collieries be able to participate in the benefits of the fund?

The Honourable Dewan Bahadur Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar: (a) The attention of the Honourable Member is invited to the preamble and Clause 3(3) of the Coal Production Fund Ordinance, 1944, a copy of which is laid on the table of the House.

(b) Taking annual coal despatches as about 25.6 million tons and the rate of cess as Rs. 1-4-0 per ton, the annual income under the cess is estimated to be about Rs. 320 lakhs.

(c) and (d). As the cess has only recently been levied it is not possible at this stage to indicate the amounts which will be spent under different heads and the extent to which collieries of different grades will be benefited.

THE GAZETTE OF INDIA.

EXTRAORDINARY

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT

New Delhi, the 26th August, 1944

ORDINANCE No. XXXIX of 1944

AN

ORDINANCE

to constitute a fund for the financing of activities for the improvement of production, marketing and distribution of coal and coke.

WHEREAS an emergency has arisen which makes it necessary to constitute a fund for the financing of activities for the improvement of production, marketing and distribution of coal and coke;

Now, THEREFORE, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 72 of the Government of India Act, as set out in the Ninth Schedule to the Government of India Act, 1935 (26 Geo. 5, c. 2), the Governor General is pleased to make and promulgate the following Ordinance :—

1. *Short Title, extent and commencement.*—(1) This Ordinance may be called the Coal Production Fund Ordinance, 1944.

(2) It extends to the whole of British India.

(3) It shall come into force at once.

2. *Imposition and collection of Excise and Customs Duties.*—(1) With effect from such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint in this behalf, there shall be levied and collected as a cess for the purposes of this Ordinance, on all coal and coke despatched from collieries in British India a duty of excise at such rate, not exceeding one rupee and four annas per ton, as may from time to time be fixed by the Central Government by notification in the official Gazette :

Provided that the Central Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, exempt from liability to the duty of excise any specified class or classes of coal or coke,

(2) During the period in which a duty of excise is being levied under sub-section (1), the Central Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, levy and collect as a cess for the purposes of this Ordinance, a duty of customs on all coal and coke brought into British India from any foreign country or from the territory of any Indian State, at a rate equivalent to the rate of the duty of excise levied under sub-section (1) :

Provided that the duty of customs shall not be levied on any class or classes of coal or coke for the time being exempted from liability to the duty of excise under the proviso to sub-section (1).

(3) A duty levied under this section shall be in addition to any other duty of excise or customs for the time being leviable under any other law.

(4) The duties imposed by this section shall, subject to and in accordance with the rules made under this Ordinance in this behalf, be collected on behalf of the Central Government by such agencies and in such manner as may be prescribed by the rules.

3. *The Coal Production Fund.*—(1) The proceeds of the duties imposed by section 2 shall be credited to a fund to be called the Coal Production Fund (hereinafter referred to as the Fund).

(2) The Fund shall be applied by the Central Government to meet expenditure incurred on measures which in the opinion of the Central Government it is necessary or expedient to take for the improvement of production, marketing or distribution of coal or coke.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (2), the Fund may be utilised to defray—

(a) the cost of administering the Fund;

(b) the salaries and allowances, if any, of Inspectors and other officers who may be appointed to supervise or carry out the activities financed from the Fund;

(c) the grant of bonuses to colliery owners for increased output of coal;

(d) the deficit, if any, on any scheme for establishing and maintaining labour camps in coalfields under the supervision of the Central Government for the purpose of providing such labour for work in coal-mines and for providing for the transport of colliery labour to and from work;

(e) the deficit, if any, on any scheme for the procurement and sale of colliery stores and equipment;

(f) the grant to a Provincial Government, a local authority or the owner, agent or manager of a coal mine of money in aid of any scheme approved by the Central Government for the improved production, marketing or distribution of coal or coke;

(g) the cost of administering any system of control for the time being in force of the production, marketing or distribution of coal or coke;

(h) any other expenditure which the Central Government directs to be defrayed from the Fund.

(4) The Central Government shall have power to decide whether any particular expenditure is or is not debitable to the Fund, and its decision shall be final.

(5) The Central Government shall publish annually in such form and manner as may be prescribed by rules an account of all sums received into and paid out of the Fund.

4. *Appointment and Powers of Officers.*—(1) The Central Government may appoint Inspectors and other officers to supervise or carry out the activities financed from the Fund.

(2) Any officers so appointed shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal Code.

(3) Any Inspector may, with such assistance if any as he thinks fit, enter at any reasonable time any place which he considers it necessary to enter for the purpose of supervising or carrying out the activities financed from the Fund, and may do therein anything necessary for the proper discharge of his duties.

5. *Power to make rules.*—(1) The Central Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, make rules to carry into effect the purposes and the provisions of this Ordinance.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, rules made under this section may provide for—

(a) the manner in which the duties imposed by this Ordinance shall be collected, the persons who shall be liable to make the payments, the making of refunds, remissions

recovery, the deduction by collecting agencies of a percentage of the realisations to cover the cost of collection, and the procedure to be followed in remitting the proceeds to the credit of the Central Government;

(b) the conditions governing the grant of bonuses from the Fund under clause (c) of sub-section (3) of section 3;

(c) the conditions governing the grant of money from the Fund to a Provincial Government, a local authority or the owner, agent or manager of a coal-mine;

(d) the duties of the officers appointed to supervise or carry out the activities financed from the Fund;

(e) the form of, and the manner of preparing, the account referred to in sub-section (5) of section 3;

(f) the furnishing by owners or agents or managers of coal-mines of statistical or other information, and the punishment by fine of failure to comply with the requirements of any rule made under this clause.

CO-ORDINATION OF GRADES OF CERTAIN TIME CHECKERS AND MATERIAL CHECKERS ON EAST INDIAN RAILWAY

213. *Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) if it is a fact that at Jamalpur the grade of the old East Indian Railway Time Checkers and the grade of the old East Indian Railway Material Checkers were Rs. 16-2-30 and Rs. 16-2-40 respectively;

(b) if it is a fact that both the grades were abolished and one co-ordinated grade of Rs. 24-2-40 was brought into effect from the year 1930;

(c) if it is a fact that there is an old East Indian Railway grade V clerks of Rs. 28-4-80;

(d) if it is a fact that there is a co-ordinated grade V clerks of Rs. 28-3-52 from the year 1928;

(e) if it is a fact that the old East Indian Railway grade Time Checkers and Material Checkers when they used to cross their grade on promotion used to go over to the old East Indian Railway grade V clerks of Rs. 28-4-80;

(f) if it is a fact that some of the old East Indian Railway grade Time Checkers of Rs. 16-2-30 who made representation for making their grade equal to that of the Material Checkers were placed in the new co-ordinated grade of Rs. 24-2-40 without being given any choice of election; and

(g) if it is a fact that the clerks were brought to the new co-ordinated grade of Rs. 24-2-40 without their knowledge?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) to (e). The reply is in the affirmative.

(f) The reply to the first part is in the affirmative. As regards the latter portion, the staff concerned could, had they so desired, have originally intimated their intention to continue on the old scale.

(g) No.

SINKING OF THE S.S. "CORMORANT"

214. *Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) if it is a fact that Oudh and Tirhut Railway's passenger steamer "Cormorant" which was on its way from Dighaghat to Paleza on the morning of the 12th September, 1944, sank while it was nearing the bank;

(b) if it is a fact that many people in confusion jumped into the water to save their lives and several lady passengers and children could not be traced;

(c) the total number of passengers on board the steamer, and its carrying capacity;

(d) what measures of rescue were adopted by the authorities on the steamer immediately and subsequently by the Railway authorities and the Government; and

(e) if the Government have got an enquiry made into the accident, and what the report is as to (i) the cause of the disaster, (ii) the number of casualties, (iii) nature of the effort made to rescue the victims of the disaster, (iv) probable value of the loss; and (v) nature of recommendation for compensation to the losers of life and property due to the accident?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) Yes.

(c) *S.S. Cormorant* had a carrying capacity of 1,000 and, at the time of the accident, was carrying about 600 passengers.

(d) and (e). I would refer the Honourable Member to the reply I have just given to Mr. K. C. Neogy's Starred Question No. 206. As regards part (v) of the question, claims for the loss of property due to the accident will be dealt with under the rules.

TRAVELLING COURTS ON RAILWAYS.

215. *Mr. Kailash Bihari Lall: Will the Honourable Member for Railways be pleased to state:

(a) if it is a fact that a Travelling Court has been introduced in the East Indian Railway;

(b) if such courts have been introduced in other Railways also; if so, in which of the Railways;

(c) since how long these Travelling Courts are functioning in Bihar, and how many cases have been detected and tried, and with what result; and

(d) the details of the system of holding a Travelling Court; whether every train contains a Travelling Court?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) The system of Travelling courts was first introduced on the Patna-Gaya section and later on extended to the Main line in Dinapore Division of the E. I. Railway.

(b) The reply to the first part is in the negative so far as the other State-managed railways are concerned. The second part does not arise.

(c) and (d). I have called for certain information and a reply will be placed on the table of the House in due course.

UNSTARRED QUESTION AND ANSWER

TOUR OF RAILWAYS BY ACCREDITED PRESS CORRESPONDENTS

47. Sardar Mangal Singh: Will the Honourable Member for Railways please state:

(a) if it is a fact that the Railway Board recently organised a tour of Railways by the Accredited Press Correspondents;

(b) if it is a fact that the Railway Board did not consult (in the selection of Accredited Press Correspondents) the Department of Information and Broadcasting; if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) if it is a fact that the Press Association (not registered under any law of the country) was approached to select the Accredited Press Correspondents; if so, whether it is proposed to lay on the table the convention for approaching non-officials unregistered and non-recognised Associations, Unions and Federations;

(d) if it is a fact that invitation to the unregistered Press Association was not approved by the Central Government; if not, what the fact is, and who initiated negotiation with a non-statutory organisation;

(e) the amount of expenditure incurred on the said tour together with the nature of expenditure; and

(f) if it is a fact that, the Central Government have always treated registered and unregistered Unions, Associations and Federations equally and that there is no differential attitude between registered and unregistered organisations; if not, the reasons therefor?

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: (a) Yes.

(b) The Department of Information and Broadcasting was consulted.

(c) and (f). The Press Association was consulted in regard to the selection of correspondents. There is no rule or convention concerning such consultation and Government are free to consult any Associations or persons they may think fit.

(d) The answer to the first part is in the negative; the second part does not arise.

(e) The only direct expenditure incurred was on catering and on the provision of road transport at the places visited. The total expenditure is not yet known as the relevant bills have not so far been received.

President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Further discussion on ~~the~~ regarding food situation.

H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait (West Coast and Nilgiris: Muhammadan): ~~On~~ at the outset I must admit that the food question is now certainly receiving ~~greater~~ and closer attention from the Government than it did some time ago. It is refreshing to learn from the Honourable Member that he himself realises, what we all know, that a great deal remains to be done, that a great amount of avoidable distress still exists. I hope that the Honourable Member and his department will be able to cope with it and will tackle all these evils in a very short time.

The feeling in the country that now exists with regard to this question is, I believe, correctly summarised in the amendment that I had the honour of placing before the House the other day. I commend that amendment to the acceptance of the House now.

Before dealing with that amendment I would like to dwell briefly on the state of things that exists in my part of the country, that is, Malabar. It is well known that Malabar suffered a great deal, due to want of availability of food grains in that part of the country. We suffered privations, hunger, pestilence and many other troubles which resulted in the loss of a great amount of life in that part of the country. The Government of India's eyes and the Provincial Government's eyes were opened to this state of affairs in Malabar only after we suffered all these days. But I had called the attention of the Government of India to the grave danger that was looming by a cut motion that I moved in 1943 in which I asked the Railway Member to arrange for the rushing of rice to my part of the country. Even earlier than that, I had had correspondence with the Members who were in charge of this matter in those days. But, as was described in a masterly survey yesterday by Mr. Griffiths, in the tragic period in which the Government was vacillating, indifferent and doing nothing; we in our part of the country suffered and suffered grievously: of course, we did not have the same publicity that Bengal had and therefore we went on suffering. There was a time in the Government of India when food was nobody's concern. For a short time the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar was in charge of it; but by the time he could get to grips with the situation in the country he was whisked away to England. I had then written to him a letter of grave warning as to what was impending in the country; but after his departure nobody appears to have taken any care of what was going on in the country, and the result is before the House. I do not want to go into past history and no good is going to come out of it.

So far as my part of the country is concerned, it is unfortunate, but it is a fact that we use no other foodgrain than rice in Malabar. Barley, jowar and bajra are things unknown to us. Therefore it is only rice that will save Malabar and rice was not forthcoming. There was a time when rice was available, but the difficulty was transport. But later on when the transport situation became a little easier, all the rice available was required for Bengal, with the result that we in the south-west of India went on suffering untold miseries. In those days, we tried our best to enlist the sympathies of the Central Government and the Provincial Government. We clamoured for rationing, but all our attempts were frustrated because of the fear in high places in the Government of India that if rationing is introduced in any part of the country the Japs will be encouraged by the thought that there was shortage of food anywhere in India. That was actually the reason advanced by our district magistrate, when one of the municipal councils, despairing of any Government action, started arrangements for introducing rationing in its area: we actually had a census taken, an enumeration was taken; and then we had cards ready; but suddenly the district magistrate came down and prohibited this activity. That was long before the Government of India ever thought of introducing rationing. However, that phase is over and I am glad to see that we have turned the corner; but the present position as envisaged by the speech of the Honourable Member gives us great anxiety: When first rationing was

[Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait.]

introduced in the urban areas in Malabar, we were allotted one pound a ~~man~~ a day of rice. It was later reduced to three-fourths of a pound. Now, ~~the~~ Honourable friend says that it is still further to be reduced to 10 ounces of rice per head. When we had one pound of rice per head, it was declared even by Government experts that this quantity was not sufficient for manual workers. Now, we are going to have rationing all over the district even in the rural areas. This 10 ounces of rice that is going to be granted is going to affect the manual workers much more than the city dwellers and the brain workers, and Honourable Members can very well realise the meagreness of this quantity. Under-nourishment in our country coupled with the weak constitution of the people has always encouraged the spread of epidemics. In 1942, in Malabar, the spread of epidemics was wholly due to under-nourishment. The Honourable Member's speech therefore causes great anxiety to us in Malabar. I would here request the Honourable Member to make it clear whether the allotment that now exists in urban cities, that is about 3/4ths of a pound of rice is also to be reduced to 10 ounces or is this ten ounces to apply only to the rural parts? That is the first thing that I want him to make clear. The other is whether the ten ounces that he mentioned is to cover only rice or all other cereals are to be included in this ten ounces, because this is a very serious matter. If he is contemplating the allotment of other cereals, I would like him to make clear what are the other cereals that he thinks are workable in Malabar. I know the people of Malabar well. I come from that district and I have lived in that district. I can assure the House that no other cereal will be of any help in Malabar.

Within the short time at my disposal, I have got one or two matters to bring to the notice of the Honourable Member with reference to Malabar. The only other food that our people know of, and especially the poorer section, is *tapioca*. In the difficult days of 1942, we tried our best to stop its manufacture into starch. Because starch was required by the mill owners of Ahmedabad and Bombay and they were prepared to pay any price for it, much of this *tapioca* was exported in the form of starch. We cried ourselves hoarse to stop its export but our District Magistrate will not move. Then, later on, when matters became very acute, the export of starch was prohibited. Now I find that there is again an idea of allowing the manufacture of starch and its export. I request my Honourable friend to put his foot down and tell the Provincial Government that on no account should this food stuff be allowed to be turned into use for any industrial purpose.

Then, Sir, the greatest difficulty is, and I agree with the Honourable Member, that rice is not available. He has made an appeal and I hope that that appeal will have a great deal of effect. He has appealed to the wheat eating parts of the country to spare all their rice for such parts of the country as cannot exist on anything but rice. I think this appeal alone is not enough. He has to make a survey and see how much of rice can be spared from those provinces which are used to wheat eating and he must compulsorily take away that rice for the people of the South. In that way alone can this question be solved to some extent.

Then, Sir, he is in the habit of making spasmodic allotments whenever a crisis occurs in our districts. This will not do. He has to set up a definite policy and let us know how much of rice we can expect monthly and that allotment, whatever it is, must reach us in that month. As was pointed out by one of my friends there, the allotment for August is now reaching Malabar and this upsets all the calculations, with the result that rations are further and further reduced.

I will now deal briefly with one or two general questions and the question of black markets. I agree with my friend Mr. Griffiths that in this country there is still want of strong virile public opinion against the black market. I hope, Sir, I will not be misunderstood in any part of the House when I say that a great deal of this want of public opinion is due to the indifference of the newspapers. They certainly can help in creating this sort of public opinion. The Indian Press today is controlled to a great extent by the Congress Party. I hope my friends on my right will not think that I am trying to make a political

point out of it. (*An Honourable Member*: "That is not correct".) I am sorry I used the word 'controlled'. It may not be controlled. It is in sympathy with the Congress Party and the Congress Party today hold such a position that they can direct the Press in whatever way they like. (*An Honourable Member*: "This is again wrong. I wish we could".) That is right but the point is this. If the Congress Party will make up its mind to give a strong lead in this matter I am sure that much can be done in this respect and I hope that something will be done. When there is a black marketeer, he has to be hounded out of society and if that is to be done, a strong public opinion has to be created and the creation of public opinion is surely in the hands of the Press. That is why I made that point. I do not think that the Press is sufficiently strong on the subject of black marketing. I do not know why, but it is true that our public workers also are not very strong on this subject. I could quote several instances where black marketeers have been caught red handed and yet some man of influence has gone out of his way to recommend to the authorities concerned that the man should be left free or let off lightly for some extraneous consideration. It may be that the man is rich or useful to some party and so on. This has got to be stopped. That is my feeling and I hope my friends of the Congress will not take my remarks amiss.

One more point. There is very little co-ordination between the departments of the Government of India concerned in this question of food. For instance there is my friend the Food Member, my friend Mr. Tyson in charge of Education, Health and Lands and there is my friend of the Planning Department and there is also the War Transport Member and I say that there is very little co-ordination between these various departments. Mr. Tyson is going on in his old merry way, doing things independently in his own way. The other day he brought up a Bill without reference to the Food Department.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Your time is up.

Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait: So, I say there should be greater co-ordination between the various departments.

Mr. J. D. Tyson (Secretary, Department of Education, Health and Lands): Sir, Rising first after the Honourable the Food Member spoke, my Honourable friend Professor Ranga said: "We have heard from time to time about more land being brought under cultivation, but how much more food has been produced?" I welcome that question and that is what I propose, in the time at my disposal this morning, to tell the House. In doing so I shall answer my Honourable friend Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi also, who said that "Grow More Food" is a complete failure. Mr. Nauman, who said that Grow More Food "has received only lip sympathy and Government have made no effort to give financial aid to the cultivators or to let them have seed"; Mr. Hegde who said that Grow More Food has "achieved nothing"; Mr. Gupta who said that Grow More Food was "bunkum"; and even my Honourable friend and erstwhile colleague Mr. Griffiths, who was nearer the truth when he said that it has "achieved something" but who finished by damning it with pretty faint praise. I will bombard the House with figures as little as I can, but I must give some.

On the basis of the average of the three pre-war years, which I take deliberately because the year immediately preceding the inauguration of the Grow More Food campaign was a year below the average and I do not want to make any unfair claims,—in the immediate pre-war period the average acreage under rice in India was 73.8 million acres, or practically 74 million acres. After one year of Grow More Food the area under rice was 75 million acres. Last year, the area under rice was practically 80 million acres, that is, 6½ million acres over the immediately pre-war average of 73.8 million acres. And though the first rice forecast is not yet published. I am happy to be in a position to inform the House that the indications at the moment are very strongly that the area under rice this year will be fully maintained, if not perhaps a little increased. I do not say the yield will be the same as last year's bumper crop, but the area is going to be no less.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban). How much more rice has been produced?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I am coming to that.

[Mr. J. D. Tyson.]

Now, take the case of wheat. The area under wheat in the three years' average before the war was 34.7 million acres. We have not been able to increase the area under wheat.

The next figure that I will give the House is the total area under all foodgrains. The total acreage under all foodgrains in the three years before the war was 195 million acres. After one year of Grow More Food the figure was 204.5 million acres and last year it was 206.3 million acres. Thus there is an increase of six per cent. of land under cultivation.

Now, I come to production

Mr. E. L. O. Gwilt (Bombay: European): May I ask the Honourable Member what is the increase in population for a comparable period?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I am not responsible for the increase of population. I have got very little time and I cannot give way.

Now, Sir, I come to the production of foodgrains. The production of rice in the three years before the war was 26½ million tons. In the first year of the Grow More Food campaign it was 24.8 million tons. Now, I would like the House to notice that though the area had increased by over a million acres, the crop actually decreased owing to natural calamities and the ravages in Bengal, of a pest called *Helmintho sporium* last year, with still greater acreage and with a bounteous harvest, the crop was 30.6 million tons. So, from 26.5 million tons, the pre-war average, it went up to 30.6 million tons. This is the highest on record. It is 4 million tons over the production of the pre-war period and it is twice the figure we used to import from Burma. We got an increased crop of wheat in the first year of Grow More Food but we did not get such a large crop last year,—it was below the pre-war average. Now, for all foodgrains the pre-war average was 55½ million tons. After one year of Grow More Food it was 57½ million tons and last year it was practically 61 million tons, an increase of 5½ million tons over the pre-war period.

Now, my point in mentioning these figures—and this is my answer to Mr. Gwilt—is not that this is enough: this is only a beginning. I could give the House, if I had time, many reasons why in the existing circumstances we are worse off now in India with this increased production than we were in the pre-war period and why we still want imports from outside. But what I am concerned with at the moment is to meet the suggestion that Grow More Food has "achieved nothing".

Now, Sir, I know that I will be told that my statistics are not to be relied upon. But we must take them as they are and we are trying to improve them. Nearly all the provinces have got on hand schemes for improving their statistics. We had a very interesting sampling test on mathematically approved lines in the Punjab and the United Provinces this last summer. I have not seen the U. P. results but certainly as regards the Punjab it proved conclusively the accuracy, this year at all events, of the provincial figures of yield.

Mr. Manu Subedar (Indian Merchants' Chamber and Bureau: Indian Commerce): Have the Provinces accepted these figures?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I am sorry I cannot give way because the time at my disposal is very short.

Sir, when I was a Sub-divisional Officer—that is a long time ago—we used to collect income-tax for the Government of India in the provinces. One day I was unsporting enough to compare the returns put in under income-tax with the returns put in by the same gentlemen in applying for gun and revolver licences and I was shocked, but not altogether surprised, to find that the property for the protection of which they wanted the use of a revolver or a gun was considerably greater than the property which was mentioned in the income-tax returns. Applying the same test here,—if it is suggested that in order to placate my own Honourable Chief here the provinces are inclined to "cook" their figures and show a bigger area under crops or a bigger off-take than really they have achieved, they would be on a very dangerous ground for immediately they would be jumped upon by my Honourable friend, the Food Member, for a bigger quota to his "basic plan". There is no reason, therefore, why we should

suspect that the figures have been "cooked". As I said, our statistics are improving. In some parts they are reasonably good and they will be better soon even in permanently settled areas like Bengal.

It may also be said that the bumper crop of 1943-44 was an accident and a gift of Providence. A gift of Providence it certainly was, but it was no accident. The high prices obtaining for rice, especially in Bengal, had led the cultivators to be willing to increase cultivation under rice and that applies, I suppose, all over India. Certainly as regards Bengal, that crop had to be sown at the beginning of the famine and we were told that the cultivators had under the influence of high prices sold their paddy and even their paddy seed with the result that although there was the willingness to sow on a very great scale, there was no seed. The Bengal Government very largely financed the distribution of seed for the *Aus* crop, but they asked us to help them in financing the distribution of the seed for the *Aman* crop and we did this to the tune of 4½ lakhs of rupees in the shape of grants and Rs. 33½ lakhs in the shape of loans to Bengal alone. For that particular crop all over India, we gave 8½ lakhs grants and 50 lakhs loans for the distribution of seeds, and that is, by the way, my answer to Mr. Muhammad Nauman, who I regret to see is not in the House at present. We also gave large sums for reclaiming waste lands in Orissa and Bombay, for irrigation of various kinds, chiefly for rice, in Assam and Bihar the U. P. and the C. P. It was therefore no accident that there was a good harvest that year, though I agree that without a bounteous monsoon, much of our help would have gone for nothing. That is one of our difficulties. It is one that can only be overcome by long-term extension of irrigation. But I venture to say that even if monsoon is patchy and the return per acre for the whole of India is poor, it is better to have an eight anna crop off 80 million acres than off 70 millions. So we go on trying to increase the area under foodgrains. During the current year we are spending even more in helping to distribute seed. We have undertaken a considerable liability,—I have no time to give the figures,—to help the Provinces in the matter of irrigation,—excavating tanks, re-excavating tanks and digging wells. These are particularly long-term—I may say they are permanent—improvements and they should mean a permanent addition in normal years to our food supply. Over and above that, the power-operated schemes for irrigation associated with the name of Sir William Stampe are just beginning to take effect with the *rabi* crop that is being sown now and there will be much more effect next year.

There has been—rightly, if I may say so,—considerable reference in this debate to "protective foods" and we also have had them in mind right from the beginning of the campaign. We had to go for first things first, and the first thing that was brought home to us very forcibly was the shortage of cereals, especially of rice. But we have had this matter of vegetables in the forefront of our campaign right through. Of course, there are two kinds of vegetables; there is the country vegetable, and the position as regards country vegetables has not, I think, been difficult. We have had no complaints regarding them and we have left the matter to the Provincial Governments. The seeds for country vegetables are produced locally, and it is not much good trying to grow in Bengal the kind of country vegetables that grow in the Punjab. What I want to speak about, however, is the European type of vegetables which are consumed by people of all races in the cities and by the armed forces. Now, Sir, the supply of seed for these was very largely imported from abroad right up to 1941. We have been faced simultaneously with the cutting off of these supplies and with the increase owing to the war in our ordinary urban population and by the influx—and I do not hesitate to say that at the time it came, it was a very welcome influx—of armed forces from overseas. In 1942 we started organising vegetable production by Provincial Governments to take up the demand of the armed forces for fresh vegetables and the demand of the Supply Department for de-hydration. This was to be separate production by an agency quite different from those which ordinarily supply the towns, the idea being to take over the supply to the army to a great extent, which would mean that the existing supplies should continue to be available in the towns. Bombay led the

[Mr. J. D. Tyson.]

way in 1941-42. Madras, Bihar and the U. P. followed. Now most of the Provinces are growing vegetables separately for the army. We have been told that the price of vegetables in Calcutta has gone very high. Calcutta has had no relief from this scheme because unfortunately the Bengal Government did not get their vegetable scheme going and they could not take up the potato scheme for which we offered them assistance. But Bengal is trying again, and if it can succeed in growing vegetables for the army, that will *pro tanto* assist the position in Calcutta. Some Provinces are now growing vegetables under similar arrangements for the civil population, and, again, Bombay is leading the way. The army themselves are growing vegetables and other protective foods to an ever greater extent. Reference was made to the vegetable seed position by my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths yesterday. Now, Sir, when outside supplies failed, we had to organise an almost entirely new industry, and mainly through the Agricultural Departments of Kashmere State and of Baluchistan we got a large acreage put under vegetables for seed production. I am free to confess that there were difficulties of supply in the first year. The growers up there were mainly private growers and they dealt to a great extent direct with seedsmen down here and a large number of seedsmen were caught out by the loss of their foreign sources of supply. They did not get a sufficient supply and there was also a certain amount of adulteration of seeds and high prices were charged. Some seedsmen did not get seeds at all. In the upshot, I am not sure whether there was actual over-all shortage, but undoubtedly there was some difficulty in getting hold of seeds in some areas. That is a point, which, in the language current at the moment, I must "concede" to my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths. This year, we have tightened up the whole thing; seeds are collected in bulk in bonded warehouses in Baluchistan and Kashmere and they are issued from there only wholesale to seedsmen and to Directors of Agriculture and to the army, after germination tests, and they are issued at fixed prices. There is no shortage of seeds this year. In fact, of some vegetables, we have got a surplus of seeds, including cabbages, which I understood yesterday were particularly the food of Americans!

I have to make some short reference to medical supplies.

Mr. K. C. Neogy (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): What about milk supply.

Mr. J. D. Tyson: I hope I have said enough to show that we have not failed to achieve something in our Grow More Food campaign and I hope that when my Honourable friend Mr. Gupta sees the transcript of his speech in which he has described it as "bunkum," he will eat it!

I have very little time left to deal with other subjects. There has been, naturally enough reference to the epidemic situation. I should like briefly to refer to that as it is a matter which has been causing grave concern in this House. Since the last Session, the epidemic position in Bengal which was then still causing us grave anxiety has shown progressive improvement. The cholera mortality which in January was 3,000 a week had declined to 700 a week in April and to 286 and 232 in the first two weeks of October. The mortality is now considerably below average. Since April when the number of deaths from smallpox, was over 2,000 a week there has been a steady improvement but the numbers though low are still rather higher than the normal. What I really want to say here is this, and I hope the House will be interested to hear it, that the Bengal Government have been going on with their campaign against these two diseases and they have been carrying out inoculations on a vast scale. In one year, since November 1943, the cholera inoculations in Bengal have totalled 18 millions; vaccinations totalled 32 millions. That is a colossal piece of work. Thirteen thousand tube wells have been renovated or new ones have been sunk. I need hardly stress the importance of that from the cholera point of view. Twenty thousand beds have been opened in 572 emergency hospitals. In 1943-44 the malaria situation in Bengal was bad and it is of course bad this year, because unfortunately in malaria one bad year tends to lead to another bad year. The Bengal Government have received for dealing with the malaria

situation 100,000 lbs. of quinine and febrifuge and 179,000 tablets of quinine substitute. The two together afford about 21 million treatments.

In Bihar,—and I think within the time left to me I shall have to finish with Bihar,—the last six months have seen a very severe epidemic of cholera,—in North Bihar. It began to develop in April and May; it reached its peak in June with over six thousand deaths in one week. Since then the figures have shown a considerable improvement and for the last two weeks of October they are 597 and 744. But since the cholera mortality began to decline, malaria has given cause for anxiety there. Now the military medical authorities have come to the help of the Provincial Government. They have supplied 22 military medical officers for emergency duties and they have released an I.M.S. officer with public health experience to be Additional Director of Public Health for North Bihar. The Bihar Government have appointed an Additional Commissioner for relief work in the Tirhut Division. They have got adequate supplies of vaccines and anti-malaria drugs; 28 million tablets of quinine substitutes have been supplied to them; they have made arrangements for the distribution of anti-malaria drugs through malaria centres, district dispensaries, village headmen and other village agencies. Voluntary relief organisations are being organised and allotted compact areas and are being supplied with anti-malaria drugs free. The great difficulty that the Bihar Government are having is to get the additional medical staff which they require.

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

Mr. J. D. Tyson: Then, Sir, I am afraid that is all that I can say.

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum (North-West Frontier Province: General): Sir, I wanted to deal with the "Grow More Food" campaign in a later part of my speech but having listened to the remarks which fell from the last speaker I am inclined to take that matter up first. He gave us some figures and thereby tried to refute the allegation that the "Grow More Food" campaign had fallen flat and the allegation made from this side of the House is groundless. But his own figures which I am going to quote—and which have been supplied to me just now by my Honourable friend Prof. Ranga, will show that the popular belief stands corroborated by official figures. There has been a lot of propaganda in this country in favour of the "Grow More Food" campaign and the Honourable Member told us that the quantity of rice produced has gone up from 26½ million tons to 30·6 million tons. If you look at the official figures of production of rice you will find that in the year 30-31 when a thing like the "Grow More Food" campaign was unheard of, the production of rice in India was more than 32 million tons, and right up to 1934-35 it was something like 30 million tons. This is from the *Statistical Abstract for British India*.

Mr. J. D. Tyson: Is that production only or import as well?

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum: The Honourable Member did not give way when I interrupted; my time is also limited.

Then as far as area is concerned, we are told that the area under rice has gone up to 80 million acres. Now with regard to the area under crops and yield of British India,—obviously it could not have included imports,—I quote from the *Agricultural Statistics of India*.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall (Member for Railways and War Transport): Does that include Burma which was then a part of India?

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum: That is not mentioned here. "In India",—that is what is stated. But even then it would not make very much difference.

The Honourable Sir Edward Benthall: It would make a tremendous difference.

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum: Even apart from that I have other figures which will show that the area under foodgrains has not increased very much even leaving Burma out of consideration. In the year 1937-38 the area under food crops was something like 15 crores and 43 lakhs of acres, and in 1942-43 it had only risen to 16 crores and 2 lakhs of acres, which shows that the progress made is very poor indeed.

[Mr. Abdul Qaiyum.]

However, leaving this "Grow More Food" campaign for the time being, the point made by Government against criticisms from this side of the House is that most of the criticism from this side is not based on facts and figures and that we have not got the wonderful secretariat which Government have at their disposal. Assuming for the sake of argument that this charge is true, that the Government of India have got machinery at their disposal from which they could have collected information about the state of things in India as regards food. They could have easily found out that long before the war India was not self-sufficient in the matter of food; and any one who had seen the countryside and the state of physique of the people would have easily found out that there were millions of people in this country who were not getting one square meal a day. With all these facts and figures at their disposal it is really surprising that this wonderful Government of India had no plan and no policy when the war began. If they had no facts and figures and had been groping in the dark one could have excused them. But they knew very well that in the matter of food, India was not self-sufficient. In spite of all this there was no policy, and when they came to have some kind of policy, that policy has been very erratic and halting,—a policy which has been changed from time to time, a policy which has not been governed by any principles, a policy which has been very inconsistent and has caused a tremendous amount of loss to the people of this country. When this country was overtaken by a terrible calamity like the Bengal famine, when lakhs and lakhs of our countrymen were dead, and when millions are even now going about as victims of the mal-nutrition and bad food which, as press reports clearly indicate, has resulted in widespread epidemics throughout the length and breadth of this country,—epidemics like malaria, cholera, dysentery, etc., which are the result of the bad food supplied to the people,—it was after all those terrible things had happened that this Government of India awoke to the realities of the situation and began fumbling round for some sort of plan to be put into execution.

My Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths from the European Benches made a very good speech yesterday and it seems he has taken a lot of trouble to study the subject. I listened to his speech with great attention. One remark that he made was that the conscience of the people of this country had not been roused sufficiently and that there was no active public opinion in this country to bring under control all such dreadful things like black markets, corruption and other things which go with the administration of food control in this country. I will frankly concede that to some extent our people can be blamed for the absence of a proper and sufficiently strong public opinion in this country. But at the same time it cannot be denied that the Government of India, constituted as it is in this country, have got absolutely no conscience and utterly lack the public support without which no Government can function in any part of the civilised world. Mr. Griffiths was giving us the analogy of how things had been worked out in Great Britain, how much more effective and efficient was the machinery that was set up in that country. One of the main reasons for the difference in the condition of things in Great Britain and in India is that there they have a Government which represents the will of the people and here the same Great Britain has forcibly thrust upon us a Government every act of which is contrary to the well-known wishes of the people of this country. Imagine, Sir, a Government in England during war time which had shut up all the members of the present British Cabinet and the Leaders of various political parties. What would be the state of mind and the state of public conscience in England as regards any measures which such Government wished to put into execution? This makes all the difference, and it is for this reason that there is no public opinion behind the acts of the Government of India, and therefore the measures which they have in preparation for dealing with the problem of food have not succeeded sufficiently enough.

The Honourable the Food Member was talking of the Basic Plan—some wonderful plan which the Government have evolved—which will bring all our troubles under control. I tried to read that Basic Plan in the Food Grains

Policy Committee Report. The Basic Plan is very modest. It comes to this: They have taken the full production of foodgrains in India for a period of five years before the war, they have added to it the imports into this country and subtracted from it the exports from this country, and they have satisfied themselves that that amount of foodgrains was sufficient for feeding the population in India.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava (Food Member): That is not the Basic Plan.

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum: That is the Basic Plan as laid down in the Foodgrains Policy Committee Report. This will not do. Even with the production and the imports which were coming in before the war, it is a well known fact that our people were not being fed sufficiently enough and this sort of Basic Plan therefore will not do. Bolder and far-reaching measures will have to be advocated. You will have to go to the source of things—the actual production of foodstuffs in this country. You will have to set up some sort of a planning committee—call it a planning committee or by any other name, as you like—which will decide what class of foodstuffs should be produced in this country taken as a whole, what should be the area under each particular crop, and then you will have to do something much more than the Government of India has been doing in the past.

The Honourable Member said in his speech that they were trying to suppress black markets. I think that by their refusal to buy up all the available surplus foodgrains in this country, the Government of India have aided and abetted the establishment of black markets. After all how do these black markets come into existence? People prefer to sell their foodgrains to certain dealers—who indulge in these malpractices, in preference to public bodies. If some such measures could be devised whereby the State will take all the available surplus—and that can be done; it cannot be said that such a thing is impossible; it can be done very easily—believe me it will end all our troubles. We have two kinds of producers in this country: We have got small farmers with small families to look after, and big landlords with a surplus. The policy should be such that the small farmers' requirements should be fixed and as much food as is necessary for the requirements of his family should be entirely left to him. But we have got large producers—big landlords—who keep back much more than they really require. And what do they do with it? These are the people who are the victims of and succumb to the temptations of the black markets. The State can easily fix a reasonable and legitimate price which will give them a fair return for the produce of their lands, and at the same time some sort of law should be devised whereby all this surplus should be taken over direct by the State without the intervention of these horrible middlemen who have come into existence as a result of the present system of control which has been set up by the Government of India. These are the people who are dealing in what I should call the black market and the white market. Simultaneously they sell to people who have got ration cards, and at the same time these are the very people who, under the eyes of the Government officials, are indulging in malpractices known as the black market. Why don't you stop supplies so that these people will not have anything to sell. Make it impossible for big landlords and people with surplus to sell to any one but the State. This is one of the methods whereby you can entirely eliminate black markets.

There is one thing more. In view of the tremendous rise in the price of necessities of life which the poor agriculturist has to purchase, for instance cloth and other necessities of life, the Government cannot be blind to the fact that he has to pay much more for these things, and in fixing the price for foodstuffs it should be seen that a reasonable amount should be paid which will cover the cost of his production and at the same time leave him with a reasonable margin of profit.

Now, Sir, I want to say a few words about the administration of the Food Control in this country. Anyone who has seen the Food Control at work in

[Mr. Abdul Qaiyum.]

this country will realize—I am not trying to score a point against the Government—that there is a lot of corruption going on in this department. In the matter of Food Control, I think the Government and the public can very well co-operate in stamping out corruption. But I do not approve of the attitude of the Government of India in this matter. When any criticism is levelled against them and it is pointed out that a lot of corruption is rampant in this department, they try to dismiss it by a blank denial that anything of the kind exists and that the criticism is irresponsible. First of all, you must be very careful in the selection of your staff; no favouritism should be allowed. It is only when incompetent people are taken in the establishment dealing with Food Control, 'people who do not know even A, B, C of work,' that it leads to corruption and incompetence. At the same time, Sir, I think it is not beyond the competence of the Government of India to set up a special Crimes Investigation Department to track down all those officials of the Food Control Department who are suspected or are well known to be corrupt. A special department should be set up in the interest of public good and in the interest of a cleaner and more efficient Food Control in this country whereby all such persons can be tracked down. And while we have this middlemen system still in existence, it will also be seen that the people who corrupt these officials are generally these middlemen who are favoured with permits to sell stuff to the poor people. These middlemen are the people who try to corrupt these officials because they are the people who stand to gain. This Crimes Investigation Department will aim at tracking down these middlemen as well as the corrupt officials and will bring about the desired reform which I think the Government and the people both desire to see brought about in this country.

Now, Sir, a few words more about the Grow More Food campaign. I have got some figures which I have taken from a book I was studying only last night. I will read out:

"In the year 1937-38, 154 million acres were under food crops in this country and in the year 1942-43, for which latest figures are available, only 160 million acres were under food crops."

That shows that not more than 6 or 7 million acres more have been brought under food crops in this country. It is obvious that the drive under the Grow More Food campaign has not brought about the desired result. I would like the Honourable Member for Food to tell us whether there are any cultivable State lands in India which have been brought under the Grow More Food campaign, and whether he would give us some facts and figures,—and it will not be impossible for him to do so—in regard to the total area of cultivable State lands and what percentage of this has been brought under crops as a result of the Grow More Food campaign?

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

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum: I am finishing, Sir. There are other matters like the proper supply of seed, the proper supply of improved agricultural implements, the setting up of machinery for manufacturing manures and other things with regard to which the agriculturists experience great difficulties. I will end up by saying that my criticism is not with a view to run down the Government of India, but to bring it to their notice that there is a lot of corruption and that the system can be improved a lot if only the Government will turn their proper attention to it. Sir, I support the amendment.

Mr. C. P. Lawson (Bengal: European): Mr. President, Sir: I would like to join my friend, Mr. Essak Sait, in paying a tribute to the Government for their energy in tackling this matter and also, I may say so, for the regularity with which they bring this matter before this House for debate.

12 Noon I do not think anybody can complain that food matters have been insufficiently debated in this Honourable House, and I congratulate the Honourable Member on his courage and his wish to share his troubles and his joys with us.

The Honourable the Food Member made four claims, as far as I understood him, when he spoke the other day. He said that his all-India food policy had been accepted by the provinces, that prices had been controlled, that Government stocks had been established to prevent local shortages, and confidence had generally been restored. Now, Sir, I think, as far as in him lies, and with the constitutional and administrative difficulties that he has to face, that that claim is largely justified. But I must point out that he is very largely still in the hands of provinces and that provincial administration and provincial policies still very largely control the effectiveness of his actions.

May I point out, Sir, to begin with, that the figure that the Honourable the foodgrains can be reduced very considerably if provinces generally decide upon Secretary for Education, Health and Lands have given us of 60 million tons of a motto of "safety first" and there is no doubt in my mind whatever that all provinces without exception are adopting a policy of "safety first": and, indeed, who is to blame them; the safety of their provinces is their main concern. But if they wish to provide a margin of safety of say 10 per cent.—and I apply this not only merely to the provincial administration but to every district and every person within a province—no less than 6 million tons of foodgrains can be removed from circulation. Where then, Sir, is the increase that the Grow More Food campaign has produced? It is already cancelled out by the margin of the safety that these provinces may demand. Again, Sir, what authority has the Honourable the Food Member, who is responsible for the distribution of food and all the details that occur in this great problem, to tell the provinces what they are to grow, where they are to grow it and so on. He has, in fact, no authority at all and the provinces can grow what they like, where they like and how they like. So, Sir, I think it is fair to say that the criticism which is levelled at the Department of Food is largely levelled on provincial administrations: and here, Sir, I will mention particularly the question of quality. We in deficit provinces know perfectly well that we are getting bad quality and the province sending this stuff to us takes no responsibility and really does nothing to see that we get something better than what Mr. Neogy yesterday described as "pebbles". Now, Sir, I am a little surprised that in the various inter-provincial meetings which have taken place this problem has not been more adequately dealt with. Surely it is possible to tie the quality to someone. In normal times we know very well that ordinary business practice makes it inadvisable for a dealer to sell somebody else bad quality. The "somebody else" won't accept it and when it goes to arbitration he is liable to lose very much more money than he has gained by adulterating his supplies. But when you are faced with a situation in which the reply is 'you can take that or nothing', a very difficult situation arises, and I will go to this length, Sir, and say that as long as this state of things exists it will be impossible to prevent the adulteration which is undoubtedly occurring in the Government rationing shops. A Government rationing shop-keeper will sell bad quality and he will say "this is the stuff I received" and there will be no one to say him, nay. So, Sir, my advice to the Government of India is this: that they tie the quality of these supplies to someone. The trade practices in different parts of India differ and the guarantee of other method may be useful in some parts but not in others. But I would advise the Honourable the Food Member with all respect to apply this policy of tying the quality of the grain supplied to somebody so that there may be recourse either by arbitration or other means to people who supply bad quality.

Now, Sir, the prices of foodgrains in India today are high. They are high in comparison with other prices; there may be many who will oppose a reduction because of the effect of such reduction on the countryside. But the duty of Government in this respect is to examine the general cost of living and to fix prices at a level which they consider fair and which will form a suitable level and a universal level. Sir, at the moment there are various prices ruling all over India for foodgrains and the result is that there is juggling between provinces, between districts and so on, where the prices vary. If in a certain district your price for rice is Rs. 12 and in another district it is Rs. 14 a man will

[Mr. C. P. Lawson.]

soon shift his rice somehow into the part of the country where he gets a better price and your arrangements are upset. I think that as soon as it can be done universal prices must be established all over the country and when that happy state of affairs is arrived at, I would strongly advise Government to make those prices fixed for a number of years so that the cultivators may know with a degree of certainty what they are going to get for their crops in time to come. Then when any measure of uncertainty is removed we can go ahead with measures for improvement and for the improving of yields, etc., about which I shall speak a little later.

There is another aspect of this price question which I must mention and that is what I would describe as a transfer of inflation. I do not quite know what the complete remedy is, because as long as partial control exists in this country there will always be a measure of inflation thrown on to articles which are not controlled and that, Sir, is happening to a very large extent in the province from which I come. As an example, I would quote the case of an uncontrolled article, namely meat. We have started in Calcutta two meatless days a week and what was the effect? Immediately the burden of demand was thrown on to fish and fish prices jumped by Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a seer almost at once. The jump was totally unjustified but there was no control over fish and the meat had been removed from the market. Even the coarse fishes like *Rohu* and *Katla* jumped Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a seer. Now, Sir, that has occurred practically in every article of food that is not controlled. Milk, eggs, vegetables, fish, etc., have all gone up and they have practically gone outside the scope of the purse of even the middle classes. The only possible remedy for this, and it is an inadequate remedy, is stricter price control: and I am in entire sympathy with those who have to administer this problem when they tell me that strict price control drives articles underground. I know it is true and, to a large extent, I know it will be hitting a brick wall. Until we can enlarge the rationing field, and I am rather doubtful whether that field can be much enlarged at present (certainly in the case of perishable articles), until we can enlarge the rationing field and until we can control supplies more adequately, we must concentrate on administration and upon enforcement. I know that it will bring with it a lot of ancillary troubles. I know that there will be a certain amount of bribery here and there: but I still maintain that a strong public opinion and with men, say in the Legislatures, banding together to make certain that malpractices are brought to light and are punished, something more could be done and, apart from anything else, it seems to me to be the only possible solution.

I would like to say a word, Sir, about public health, which has loomed large in this debate. I know from personal experience that public health is declining. Our own office staffs, of which we keep a careful record, are definitely more frequently absent and they are getting ill very easily. That, Sir, I think, is undoubtedly due to the absence of those foods, which the Honourable the Secretary for Education, Health and Lands called 'protective'. They are not getting eggs, they are not getting vegetables and I was surprised to find how much the potatoe has become a normal item of diet. All these things are now practically unobtainable and there is no question in my mind that the health of the people is declining as a result. I think that this matter of non-cereal foods demands the Government's most urgent attention, because if attention is not soon given to it there will be a definite and serious decline in the health of the people.

I was very glad the other day to hear from the Secretary of the Education, Health and Lands Department that over the question of rice there was a proposal to go more for production than increase in acreage. I know that it is very easily and frequently stated by critics of the Government that there are 150 million acres of cultivable waste in this country. That, Sir, is a figure which is totally misleading. Most of the culturable waste in this country is not cultivable land at all and much of the rest depends on the communications that can be established. There is no use telling a cultivator to go and culti-

vate a piece of land that has no roads, no railways and no water. Therefore, Sir, we must undoubtedly go as far as we can for an increase in yield per acre and there is no earthly reason why that yield per acre should not be increased. I have little faith in statistics, particularly in Indian statistics, but I have seen it stated that the yield of rice per acre in China is double that in India and in Japan it is three times. I know, equally well, from personal experience that there are parts of India, which produce rice yields per acre as large as any in the world. Unfortunately there are other parts which bring down the average. With a bump and the trouble is mainly seed. As the Honourable the Secretary for Education, Health and Lands Department stated the other day only about 6 per cent. of improved seeds is used in rice cultivation in this country and I am glad to hear from him that an effort is to be made to increase that.

Sir, I want to point out at this stage that while the position as regards rice has improved very considerably, I do not regard the future with anything like complacency. I think, to a large extent, the troubles of the Honourable the Food Member are still to come and let me tell him why I think so. In the first place, to provide for the increase in the population of this country this country has got to produce every year half a million tons more of food grains. The calculation is open to argument but I think it may be even more than that. Now, Sir, the Government is working to meet this increasing demand. They are bringing in imports but, if I may say so, they are working "blind". They do not know what the production of the country is. Their information regarding the stocks that exist is largely coloured by the provincial policies and as regards consumption in the country they have no information at all. The Government at the moment do not know what the people are eating. In the United Provinces, where in the winter months the cultivator ate pulses, millets very largely, I now understand that he is eating wheat and I am very glad that that is so, because it is a better food and better for his health. But how will this affect the wheat stocks that the Honourable the Food Member thinks he has?

And let me add another warning regarding prices. Unless these prices are stabilised reasonably soon, you are going to be in very great difficulties. There are, I believe, one hundred thousand tons of gram found in excess in this country now and if there is a drop of Rs. 2 a maund on that supply of gram someone is going to drop half a crore of rupees. It may be the Government, it may be the stockists, but somebody is going to have to pay and in this country there must be millions and millions of tons of stocks held in various places. Let the price go down, apply a drop of one or two rupees a maund to these various stocks that are held, I wonder how many of the small mofussil banks and co-operative societies will survive. This is going to be a matter which the Government will have to watch extremely carefully and the sooner they stabilise these prices, believe me, Sir, the happier I shall be. That brings me to the end of my time and I must stop.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Mr. President, we have heard from every Member on the Opposition Benches a tale of woe, and I am inclined to believe with my friend Mr. Lawson that that tale should have been voiced in the provinces more than in this Honourable House. A great deal of the administration of the policy of food control lies with the provinces, and unless this agitation which we rightly hear in this House is carried more effectively into the provinces, I am afraid the Honourable Food Member will not be of much avail to us from the Centre.

There are only two or three issues to which I desire to draw your attention. The first issue is the very important one of distribution which affects my province. There are three or four notoriously deficit provinces in India: they are said to be Travancore, Cochin, Bombay and Malabar. Government have laid down a policy whereby in their opinion one pound a day per head, or 34 seers per week, is the minimum quantity that should be rationed for an adult. There are many parts of my province which do not get that minimum. The whole of Cochin and Travancore perhaps do not get that minimum. Malabar

[Sir Cowasjee Jehangir.]

or parts of Malabar may be in the same category; but Mr. President, there are provinces in India where the individual citizen is getting much more than that minimum. Is it because those provinces will not come into line with the Government of India's policy, or is there some other reason? Will the provinces who have this surplus and who are giving out much more per individual than the deficit provinces, see reason? Can they be tempted—I will not say forced, but tempted—to come to a compromise with those provinces which are having less than the minimum—and by no means is that minimum liberal, it is a real minimum to keep body and soul together? Will these provinces be made to understand that India as a whole has to live and that if some provinces today are much worse off, a time may come when they themselves may be worse off in other directions? They want cloth; they demand that the Government of India should give them not only quantity but quality. We supply that. The Government of India makes us supply that and we do so

Dr. P. N. Banerjee (Calcutta Suburbs: Non-Muhammadan Urban): We did not get much of cloth in Bengal.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: I really do not understand that. There is no reason why Bengal should not get sufficient quantities of standard cloth. I am not going to be diverted into that issue just now; but I may say that if you do not get standard cloth in sufficient quantities it is up to you to agitate to get it. Those provinces who do not make cloth, want it and it is given to them. That is only one example. In return I do believe they could be made to understand that all peoples in India should be given an equal quantity of food.

Now, I will come to the very encouraging figures given to us by my Honourable friend, Mr. Tyson. I am not by any means elated with those figures, for let me frankly tell him that I do not believe them. He told us that compared to the three years before the war, in 1943 we had 4 million more tons of rice. His department has presented India with 4 more million tons of rice. The imports from Burma before the war were, I believe, 1½ million tons. So he has presented this country with two and a half times the quantity that Burma sent us before the war. Does he ask us to swallow that? And if he does, I will ask the Honourable Food Member to distribute that 4 more million tons of extra rice to the rice-eating provinces, such as Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. In these deficit provinces there is one very great difference which the Honourable Member surely knows. Cochin, Travancore and Malabar are accustomed to eat rice. It is very difficult for them to take wheat, *bajri* or *jowari*. I believe the Governments of those provinces are trying their best but you cannot educate a people to eat something which they have never been accustomed to eat: it affects their health. I sympathise with them. But we in Bombay, who are also a deficit province can eat wheat, *bajri* and *jowari*. We have that advantage, and therefore I would ask the Honourable Food Member, while he considers this question of distribution, to keep this point in view. We can eat everything.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Including pebbles!

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: We have had to do that. While Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore may deserve a greater portion of rice and I am prepared to admit that, give us wheat, *bajri* and *jowari*; do not deprive us of the minimum quantity of food; of course a certain portion of rice, must be supplied. With regard to these figures of the Honourable Member, I am afraid they do much more damage than good, because if we have got 6 more million tons of food now than we had in the three years before the war, where is it? With whom?

Mr. J. D. Tyson: With the producers to some extent.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Did they eat nothing at all before the war? Are they consuming all these extra 6 million tons? I ask the Honourable Food Member—where is it?

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: Bunkum!

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Statistics are very dangerous things to play about with, and I think the Food Member realises that more than anybody else. One department says that it has given the Food Member 6 more million tons a year and when we cross-examine the Food Member not only here but in other places he has got nothing to say about those six millions and I will ask him this direct question—in which pocket has he got these six million tons of extra food? If he will tell us, we will raid it. Statistics are a dangerous thing and if Government are to be deceived, do not let them try and deceive us because it will only increase the discontent in the country. It will only increase agitation and rightly so. It will only give a handle to others to say that there must be something rotten in the Kingdom of Denmark if after getting 6 million extra tons of food in this country, as compared to the three years previous to the war, we are still starving.

Now, Sir, I will not take up the valuable time of this Honourable House. I will only say that I quite agree with the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party when he emphasized the principle that provinces should buy direct from the agriculturist and cut out the middlemen. That policy is being adopted in my province of Bombay and let me tell the Honourable Members it is not so easily done as said. There are many complaints. The Agriculturists feel that they are being compelled to part with a commodity for which in the black market they could get more. They feel that *sulum* is exercised on them by the subordinate officers. There are complaints of corruption on the part of these officials. Notwithstanding all these complaints, I agree, and I have said in this House time and again, that that should be the policy of provinces. It cannot be enforced from the Centre. The Centre is helpless. It is the provinces that are all powerful in this question of food and each province must suffer or gain according to the administration of that province. There are provinces that are better off than others. There are two reasons for it. One is the better administration, and the other, and the much more important reason, is the people themselves who are ready to help themselves. If the people are not ready to help themselves, well, they must suffer. There are two reasons why some provinces are better off than others. I will repeat that—better administration and the spirit of the people themselves. I am proud to say, Mr. President, that at least in the city of Bombay, we have seen some public spirit and people, men and women, never accustomed to work of this kind, volunteered for it before rationing came into existence, which set an example, which made not only rationing possible but rationing a success to a certain extent. I do not claim perfection for it and if the province of Bombay, being a deficit province, being a province that ought to be really starving, has done a little better than other deficit provinces, it is due to the spirit of the people and to the uncomplaining attitude of the millions who starve and suffer. There are millions in the province of Bombay, outside the city of Bombay, where, believe me, people are getting less than your most uncharitable minimum and still we are told and complimented on the condition of Bombay and that is why, Mr. President, I desire most earnestly to draw the attention of the Government to see that all provinces get per head an equal quantity of food and that some provinces should not be allowed, because they happen to be surplus provinces, to give their people much more than that minimum, while, we in the deficit provinces should be compelled by you to give our people much less than the minimum.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao (Government of India: Nominated Official): Mr. President, I have been listening most carefully to the speeches which have been made from the other side of the House and it appears to me that the main substance of the speeches falls under two categories, a review of what the Government India has done so far in the matter of food policy and food administration, and a recital of what should be done in extension of their existing food policy. It is not my purpose, Sir, to answer the charges which have been made against the administration of the Government's food policy as it exists at present and as was decided largely by the foodgrains Policy

[Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao.]

Committee, which, I may remind the House, pertained very largely to the supply of foodgrains and related mainly to the urban areas.

There have been, Sir, a number of detailed complaints about the administration of food in the various regions from which Honourable Members come and whose interests they represent in this House. It is obviously not possible for me, within the short space of time that I have at my disposal, to deal with those complaints, but I would like to assure the House that every one of those complaints is now under the active examination of the Food Department and if any Honourable Member has got any detailed matter on which he would require urgent inquiry and action to be taken by the Government in the Department of Food, I am authorised to give him an assurance on behalf of the Food Department that if only he will let me have the facts at the end of this debate or some time later, we in the Food Department shall take the most immediate steps to have them attended to.

Mr. Lalchand Navai Rai (Sind: Non-Muhammadan Rural): I gave some facts to the Food Member about Sind and he has not replied.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: During the course of the debate, a number of points have been raised regarding extension of the food policy; if I may say so, this concern with new matters perhaps implies that the House is not now so much concerned with the criticism of the food policy as it was formulated last year which pertained mainly to foodgrains in urban areas, but that the House is now passing on to further problems which have been raised by the comparative success of the existing food policy of the Government of India. The new problems to which reference has been made are things like the extension of rationing in rural areas, the effect of procurement on producers, the question of Government monopoly purchase, the question of the basic protective foods and non-cereal foodgrains, and also the question of subsidy.

As regards procurement, Government monopoly procurement is only now being extended in considerable parts of British India. The Department has already appointed a special officer who is an expert in the grains trade to visit all the provinces where a Government monopoly purchase system prevails, particularly to examine the manner in which the grain is being procured from the producer, the price that the producer obtains, the amount that is left to be retained by the producer and the effect of such procurement on rural areas. The report is now in the possession of the Food Department and copies of it are being printed and will be sent to all the Provincial Governments. This report is now under the active consideration of the Department of Food.

Mr. N. M. Joshi (Nominated Non-Official): Circulate it to all the Members.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: I shall convey that suggestion to the Department. As soon as the Department has considered the report and obtained the views of the Provincial Governments, I am sure the Honourable Food Member would be able to come forward before this House and tell them what we intend to do regarding a number of problems such as those which my Honourable friend Prof. Ranga, who represents the Kisans, is particularly interested in.

Then, Sir, a very much larger question has been raised in this House, the question of subsidy. There have been two voices on the subject of the price of foodgrains. There have been some Members who have been saying that the prices of foodgrains are not particularly high at present and they should at least be permitted to be retained at their existing levels otherwise the producer will not produce, there will be no incentive to grow more food and there will be distress among the producing and agricultural classes. On the other hand, voices have also been raised in this House to the effect that the prices of foodgrains are high and it is not possible for many persons to purchase such quantities of foodgrains as are required for their nutritional requirements on account of the high prices of foodgrains and that something

of compromise and as a way of reconciling these two opposite points of view—high prices for the producer and low prices for the consumer—, a suggestion has been made in this House that Government should examine the principle of subsidy as far as the prices of foodgrains are concerned. I would like to tell the House that this principle of subsidy is under the active examination of the Food Department and it has been under their examination for some time past. It is not possible for Government to come to a decision on a complicated subject like that of subsidy without due consideration nor, I am sure, will the House expect from me any declaration of decision on the part of the Government as regards subsidy. But I think perhaps the House may be interested to hear from me a brief account of some of the enormous complications which arise from the question of subsidy and I shall do so not only from the point of view of giving information but also in the hope that subsequent speakers who shall follow me will take up this point and let the Government of India have some idea of how they themselves feel on these complicated problems.

It is important to realise—I know one Honourable Member in particular waxed eloquent on the subject of the analogy of the United Kingdom and I have not got the time to answer him here but shall be glad to do so outside this House—that the analogy of England giving a subsidy of 150 or 200 million £ is all very good, but we must remember that we are not dealing with England but with India, a country even whose total national income is lower than that of the United Kingdom. Now that we have reached the stage when the prices of foodgrains are already high, the question whether subsidy will have an anti-inflationary effect will very much depend upon how it is going to be financed.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Is the agriculturist making any money?

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: That is a question which I am not prepared to answer on the floor of the House. All that I can say is. . .

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: Is he not responsible for inflation to a certain extent?

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: I shall refer the Honourable Member to the speech that was made by the Prime Minister of Bengal and which was reported in yesterday's papers. He said that the cultivator in Bengal is very much better off than he was before and he was advising them as to what he should do with the surplus money that he has got.

But to come back to the question: What is going to be the amount of subsidy that the House would like to give? I would just give an illustration. If the idea is to introduce a subsidy and if the idea is to bring back the prices of foodgrains to what they were before the war—and the difference between the prices now prevailing and those before the war is Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 per maund of foodgrain, it must mean that the amount which will be required will run into hundreds of crores. I do not want to stagger the House with figures, but the amount will really run into hundreds of crores. And I should like to ask the House to consider how that money is going to be raised. If it is going to be raised by means other than taxation, it is not going to be of the slightest help as far as the bringing down of the prices of commodities in general and the cost of living are concerned. If it is to be obtained by methods of taxation, the House will consider on whom the incidence of it will fall and how far the incidence of this tax will leave the cultivator unaffected. Then again, my friend Prof. Ranga will say that the subsidy should be such that the benefit goes to the producer and that it is not taken away by the middleman. I entirely agree with him that the benefit of the subsidy is for the producer, but what is going to be the technique that we are going to have for this purpose. If there is a Government monopoly purchase system where the Government buys grain directly from the producer—and I am very glad the Honourable the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party has lent his support to this and this is also the policy of the Food Department,—then it would be possible to institute this system of

[Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao.]

subsidy. But the House knows that, excepting in some parts of the country, the crop is not directly purchased from the producer by the Government. And what is going to be the machinery which is going to be devised for the purpose of seeing that the subsidy reaches the producer and is not intercepted on the way.

Then, Sir, there is also the question, if you are going to institute a subsidy, what are going to be the grains which will be subsidised? Are we going to subsidise only the cereals, such as, wheat, rice, barley, bajra, maize or are we also going to subsidise milk and milk products, vegetables, poultry, eggs and other foodstuffs? I am not saying that they should not be subsidised, but I just want to say that these are problems which require consideration and which cannot be answered on the spur of the moment. They have already been under the examination of the Food Department and they require a very long and exhaustive examination before it is possible for the Government to have a firm policy on the subject of subsidy.

Then, there is also the question of the consumer. As my Honourable friend Mr. Joshi pointed out, and quite rightly, because he represents the working classes, the benefit of the subsidy should be such that the consumer today is able to get foodgrains or other commodities at prices lower than what he is having to pay at present. Here, again, there are a number of complicated questions which have got to be answered. When we talk of the consumer, should the subsidy be given to all consumers or should it be given only to a certain class of consumers? And if it is going to be restricted to a certain class of consumers only and not to all consumers, then what is going to be the principle of restriction? Is it going to be on the basis of income or is it going to be on some other basis?

Prof. N. G. Ranga (Guntur Nellore: Non-Muhammadan Rural): It should be on the basis of income.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: If it is going to be on the basis of income, what should be the levels of income at which the subsidy should stop? Then, Sir, there is also the question, the moment you talk of income-groups, about what would be the position regarding industrial workers. As my Honourable friend Mr. Joshi knows, quite a large number of industrial workers are getting a dearness allowance which is based on the existing cost of living. If the Government of India decides to have a policy of subsidised foodgrains for industrial workers and give them food at lower prices, will my Honourable friend Mr. Joshi be prepared to advise his friends to accept a reduction in the dearness allowance which is based on the cost of living, and which is based on the present high prices of foodgrains? I am not saying that he should, but I am only showing that that is a difficulty. The question as to what is going to be the position of industrial workers and all those consumers who have had the benefit of a higher income directly as a consequence of the rise in prices has got to be considered. Then again I do not know how my Honourable friend Prof. Ranga did not make an interjection and say: "What about the rural people? Are you going to confine the benefit of the subsidy only to urban workers?" During the debate in this House I gathered the impression that the House has been very much concerned with the interests of the rural people. What then should be the position of the rural masses in a scheme of subsidy? What about particularly the classes with which I have the greatest sympathy and to which my Honourable friend Rao Bahadur Siva Raj referred, the landless labouring class, the class who has borne the strain of every economic stress in India? What is going to be their position in a scheme of subsidy? What is going to be position of the non-producers in rural areas and what is going to be the position of the inadequate producers in rural areas in a scheme of subsidy? What is going to be the position of producers who produce non-food crops? There are many complications.

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: Therefore the solution is, do nothing in the matter.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: I can assure the Honourable Member that I am

stating these facts for his consideration, and not with a view to show the impossibility of anything being done in the matter of subsidy. It is only to show that the problem is vast and complicated, it has got all sorts of implications, and financial implications are the biggest of all. Apart from the question of the amount that a scheme of subsidy of any reasonable character will cost, there is the question of who is going to bear the subsidy? Is it going to be the Central Government? Is it going to be the Provincial Government? If the subsidy is going to be met by taxation, then on whom should the incidence of taxation fall? My only point is that the whole question of subsidy is one that bristles with difficulties. It is not that the Food Department is oblivious of the fact that there are large classes of people in this country who do not get as much food as they should get. The Food Department is anxious that not only should the price of food grains be brought down and adequate supplies rushed to places where there is scarcity; but also that the people who are in need of food do actually get it. That is why we are investigating this question of subsidy. Apart from the question of income groups, rural groups, urban groups, etc., what is to be the position of pregnant mothers, nursing mothers and children? Would it be possible to have free or subsidised milk canteens all over the country? Is it desirable to have a system of subsidy on the basis of industrial canteens for the benefit of industrial workers?

Dr. G. V. Deshmukh: May I ask the Honourable Member to tell me either inside or outside the House how this question has been solved in other countries?

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao: The Honourable Member knows that I am entirely at his disposal outside this House, though I may not be within the precincts of this building. I have very little time left. All that I want to say is this. We, in the Food Department, have been considering this question of subsidy. It is under our most active examination. As soon as we come to a stage when it is possible to put forward any concrete suggestion, we may have to refer it to a inter-departmental Committee consisting of the Economic Adviser to the Government of India, a representative of the Finance Department, of the Food Department and of the Department of Education, Health and Lands for the purpose of going in greater detail into this question of subsidy. Sir, this question of subsidy will also be one of the problems which will be immediately investigated by the planning section of the Food Department to which the Honourable Food Member referred in his opening speech.

I should like to conclude my speech by saying one thing. A number of suggestions have been made on the floor of the House, some by way of detailed criticism of the food administration of the country. On all these matters any information given to the Food Department will be immediately investigated and whatever the Government of India can do by way of communicating to the Provincial Governments will be done. In the matter of new suggestions regarding policy which have been made, almost all of them, if I may say so, are suggestions which are well known already, which have been under the examination of the Food Department for a considerably long time and on which I hope the Food Department would be able to come forward before this House within a reasonable measure of time with concrete suggestions and policies. In the meanwhile, if Honourable Members opposite will forgive me, I do very much wish that some little credit had been given to the Food Department for the work that they have done in managing the food problem, at least as far as cereals and food grains are concerned.

Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam (Surma Valley *cum* Shillong: Non-Muhammadian): Mr. President, I shall not deal with the long statements given by the Government time after time to show how they have been carrying out the food policy and the food programme. I shall only refer to two or three points which will throw a flood of light on the administration of food problem in the different Provinces. The policy of procurement, distribution and control of prices, all these have failed in their effect on the people of this country. No

[Mr. Ananga Mohan Dam.]

doubt the Government have been giving long statements, but the fact remains that their effect on the people of the country is most unsatisfactory. Regarding procurement policy, I shall show one instance. Government have given monopolies to contractors. In Assam paddy is being purchased by Government contractors at Rs. 5 a maund though the gazetted rates are Rs. 7-12-0 to Rs. 8-4-0 a maund. There are purchasing centres to which these poor cultivators have to take their produce. The Government contractors, in order to hoodwink the poor cultivators say "Oh! the Government have stopped the purchase of rice. Go to such and such people". These people are all their middlemen. The poor cultivators are sent to these middle men. These middle men say, the Government are not purchasing, how, so you had better give the rice to us. They compel the cultivators to part with their rice at a low price i.e., Rs. 5 a maund. Thus these cultivators do not at all get the price which the Government have fixed in their communique or in the Gazette. The Government are simply anxious to get at the rice by some process or other. I brought these facts to the notice of the Chief Secretary of Assam Government, I also wrote to the Government of India, but no reply has been vouchsafed to me on this matter till now.

I will now take up the case of salt. Salt at one time was selling at twelve annas per seer in the sub-division of Maulvi Bazaar in the district of Sylhet under the very nose of the Sub-Divisional Officer. When the people complained and brought it to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner, no redress was given. Not only that. An officer went to Balaganj a big market in the district of Sylhet and he detected a large quantity of salt hoarded by a merchant. The Government did nothing in the matter to punish the hoarder. The result was that the particular officer who detected this was transferred elsewhere. Even licensed merchants hoard salt. The people were starving for want of salt, and yet Government did nothing to bring out the hoarded salt to the public. I sent to the Government of India all this news published in the local paper the *Sylhet Chronicle*, I sent cuttings in the month of August, and now we are in November, I have not yet got any reply from the Government of India whether any enquiry has been made by the Government of India or not. This is the procedure of the Government of India. This is the policy they are pursuing in this country, to give relief to the people. The Food Department says, it has done much. I say they have done nothing at all. I can give a large number of instances of maladministration and really no credit is due to the Department, on the other hand, they deserve the condemnation of the people.

Now, I will take another point. There is the Fresh Fruit Ordinance in Assam. As the House is aware, Surma Valley is known for its oranges. Oranges are required for military purposes. The contract for purchase of oranges is given to people who are in the good books of the Provincial Government. Some people say they are all relations of the Provincial Ministers. I do not know about this. It is the talk of my town. As I was saying this Fresh Fruit Ordinance prohibits the export of oranges outside Assam. If they are not exported all of them are bound to perish. You can imagine the plight of the orange garden owners. The idea underlying this ordinance is that if the orange growers are not allowed to export, they will be compelled to sell them at low price to Government contractors. Otherwise the oranges will all perish and become unfit for human consumption. These contractors are thus able to purchase at a low price and sell at high prices to the military. The Fresh Fruit Growers Association in Surma Valley have written to the District authorities that they can sell the oranges at Rs. 9. But the contractor who is now supplying it is getting Rs. 11/8/-. Of course I am not concerned with the contractor or any one else. What I want to know is why this fresh fruit Ordinance was passed. Instead of improving the situation it has only made it worse, because these perishable things will have to be sold at a lower price. Therefore I say that the Government of India are callous towards the interests of the agriculturists in spite

1 P.M.

of their professions to the contrary. This is a big problem before the country. If the price of consumer goods goes up and the price of the agriculturists' stuff goes down, what will be the condition of these poor people? These people whom I mentioned a few minutes ago are selling their paddy at Rs. 5 and they have to buy their salt, kerosene and other essential commodities at a price which it is beyond their capacity to pay.

Sir, I will not take up much time of the House; I only want to say that I gave these instances of corruption and maladministration to the Government of India, but they did not favour me with a reply as to what they are doing. I cannot thank this Government for their indolence, for their inactivity and for their want of sympathy with the people for whom they profess so much sympathy.

Mr. N. C. Chunder (Calcutta: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Sir, on a point of order, what is the use our speaking when no one from the Food Department is in the House?

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed (Leader of the House): The Food Member has just gone out and will be back very soon.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad (United Provinces Southern Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): Sir, the production, consumption and distribution of food is at present a divided responsibility. One is in charge of the Food Department and the other in charge of the Agriculture Department. Agriculture is in itself a very big subject and it should not be tagged to a department which is responsible for everything from childbirth to the grave.

The shortcoming of the Government of India lies in the absence of farsightedness and imagination. We lost the import of rice from Burma and immediately action should have been taken to make up for this deficiency. My Honourable friend Mr. Tyson gave some figures about increase in production and my Honourable friend Mr. Gwilt quite cogently pointed out the increase of population during the same period, i.e., about 6 millions. Therefore increase of production should be correlated with the increase of population. Another thing is that the Food Department take the total production of cereals, forgetting that in certain provinces people eat nothing but rice. I have evidence that when *bajra* was sent to Travancore and other parts of Malabar, they did not know how to make bread and how to eat it. We all know that *bajra* cannot be eaten in the hot weather but can only be taken in cold countries and in the cold weather. Therefore it is useless to send it to Travancore and other rice eating provinces.

We recently appointed a Famine Commission. But the real problem in India is not so much the investigation of famine conditions but of growing more rice for the rice eating people. We have recently condemned the pegging system in South Africa but we have the same thing in the line system of Assam which is primarily responsible for the rice shortage in Bengal. I have figures with me. The total cultivable land now available in Assam valley is 5,747,736 acres, and according to the figure given by the Minister in Bengal they have got about 200,000 persons who are quite willing to go and cultivate this land. We have got the land, the men and the resources. Then why are we not able to produce the rice necessary for Bengal? People say that the acute condition does not exist; it may not exist at this moment, but Bengal is not out of danger and a slight variation in the crop will make the situation very acute. The other day there was a deputation of very influential men representing Assam waiting on Famine Commission and a Resolution was passed in which they said that the abolition of the line system will go a long way to permanently solve the problem of food shortage in Bengal inasmuch as it will bring under cultivation about 60 lakhs of bighas of arable land at present lying fallow in the Assam valley. Therefore this should be tackled at once. But who will do it? If I speak to the Food Department they say it is no business of theirs; the Agriculture Department say the same thing and refer me to the Home Department, who will perhaps say that they cannot interfere with provincial autonomy. But will the Government of India shirk their responsi-

[Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad.]

bility simply on account of the obstinacy of few individuals in Assam, when people in Bengal are dying of hunger and people in Travancore, Malabar, and other places are suffering so badly?

One thing has to be remembered that the quality of rice in the different places is different. The rice that is taken in Bengal grows only in Bengal and Assam and in damp climate and the rice grown in Upper India will not be consumed by the people of those provinces. Therefore simply to talk of growing more rice is meaningless; the quality of rice actually needed by famine province, has to be considered.

As regards this shortage of food and the removal of the line system, I find that Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Sjt. Gopinath Bardoloi, the then Premier of Assam, that the present line system was wholly undesirable and he also said that:

"Every effort should be made to avoid giving prominence to the communal aspect of it; essentially it is an economic question and should be tackled in an economic manner."

Miseries don't come alone. Another point in Bengal is that you took away their boats in pursuance of the denial policy. For the people of Bengal there are two essential articles of food, rice and fish. Unfortunately both of these things were taken away. Another factor which created difficulty was the influx of a large number of non-Bengalees in the departments of the Government of India and in military personnel, English and American. And they have to be fed very largely on the production of Bengal. These two additional factors—namely, influx of a large number of outsiders, and the taking away of boats—do not exist in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Therefore the conditions in those parts of the country were not so acute as in Bengal. Therefore, I strongly recommend, in order to avoid any future acute famine condition in Bengal—and I take it for granted that food shortage in Bengal has subsided only temporarily and may be revived at any time when there is slight failure in crop—(1) that Government should take steps to grow more rice in the cultivable land which is now available in Assam. (2) The Government should immediately provide boats to help the people of Bengal in fishing and transport. In certain parts of Bengal boats are the only means of transport and in order to facilitate that and also to provide some kind of living to people—for catching fish—Government should provide boats liberally. (3) The third thing which Government ought to realize is the fact that it is the responsibility of the Central Government to feed Calcutta. It is not the responsibility of the Bengal Government to feed Calcutta, as in Calcutta itself we have a large number of outsiders, mostly military who can afford to pay fancy prices for articles consumed by middle and higher class people. They can afford to buy all they want, and it is for this reason that prices have gone up abnormally as compared to Bombay and Delhi. And, therefore, unless the Government of India would take on themselves the responsibility of feeding Calcutta, it will not be possible for the Bengal Government, I am afraid, to do so. I would very strongly recommend to the Government of India to take action in the matter in order to avoid future famines. The troubles are not over; they are still there, and if the Government keeps silent over the matter, famine may recur. I say that the responsibility will be entirely ours and not that of the Government of Bengal. We have been hearing eloquent speeches, and we have had many debates on the food situation, there have been many committees and conferences also, but no action has been taken to relieve the people who are dying of starvation.

Then, I come to the question of distribution. First of all, distribution was in the hands of merchants and businessmen. Businessmen, unfortunately, have identified themselves with black markets. Therefore the responsibility shifted from the businessmen to officials. The officials are identifying themselves with the Defence of India Rules, and they are proving as inefficient as those who identified themselves with black markets. Both have failed. We have

now to try another method. You ought to associate a larger number of consumers themselves—non-official members—and they must work under the supervision of officials and with the help of businessmen. With the general supervision of officials, and with the advice of businessmen in actual work, consumers themselves should control distribution. Co-operative methods wherever possible may be tried.

Here is the Gregory Report. It says 'the Government ought to take full responsibility of the purchase'. The Government instead of taking the responsibility have changed the name; instead of calling the 'purchasing agents' they now say 'clearing agents'. Change of name does not make the scheme more efficient, Government ought to take direct responsibility of procurement. I gave notice of a Bill in which there were three points which I mentioned. One was about procurement. I say that the procurement of food is the responsibility of Government. The second thing was that price should be fixed by the Government and everything should be sold within limits, and the penalty should be very heavy for those who do not observe the rules properly. The Food Member did not permit me to introduce the Bill.

My Honourable friend, Mr. Rao discussed the question of subsidy. I could not possibly consider that Government is in a position to give subsidy to the growers and cultivators in this country. It requires three times the present income of the Government of India to do so. You can only give subsidy to those persons who try to cultivate virgin soil but to give money to the growers in this country in order to reduce the purchasing price is a very novel method and I am surprised that an economist should propound this theory. The details are so many as Mr. Rao himself pointed out, we will not come to any conclusion till five years after the war.

Sir, there is one thing which has not been done by the Food Department. They have fixed the price at which Government would purchase food grains from the producers, but they have not fixed the price which consumers shall have to pay. They should see that the difference between the two prices is not very great. At present we find that the difference is sometimes as much as Rs. 2/-, which is really very great.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): It is now Quarter Past One. The Honourable Member has five minutes more and he can finish his speech after Lunch.

The Honourable Sir Sultan Ahmed: There is a general desire in the House that, you would kindly give us another half an hour after Five of the Clock today.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): If this meets the convenience of the Members, the House will sit till Half Past Five of the Clock today.

Some Honourable Members: Yes, Sir.

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

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

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Before lunch I submitted that the situation of rice in Bengal had not become stable. It is still precarious and we should make every attempt to grow more rice in the Assam Valley. Secondly we ought to provide as many boats as we possibly can to the people of Bengal to help them in fishing and in transport. Thirdly we have got in that area a very large number of Military personnel specially who require good food. The prices in Calcutta as quoted by two Honourable Members on the floor of the House are abnormally high as compared with other towns. To give relief to the people of Bengal, the Government of India ought to take responsibility to supply food to Calcutta and they should have large poultry farms, cattle farms and also vegetable farms and import livestock under

[Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad.]

lend-lease arrangements from America. It is very fair to the people of Bengal otherwise the prices will not come down however much you may subsidize.

The next thing I suggested was procurement. I said we follow the Gregory Report. If the Government will take the direct responsibility for purchases from the producers the complaints of large discounts to purchaser will be over. I do not see any difficulty in compulsory purchase. We follow the practice initiated by the Madras Government.

As regards prices, they ought to be stabilized. There is no question of giving a subsidy to growers. The prices should be economically fixed and there ought not to be any abnormal variation in prices from province to province and from district to district, and if a subsidy is necessary it ought to be given to stabilise the prices all over the country as we subsidise for stabilising exchange. Uniformity in prices and easy transport will close down black markets.

No doubt the situation has very much improved but the power behind the Food Department is still the combine of the grain dealers. They are a powerful body and I do not know whether the Food Department will ever be strong enough to break this monopoly. In the case of gram, it was declared by every province as an article not wanted. The moment the Food Department declared it open to free trade every province purchased it. It seems that this was arranged by the combine of the grain dealers.

The next thing is the question of distribution. . . .

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): You have one minute more.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: . . . in places where we have the rationing card. The system prevalent in Delhi is hopelessly inefficient. If a person happens to come on a Saturday evening he will have to go without food for two days. He will not be able to get his card till Monday. There are so many other difficulties, the consumers must have their say. The officials don't appreciate the needs of consumers. The consumers should regulate the distribution. If you leave it to businessmen alone. . . .

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

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: . . . there will be dishonesty. If you leave it to officials alone. . . .

Mr. Satya Narayan Sinha (Darbhanga *cum* Saran: Non-Muhammadan): There will be greater dishonesty.

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: . . . constant application of Defence of India Rules. But leave it to the consumers under the advice of the officials and the help and experience of businessmen. I shall discuss the difficulties of transport on other occasion.

Mr. Manu Subedar: No one doubts the great business experience that the Food Member brings with him or his genuine sincerity to tackle the problem entrusted to him. But he must excuse non-officials if they take the food policy and the food administration of the Government of India and the Provincial Governments as a whole during the last five years.* Sir, the figures given by Mr. Tyson this morning were really very reassuring though why he takes credit for the Grow More Food campaign I do not know, as I have got here the Report of the Marketing of Rice in India and Burma published in 1941, page 482, in which in the years 1937-38 the acreage under rice was above 79 million acres and the production of rice was 31 million tons and 29½ million tons. But I would rather rely on what he said this morning and what he said means that there is enough food in this country and if that is so. . .

Mr. N. M. Joshi: No.

Mr. Manu Subedar. . . . the responsibility for the distress in any part of the country will be that Government's. On the other hand the European Group is in the habit of trying to confuse and brow-beat the Indian side and the cry of population has been raised. Let me dispose of it in a minute. On

- the one hand over 3 millions have been taken away as combatants and non-combatants. Perhaps 1 million of them are dead. Two to three millions are dead on account of famine and diseases and in any case the new births since the war are infants and they are not likely to consume even the very limited ration which the Food Member offers. Therefore the problem is a problem which should be and could be considered without bringing the red herring of population across it, which has been attempted. The wisest remark which was made on the whole of this debate was by my friend Mr. Siva Raj, when he said that the entire food difficulty arose on account of the war. Mr. Siva Raj wanted to exonerate the Government of India and he said it was due to the war and what could the Government of India do? As a matter of fact the trouble started with the denial policy in Bengal when 26,000 boats were confiscated and actually grain was exported from Calcutta in Bengal. It was taken away from the villages. Since the beginning of the war the entire concern of this Government has been to get the necessary military supplies. They have left the civilian population to fend for itself like chickens in a coop or sardines in a tin. This lack of foresight on their part is responsible for the various troubles we are experiencing. The Honourable the Food Member would have served Government as well as the country much better if he dwelt a little more on the lack of power of himself and his Government and their unwillingness to exercise this power at the proper moment.

Sir, in this country we are always at war. We are at war with poverty, hunger and disease and in this war all the people through this country, irrespective of party-politics, are at one. Even Mr. Griffiths had to say that the food problem ought to be now considered as important as the war itself! This is our war and if the Honourable the Food Member would only exercise the powers which he has or ask for more powers which he has not and if the Government were really active, the position would be very much better.

Now, Sir, I shall dwell on some of the mistakes, and some of the omissions on the part of the Government which have really accentuated the trouble and from the nemesis of which we are not still free. For one thing, Sir, Government have got an enlightened doctor, an economic Adviser who has produced a prescription for them. But what has happened? The report is probably going between the various Departments. Probably the Finance Department had something to say, the Agricultural Department had something to say or the Political Department had something to say and by the time they have made up their mind as to what could be done, much precious time is lost and it is a pity that even now Government have failed to act up to their own report, to the advice given by their own doctor. Why have the Government, may I ask, failed to import the quantity of food which is necessary and which was recommended and for which public bodies pressed on all sides? Because they have not the spine, they have not the will, they had no desire, they had not the humanity to see what would happen to the civilian population in this country. They were entirely concerned with the war. In the beginning of the war there were people who were war-mad, who thought of nothing but the war, who would not allow anybody to say a word outside the war issue. I have heard, Sir, from an officer who was returning from Syria that he had a fight with a British Officer on the boat in the docks of Bombay as the boat was entering, because that British officer said that famine will help recruiting and this was before the Bengal famine. There were, as I said, people who were war-mad and so they entirely ignored the requirements and the necessities of the civilian population of this country.

Take the position of the Government of India *vis-a-vis* the Provincial Governments. Sir Homi Mody came to our Chamber, so did Mr. Sarker, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar and other Members in succession including the Honourable the Food Member. We always raised the question: When you could, why don't you do something with the Provinces which have a surplus

[Mr. Manu Subedar.]

and see that there is a just and proper distribution throughout India? They said that there was the difficulty of Provincial Autonomy. I do not know (because the number now exceeds many hundreds) the number of Ordinances which have been issued and which have cut across not only the legislative authority of this House but also the legislative and administration authority of all the Provincial Legislatures and the Ministries. I cannot understand, Sir, how the Government of India came to regard the food position as not important enough to enable them to exercise the powers which they have exercised in less important fields, according to some of us in most obnoxious fields.

The Food Member was congratulating himself that the surplus Provinces are now falling into line so far as rationing is concerned but have they fallen into line so far as the release of their surplus produce is concerned? Is it not a fact that very many of them indulged in open profiteering, some of them added to the price of the food, which they permitted to be exported, several crores of rupees and dispensed with an old outstanding debt and they set such a bad example that several Indian State administrations in various parts of the country found this a golden opportunity. They, in their turn, robbed their own peasants of the food produced and they exported it at a very heavy price. This did not end there. If the Government of India had shown strength all these evils would not have arisen. In the surplus provinces there was a very strong tendency towards hoarding. Merchants held back commodities in the expectation of a rise in prices. Lorry-drivers, station masters, coolies, porters and others were threatened that if they helped in the export of food from that particular place they would be penalised. The Government of India did not act in time and a great psychological harm was done, first by the denial policy in Bengal and afterwards by the speculation, the hoarding and the holding back in the expectation of better prices, which took place in the various provinces.

The Government of India showed themselves weak with regard to His Majesty's Government. They did not convince His Majesty's Government of the necessity of the importation of food which was urged from all quarters. They are still in communication with His Majesty's Government and though Sir Henry French has come and gone, I hope the Honourable the Food Member will be able to tell us whether there is going to be a pleasant and welcome outcome of this mission.

Sir, they could not get shipping for food: that was the excuse. May I ask what was the necessity for whisky in this country, whisky which the Commerce Member said was food to some people! May I ask why have cosmetics and soaps arrived in Bombay in such large quantities and why are steel and iron and piping and other things arriving in Bombay in steamer loads. Does this House know that under the plea of consumer goods whole steamer loads have arrived in Bombay of various classes of goods which may be needed in this country but some which are not needed, such for example as 2 million kerosene lamps. Kerosene lamps have been imported into this country when it is well known that the people have not got the kerosene to burn them and they are lying there on somebody's account. They have eaten up valuable shipping space. What were the Honourable the Food Member and his predecessors doing when all this was occurring. Why were they so spineless?

Take the next point. When they convinced His Majesty's Government that some food was wanted for India what did they get? They got barley, which the Government of Bombay was compelled to buy. That barley was only barley in the sense in which some scientists would say that it belongs to the same generic family. It was not barley and it was not eatable by human beings. Its entire cost was debited to the Bombay Government who were compelled to purchase it and of course in their turn the Government of India argued "What can we do, we have been compelled to purchase it".

That was not all. Then came what is known as the small red wheat from Canada. Those are products which human beings never consumed in the past and which they will never consume in the future but which my unfortunate province had to accept at full value and dispense to the population. The Government of India had not the courage nor the strength or spirit to resist that offer and to tell His Majesty's Government that this would not do. We made a suggestion at one time that Indian wheat should not be sent out to Russia, Middle East, North Africa and Italy. We suggested that instead of importing from Australia for India and sending out Indian wheat why don't you do this way, *vis.*, making a prohibition of the export of Indian wheat and let Australia supply these things directly; but the Government of India would not accept, they were not willing, they did not see the humanity, they did not see the wisdom of the suggestion. Sir, even very late, even in the course of this year we have been urging the complete prohibition of the export of ground-nut, which is in substitution for other foods a very valuable food product. What is the position? The Government of India could not do anything. Why? Because the U. K. C. C. was concerned. It was the U. K. C. C. who took the food from here for Russia; when the Ukraine was gone it was the U. K. C. C. which took ground-nut from here—very badly needed for the population of Malabar and elsewhere. It would be a most wonderful substitute for other foods and as an ancillary food: . .

Prof. N. G. Ranga: And manure also.

Mr. Manu Subedar: My friend reminds me that even now the Government of India and the Department of Agriculture is so slack, so negligent of its normal duties that it permits the export of agricultural manure, when on the one hand it tries to grow more food—more food can be grown in the country if more manure was made easily available; but the manure is taken away from this country at a time when it is most needed in this country.

• Sir, Government missed the psychological factors, as I said. What is the use of the Food Member congratulating himself that Rs. 13-12 is the stabilised price in Bengal? Does he know that even when Rs. 2-8 was the price per maund, there were millions in this country on the margin of starvation, barely making a living, barely getting food? If they were starving on Rs. 2/8 a maund, does he not imagine what the state of starvation would be when the price is Rs. 13-12? And this is the price which has been brought down! My Honourable friend will not dispute with me that the price reached as high as Rs. 50 and Rs. 70 in Dacca and Chittagong during the worst troubles. The psychological factor therefore is that the prices must be brought down. They must be brought down, not in a manner to hurt the cultivator, but they must be brought down from the inflationary factors which have affected it. Who is the greatest culprit with regard to inflation? I do not merely refer to the note printing by the Honourable the Finance Member; I also refer to the railway charges. I refer to the profiteering over materials supplied to Bengal, indulged in by the Government of India themselves, about which, when Mr. Suhrawardy made a big fight, the Honourable Finance Member said he will disgorge and make good. Government profiteering of every description by anybody should stop; they should set the example. I as representing the commerce of India in this House will say without hesitation that they should set an example which others can follow; and if there is anybody not willing to follow that example in the matter of food, down with him. Take any measures you like and we shall be with you.

Time does not permit me to deal with numerous points which my friend Dr. Rao raised. They are of course important points; but the question is whether the points were raised by my friend, Dr. Rao, in order to come to a solution, or are they merely raised in order to tell us that you are thinking about them. What is the use of your continuing to think if the harm happened in the interval?

I have two or three suggestions to make and I say that I am addressing myself in this not merely to the Food Member but to the committee of the

[Mr. Manu Subedar.]

Viceregal Council which is going into this at higher levels. Let it be remembered that I am speaking on higher levels also and with every desire that the policy of the Government of India in the matter of food should succeed. We are not here out to deflect you from the policy you have undertaken. We are here to support you and to make suggestions both here and outside, at any time when you need it. The Centre should bear the cost of supplying food at the same price to consumer as it purchases from the farmer, the freight, deterioration and administration. The first thing I would suggest is, that instead of conundrums which my friend Dr. Rao has expounded, I would suggest that when food moves from a surplus to a deficit province, it should move down on railway material rates: this will be some small assistance in the matter of freight. The railway revenues are now swollen to unnatural figures and this would be a very legitimate and proper use, particularly as the railways of India are even now giving concessions. . . .

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): You have got two minutes more.

Mr. Manu Subedar: They are giving concessions to military movements to your war. There is no reason why for this purpose the Honourable the Food Member if he showed strength and if he had, as I believe he would have, the support of all his Indian colleagues, why he should not get this.

I would say a word briefly about milk and animals. It is my belief—and I challenge the Government to produce figures to the contrary—that more animals are slaughtered in this country than are being produced by the natural process. You can only supplement them by importation. If not, the grow-more-food campaign and the powerful array of figures quoted by Mr. Tyson would next year be a very sorry tale. This is the catastrophe lurking, in my opinion, and I think it merits and deserves complete examination and I should have brought to light many more facts here if I had the time.

The next question is about corruption and profiteering. By whichever door it enters your house, that is, this country, it is bad. It is a bad heritage and it will take years for our people to overcome this; and I say, whether it is in the central departments, in the people who give permits for transport, people who handle procurement, people who concern themselves with distribution, whether central or provincial, the blame comes to this Government and this Government ought to arm itself with powers as my friend Mr. Abdul Qaiyum suggested. About the subsidy which is wanted, it is not difficult to find out who are the most fit people to whom you should give it. Start with common humanity: you will soon discover the man who cannot pay for his food, not only at 13-12 which he cannot pay but at pre-war prices. Give him first the food he requires. Do not argue about it—as to which department will do it or from where the funds will come; give him food. It is a tragedy and it is a blight on British rule in this country that human beings should die for want of a little food; and I hope the Honourable the Food Member and his colleagues would wake up and would show strength, would make up for their past omissions and would put the matter right.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Sir, I listened with due attention the speech made by the Honourable Food Member a few days ago. I rise now to point out some of the omissions and errors in that speech and to make a few observations on the food policy of the Government. The Honourable the Food Member did not say anything about the magnitude of the great disaster which was the greatest in India since 1771. Nor did he make even a passing reference to the after-effects of the famine of last year. It is known to careful observers that the famine of last year not only carried away millions of persons from the unfortunate province of Bengal, but left the remainder of the population in a debilitated and devitalised condition. The result is that this year this devitalised population is unable to resist the onslaught of diseases like malaria and cholera, and are falling easy victims to them. Thus we find

that the famine took a heavy toll of human lives last year and is taking another heavy toll this year.

But what is the Government doing to prevent further loss of life? Very little. Medicines are not available in many parts of the country and where they are available the prices are so high as to be beyond the reach of the poor people. The policy followed by the Government of Bengal is the old policy of callousness and complacency and their criminal negligence is as great this year as it was last year.

Sir, the devastation which has been caused by the famine can be gathered from the reports of persons who have visited the villages during the last few months. I am one of those who paid visits to some of these 3 P. M. unfortunate villages and I found that most of the mud huts in which the poor people live are in a state of ruin and the poor people find it difficult to protect themselves from rain or the cold wind. In the riverside villages, the people have no occupation left to them because their boats were taken away. In the villages where weavers predominate, there is no occupation for them because of the high price of yarn. I could multiply instances, but time will not permit me to do so. In a word, I must say that it is a mistake to suppose that the famine is over. If technically, deaths from starvation are no more, deaths from the after-effects of starvation are still there and in very large numbers.

Now, coming to the figures given by my Honourable friend with regard to the prices of rice, I say that they are only partially but not wholly correct. It is true that the sub-divisional average of prices of rice is in the neighbourhood of Rs. 13 but the prices which prevail in some of the deficit areas are higher than those mentioned by my Honourable friend. I may point out that, even if you take the figure of Rs. 13 per maund all round, it is needless to tell anybody who has even a very nodding acquaintance with the economic system of the country that the price level is today nearly four times as high as that of the pre-war normal year. I do not want that the price level of rice and other foodgrains should go back to the pre-war level, but certainly further substantial reduction in prices is urgently called for. Otherwise, the poor people will not be able to get a sufficiency of food and there will be more deaths either directly or indirectly.

What about Calcutta? My Honourable friend failed to mention the case of Calcutta. In that city, the price fixed is Rs. 16/4 per maund. What is the justification for maintaining the price of rice at such a high figure in Calcutta? The residents of Calcutta are not all rich people. There are manual labourers, small artisans and the poorer sections of the middle-class. These are being hit very hard by the high price of rice which prevails in Calcutta.

Then, Sir, my Honourable friend does not mention at all the prices of other articles of food, mainly what is known as protective food—milk, milk-products, fish and vegetables. The prices of these articles are 4 or 5 times higher than they were last year. Now, what are the causes of the high prices of these articles of food. Let us take milk first. Pure milk is not available even at the price of one rupee per seer in any part of Bengal. Now, the real reason for this is the great slaughter of cows. In fact, the slaughter of cows in Bengal was greater than in any other province of India. And what was the object—to feed the military. Then, in the case of fish, there also the demand of the military has a priority over the demand of the civil population. As regards vegetables, the same thing happens. Now, taking all kinds of food together, it is clear that the total cost of food at the present day is much greater than that of last year. The question is: How long can the people suffer from this state of things? The remedy must come, and a remedy can come if the Government make separate arrangements for the supply of food for the military and their entourage. If that is not done, the situation in Bengal will become even more serious in future than it is at the present day.

[Dr. P. N. Banerjee.]

Sir, my Honourable friend seeks to depict a picture of the province which is rosy, but I find that the picture is not only not rosy at all but is a most dismal one. My friend points out that there has been an improvement in the prices of foodgrains and he claims credit for his Government and the Provincial Governments for that. But to whom should the credit go? To Providence. I frankly admit that the Central Government did something to relieve the distress of the starving millions of Bengal at a very critical period and to that extent thanks are due to them. But so far as the Provincial Government is concerned, I am not prepared to say that. There the same bungling policy has continued; the system of procurement of foodgrains is a faulty one, as has been pointed out by a committee appointed by the Government of Bengal. Price control has become a joke as well as a scandal. And rationing has become a source of great inconvenience as it has been worked in a manner which is extremely troublesome to people, also very bad food is being supplied in the rationing shops. Above all, there are huge quantities of foodgrains which have been wasted, and the Committee to which I referred has condemned the system of storage. What a pity is it that before the eyes of the starving population huge quantities of foodgrains were and are still rotting. This is a sin against God and a crime against man.

Sir, added to these serious defects in the administration the Government of Bengal has not been able to show any competence in the matter of dealing with the food situation and corruption is rampant throughout the administration. This is so far as the present situation is concerned; what about the future?

Sir, it seems to me that the Honourable the Food Member is taking a short-sighted view of the future. He hopes to tide over the present trouble, but is the mere tiding over of the present trouble enough? Certainly not. Bengal is at the present moment faced with a three-fold problem. The first is the problem of rehabilitation; the second is the problem of re-vitalization; and the third is the problem of the prevention of the recurrence of the famine. If this three-fold problem is to be solved to the satisfaction of all, greater energy will have to be put forth into the work and a well thought-out policy will have to be adopted. Now, towards the achievement of this end, I should like to make a few suggestions. In the first place, I should like to suggest that the intervention of the Government of India should not cease but should be continued as a part of a consistent and continuous policy. Secondly, I should suggest that greater financial assistance should be given to the province of Bengal by the Central Government, by the British Government and by the United Nations through the United Relations Relief and Re-habilitation Fund. Thirdly, I would suggest that the Administration of Bengal should be placed on an efficient and honest basis. Fourthly, I would suggest that normal trade channels should be utilised to a greater extent in the future than has been the case in the past. Fifthly, greater facilities of transport should be provided. Sixthly, the importation of foodgrains from abroad should be continued until the whole country is self-sufficient in respect of her food supply. Seventhly, the production of food within the country should be greatly accelerated and the 'grow-more-food' campaign should no longer be a paper propaganda but should tackle the realities of the situation. Lastly, Sir, I would suggest that a long-range policy should be formulated by the Government and actively pursued.

With regard to this last suggestion, it was made by me nearly two years ago; if it had been accepted by the Government there would have been a considerable improvement in the situation by this time. But better late than never. My Honourable friend now speaks eloquently of this long-range policy and he tells us that he would be able to supply us with "more food, better food, balanced food". These are eloquent words, but words

~~cannot~~ very little value if they are not translated into action. I hope and ~~trust~~ he will do his best to translate his words into action.

But so far the Government in this country has failed to perform its primary duty, namely, that of saving human lives from starvation. And what is the result of that? The result is, as has been pointed out by my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths, himself a Britisher, that there has been a considerable "lowering of the prestige of the Government in the eyes of the world". Is it too much to expect that Government will now take steps which will prevent a further lowering of its prestige and will adopt such measures as will help to raise this prestige in the eyes not only of the Indian people but of the peoples of other countries as well?

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions Muhammadan Rural): Mr. Deputy President, let me say at the outset that so far as the food situation in the country is concerned, a narration of hunger and starvation, disease and death, have become an annual feature of this Honourable House. The matter has been under discussion for the last three days and I do not think there has been any Honourable Member of this House, at least on this side, who has not narrated a tale of woe of what has been happening throughout India.

Sir, yesterday, my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths, who I notice is not here, made a very eloquent speech, except for his comparison of conditions in England with those prevailing in this country. My Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths stated that in England, everything with regard to the question of food was perfect. He blamed the administration of this country as well as the people of India for the inefficient manner in which the food problem has been tackled. As far as the people of India are concerned; he asked us that we should be active. My Honourable friend Sir Cowasjee Jehangir also suggested that the people really should come forward and try to eradicate all the evils that exist in the administration of food. Both these Honourable Gentlemen counted without the host, which is the British Government in this country and which is British domination in every walk of life in India. Sir, I am afraid that these two gentlemen who try to put some blame on the people of India really do not know the real conditions that prevail in the land. They do not come into contact with so many "tin gods" who are part and parcel of this machinery, the Government of India. These "tin gods" do not like any interference or any helpful co-operation or suggestion from the people in this country. I will give you one instance. It is a very recent one. The gentleman who is in charge of the Food administration and Rationing in U.P. went to Meerut. The joint secretary of the local Muslim League took a deputation to him and complained to him about the difficulties that the people were experiencing in securing fuel. He listened to their complaints and after that he asked them, 'are there any complaints with regard to food or any other matter?' Now, Sir, this young man, the joint secretary of the Muslim League said: "Yes, but I have no personal experience. I have heard it stated that the food ration which is being distributed or sold in the ration shops, is in a number of cases unwholesome." This officer asked the joint secretary to go along with him. He took him to the bazaar of Meerut. Unfortunately for our joint secretary, most of the shops were closed, but there were one or two open. So, he took him there and said "look here, what is wrong with this grain. This is all right". The young joint secretary told him: "I told you beforehand that it was not my personal experience, but that it was what I had heard, and as most of the shops are closed today, you really cannot say that these complaints have no foundation whatsoever". What was the result? An order was given to the police to prosecute this young man under the Defence of India Rules. With what face can the Government come forward and ask the people to co-operate with them? You do not want any co-operation. When they want to be helpful to you, you prosecute them. Sir, my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths—who I am glad to see is present here now—blamed the administration of this country for the inefficient manner in which the food

[Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan.]

problem was being tackled. I wonder if he really realised that he was in fact putting the blame on the Britishers inasmuch as the Governor General of India who has all the powers is a Britisher, and the Governors of the Provinces, who are really the persons who administer those Provinces, in spite of the Ministeries that may be functioning, are all Britishers. If this administration of food has failed in this country, it shows the bankruptcy of statesmanship and administration on the part of the British people. My Honourable friend may think that as there are so many Indians in the Executive Council, and in the services, therefore, really the blame would be or at least most of the blame would be shared by them. With due respect to the great powers and the great influence that the Honourable Members of the Executive Council of the Governor General of India enjoy, let me say that all the key posts of the administration are in the hands, not of these gentlemen, but in the hands of the "steel frame" to which my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths belonged once upon a time. It is true that in that steel frame, we do find some men who are made of Tata steel, but it goes without saying that it is the—"British steel" that is ruling this country, and if there is any defect in the administration of food in this country, the blame lies on the British people and the British Government.

Sir, let me dispose of the speech of my Honourable friend Dr. Rao to whom I listened with great attention. I congratulate him on the torrential eloquence of his speech. He put to the Honourable Members of this House a number of posers. I thought that it was for the experts to answer difficult questions, and it was for laymen to put before them their difficulties. But in this case, Mr. Deputy President, the process was reversed. Surely he does not expect me to give him an answer to all the questions he put in the short space of time that is at my disposal. But let me tell him that on his own confession he realises that the question of giving subsidy is a matter which cannot be ruled out. He himself admitted that this matter was not only under consideration, but under active consideration, of the Food Department. Therefore it was that a proposal was made from this side of the House that the question of subsidy should be considered and that subsidy should be given to bring down the high prices now prevailing which are beyond the reach of the poor people. There are of course two ways of doing it. One method is to bring down the prices of foodstuffs and the other method is, before doing that, to bring down the prices of all those things which are required by the cultivator. You cannot bring down the prices of foodstuffs if the cultivator has to buy all his requirements at fabulous prices. My Honourable friend was referring to the case of industrial labour. My Honourable friend is an economic expert and I hope he will forgive me for saying that there was something in his mind which he left unsaid. But he said, "Will industrial labourers be willing to accept less wages than what they are getting at present?" I will tell my Honourable friend Dr. Rao, with the limited knowledge of economics that I and other Members on this side possess, that it is not the amount of money that you give to a man which really matters but it is the purchasing power of the money which is important. Therefore, Sir, I am afraid, the speech of my Honourable friend Dr. Rao has not been very helpful. We expected that an expert would give us the benefit of his expert knowledge instead of putting posers to us.

Sir, I read the speech of the Honourable the Food Member with great attention. He has tried to take credit for his department and for himself for what Government have been able to achieve, which in my opinion is mighty little, and wherever there has been an uneasy situation he has glossed over it. He referred to the question of wastage and he admitted that there has been a lot of wastage. I think the House would have appreciated it still more if he had given us some figures of the wastage that has taken place during the last year. We want to know what is the quantity of foodstuffs that has been wasted due to the inefficient manner in which the Government of

India have administered this department. I looked at the speech most carefully; I read it more than once, but I did not find any figures with regard to the quantity of foodstuff that has been wasted due to the negligence of either the officials or the agents of the Government.

Of course the Government of India are past masters in the art of appointing committees, holding conferences, and importing experts. They always appoint a committee to inquire into a matter when the situation no longer requires it. We are told that they have imported an expert from the Middle East to help the Government of India in the matter of avoiding wastage of foodstuff. Sir, this reminds me of a story. In the olden days,—and I suppose even now,—in every village you have a *buj-bujjakar*, a man who knows everything, master of all. Once upon a time a young boy climbed up to the top of a tree; he had done this for the first time in his life and he did not know how to come down. So there was great confusion and the villagers did not know how to bring that boy down from that tree. The whole village collected there and at last word was sent to this wise man of the village, the expert, to come and make a suggestion as to how that boy was to be brought down. He came, scratched his head, rubbed his eyes and said, "Yes, it is a difficult situation, but please bring a rope". So a man brought a strong rope. The expert said, "Throw it up to that boy". So they did it and asked the boy to catch hold of it. The boy did it and the men below told him to tie it tightly round his waist. The boy did that also and this wise man asked about half a dozen men to pull the rope. The men pulled the rope, the boy fell down and died. These people then said to this wise man, "What have you done?" He looked very sad and said, "My friends, this boy's time had really arrived because in hundreds of cases I have pulled out men by the same method from wells". Sir, they have imported an expert who knows nothing about the conditions of this country, nothing about the climate here, and he is going to advise the Government of India as to how to save all this wastage of foodstuff. I may tell the Honourable the Food Member that in this country agriculture has been and is the chief industry of the people, and for thousands of years they have done nothing but cultivate the soil. The villager knows how to protect his foodstuff; of course the agents that the Government of India employed were not expected to know it. Therefore instead of importing experts from outside it would have been much better if the Government of India had made use of local talent and village talent in this respect.

Sir, in this amendment moved by Mr. Essak Sait we have criticised the policy of the Government of India in the matter of procurement. Sir, their procurement has been not only ineffective but wasteful; and I hope the Honourable the Food Member will correct me if I give any wrong narration of a case which has come to my knowledge. I understand that the Government of Bengal arranged with the Nepalese Government to procure in Nepal one hundred thousand tons of rice. A certain price was fixed—I have got all the figures and if my Honourable friend would ask me I will give further details, but I do not think at this stage it is necessary—a certain price was fixed for rice as well as for paddy. The Central Government, with all the authority that it possesses and which it always uses in the wrong direction, ordered the Government of Bengal to take their hands off this deal, and they appointed their own agent to buy this rice in Nepal, who bought this rice at a price which was Rs. 2/12 per maund higher in the case of rice, and about Rs. 1/8 per maund higher in the case of paddy. Thereby, Mr. Deputy President, the Government suffered a loss of nearly 40 lakhs. Then what happened? That is not the end of the story. This man had never dealt in such big quantities of rice,—he had probably got this contract for reasons which are either unknown or too well known,—he had never handled such big quantities in his life before. There was a big amount of wastage. I understand that the value of wastage of the rice amounts to nearly 30 lakhs of rupees, and now the Government of India are trying to see that this loss is not borne by this "innocent" man but by either the Central Government or the Governments to whom the rice has been or will be supplied. Apart from this loss in money, I suggest that it is criminal that such big

[Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan.]

amounts of foodstuff should be lost when people are dying of starvation, when people are suffering from various diseases due to malnutrition. This is, Sir, only one instance, and I dare say that there are hundreds within the personal knowledge of a number of members of this Honourable House.

As regards distribution, Mr. Deputy President, it is the same tale. I do not have to give any instances in this respect because the Honourable Member for Food himself admits the difficulties that they are still experiencing with regard to the carriage of foodstuffs from the surplus to the deficit areas.

With regard to price control, I submit that if you control the price of only certain cereals and do not control the price of other foods that are required for human consumption, you are really not dealing with the problem effectively. My Honourable friend, Mr. Griffiths, gave some instances from Calcutta, but let me tell him what is happening under the very nose of the Honourable the Food Member—in New Delhi. We see that in the *Statesman* certain prices are published, the prices of various articles of food including meat, eggs, fish, fruit and so on for the next week. But nobody is selling those articles at those prices; nobody can get them. So, that is no remedy. Of course it serves one purpose. If and when public raises a cry, Government will come forward and say that there is control. They will take cuttings from the *Statesman* to whom, I suppose, they pay a handsome amount for publishing these, attach those cuttings to the files and they will say, 'look here, we have fixed the prices'. Sir, it is really the most inefficient manner in which this problem is being tackled. Everybody knows that cereals are not the only food that is consumed by people in this country. It is supplemented by so many other articles and unless you are able to control all articles of food, you will not be able to solve this problem which is facing the country. Sir, the Honourable Member for Food gave us some figures with regard to the quantity of ration that is being given in various areas. He told us that in Cochin it was 6 ounces or 5½ ounces. 6 ounces really means so little that even I think my Honourable friend Mr. Griffiths' dog would eat more than that. What is the use of giving so little food to people and then feeling complacent about it. All the disaster that we hear of prevailing in the various parts of the country is due to the fact that the amount of food which is being given to the people even under the ration scheme—I am not talking of those poor people who cannot get any food whatsoever—is so little that it is really impossible for a human body to resist any infectious germs. My Honourable friend, Mr. Tyson, stated that they have grown, I think I am right in saying, 6 million tons of rice more than what they used to do before the war.

Sir Cowasjee Jehangir: All food put together.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Yes.

Mr. Deputy President (Mr. Akhil Chandra Datta): You have got two minutes more.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Sir, according to the Gregory Report, I understand that what was required was only about a million tons from outside India and according to the figures that my Honourable friend, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, gave us India used to import only 1½ to 2 million tons of rice from Burma. So, in fact, we have got much more rice in India today than what we had before.

An Honourable Member: Where does this go?

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: My Honourable friend asks where does it go. I can only think that probably all of it or most of it goes in wastage which figure the Honourable the Food Member has not given us.

Sir, the negligence with regard to food is indeed criminal in this country. There are indeed a number of other matters which could be dealt with by me, but as you have just said I have very little time at my disposal, I will wind up by saying that as far as the question of solving the food problem in this country is concerned, there is no party and no individual who has refused his co-operation to the Government. If you have not been able to take advantage of that offer the fault does not lie with us; the fault lies with you.

The fact is that your officials who are "the nests of corruption" do not want any outside examination of their administration and that is the reason why they neither welcome nor do they encourage any public co-operation in this matter. Sir, it is a well-known fact—everybody knows it, may be that the Honourable the Food Member does not know it, or would pretend not to know it—that as far as the Food Department is concerned, it is rife with corruption and nothing effective is being done by the Government of India or their agents, the Provincial Governments, to eradicate this evil. Unless and until there is a marked change in your outlook and in your policy, this situation would continue to be serious and the hundreds and thousands of people will continue to suffer for want of food and from disease and deaths from starvation will go on;—the blood of all these people, the miseries of all these people, will be on your heads.

Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai (Bombay Northern Divisions: Non-Muhammadian Rural): Mr. Deputy President, Sir: I rise to support the amendment which in collaboration with my Honourable friends, most of the Non-Official Members of this House, we have placed for the consideration of this body. For it is not uncommon that the Government instead of saying positively what their policy is, bring in a most neutral and non-committal motion before the House. When the question of South Africa was before us the Honourable Member moved that the situation may be taken into consideration. When an equally important question comes before the House relating to food, the Honourable Member in charge says the question may be taken into consideration, as if it is no part of their responsibility formally as to what their policy of case is. But notwithstanding the fact, that is the manner in which they want it to put before the House so that ultimately they may be able to defend themselves by what you may call a mere argument and not a question of policy or principle. Hence it is that in future I do commend to this House that they will demand that whenever the Government puts forward a proposal it should be in terms definite, it should be in terms affirmative and it should be in terms in which one is able to say to what extent there is an alternative to that policy. What we are left with is this: that you are asked to say that this is a matter to be considered. Of course, who denies it? And therefore we are obliged to put forward an amendment in the form in which we have done—that all you say is that it should be considered: we say, having considered we are of this opinion which we have put forward and embodied in that amendment. So much, Sir, for the form and manner in which questions of this grave and pre-eminent importance are being dealt with on the other side of the House.

There is the first and foremost observation which I wish to make. Even during war time, side by side with fighting the war, it must be the duty of the State, if it wants to fight the war efficiently to see to it that the health, the strength and the morale of the rest of the population is maintained side by side with those who are fighting in the actual front. That is the accepted duty of all the States who are now fighting the war. But unlike them all, so far as the Indian administration of today is concerned, they are, as the Honourable the Food Member put it, in a stage of experiment, and there is no greater condemnation of the manner in which the matter is dealt with in that during a period of some two to three years there have been three successors in this office. Can you imagine, Sir, that a problem of this magnitude, a problem of this importance, is merely handed from man to man because I believe, following the traditions of the steel frame, so long as a man can affix to his name the letters I.C.S. as he sees himself, he is fit for every subject on earth. That is the manner in which this problem has been tinkered with during the last three years, at least from the time it was perceived that it became a real acute problem in this country. It is a subject of the first and foremost importance to be considered. The Honourable the Food Member could not have selected a better *nom-de-plume* for himself. The Honourable the Food Member told us it is time to ring the curtain down on what has happened in the past in Bengal. I quite agree. It suits him to say so. It suits him to ask everybody else to think so, but can this country consider

[Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai.]

the question today except in the background of what has actually happened? You have had many speeches from this side of the House regarding the condition of the provinces from the Members of the constituencies to which they belong. You have been told that the ration now—wherever there is any rationing at all—varies from anything like six ounces to a pound. In other words, on their own admission, the amount of food they are able to supply with all the Herculean efforts they have made cannot maintain body and soul together. I think it is commonly accepted now that for a man or a woman who is a manual labourer, it is not possible to live, at all events live with any hope of doing any work for which they are intended, for anything less than a pound of cereal. If that is so, it is somewhat of a hardship for this Government to tell us, 'Oh, consider the problem which I am putting before you. All I have been able to do, with all the expert advice in my command is to be able to show that the amount of ration varies from six ounces to 16'. If that is the situation in which we find ourselves today, I do not think it requires any eloquent words to point out in what state we find ourselves in so far as this country is now concerned.

The next, Sir, we cannot forget the immediate background of this situation: that during the last year there has been a famine of an unprecedented character in this country. It has now been followed by epidemics which are not merely just an aftermath of that famine alone but the aftermath of the actual under-nutrition of this country during the last century. For indeed it is admitted by the spokesmen of Government themselves that 80 millions out of 400 millions are hungry in this land. It used to be also a commonly accepted fact that a large number of manual workers, landless labourers and the smaller farmers never get more than a meal a day, and still we are told that that is the only situation that has to be perpetuated in the future. That is not the problem: that is not the way to look at the problem. But indeed, if the under-nutrition is to be carried on, apart from the mal-nutrition that prevailed during the period of the famine, it is quite obvious that to call it a food policy is to insult the world, insult ourselves and insult the very language itself. If the policy is that those who starve should continue to starve, do you call that a policy of the Government? Can you have a greater condemnation of the Government itself?

On the other hand, it is now time—and the time came long ago, if there had been a popular Government in this country, the first great question in the scheme of any reconstruction whatever is to bring up the standard of life of the Indian man and woman in the street, in the factory and in the fields to a level certainly of two meals a day. And therefore it is that the problem of problems before the country is not merely a question of what is described as the Basic Plan. My Honourable friend took exception to what Mr. Abdul Qaiyum said as to what was the Basic Plan and I shall read out to you, Sir, from the papers circulated by the Department (page 9, paragraph 80) and this is their Basic Plan:

"In place of the formula still employed the Committee recommends that the following formula be adopted. Normal consumption requirements should be taken at the average of the estimated harvests of all the foodgrains over a five year period ending 31st March 1942 plus minus the imports and exports of the same period. Surpluses and deficits should be calculated on the basis of this normal consumption."

In other words the basic aim of those who are now in charge of this Department is to do no more than merely strike an average of the last five years. If that is their basic aim, they cannot expect us to congratulate them. My Honourable friend told the House that it was not a matter of self-complacency, it was not a matter of self-congratulation or, to be more accurate, self-advertisement. I would like him to choose what word he likes. The House will have to find out whether what he said coincides with any of those three words or all of them. But the fact remains that the Basic Plan is merely to reach what he calls the average of the last five years plus/minus the imports and exports, so that you do not know what it is on a particular item, because it varies with the desire to please our neighbours. We have to fight a war, we

have to be friendly with the Central part of Asia and even a little further off and therefore it is that whatever may happen to our children it does not matter but we have got to feed our friends and, as some people said, in a manner which does not commend itself I think even to those who set it. But we have to see that we create a market in the friendly countries. Those were the excuses given for the export of food from this country at a time when not only, at any rate, the same condition was prevailing here, namely, not one square meal a day for the average man but it was getting less and less from time to time. So that in the background of a famine, when more people died than people have died in many other countries in the actual fighting of the war itself, the sacrifice that the Indian people were made to make is something for which this Government is answerable. For indeed, not only have we fought in the fields of warfare contributing two million and more of men in the matter of depleting the Indian population, but also in the matter of war time food policy we have had to pay a price equivalent, (as we now know, nearly two million people died in famine and more than three million died in epidemics), so that if you have five million deaths to be accounted for by reason of this policy, you cannot afford to be complacent, unless you have reached the beatitude which the Honourable friends on the other side have done. Of course it is a beatitude which is their only shield, for, indeed, otherwise they could not face this House with the kind of problem which they have placed before us. Therefore it is that we are very sorry that the other side of the House cannot possibly ring down the curtain on the loss of five million lives so lightly as they seem to think. But whoever has thought of Indian life as life at all! They have always thought that so long as administration went on, so long as taxes were collected, so long as an enforced peace was reigning in this land, that was enough for the purposes of those who are ruling in this country. However, the time has come when the administration of this country must be in the hands of other persons who have a double claim to that situation, claim not merely because it is their inherent right but claim in order only that they may fulfil their responsibility to those for whom they labour and for whom they have got to labour. We cannot continue to have a Government which is entirely detached—they are completely detached. They have neither the popular support nor have the faith that they have any popular support or sympathy. They are carrying on an administration merely on paper as if in a kind of laboratory. That is the kind of administration that is bound to produce the results which we see today in this country.

You are all aware that the great Pusa Farm is no longer Pusa except in name. It has now been removed to somewhere in the neighbourhood of great Delhi. But what is the object of that experimental station, not merely the farm but all its little sisters spread out over the different parts of India. The object was that the yield in India of every kind of commodity that is produced should improve. You have here the figures officially authenticated and the result which you have today tells its own tale. "The crop of yield in pounds per acre: rice in India is 988, rice in China 2,433, rice in Japan 3,070, rice in the U.S.A. 1,680: and wheat 811 in India, 981 in China, 1,350 in Japan and 990 in the United States." We are at the lowest rung of the ladder in the matter of production in so far as the yield from our fields is concerned. During a period of one hundred years surely they were not waiting for a famine to come. It was their obvious duty to see to it that in so far at least as the stability of Indian life was concerned, even if they had done nothing in this country, they could at least have brought about one standard of life for the average man, so that when the day dawns and when he has had his labour and the sun goes down he would be able to say, at all events, that he has had one standard of life given to him. Standard of life is a matter to be cared for every where. The standard of life in India is what you are condemned to. That is the standard here. As against that here is an extract which I shall read out from your own records. Dr. MacLagan Gowrie, Director of Surveys in India, estimates that with large scale planning and in concert with the Central and Provincial Governments some 170 million acres of Barani land, i.e., land which is dependent on rains alone, could be brought into full cultivation.

[Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai.]

In other words, the problem is not merely giving us figures as to what my friend travelling to Lahore was able to get from a little surplus province: the problem is the real basic problem. The basic plan ought not to have been merely to cast the average of five years' production. The basic plan ought to have begun years and years ago, to bring a larger quantity of land under cultivation and a larger yield per acre, if they had only taken the trouble to do so. So far as these farms are concerned, I have visited one in Surat and I find they are merely luxuries. They carry out what are called experiments but I have never seen one of them reach the cultivator of the district at all. I have always felt that if this Government was at all concerned even with just the bare life of the people, the bare actual nominal proper existence of the people, we would not have been in the condition in which we are today. It is perfectly absurd for any Government to come and say "Oh, yes; but we did not anticipate this; we did not anticipate the famine". If you could not anticipate what is likely to happen, all that you can do when famine comes is to hold up your hands and say the famine has come: then why do you administer the country at all? Contrast that with the statement which Sir Henry French himself made on his departure from this country. The newspaper reporters asked him "Sir Henry, you have been here; you have made inquiries; did you find that there was a famine in this country costing millions of lives. Are you aware of that?" The only answer he gave is: "Such a thing is unthinkable in Britain". Imagine a country that does not produce enough food to supply its own population, and that country is fighting a war. India is fighting under conditions more or less laid down by the other side. In that country, while fighting a war, it was unthinkable that any single man will die of hunger. That is the situation there after six years of war. That is the pronouncement of the expert, the Secretary of the Food Department there, who came and told us here. Yet it is actually taken by the other side as if the war was a sufficient excuse for millions of deaths either from famine and hunger or from the subsequent effects of it, namely, malnutrition and under-nutrition and, therefore, of epidemics. The prime duty, therefore, of the Government is not merely just to govern, merely to maintain the steel frame and take taxes—88 crores a year budget used to come before this body year after year, apart from the 300 crores that will come now, if not, 400 crores, under the stress of the war; and we used to be told at the end of the year "Oh; 56 or 55 crores will be required for the army; and so much for the services; and as to the feeding of the children of this land, do what you like". That is how this administration has gone on; it is not a case of mere individual efficiency; it is not a case whether A is able or B is able; it is a case of entirely overhauling the manner in which the conditions of this country have got to be looked at, repaired and repaired immediately. Unless, therefore, the basic plan is that all available land which is culturable is brought under cultivation and the increase of yield per acre is brought up to the standard—if not of Japan because it is three times ourselves but even twice what it is now—I have not the smallest doubt that such a government would deserve well of their country. But a government that merely tells us "We will find a little from here and a little from there; and if it cannot be moved and if you starve we are very sorry",—that is a kind of empty sympathy which has absolutely no value; it does no credit to the giver and gives very little solace to the taker.

I come then to the next part of the problem I hope and trust that the Honourable the Food Member, when he rises to answer, will be able to tell us what his basic plan is. I have read out the document which he has promulgated; and we have put forward what we believe ought to have been done by this Government years and years ago. In England I am told and I found it from their documents that were published three years before the war began, they began to conserve food; they made it a problem of their own; so that countries which do not grow food make additions to their food production, get from elsewhere, and make it a matter of their duty in order that their population may be maintained by them in the matter of physical and ethical morale. But whose

business is it in this country to care either for the physical or the ethical morale of the Indian people? It is that which is the root cause; it is that callousness and that indifference, because this Government has gone on to no other purpose except merely to govern from the top.

To give you an illustration of the way in which my Honourable friends look at this matter. The Honourable Mr. Griffiths got up and said—he delivered undoubtedly as we have always accepted it a very glib speech, but he was very particular about saying one thing, and I would like the House to examine that in order that you may see what is the mind behind it. He said “Oh, yes; I agree your policy is good enough though your administration is bad and corrupt; but take care that the duty which the Central Government has undertaken, the task of feeding Calcutta—that should not be disturbed”. So far as the yield of rice in Bengal is concerned, I do not see that the 36 lakhs of people in Calcutta are any different to the rest of the population of Bengal. But I know why this demand is being made. It is this. “It does not matter what happens to you and the rest in the rural areas of the country, but we who live and who trade and who have industrial factories in and around Calcutta, we must be first fed, whatever happens to the rest of the land.” . . .

Mr. P. J. Griffiths (Assam: European): On a point of personal explanation; my industrial constituency is in Assam—not in Calcutta.

Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai: So far as the Europeans are concerned, I hope my learned friend absolutely understands that this quibbling is to no purpose. I was not talking of Mr. Griffiths personally—I suppose he will find food wherever he goes; he has not much difficulty about it. But the question was: Why was it he said it? I turned it over in my mind yesterday, why Calcutta was singled out for this particular purpose of a soft corner in the heart of the Central Government? Yes. It is of course the jute mills, it is the jute trade; it is the residence of the bulk of the Europeans who have very well prospered in this country—I do not object to their prospering, but I do object to any discriminatory treatment which they require for themselves and those by whose sweated labour they are probably hoping to make profits. It is that which has my objection. I have no objection to Calcutta as Calcutta: they are as good friends of mine as anybody else; but the point is that the rationing of the cities should have a better purpose than the purpose which one cannot help arriving at—not by any suspicious mind but by a process of reasoning. The reason why the cities are being rationed, and particularly the principal ones, is: “Oh, yes; we are fighting the war; we have got our industries situated there—what they call the essential industries—round about a few cities. What will happen if the labourers were not fed and the factories came to a stand still?” So that, while I admire the policy, I do not have the least objection to it if the rural areas were equally well treated with the cities. Who objects to it as a mere matter of administrative convenience? But if there is anything more than mere administrative convenience, that the cities may be preserved along with the industries which feed the war, and the rural areas may look after themselves, that is a matter that I am not prepared to accept. Hence it is that we come to the real cause of the problem, the problem of rationing the cities—on which one may congratulate one Member or the other—whoever devised it ought to know what happens in the rural areas today. Even in those areas which are supposed to be self-sufficient, if not deficient, even there the distribution is extremely poor. The administration is very much typified as Mr. Griffiths frankly admitted. In other words, one Collector says: “Oh, yes; my area has a certain amount of surplus; but I am administering this district; what do I care for the neighbouring one.” And the neighbouring one starves while this district probably has some sort of surplus which they can easily spare. But the actual reason is this, that in the matter of the administration of food policy and food distribution, there is no policy at all. There is no policy of any real attempt to raise a greater yield, out of greater land and better land and better manured land and better cultivated land and better seed. That is the way to increase the

[Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai.]

yield, not by merely talking about it in newspapers or giving interviews for three or four days.

That cannot be achieved, but you come to distribution. I regret to find that so far as the movement of the crops of this country are concerned, even from a surplus to a deficit area, there is not that attention to their movements which the problem deserves. True, you can make the efficiency of the war as an excuse for it. I am told for example, and I take the figures from their own published records, that out of 100 trains, 60 trains now run on what is called military purpose. The other 40 carry goods for the civilian population and civilian traffic. That is the situation to which we have been reduced. In other words, the fact comes to this. Nobody says that you should not fight the war but if the efficient fighting of the war means that the rest of the country, at the end of the war, will find itself in a state of starvation and epidemic, you would have fought the war in vain so far as we are concerned, because it is no longer a mere political problem. You may very well remember—and I believe it is writ large even in British history—that hunger is the most potent instrument of revolution anywhere in the world and you are driving the country into the jaws of hunger. There are causes sometimes which rise into flames, go down and allay themselves but a permanent hunger of the kind that you have created in this land is something which ought to be eradicated, even at the cost of other things. Hence it is that we make the appeal that so far as the movement of crops, particularly food crops, is concerned, greater facilities ought to be given than we have hitherto been able to see. We find that the distribution in certain areas is so unequal, that we find that there is less there than what is sufficient for the people. You begin with that initial disadvantage but even with that disadvantage, what little remains is not evenly distributed. You can easily understand what happens.

That brings us to the third part of the amendment which we have put forward before this House—that is the corruption which is rampant in the matter of the administration of this policy. I agree that it is possible for my Honourable friends on the other side to say: after all the subordinate officials in that particular hierarchy to which they belong are men drawn from this land and that, to that extent, the lower standard of morality is probably as much to blame as anything else. It is true, but what answer is there to this question. You have undertaken to administer this country. You have taken away every initiative from everybody and having done that you now say 'Oh, the agents whom we employ being Indians, we do not have any blame to bear'. That will not do. The fact remains today that in the matter of the food policy, the inequalities of life that are experienced, the sufferings of the poor man that are to be seen, you cannot just merely wave your hand and say, in the language of my friend Mr. Griffiths, that there is not that patriotic sense. The remedy was entirely in the hands of Britain. I would not say 'in your hands'. If there had been in this country, among the men who administer this country, men who really represent the country, you would not find the spectacle that you find today. You have got men who are paid to do a job, who have not that anxiety for the well-being of the people that we should like to see. You cannot blame it that machinery goes into the condition into which it has gone now and hence it is that the whole system of Government in this country has got to be overhauled. We have said it so often in the past. I do not say it on any political ground whatever, nor on any racial ground. We are saying it on one and one ground alone—that as long as you do not have an administration in this country which responds to the people and to which the people respond, you may be quite certain that you will never be able to tackle the problem that has come before this House and you cannot solve one iota of it at all. Hence it is that we have moved this amendment. The Honourable the Food Member simply says he will consider it. We thank him very much for this sop and you will never give it

that consideration it deserves unless the pinch that is now felt by the poor is transferred to you. The helplessness of the situation was well known, well appreciated and well felt—that the administration is in the hands of men whom we cannot influence to the extent and in the manner in which we should like to be able to do it, and it is true to say that whenever there is a famine, whenever there is any popular problem to be solved, the Government of the day, as it now exists, always fights shy of popular machinery. I have read some of the circulars of Government. They think, "These agitators will get into touch with the people, they will do good to them, they will bring about some equal distribution, will persuade those who otherwise may not be persuaded by us. The result will be that people will be with them and where shall we be". Hence it is that it is an insidious political idea that has often taken hold, at all events, of the district officials in this country. They will not allow any popular machinery to get into touch with the people at large. They do not want to use them, lest ultimately they may find themselves isolated in the condition in which they are and want to be. Hence it is, as I said, that we say that people must respond to them and they must respond to the people. Here there is a complete cleavage of that situation which has resulted in the condition in which we find ourselves. We cannot therefore forget the lesson that Bengal has taught us. We cannot forget the lesson—that in Malabar and other parts of that area you have got about a third of the ration that a human being can subsist on. We cannot forget all that. You can do something for the solution of this problem even while you are in office. Unless you enlist popular association and unless you enlist it in a wholehearted manner, without any mental reservation, you may be quite sure that the people will not respond to you. Unless you do that, as my Honourable friend here eloquently put it, the blood and the miseries and the death of thousands of these unfortunate people will be on your heads. We have not moved this amendment in any spirit of antagonism. We have moved this amendment with a view to helping you so that you may recognise the errors and the difficulties of the situation but if you dare to oppose it, let the House and the country decide it.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: Sir, one of the principles which I have adopted in replying to the debates of this kind is that truth must be told and faults must be owned, and I am going to answer to this debate on those lines.

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

Sir, I am happy to say that although bouquets and coconuts have both been thrown at me during this debate, nobody has thrown rotten eggs at me.

Mr. Abdul Qayyum: They are very expensive: 5 annas per egg.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I was going to say that perhaps because eggs have become too expensive. I do not say that the charges which have been made against us have stunned me or even dazed me. In fact, I feel that my main speech at the opening of the debate holds the field. I have not heard one definite criticism of the policy which I enunciated in that speech. There has been a great deal of criticism in matters of detail, but the policy remains unassailed and I am happy to say that the House as a whole recognises—I feel that way, I may be wrong—that the policy which the Government is now following is the right one.

An Honourable Member (from the Congress Benches): You are wrong.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I am very sorry to say that politics have been imported into this debate. I have kept food out of politics all the time that I have been in charge of the Department. I have been very anxious that no political considerations should be brought into food and I think I have succeeded to a large extent. I have received in places the co-operation from all sections of the people, people belonging even to the political institutions to which my friends over there belong. I have congratulated myself on this fact and I would expect this Assembly which consists of the chosen representatives to follow that example.

Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai: Not that side: not the 39!

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: Now, Sir, I will deal with some of the main charges that have been made against us. The first charge which has been made is that the war caught us napping and that we were not prepared before the war broke out or soon after the war broke out to deal with the food situation as it might have arisen. I do not know whether I am expected to put up a defence on behalf of the Government of India tonight here. I have been in charge of the Food Department for only a little over 15 months, but I have looked up some of the records and I would like to give to the House some facts as to what happened in the beginning of the war.

The Government of India, soon after the declaration of the war, that is to say, in September 1939, decided to impose price restrictions on all primary commodities. The provinces were delegated with emergency powers in this regard. In October 1939 a Conference was called by the Government of India to discuss this matter, especially with reference to food prices. This Conference was attended by the representatives of the Provincial Governments and the States, and amongst those attending the Conference were the representatives of the provinces where Congress Ministries functioned. This Conference unanimously opposed the imposition of any restriction on food, either price control or anything else. The Congress in those days thought that the agriculturist must be allowed to make the most out of foodgrains and there should be no restriction on foodgrain prices. The Congress were very definite in their views. In my own province of the United Provinces, as an employer of labour, I myself approached the Congress Ministry to think of the future when there may be shortage of foodstuffs, but they sent me away saying that I had some ulterior motive in asking for restrictions to be imposed on foodgrains. They thought, at that time that there was no necessity to check the prices of foodgrains, like my friend Prof. Ranga who is still of the same view. The Congress, who could have started price control in the beginning of the war, did not do it deliberately. It was their belief that any restriction imposed on prices would not be in the best interests of the country. I do not blame them for that. Nobody could foresee the circumstances which arose later, and I am sure that even if the Congress were in power for the next 12 months or 2 years, they would have continued with that policy. They were convinced that in the interests of the cultivators no lowering of prices and no restriction of prices of foodgrains was desirable. Therefore, I say that we were all caught napping.

The Government of India again called another Food Conference in January 1940. That was about four months after the declaration of the war and that Conference also unanimously resolved not to impose any price control on food grains.

An Honourable Member: Was the Congress there?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I am unable to say so. It is a pity they disappeared all too soon. What happened actually was that the price of foodgrains rose sharply soon after the declaration of war. Then because of the war, because of the course which the war had taken, prices became stabilised and then they started falling actually and they fell very nearly to the pre-war level.

An Honourable Member: Why blame the Congress?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I am not at all blaming the Congress. I am praising them. Let my Honourable friends disabuse their minds of this.

Now, Sir, nobody could have thought of imposing price control of food grains until actually the war situation became much worse and that was in December 1941 when Japan declared war. The real trouble in India so far as the food situation goes arose after the entry of Japan into the war. This contingency, I submit could not have been foreseen by anybody, whether it is this Government or it was the Congress Government or the Muslim League Government. However, I do not think it is much use crying over spilt milk. As I say, none

of us was an astrologer and the course of the war could have been foreseen only perhaps by Nazi astrologers or the mad men of Tokyo. You and I could not have foreseen it. That being so what did the Government of India do? As soon as the war against Japan was declared, and when we foresaw that there was a chance of our losing Burma rice, we called a conference and we imposed price control, and ever since then we have been working to get the better of the food problem in the country. We have made mistakes, I am free to confess. But so would you have if you were doing the job. Perhaps you would have made worse mistakes. Anybody tackling a problem of that kind and of that magnitude is bound to make mistakes. The wonder is that we have not made more mistakes. I think, Sir, that on the whole, we have done extraordinarily well. I remember, Sir, that last year this time when there was a food debate, nobody talked of chickens, poultry and eggs and those kinds of things or of cabbages. They only talked of rice and wheat. The fact that they have forgotten those cereals now and are today talking of protective foods, such as poultry, eggs, chicken and milk—I admit my Honourable friends are more interested in those things which contain vitamins—this change in their topic for discussion shows that really the food situation of India has vastly improved. There is no special shortage of foodgrains. I admitted in my original speech that there were local shortages in some parts but I think I have dealt comprehensively with the main deficit areas and the steps we have taken to relieve those shortages. But there is no major catastrophe anywhere howsoever you may like to misrepresent things. Sir, the main proof of the success of our policy is that prices have fallen all round. Wheat and rice are the two main staple grains. As I told the House in my initial review, the prices of both are rapidly coming down.

An Honourable Member: With what rapidity?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: If the Honourable Member will read my original speech, he will find the figures. I do not want to repeat them and thus take up the time of the House. Sir, it is gratifying that prices have gone down as they have done. There is no doubt about it that the situation in the country is much better. I do not say there is no room for further lowering of the price and to that extent, I am in full sympathy with one clause of one of the amendments. At the same time, I would like Honourable Members of the House to decide among themselves as to what is the right course in regard to prices to be adopted. Some of the Honourable Members have impressed upon me that we are trying to ruin the growers. Another set of Honourable Members have said that prices are still too high. Now, Sir, judging from the speeches made this afternoon and yesterday in the House, I have a feeling that we are somewhere in the right. In any case, Sir, I wish to assure the House that the Food Department are most anxious to fix prices which will be within the reach of the poorest consumer and will at the same time be not unfair to the producer, leaving him with a reasonable margin of profit. We realise and sympathise with those who stand up for the cultivator. We know he is the backbone of the country, but at the same time who must remember that there are poorer people in India than the cultivator who must be fed and it is the duty of the Food Department to feed them.

Sir, I will now turn to some remarks made by my very old friend Mr. Griffiths. I was very glad to hear his eloquent speech but I felt somehow that he mistook the forum; he thought he was speaking in the Bengal Legislative Assembly and that he was not Mr. Griffiths but Mr. Fazlul Huq. Anyhow we have taken a note of many of the points raised by him and I wish to assure him that they are mostly provincial and there is no difference of opinion between us and him in regard to them. The only point that I should like to enlighten him on is in connection with the "Grow More Vegetables" work which is being done by the Government of India. My Honourable friend Mr. Tyson has given you an account of what his department is doing in this direction. I am not going to enlarge on that but I should like to say that in the matter of control of prices of these articles my department is exercising every vigilance. Of course I admit that we started a little late in this, for the simple

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

reason that all our energies were absorbed in the matter of foodgrains. We took first things first and we are now devoting our attention to this in right earnest and I should like to tell the House of what is being done by the Government of India. We fully realise its importance and we consider that the shortage and high prices are due very largely not so much to the army demand as to other contributory factors which exist at the present moment. Sir, the main difficulty in controlling the prices of these articles is the difficulty of securing control of production and stocks. They are not like foodgrains where we can procure large quantities and keep against a rise in the market. However, Sir, what the Government of India have done is that they have stimulated action by the Provincial Governments in close collaboration with the military authorities to take certain basic steps, such as, to survey and ascertain local resources, to increase and co-ordinate local production, divide the resources available, to allocate them to priority consumers, co-ordinate the demands and, above all, reduce or eliminate the element of competitive purchasing. For this purpose, Sir, we have formed area and provincial co-ordination committees on which the Centre, the Provinces and the defence forces are represented. In addition, in Southern India we have formed in consultation with the E., H. and L. Department a special committee to deal with cattle movement. Apart from these measures, whenever the Government of India receives information of the imposition of a ban which involves other provinces or States, we inquire into the merits of the case and endeavour to secure the necessary co-ordination of supplies by discussion and agreement. Finally, we are in constant correspondence with the provinces and States as to the importance of securing the distribution of non-cereal foods to those sections of the population which most need them. I am glad to say that I believe that Provincial Governments are now fully alive to these problems.

The case of Calcutta appears to be a special one. It is a pity that the Provincial Government of Bengal did not move in the matter early enough, but I wish to assure the House that they have now got down to the job and I hope the situation in Calcutta will soon be relieved. In addition, Sir, the House is probably aware that the Government of India have imported large quantities of tinned milk which has come as a boon to many places where women and children have been suffering from mal-nutrition.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: A mere drop in the ocean.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: No, it is a fair quantity. I admit it is not sufficient but still it is very useful. I have seen this milk distributed in areas of Cochin and Travancore with very good results.

Sir, I wish to assure the House that so far as protective foods are concerned, they are now our main anxiety and I hope this time next year Honourable Members will move on to something else and not take up protective foods.

An Honourable Member: You think the war will go on till then?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: The next thing that I should like to talk about is this question of feeding Calcutta. I know many Honourable Members are keenly interested in this problem but they are aware that last year we agreed to feed Calcutta in very special circumstances. There is an over-all shortage of rice in the country; there is not enough rice to go round and the needs of other parts of India have to be taken into account. Last year on account of the famine we decided that we should take Calcutta out of the hands of Bengal in order to restore confidence, and I am glad to say that we have done this successfully. The time is not yet ripe for announcing any definite decision on this matter because we are still collecting the figures. But my present feeling is that once we have received all the surplus and deficit figures from the provinces we should treat Bengal and Calcutta in the same way as any other province for the purposes of the basic plan, that is to say, if it is found that Bengal including Calcutta is deficit in any particular grain we shall try to meet the deficit, subject to our overall supplies. If it is surplus it is up to the Provincial Government to

get grain from within its own boundaries. That is my personal inclination. I do not say this because I have got anything against Bengal or Calcutta—that has been our main concern during the last twelve months—but I find that the needs of other parts of India are far greater. They have been neglected in the past because we had Bengal on our hands. I think it is time now that we did something for them. When I say this, I would like to correct a misstatement by my Honourable friend, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai. He thought that the total scale of ration in Travancore or Cochin was six ounces. That is not so.

Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai: I took it from my friend, Mr. Seth, who belongs to Malabar.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: It is not so. The ration there is 12 ounces out of which six ounces is rice. It has always been so.

An Honourable Member: That one cannot eat. It contains worms, pebbles and what not.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (East Central Punjab: Muhammadan): Do you think that 12 ounces are sufficient?

The Honourable Sir Jwalaprasad Srivastava: I am not saying anything of the kind. That is why I am appealing to Bengal and to other parts of India to give us more rice to increase the ration of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. I have just been there and I feel that the people have undergone terrible strain during the last three years and now it is time that we gave them more rice. The difficulty is that people in those areas will not eat either millets or even wheat. They are used only to rice, and so it is necessary for us to find more rice for them and as the Honourable Members would realize that the resources of the Government of India in rice are meagre.

Mr. H. A. Sathar H. Essak Sait: May I correct one discrepancy.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: Let me finish my speech. I am sorry, I cannot give way.

Another matter which has been dwelt upon is the question of rural areas. Last year people were anxious that even cities should not be rationed. Why cities have been chosen for rationing first is not because of any military or imperialistic reasons, but for the simple reason that cities don't grow foodgrains and the people there have got to get foodgrains from villages. In conditions of scarcity the cities starved. That is the only simple reason why we started with the idea of rationing in cities, and I am glad we have very largely succeeded. We have now under ration 42 millions of people and I think the number of towns is 420 as I said in my speech. This is no mean achievement for 12 months because at one time people were all opposed to rationing. They thought it was an imposition which they did not want to tolerate. I am glad now that people are asking for an extension of rationing.

Mr. N. M. Joshi: Which people?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: People living in the cities.

About rural rationing, as I have told the House, we are starting an experiment in Malabar. It is a very complicated and difficult matter. It is accompanied by compulsory rural procurement. The district which imposes rationing has got also to procure all the available supplies within the district and then if there is a deficit it has got to arrange additional supplies from outside. Malabar is the first district in British India where rural rationing is being started. I am watching the experiment with great interest and if it succeeds, as I hope it will, then I think it ought to be extended to other deficit areas. I have already suggested that Vizagapatam should be taken next.

Prof. N. G. Ranga: How long will it take?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: In these things you cannot go too fast. It depends on the people themselves; it does not rest with the

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

Government at all. The people have got to get used to it, and we have got to learn by experience what pitfalls we have to avoid. I do not wish to say more on this subject beyond assuring the House that the Food Department is alive to the needs of the rural areas and is doing whatever it can.

Another matter which has been prominently dealt with in the debate is the question of corruption of Government officials.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: Rampant everywhere.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I am not aware to what extent corruption is rampant but that there is some corruption I have no manner of doubt, but as the House knows how very difficult it is to eradicate corruption in such matters. The Government is most anxious to catch out all misdoers and I would ask for the assistance of the Members of this House in eradicating corruption. As Mr. Griffiths pointed out, it takes two to make corruption: The giver and the recipient are both to blame.

An Honourable Member: What about the intermediary?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: And I am sure the Members of this House will assist us in encouraging the giver to come to us and tell us of any such cases.

I have only one point more to deal with. Mr. Griffiths said that the performance of Great Britain in the matter of food had been so much better than that of India. I entirely agree with him but what are the comparative circumstances? They started on food administration there seven years ago. . . .

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: Why did not your Government do so?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I have explained that. You too never pointed out that there was any need for food control in India. You have been a Member of this House for many years. I do not seem to have read any of your speeches to that effect.

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: I pointed out six months before your Food Department was set up.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: We started off in right earnest on a co-ordinated policy 18 months ago or even less than that. Great Britain has got to cater for 40 millions of people. We have to cater for ten times that number. Great Britain has the advantage of organised trade channels for distribution. We have not got that advantage. Great Britain's problems of procurement are nothing; they get all the stuff supplied to them in convenient parcels which come from overseas. . . .

Mr. P. J. Griffiths: No, no.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: Most of it. And every bit of agriculture, which is not much, is controlled. We have to secure our supplies from millions of small producers. Then, Sir, take into consideration the transport problem. The distances in Great Britain are nothing as compared to mine. Still these considerations have not made us lose heart. We have gone on and done whatever we could. Sir, I am glad to be able to say that Sir Henry French when he visited this country paid us a great compliment. . . .

Mr. Satya Narayan Sinha: How much rations did he get?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: . . . on what we had been able to achieve within fifteen months. Sir, he came as a partial critic. His opinion is worth something.

Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai: Did he dine with you?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I think I have dealt with many of the points which were raised in the debate which call for a reply from me. There is one point left in the speech of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan

when he referred to Nepal paddy purchases. I think he has got his facts all upside down.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: Why didn't you challenge me then so that I could have given you a reply.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: He had better verify them.
(Interruptions from Muslim League Benches.)

It is not correct to say that the agent who bought the rice bought it at a price above that arranged for by the Bengal Government. He did not do it.

Qazi Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi (Meerut Division: Muhammadan Rural): When was the enquiry made?

Sir Syed Raza Ali (Cities of the United Provinces: Muhammadan Urban): At what price did he buy? At the same price?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I cannot give all the prices from memory.

(Several Honourable Members interrupted.)

He bought at the price fixed by the Bengal Government. That is the main basic fact.

Sir Muhammad Yamin Khan (Agra Division: Muhammadan Rural): How was this calculation made?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: I do not know. As regards loss by deterioration the assertions are much exaggerated.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: What are the true facts?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: There is no question of not holding the agent to the terms of his contract. That again is not correct.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: What are the correct facts?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: Some loss inevitably takes place. I have not the exact quantity.

(Several Honourable Members again interrupted.)

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

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: But the way it has been put is not right.

Nawabzada Muhammad Liaquat Ali Khan: He does not tell us the right way and still he says it is wrong!

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: Well, I have told you the right facts.

Some one raised the question of Canadian wheat not being fit for human consumption. I do not know whether he has tried it.

Mr. Manu Subedar: I have tried it and I have suffered by it.

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: But palates differ. I have tried it and I like it. It is very nice. In any case I tell you a sample of this wheat was approved by the Bombay Provincial Advisory Committee who I believe tested it. They must have cooked it and eaten it and they were quite satisfied with it and I have the authority to say that Sir Purshotomdas Thakurdas found it absolutely right. My friend Mr. Manu Subedar might make further enquiries into the matter.

Mr. Manu Subedar: You were too weak. You could not resist His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Satya Narayan Sinha: You can stomach anything!

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: A number of amendments have been moved. I will now deal with them. By the trend of the speeches they have not traversed my main statements with regard to the policy and achievements of the Department of Food and yet it is thought fit to condemn us for a number of things of which we are not guilty on the admission of the other side of the House. Not a word has been said about the inadequacy of

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]
transport. I am glad to say that there is complete understanding between the Food Department and the War Transport Department and thanks to my Colleague on my left, things are working very well indeed. No Member had one word to say against the War Transport Department and yet in one of the amendments that Department has been brought in. (Interruptions.) I would appeal to the House not to be carried away by emotion or by . . .

Mr. Abdul Qaiyum . . . logic or good sense!

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: First of all I would deal with the amendment of Dr. Zia Uddin. I regret that Government cannot accept the amendment as it stands. It must vote against it although some of the points which the Mover has advocated already form part of the Government policy. On the specific points raised by the Honourable Member the attitude of the Government of India is as follows: The Government do not admit that no effective measures for growing more rice have been adopted. Production is a matter for the Education, Health and Lands Department who have already dealt with the details of the Grow More Food campaign, particularly the question of increasing the production of rice. The House is however aware that a great deal has been done by the Army already in order to reduce its demands on the stocks available for the civil population in the establishment of poultry, cattle and vegetable farms.

Dr. P. N. Banerjee: In what portion of the country?

The Honourable Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava: The Food Department particularly agree with the Honourable Member in his advocacy of steps to utilise the resources of Assam for growing more rice and this is one of the things which I have been chasing for some time. This problem is under active consideration between the Food Department and the Department of Education Health and Lands and certain proposals will shortly be made to the Government of Assam.

Now with regard to the control of prices and the black market. The Food Department is at one with the Honourable Member in believing that the control of stocks is an essential feature for the control of prices. The aim which Government has effected in its procurement machinery in the past year, combined with the assurance which it has had of imports, has enabled the Provincial Governments to build up stocks with the result, as has been amply shown, that confidence has been restored and prices, particularly in the Eastern Region, have shown a marked and continued fall. I take note of the particular methods which the Honourable Member has advocated for the control of individual stocks. I may say that it is the policy of the Government of India to stimulate Provincial Governments and Administrations to improve both the procurement machinery and their administration of the Foodgrains Control Order to the stage, where they have both effective knowledge of the location of stocks and the means of controlling or acquiring those stocks if required. That also deals with the objection raised by my friend Mr. Griffiths. As regards statistics, I agree with the Honourable Member that the improvement of statistical information is an essential part of the improvement of food control. We already have a scheme for distribution from surplus to deficit areas on the lines advocated by the Honourable Member. No food grain can move except on Government account and Government's view is that the necessary priorities for the transport of food grains already exist. We are, however, constantly watching the situation in consultation with the War Transport Department and wherever we find that the priorities allotted are insufficient we shall not hesitate to press for such higher priorities as may be necessary. It is already the policy to fix maximum prices for the whole of India by statute. We have proceeded a very long way towards this goal. In the case of rice we have not yet been able to realise an all-India maximum on a single all-India basis. We hope to be able to do so in the course of the next twelve months.

We fully agree with the Honourable Member in the desire to associate non-official Members of the Legislature with the Food Administration at every stage. So far as the Centre is concerned the House realises that I have established a Central Food Advisory Committee and Price Advisory Committee in addition to the Standing Committee of the Legislature, whose assistance and advice I have constantly sought and gratefully acknowledged.

As for rationing, I am afraid that I cannot agree with the Honourable Member that rationing should be confined to towns with a population of 150,000 or over. Our policy first of all is to extend rationing to all towns with a population of 100,000 and then to extend it where necessary to smaller towns. My information is that wherever rationing has been introduced, in spite of complaints which we have received on certain aspects of rationing, there is developing a general public demand not only for the extension of rationing so far as food is concerned but for its extension to other commodities outside the range of food, pure and simple.

I agree with the Honourable Member in deploring wastage of food wherever it has occurred and could have been prevented. At the same time, we must acknowledge the great difficulties which Provincial Governments have to face in setting up the organisation necessary to prevent this wastage.

Sir, this is as far as Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad's amendment goes.

As regards Prof. Ranga's amendment, I am unable to accept it, as it stands, although I have very considerable sympathy with many of the points which the Mover seeks to make. These points are already engaging our attention and I will not give the detailed facts, which I have already stated in my speech.

Then, Sir, there is an amendment moved by my friend Mr. Essak Sait. Government do not accept this amendment and must oppose it. The Food Department does not accept that the defects pointed out by the Mover existed in the working of the Food Department at the Centre. I have stated the true facts in my speeches and I cannot accept a censure of that kind. In fact that censure is not justified at all by the speeches made in this House or by the mover of the amendment himself. His speech was appreciative of the work which has been done by the Food Department. That being so, I think it is a little hard that an amendment of that kind should be moved.

Sir, as regards Mr. Chattopadhyaya's amendment, we are in general sympathy with the object of it but we cannot accept it as it stands. The facts show that a very considerable improvement has been effected in the Bengal situation and the Bengal Government is already taking advantage of cooperative societies.

As regards Mr. Avinashilingam Chettiar's amendment I have considerable sympathy with many of the points which the Mover seeks to make but I am unable to accept the amendment.

Before I sit down I would like to thank my friends, the non-official Members of this House, for the many valuable suggestions that they have made. As was assured by Dr. Rao, we shall examine every one of them and give our best consideration to them. In fact what I detected was that many of the criticisms were levelled not so much against the Centre as against certain acts of omission and commission of the Provinces.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging once again the continued guidance and constructive suggestions which I have received from the Honourable Members. Whatever may be our differences in matters of detail, our main objective is one and common—Food for all, on which the life of the community depends. Whatever Government may be in power, it cannot have any other objective. Politics as such are entirely outside this sacred sphere. So let us bend our energies to real, honest constructive work for the common good. Without your support, the support of the chosen representatives of people like yourselves, my Department cannot achieve anything worthwhile. With your help nothing is impossible, I am quite sure of that. We have

[Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava.]

set a great and noble task in an hour of unprecedented crisis in the history of our nation. Let that task be not marred by political rivalries. That is my wish and fervent appeal.

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

Maulvi Syed Murtuza Sahib Bahadur (South Madras: Muhammadan): On a point of information, Sir. I want to be informed on certain points. Neither the Honourable Member nor Mr. Tyson have dwelt upon the very important question raised in the debate, that is, regarding the line system in Assam. I want to be informed about it.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Order, order. The Honourable Food Member has made his reply.

The motion moved was:

"That the food situation in India be taken into consideration."

The first amendment is in the name of Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad. . .

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Sir, I do not press it to division.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Does the Honourable Member wish to withdraw it?

Dr. Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad: Yes, Sir.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Has the Honourable Member the leave of the House to withdraw his amendment?

Honourable Members: Yes, yes.

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

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next one is in the name of Mr. Essak Sait. It is:

"That the following be added at the end of the motion:

and having considered the same, this House is of opinion that the co-ordination of procurement and distribution between surplus and deficit areas is entirely wanting; that the transport in that behalf is not adequate and timely (even considering the priority for war purposes) and that the prices are beyond the means of the mass of the poor in this country; and that the steps taken by Government for exercising vigilance over eradication of corruption among those engaged by Government in the matter of the execution of food work are poor and ineffective."

The Assembly divided:

AYES—61.

Abdul Qaiyum, Mr.
Abdullah, Mr. H. M.
Ahsan, Mr. Muhammad.
Azhar Ali, Mr. Muhammad.
Banerjee, Dr. P. N.
Chandavarkar, Sir Vithal N.
Chattopadhyaya, Mr. Amarendra Nath.
Chettiar, Mr. T. S. Avinashilingam.
Chetty, Mr. Sami Vencatachalam.
Choudhury, Mr. Muhammad Hussain.
Chunder, Mr. N. C.
Daga, Seth Sheodass.
Dam, Mr. Ananga Mohan.
Datta, Mr. Akhil Chandra.
Desai, Mr. Bhulabhai J.
Deshmukh, Dr. G. V.
Deshmukh, Mr. Govind V.
Essak Sait, Mr. H. A. Sathar H.
Fazl-i-Haq Piracha, Khan Bahadur Shaikh.
Gauri Shankar Singh, Mr.
Ghiasuddin, Mr. M.
Gupta, Mr. K. S.
Habibar Rahman, Dr.
Hans Raj, Raizada.
Hegde, Sri K. B. Jinaraja.
Hosmani, Mr. S. K.
Ismail Khan, Hajee Chowdhury Muhammad.
Jinnah, Mr. M. A.
Joshi, Mr. N. M.
Kailash Bihari Lal, Mr.
Kazmi, Qazi Muhammad Ahmad.

Krishnamachari, Mr. T. T.
Lahiri Chaudhury, Mr. D. K.
Lakhichand, Mr. Rajmal.
Lalchand Navalrai, Mr.
Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawabzada Muhammad.
Mangal Singh, Sardar.
Manu Subedar, Mr.
Misra, Pandit Shambhudayal.
Murtuza Sahib Bahadur, Maulvi Syed.
Naidu, Mr. G. Rangiah.
Nauman, Mr. Muhammad.
Neogy, Mr. K. C.
Pande, Mr. Badri Dutt.
Raghuraj Narain Singh, Choudhri.
Ramayan Prasad, Mr.
Ranga, Prof. N. G.
Raza Ali, Sir Syed.
Reddiar, Mr. K. Sitarama.
Sant Singh, Sardar.
Satyanarayana Moorty, Mr. A.
Sham Lal, Lala.
Siddique Ali Khan, Nawab.
Siddiquee, Shaikh Rafiuddin Ahmad.
Sinha, Mr. Satya Narayan.
Sri Prakasa, Mr.
Subbarayan, Shrimati K. Radha Bai.
Umar Aly Shah, Mr.
Yamin Khan, Sir Muhammad.
Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana.
Zia Uddin Ahmad, Dr. Sir.

NOES—45.

Ahmad Nawaz Khan, Major Nawab Sir.
 Ambedkar, The Honourable Dr. B. R.
 Anthony, Mr. Frank R.
 Azizul Huque, The Honourable Sir M.
 Benthall, The Honourable Sir Edward.
 Caroe, Sir Olaf.
 Chapman-Mortimer, Mr. T.
 Chatterjee, Lt.-Col. Dr. J. C.
 Daga, Seth Sunder Lall.
 Dalal, Dr. Sir Ratanji Dinshaw.
 Dalpat Singh, Sardar Bahadur Captain.
 Griffiths, Mr. P. J.
 Gwilt, Mr. E. L. C.
 Habibur Rahman, Khan Bahadur Sheikh.
 Haidar, Khan Bahadur Shamsuddin.
 Imam, Mr. Saiyid Haidar.
 Inskip, Mr. A. C.
 Ismael Alikhan, Kunwer Hajee.
 James, Sir F. E.
 Jawahar Singh, Sardar Bahadur Sardar Sir.
 Joshi, Mr. D. S.
 Kamaluddin Ahmad, Shams-ul-Ulema.
 Khare, The Honourable Dr. N. B.
 Krishnamoorthy, Mr. E. S. A.

Kushal Pal Singh, Raja Bahadur
 Lalljee, Mr. Hooseinbhoj A.
 Lawson, Mr. C. P.
 Miller, Mr. C. C.
 Muazzam Sahib Bahadur, Mr. Muhammad.
 Mudaliar, The Honourable Dewan Bahadur
 Sir A. Ramaswami.
 Mudie, The Honourable Sir Francis.
 Raisman, The Honourable Sir Jeremy.
 Rao, Dr. V. K. R. V.
 Richardson, Sir Henry.
 Roy, The Honourable Sir Asoka.
 Sethna, Mr. D. P.
 Shahban, Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir
 Muhammad.
 Shoober, Mr. W. H.
 Siva Raj, Rao Bahadur N.
 Spence, Sir George.
 Srivastava, The Honourable Sir Jwala Pra-
 sad.
 Stokes, Mr. H. G.
 Sultan Ahmed, The Honourable Sir.
 Thakur Singh, Capt.
 Tyson, Mr. J. D.

The motion was adopted.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

"That the following be added at the end of the motion:
 'and having considered the same, this House is of opinion that grain prices in most
 places are uneconomically low for producers and that the failure of Government to sub-
 sidize the food consumption of the poorest consumers both in towns and villages is hitting
 hard both the producers and consumers of food'."

The Assembly divided:

AYES—58.

Abdul Qaiyum, Mr.
 Abdullah, Mr. H. M.
 Ahsan, Mr. Muhammad.
 Azhar Ali, Mr. Muhammad.
 Banerjee, Dr. P. N.
 Chettiar, Mr. T. S. Avinashilingam.
 Chetty, Mr. Sami Vencatachelam.
 Choudhury, Mr. Muhammad Hussain.
 Chunder, Mr. N. C.
 Daga, Seth Sheodass.
 Dam, Mr. Ananga Mohan.
 Datta, Mr. Akhil Chandra.
 Desai, Mr. Bhulabhai J.
 Deshmukh, Dr. G. V.
 Deshmukh, Mr. Govind V.
 Essak Sait, Mr. H. A. Sathar H.
 Fazl-i-Haq Piracha, Khan Bahadur Shaikh.
 Gauri Shankar Singh, Mr.
 Ghiasuddin, Mr. M.
 Gupta, Mr. K. S.
 Habibur Rahman, Dr.
 Hans Raj, Raizada.
 Hegde, Sri K. B. Jinaraja.
 Hosmani, Mr. S. K.
 Ismail Khan, Hajee Chowdhury Muhammad.
 Jinnah, Mr. M. A.
 Kailash Bihari Lall, Mr.
 Kazmi, Qazi Muhammad Ahmad.
 Krishnamachari, Mr. T. T.

Lahiri Chaudhury, Mr. D. K.
 Lakhichand, Mr. Rajmal.
 Lalchand Navalrai, Mr.
 Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawabzada Muhammad.
 Mangal Singh, Sardar.
 Manu Subedar, Mr.
 Misra, Pandit Shambhudayal.
 Murtuza Sahib Bahadur, Maulvi Syed.
 Naidu, Mr. G. Rangiah.
 Nauman, Mr. Muhammad.
 Pande, Mr. Badri Dutt.
 Raghubir Narain Singh, Choudhri.
 Ramayan Prasad, Mr.
 Ranga, Prof. N. G.
 Raza Ali, Sir Syed.
 Reddiar, Mr. K. Sitarama.
 Sant Singh, Sardar.
 Satyanarayana Moorty, Mr. A.
 Sham Lal, Lala.
 Siddique Ali Khan, Nawab.
 Siddiquee, Shaikh Rafiuddin Ahmad.
 Sinha, Mr. Satya Narayan.
 Siva Raj, Rao Bahadur N.
 Sri Prakasa, Mr.
 Subbarayan, Shrimati K. Radha Bai.
 Umar Aly Shah, Mr.
 Yamin Khan, Sir Muhammad.
 Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana.
 Zia Uddin Ahmad, Dr. Sir.

NOES—46.

Ahmad Nawaz Khan, Major Nawab Sir.
 Ambedkar, The Honourable Dr. B. R.
 Anthony, Mr. Frank R.
 Azizul Huque, The Honourable Sir M.
 Benthall, The Honourable Sir Edward.
 Caroe, Sir Olaf.
 Chandavarkar, Sir Vithal N.
 Chapman-Mortimer, Mr. T.
 Chatterjee, Lt.-Col. Dr. J. C.
 Daga, Seth Sunder Lall.
 Dalal, Dr. Sir Ratanji Dinshaw.
 Dalpat Singh, Sardar Bahadur Captain.
 Griffiths, Mr. P. J.
 Gwilt, Mr. E. L. C.
 Habibur Rahman, Khan Bahadur Sheikh.
 Haidar, Khan Bahadur Shamsuddin.
 Imam, Mr. Saiyid Haidar.
 Inskip, Mr. A. C.
 Ismail Alikhan, Kunwer Hajee.
 James, Sir F. E.
 Jawahar Singh, Sardar Bahadur Sardar Sir.
 Jehangir, Sir Cowasjee.
 Joshi, Mr. D. S.
 Kamaluddin Ahmad, Shams-ul-Ulema.
 Khare, The Honourable Dr. N. B.

Krishnamoorthy, Mr. E. S. A.
 Kushal Pal Singh, Raja Bahadur
 Lalljee, Mr. Hooseinbhoy A.
 Lawson, Mr. C. P.
 Miller, Mr. C. C.
 Muazzam Sahib Bahadur, Mr. Muhammad.
 Mudaliar, The Honourable Dewan Bahadur
 Sir A. Ramaswami.
 Mudie, The Honourable Sir Francis.
 Raisman, The Honourable Sir Jeremy.
 Rao, Dr. V. K. R. V.
 Richardson, Sir Henry.
 Roy, The Honourable Sir Asoka.
 Sethna, Mr. D. P.
 Shahban, Khan Bahadur Mian Ghulam Kadir
 Muhammad.
 Shoobert, Mr. W. H.
 Spence, Sir George.
 Srivastava, The Honourable Sir Jwala Pra-
 sad.
 Stokes, Mr. H. G.
 Sultan Ahmed, The Honourable Sir.
 Thakur Singh, Capt.
 Tyson, Mr. J. D.

The motion was adopted.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next Amendment is in the name of Mr. Chettiar.

Mr. T. S. Avinashilingam Chettiar (Salem and Coimbatore *cum* North Arcot: Non-Muhammadan Rural): I do not press it. I want to withdraw it.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): Has the Honourable Member leave of the House to withdraw his amendment?

Honourable Members: No, no.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question is:

“That the following be added at the end of the motion:

‘having considered the same, this House is of opinion (1) that the prices fixed for paddy and other food grains should be revised in view of the present circumstances, and in considering the level of prices of food grains appropriate to a particular area, regard should be had to (a) the cost of articles entering into the cultivators’ cost of production; (b) cost of articles entering into his standard of life and (c) cost of cultivation of marginal lands, as it obtains at present cost levels;

(2) that having in view the enormous amount of corruption created by the fact that revenue and other officers have been entrusted with the duty of issuing licences for purchasers and distributors of paddy and rice, wheat and other food grains, these licences in the districts and taluks shall be issued on the advice of the advisory board, attached to the districts and taluks and to co-operative societies wherever available;

(3) that peasants shall be given the choice of supplying food grains either in the shape of paddy or rice, wheat or atta and thus be entitled to eliminate the profiteering now being made by millers; and

(4) that every effort be made to review and reduce the margins of profits now allowed to various agencies of middlemen;

(5) that the responsibility of the Central Government should not cease with more allotment of food grains but it should extend to seeing that their allotments reach the deficit or needy areas and that no invidious distinction shall be made in distributing rations between civilian population and those who are the relatives of people in the armed forces and also between the urban and rural peoples, and that all needy peoples, whether living in towns or villages be granted equal rations;

(6) that in cases of districts experiencing great scarcity, district-wise and equitable rationing shall be organised;

(7) and that to meet the food deficit in this country, apart from the measures taken to tide over the present difficulties, other measures of a permanent character such as that of new irrigation schemes, manufacture of fertilizers, fixation and maintenance of minimum prices of food grains shall also be taken up as soon as possible.”

The motion was negatived.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The next Amendment is that of Mr. Chattopadhyaya. The question is:

“That the following be added at the end of the motion:

'In view of the fact that the system of procurement and distribution of essential food-stuff adopted by the Food Department of the Central Government has not succeeded so far to alleviate the difficulties and inconveniences of consumers in Bengal and in other affected provinces as well, the co-operative system of production, distribution and consumption be introduced and adopted in the affected provinces specially in Bengal by setting up Co-operative Producer, Distributor and Consumers' Society registered under the Co-operative Societies Act'."

The motion was negatived.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim): The question now is that the following motion be adopted:

"That the food situation in India be taken into consideration :

(a) and having considered the same, this House is of opinion that the co-ordination of procurement and distribution between surplus and deficit areas is entirely wanting; that the transport in that behalf is not adequate and timely (even considering the priority for war purposes) and that the prices are beyond the means of the mass of the poor in this country; and that the steps taken by Government for exercising vigilance over eradication of corruption among those engaged by Government in the matter of the execution of food work are poor and ineffective :

(b) and having considered the same, this House is of opinion that grain prices in most places are uneconomically low for producers and that the failure of Government to subsidize the food consumption of the poorest consumers both in towns and villages is hitting hard both the producers and consumers of food."

The motion was adopted.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, the 10th November, 1944.