

Proceedings of the Thirteenth Session of the First Assam Legislative Assembly, assembled under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935.

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 11 a.m. on Saturday, the 27th November, 1943.

PRESENT

The Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Speaker, in the Chair, the ten Hon'ble Ministers and fiftyone hon. Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

C. R. Case No.333 of 1943, Emperor versus Gobinda Adhikari and others

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked:

*43. (a) Will Government be pleased to lay on the Library table a copy of the judgment delivered by Mr. Gopendra Lal Das Chaudhury, First Class Honorary Magistrate, Habiganj, in the case C. R. No.333 of 1943, Emperor versus Gobinda Adhikari and others (under sections 456 and 411, I.P.C.) ?

(b) Is it a fact that the accused Gobinda Adhikari has been acquitted by the Magistrate ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA replied :

43. (a)—Government see no reason to call for a copy of the judgment, in view especially of the fact that the hon. Member has not disclosed his reasons for making the suggestion.

(b)—Yes.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: May I know from the Hon'ble Minister what is the nature of the case ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: The nature of this case has more or less been stated by the hon. Questioner there and I do not think that the decision of the Court and the reason for it should be made a subject for criticism in this House.

Supply of Government publications to Members of Legislature

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*44. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the proceedings of the Legislature are supplied to all the Members of the Legislature ?

(b) If not, why ?

(c) What are the names of those Members to whom they are not supplied ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA replied :

44. (a)—Yes.

(b) & (c)—Do not arise.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Is it a fact that some of the hon. Members of this House who are now in prisons do not get the proceedings ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: My information is that they are being supplied. They are being sent to the Superintendents of Jails.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that some of the hon. Members who are in prisons do not get the proceedings of the Legislature ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: I have no information, Sir, but I may look into the matter.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I request the Hon'ble Minister to inform the result to this House day after to-morrow ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: If the hon. Member can bring any specific instance I will then inform him.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: So far as I know, Sir, the Members who are in the Sylhet Jail, viz., Mr. Chanda, Mr. Gauri Kanta Talukdar and Mr. Kameswar Das—they do not get the proceedings.

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: I will look into the matter.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My request to the Hon'ble Minister is that he will inform me after an enquiry on Monday next.

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: If it is possible by that time I shall do that.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I enquire another thing, Sir? Who is responsible for sending the proceedings to the hon. Members? It is your Department, Sir, because it will be found in Assembly Rule No.121 which runs "The Secretary shall cause a full report of the proceedings of the Assembly at each of its meetings to be prepared as soon as possible after each meeting. He shall send a copy of such report to each member and to the Governor and Governor-General. A copy of such report shall also be published in the Gazette". But then why the hon. Members do not get the proceedings ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: As the rule stands, that is of course a duty of the Secretary to send copies of the proceedings to all the hon. Members as soon as a Session is over. But it is also a fact that the proceedings are published as a part of the Gazette and the duty of the Secretary is, therefore, practically and substantially entrusted to the Government Book Depôt, in view of the fact that the Members get the Gazette from the Government Book Depôt and as a part of the Gazette they also get copies of the proceedings. Therefore, there is no necessity of separately sending the copies of proceedings to Members by the Secretary. As a matter of fact this entrustment of the Assembly Department to the Government Book Depôt for the supply of proceedings to the hon. Members has been accepted by the House and has worked well so long. Up till now I have no information that the hon. Members who are in detention as Security Prisoners or as convicted persons are not getting the proceedings and the Hon'ble Minister also said that he has no information about it. He has undertaken to make an enquiry into the matter and inform the hon. Members as to whether the hon. Members who are in detention get the proceedings of this House or not. This should satisfy the hon. Member for the present.

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Are not the receipt of these proceedings by the hon. Members who are in detention subject to the rules and regulations of their detention ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: No; because the Members who are in detention get the summons from His Excellency the Governor to attend the Assembly and all papers relating to the business of this House are regularly sent to them by this Department. There is no restriction on their right to get papers connected with the Assembly so far as I know.

Supply of proceedings of Legislature to subscribers of the Assam Gazette

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*45. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether the proceedings of the Legislature are supplied to all the subscribers of the *Assam Gazette* as a part of the Gazette ?
- (b) If not, what are the reasons therefor ?
- (c) What are the names of the subscribers of the *Assam Gazette* to whom they are not supplied ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA replied :

45. (a)—No.

(b)—It has been decided in the interests of economy in printing and also of security that the proceedings should not be supplied to non-official bodies and persons.

(c)—A statement has been placed on the Library table.

† Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Is it not a fact that the proceedings form a part of the Gazette ?

† The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: The reply is already there. It forms a part of the Gazette but the proceedings are not sent to all the subscribers.

Purchase of rice and paddy by persons or firms on behalf of Government

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*46. (a) Will Government be pleased to lay on the table the copies of tenders received by them from persons or firms for purchasing rice and paddy inside the Province on behalf of Government ?

(b) What are the names of persons or firms whose tender or tenders have been accepted ?

(c) Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a copy of the agreement made between Government and persons or firms aforesaid ?

*47. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The quantity of rice and paddy purchased by the contracting party showing the price paid and the quantity purchased at that price district by district separately up to the 31st October 1943 ?

(b) How the purchased rice and paddy have been disposed of showing the quantity and the price at which they were sold district by district separately ?

(c) The total amount of money advanced by Government to the purchasing agent or agents up to 31st October 1943 through the different Treasuries separately ?

(d) The amount of gain or loss on this account ?

(e) The total amount paid as commission to the agent or agents for purchasing rice and paddy separately up to 31st October 1943 ?

*48. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The total quantity of rice and paddy exported by the Government outside the Province showing the quantities district by district separately ?

(b) The names and addresses of the consignees ?

(c) The total expenditure incurred by Government and the total cost realised from the consignees up to the 31st October 1943 ?

*49. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether there was any condition imposed by the Central Government on the Government of Assam regarding supply of rice and paddy outside the Province ?

(b) If so, will Government be pleased to lay on the table a copy of such terms and conditions prior to the re-imposition of the ban ?

† Speech not corrected by the Hon'ble Minister or the hon. Member concerned.

*50. Will Government be pleased to state the total quantity of rice and paddy exported outside the Province by (i) private firms, (ii) individuals and (iii) by Government up to 31st October 1943 ?

*51. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have fixed up any maximum price for rice and paddy to be purchased by the Government Agent ?

(b) If so, what are those rates ?

*52. (a) Will Government be pleased to lay on the table the copies of tenders received by them from persons or firms for distributing imported food-stuffs in the Province together with the names of such persons or firms whose tenders have been accepted showing the area in which they have been allowed to operate and the date of their appointments ?

(b) What amount has been paid as commission to the distributing agents up to 31st October 1943 ?

*53. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The total amount of loss or gain by Government with regard to imported food-stuffs (figures to be given commodity by commodity for each district separately up to 31st October 1943) ?

(b) The names of food-stuffs imported in the Province by Government up to 31st October 1943 showing the quantity and the cost incurred thereof including all expenditure ?

(c) How these food-stuffs were distributed in each district and how their prices were realised ?

*54. Will Government be pleased to lay on the table the copies of tenders received by them for purchasing food-stuffs outside the Province on behalf of Government together with the names of persons or firms whose tender or tenders have been accepted and the total commission paid to such agents up to 31st October 1943 ?

*55. Will Government be pleased to state the highest price of paddy and rice reached in each district of the Province during the current year and the highest price offered for the said articles by the Government agent in each of these districts ?

*56. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The total quantity of (i) Rice, (ii) Paddy, (iii) Sugar, (iv) Salt, (v) Dal, (vi) Wheat, (vii) Atta and (viii) Flour, stocked in Government godowns up to 31st October 1943 ? (Figures to be shown district by district separately.)

(b) Whether any of the said food-stuffs has been destroyed, being unfit for human consumption ?

(c) If so, how much of each of these commodities were destroyed ? (Figures to be shown district by district separately.)

*57. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether any defalcation has taken place in Government supply stores in any of the districts of the Province ?

(b) If so, where that defalcation has occurred and what is the amount involved ?

(c) What are the names of Officers who were in charge of those supply stores ?

(d) Whether Government propose to lay on the table the reports of the Audit Department on all the Government Supply Stores in the Province ?

*58. Will Government be pleased to state the quantities of rice and paddy separately which used to be imported in and exported by this Province during the years 1938-39, 1939-40, 1940-41, 1941-42 and 1942-43 ?

*59. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether the Assam Government is supplying food-stuffs to labourers engaged on military works in the Province ?

(b) If so, will Government be pleased to state whether they are making arrangements with the military authorities to be relieved of their responsibility for supplying food-stuffs to the said labourers ?

*60. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether Assam Government is supplying food-stuffs to the outside labourers recruited by the Railway Authorities for their new projects ?

(b) If so, whether Government are moving the Railway authorities to make their own arrangements to feed their labour population ?

*61. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have purchased any rice or paddy from outside the Province ?

(b) If the answer to question (a) above is in the affirmative, will Government be pleased to state (i) the quantity of rice and paddy purchased and their respective prices, (ii) the place from which they were purchased, (iii) the manner in which they were disposed of, (iv) the reasons for such purchase ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

46. (a)—The tenders are confidential documents and cannot be made public.

(b)—Messrs. Steel Brothers & Company, Limited, Calcutta.

(c)—The terms and conditions of the agreement were discussed and settled, but no document has been formally executed for year 1943.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : May I know from the Hon'ble Premier how many tenders were received by them ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I cannot give the number off-hand, Sir.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Are all the tenders treated as confidential, Sir, after they have been disposed of ? What is their bearing ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Because tenders may again be called for next year and rival companies will get the competitive figures.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : What was the special ground for accepting the tenders of Messrs. Steel Brothers and Co. ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Because they were doing the work from September 1942 and discharge of their function was satisfactory to Government and all parties concerned.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : When they were appointed during September 1942 what was the special reason that persuaded Government to give contract to that firm ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Because they had wide experience of this nature of business. They had practically the monopoly of rice and paddy business in Burma.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Do Government think that the experience in Burma is equally good to be considered in India also ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : There is no difference in rice trade between India and Burma.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : May we know why Government appointed Messrs. Steel Brothers in preference to local experienced traders ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : We took steps immediately, as part of the Province was going without any foodstuff, and as Messrs. Steel Brothers were at hand they were appointed as Government agents last year.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Is it a fact that Messrs. Steel Brothers lost everything in Burma and out of sympathy the Assam Government gave them the contract ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : No, Sir, Messrs. Steel Brothers have got a world-wide organization and their head office is in London. They are the agents of the Palestine Government and the Ceylon Government and even Bengal Government had appointed them as their agents in some respects.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Is it a fact that their entire business in Burma has been lost ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Everyone knows that when Burma was overrun by the enemy anybody having a business there must have lost it.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Is it a fact that this contract was given to them only by way of compensating their loss in Burma ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : No, Sir.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : May I know from the Hon'ble Premier whether our Government had to do anything with this company for which the contract was given to them during 1942 ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : No, but they were employed from August 1942.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Was there no other rice dealer on the spot who could be given the contract ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Last year no rice dealer of the experience of Messrs. Steel Brothers was available in Shillong at the time.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT : Is it a fact that due to the unstable condition of the usual trade channels Messrs. Steel Brothers were appointed as it was necessary to make some arrangement whereby it might be stabilized and the public fed ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Yes, it is so.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Did Government try to procure foodstuff last year as they are doing this year ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I think there was such a question during the last session ?

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : My Friend Mr. Blennerhassett has put a question just on that point and I want to ask one more question. Are Government aware that the general public of the Province are not in favour of giving such contracts to such a firm ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Last year there was no such question and the general public did not know that Government was appointing any Government agent. Last year there was no objection to the operation by Messrs. Steel Brothers in buying rice and paddy in surplus areas and distributing them in deficit areas. This year we heard complaints about the quality supplied by them.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Are Government aware that Messrs. Steel Brothers could not discharge some of their obligations regarding the supply of rice to tea gardens ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Government are not aware of that.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT : Will Government take it from me that that is not my experience.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Will Government take it from me that that is my experience with regard to some gardens in the Surma Valley ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :
47. (a)—25,38,918 maunds of rice and paddy. The labour and time involved in collecting figures district by district do not engender the hope of this information being available in time for reply now.

(b)—The quantity was supplied according to requirement of Army, Industrial interests, internal consumers and by export to Bengal.

(c)—A statement has been laid on the table.

STATEMENT A SHOWING THE DRAWAL BY MESSRS. STEEL BROTHERS AND COMPANY FROM DIFFERENT TREASURIES FOR THE PERIOD FROM 15TH SEPTEMBER 1942 TO 15TH OCTOBER 1943.

Treasury	Amount		
	Rs.	a.	p.
Gauhati...	1,00,00,000	0	0
Shillong...	5,000	0	0
Jorhat ...	2,000	0	0
Dibrugarh	9,25,000	0	0
Mangaldai	38,25,000	0	0
Silchar ...	6,50,000	0	0
Sibsagar...	5,64,380	2	0
Tezpur ...	7,00,000	0	0
	1,66,71,380	2	0

This figure is available upto 15th October 1943.

(d)—It is too early to say anything about gain or loss to Government, if the question refer to their profit or loss.

(e)—Total amount of commission paid is Rs.3,18,372. As the commission on rice and paddy are same, commission account was not kept separately.

48. (a)—Government exported 1,11,092 maunds of paddy from Assam Valley to Bengal before free trade came in and a further 61,000 maunds of paddy were allowed to be exported from Surma Valley after free trade was abolished to make up Assam quota under the basic plan. Recently 11,000 maunds rice and 14,000 maunds paddy were exported from Cachar district to relieve distress in Bengal.

(b)—Director of Civil Supplies, Bengal and the Chief Minister, Cooch Behar State.

(c)—Total expenditure incurred by Government was Rs.7,76,262-14-0. Total amount to be recovered comes to Rs.8,06,351-6-0 including Government cess of Rs.30,088-8-0 of which a sum of Rs.3,50,996-15-0 has been realised and the balance is under recovery.

49. (a)—No, except that we were asked to supply 7,300 tons of rice to Bengal, after the free trade was withdrawn.

(b)—Does not arise.

50.—Government have no information about exports by private firms or individuals. The quantity exported by Government up to 31st October 1943 was 1,11,092 maunds of paddy before free trade and 61,000 maunds of paddy were ordered to be made over to Bengal agents after free trade was withdrawn.

51. (a) & (b)—Yes, vide Government Notification No.SD.293/43/3, dated the 11th September 1943 and No.SD.293/43, dated the 27th September 1943.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : What are the rates, Sir ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : There is a reference to the Government Notification. The hon. Member knows that when an information can be obtained from Government publications there should not be any question. The hon. Member can gather the information from the notification published in the Gazette, and perhaps for that reason Government did not state the rates.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : We gave the numbers of the Notifications.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : So far my question is concerned I doubt whether my purpose will be served by the notifications mentioned by the Hon'ble Premier.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : What was the hon. Member's purpose ?

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My purpose is this—whether Government fixed any maximum price for their agents so that they should not exceed that price while purchasing rice and paddy on Government contract.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: That question can still be asked even without knowing the rates.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government please state the rates?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The Government Agents did not have any free hand in the matter; they were subject to the rates of price control that applied to the general public.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Before the price control order was published, was any maximum rate fixed for the agents?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact that after the publication of the Price Control Order Messrs. Steel Brothers purchased at a higher rate than was fixed by the price control?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, they did not purchase at a higher rate, but they were allowed time up to the 31st October to take delivery of their earlier contracts, *i.e.*, contracts which they had secured before the Price Control Order was issued.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact that rice booked before the Price Control Order was published, at some railway stations of Maulvibazar Subdivision, was not allowed to be exported to Bengal after the publication of the Order?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, the ban was not imposed on account of price control, but because of the general policy of not allowing exports outside the Province.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

52. (a)—Tenders are confidential documents and it is undesirable to make them public. The tenders of the Assam Supply Agency, Limited and those of the Surma Valley Agency and Company were accepted, the former are to operate in the Assam Valley districts excluding Dibrugarh and Golaghat subdivisions, while latter are to operate in Sylhet, Cachar (excluding North Cachar Hills) and in the Municipal Area of Shillong. The Agencies signed their agreements on 12th April 1943.

(b)—Rupees 25,996.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: May I know who are the shareholders of the Assam Supply Agency, Limited?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: They are quite a large number.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: May I know a few names?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: One notable person is our Friend Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Any other names?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Others are not Members of this Assembly. I remember that one is Dr. Jyotish Chandra Das of Gauhati; the other two, if I remember aright, are retired Government officials, and the fifth name I remember is our Friend Maulavi Abdul Hai, *Ex-Member* of the Legislative Council.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

53. (a)—In commercial undertaking loss or gain is not worked out commodity by commodity and district by district. It is too early to give figures of loss or gain for the period.

(b)—A statement has been laid on the table.

STATEMENT B SHOWING THE VARIOUS COMMODITIES OF FOOD-STUFFS IMPORTED TO ASSAM DURING THE YEARS 1942-43 AND 1943-44

	1942-43						1943-44 (upto 31st October 1943)					
	Md.	sr.	ch.	Rs.	a.	p.	Md.	sr.	ch.	Rs.	a.	p.
Salt	7,63,662	8	0	45,65,538	10	9	2,97,471	16	0	19,46,738	11	0
Sugar	2,28,695	21	4	33,12,799	9	3	2,78,959	0	0	28,49,075	2	6
Flour and Atta..	43,239	0	0	5,04,992	2	0	1,22,566	28	0	17,39,047	14	0
Gram	19,255	24	0	1,46,415	12	3	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Mustard oil ..	2,638	35	12	71,758	8	0	2,597	35	4	1,10,415	10	0
Ghee	120	26	5	8,359	2	3	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Burma Rice ..	2,133	0	0	16,302	11	0	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Arhar Dal .. .	19,643	14	0	2,57,181	7	9	1,33,361	34	8	25,13,978	10	0
Masur Dal .. .	71,722	24	0	7,63,964	14	9	56,651	21	4	11,52,967	13	0
Khesari Dal ..	4,075	8	0	44,966	4	6	3,221	31	0	52,829	11	0
Gram Dal .. .	490	0	0	5,551	7	0	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Kolai Dal .. .	1,000	0	0	12,082	12	3	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Moog Dal .. .	1,034	22	0	18,303	6	0	1,206	33	0	19,359	15	0
Motor Dal .. .	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	6,329	27	0	1,05,612	10	0
Jagree .. .. .	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	24,236	37	12	2,95,223	2	0
Wheat .. .. .	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	40,246	31	0	5,54,471	15	0
	97,30,216 11 9						1,13,39,730 1 6					

A—Dal—97,965 Mds. 28 srs.

Rs. 11,04,050-4-3.

B—Dal—2,01,371-26-12

Rs. 38,44,757-11-0.

(c)—The quantities were distributed to each district according to quota fixed on population basis and the prices were realised in accordance with rates fixed by Government from time to time.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: From the statement I find that so far as sugar is concerned Habiganj got 2,118 whereas Sunamganj got 6,662. Am I to understand that this was on population basis?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: This was according to the requisition of the Subdivisional Officer.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Then for this lesser quantity supplied to Habiganj was the Subdivisional Officer of Habiganj responsible?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: We act on the requisition of the Deputy Commissioner, and he gets requisition from the Subdivisional Officers.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Will Government say why atta is sold at annas 8 per seer whereas we find from the report of the Punjab Government that the selling price there is from Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 per maund?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The atta we got here did not all come from the Punjab. We got some from the United Provinces where, according to the Press report of the Food Debate in the Council of State which appeared yesterday, the price was from Rs. 14 to Rs. 15. Moreover we have got no milling facilities here. So, we had them milled at Calcutta by Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company who had to be paid milling charges. To this must be added the cost of transport from Calcutta.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Even in Bengal atta is sold at annas 6 per seer. Are the Assam Government profiteering in this commodity?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, Bengal got, according to Press reports, most of their requirements from the Punjab which was unfortunately not the case with us.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

54.—No tender was called for Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company of Calcutta, a firm of standing and repute was selected as purchasing agents for imported commodities on a commission of 1 per cent. on purchase price. The commission paid to them from 1st April 1943 to 31st October 1943 is Rs.82,538-11-0.

55.—The price of best rice on an average rose up to Rs.35 and that of paddy up to Rs.19 per maund. The purchasing agent's maximum offer was Rs.34 per maund of rice and Rs.19 per maund of paddy.

56. (a)—A statement showing the balance of stock of different commodities excepting rice and paddy on 1st November 1943 has been laid on the table.

Statement referred to in reply to starred question No.56(a) asked by Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee at the November Session of the Assembly, 1943

Stock position of Food-stuff on 1st November 1943

Serial No.	Names of places	Salt	Sugar	Masur dal	Moog	Arhar	Flour	Atta	Wheat	Mustard oil	Gur	Khasari	Motor	Gram
1	North Sylhet	34,330	10,430	2,835	3,403	466	735	4,043	2,435	..	..	..	..	..
2	South Sylhet	32,841	4,083	993	..	312	311	20	..	..	..	..	..	..
3	Habiganj ..	48,398	2,118	2,908	1,175	511	532	(Suji)	83 mds.	..	..	..	..	..
4	Karimganj ..	24,352	2,100	907	3,000	376	411	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	Sunamganj ..	9,717	6,662	684	..	228	261	20	..	..	..	..	..	..
6	Silchar ..	25,395	2,258	1,121	1,750	900	720	(Suji)	..	..	3	..	..	..
7	Hailakandi	4,092	1,828	161	1,328	17	21	(Suji)	..	..	..	..	..	..
8	North Cachar	600	301	20	4	..	3	..	19(tins)	..	..	..	..	..
9	Mangaldai	115	576	178	540	4	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
10	Tezpur	951	1,300	55	1,679	201	176	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
11	Golaghat	75,922	903	5	3,033	501	991	1,312	..	..	..	..	..	..
12	Jorhat ..	6,652	5,292	514	4,455	556	107	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
13	Sibsagar	4,488	3,907	489	6,314	118	821	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
14	North Lakhimpur	10,635	1,027	250	3,868	87	124	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
15	Dibrugarh	Nil	1,248	Nil	2,581	41	70	(Suji)	..	..	..	..	..	..
16	Dhubri	48,260	4,638	609	5,204	4,451	5,745	7,269	279	..	1,612	3,519	..	..
17	Goalpara	41,507	3,828	17	3,548	267	562	40	..	1,203	..	..	..	..
18	Barpeta	4,733	160	24	2,826	74	75	(Suji)	16	..	..	..	..	..
19	Gauhati	1,878	151	..	3,852	12	32	(Suji)	39	..	..	..	..	13
20	Nowgong	41,243	5,080	52	8,653	1,359	1,379	78	264	648	..	..	..	..
21	Shillong	10,076	5,424	..	5,009	533	1,077	(Suji)	34	..	..	..	..	..
22	Jowai ..	7,333	2,836	3,802	2,362	1,279	1,185	(Suji)	39	..	..	..	..	..
		106	121	5	..	16	8	(Suji)	..	..	..	..	..	..
		4,33,584	66,271	15,529	Nil	64,584	12,309	15,448	12,956	543	4,369	1,901	3,519	13
										+19	+603			tins. chakis.

(b) & (c)—Some small quantities had to be destroyed here and there being unfit for human consumption due to long storage and bad damp weather of Assam during rains. Such losses are inevitable in transactions of such huge magnitude. Quantities destroyed being very small figures are not shown district by district.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: With regard to (a), may I know the balance of stock with regard to rice and paddy?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The stock is with the different Deputy Commissioners; I am not in a position to give the figures just now.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Do they keep any record at all so far as rice and paddy are concerned?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes. There is a record of the stocks which were either requisitioned or secured by the Deputy Commissioners.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What was the difficulty that stood in the way of Deputy Commissioners that they could not supply those figures?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The difficulty is that the stock is not kept in one place, for instance, in the Sylhet district the stock has been kept in five or six different places. The records of every place have got to be collected before any reply can be given.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: So far as the balance of stock purchased by the Government Agents is concerned, can we have the figures?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Nothing was destroyed of the quantity purchased by the Government Agents because as soon as they purchased, they delivered the quantity to the interest concerned.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My question is not related to destruction of stock; it relates to the balance of stock.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am sorry I have not got the figures for the balance of stock of rice and paddy purchased by Government Agents, but I know it definitely, Sir, that my hon. Friend, who is a member of the Economic Advisory Board, has got the figures with him.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: That is confidential, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The information wanted by my hon. Friend is known to him.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied,

57. (a)—No.

(b)—Does not arise.

(c)—Does not arise.

(d)—Serious irregularities noticed in the Audit Reports are included in the Appropriation Accounts which will be placed before the Public Accounts Committee in due course. Government do not therefore propose to place separately the reports of these transactions on the table.

58.—A statement has been laid on the table.

Statement showing the quantities of rice and paddy separately which used to be imported in and exported by this Province during the years 1938-39, 1939-40, 1940-41, 1941-42 and 1942-43

(a) The quantity of rice and paddy imported into Assam are—

					Paddy	Rice
1938-39	...	...	...	...	11,239	5,98,899
1939-40	...	...	...	...	19,361	11,80,307
1940-41	...	...	...	...	3,489	5,35,184
1941-42	...	...	...	...	10,957	7,56,377
1942-43	...	...	...	...	NO IMPORTS.	

†Speech not corrected by the hon. Member concerned.

(b) Quantity of rice and paddy exported are—

				Paddy	Rice
1938-39	...	...	...	5,38,274	4,94,049
1939-40	...	...	...	6,92,650	2,06,925
1940-41	...	...	...	13,55,914	5,60,054
1941-42	...	...	...	10,01,861	6,93,906

1942-43 About 1,72,092 maunds of paddy exported to Bengal on Government account upto 31st October 1943. Figures of export during free trade period are not available.

59. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes.

60. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes.

61. (a)—No.

(b)—Does not arise.

Standard price of coarse and fine rice

Mr. BINODE KUMAR J. SARWAN asked :

*62. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they propose to fix any standard price of both coarse and fine rice for the whole Province ?

(b) What steps have been taken to remedy the scarcity of rice according to the crop conditions in each district ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

62. (a)—The hon. Member is referred to the Government Notification No. SD. 293/43, dated 27th September 1943. Government do not contemplate introducing further price gradations according to quality.

(b)—Government intend to undertake purchase operations throughout Assam and such stocks will be made available for meeting any local scarcity.

Settlement of lands in Assam Valley Districts with immigrants

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked :

*63. Will Government be pleased to state :

(a) Whether it is a fact that many people from outside the Province are at present living in Assam without any land ?

(b) The number of such people who have not been given any land ?

(c) The area of land settled with immigrants from Bengal from 1940 uptill now in the Assam Valley Districts ?

(d) Whether it is a fact that there is a demand from the Assam Provincial Muslim League and other Muslim public bodies of the Province to do away with the Line System Policy of the Government ?

(e) If so, what action Government have taken in the matter ?

(f) Whether it is a fact that due to settlement of lands in the Assam Valley Districts with the new-comers the Government revenue has much increased ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

63. (a)—Yes.

(b)—It is not possible to give such number ?

(c)—The information is not available and would take too long to collect.

(d)—Yes.

(e)—This view, as well as the opposite one, held, was taken into consideration by Government before framing their recent Resolution on Land Settlement.

(f)—Yes.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: What is the difficulty, Sir, in giving the information with regard to the settlement of land with new-comers?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: On a previous occasion a similar question was put, and I showed the difficulty of it quite exhaustively. There were supplementary questions, replies to which satisfied hon. Members of the House.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: That was with regard to landless people for the purpose of "Grow More Food" Campaign. Is it not a fact that Government keeps a regular and reliable record of the number of people and how much land they have got in *Khas*?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Yes. It is known to all hon. Members.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: May I know whether any land has been settled with any of the immigrants from 1940 up till now?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Yes, Sir, much land has been settled.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Cannot Government give the accurate quantity of land settled?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: I submit, Sir, that the question does not arise.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: What is the basis on which land is being distributed?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: These are questions of details in carrying through our new policy. We are taking into consideration on what basis land should be settled at present. To serve more or less as a guide, instruction to our local officers is that each family may get 30 to 35 bighas of land.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Are we to take it that every family in the Province already settled has got 35 bighas of land for each?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: This is more or less for guidance of our officers who give out land settlements. In some cases the applicant would not demand as much as 35 bighas.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: What is the presumption with regard to the people already existing in our soil?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: The presumption and impression of Government is that most of them have got no less than 35 bighas and there are others who would not like to take so much.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it a fact that lakhs of people are living in Assam who have no land?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Yes, there is a considerable number of people called landless residing in the Province.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: There are landless people in the Province, particularly in the Surma Valley.

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Yes, I am aware.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Did Government receive applications for settlement of land from the Assam Valley?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Yes, Sir. Sporadic applications have been received from them and they are being considered.

Paddy and rice seized, requisitioned and confiscated

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked:

*64. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The amount of paddy and rice which they have seized, requisitioned and confiscated in each of the Subdivision of Sylhet district from January to September, 1943?

†Speeches not corrected by the hon. Member.

- (b) How much of the said articles have been released for public consumption ?
- (c) The rate or price fixed by Government to be paid for those articles seized and secured in the district of Sylhet ?
- (d) On what basis the rate of price paid to the owners was fixed ?
- (e) The total quantity of rice and paddy exported from Sylhet district through Government agencies and Government recognised agencies from March 1943 to September 1943 ? (Figures for each Subdivision to be shown separately.)

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :
64. (a) & (b)—A statement giving the details has been laid on the table.

Statement referred to in reply to starred question No.64(a) and (b) asked by Maulavi Abdur Rahman at the November Session of the Assembly, 1943

(a) —		Rice	Paddy
<i>Sadr Subdivision—</i>			
Seized	...	822 maunds	816 maunds.
Confiscated	...	37 "	189 "
<i>Karimganj—</i>			
Seized and	...	Mds. srs.	Mds. srs. ch.
confiscated.	...	187 39	1,958 37 12
<i>South Sylhet—</i>			
Seized	...	1,918 maunds	8,856 maunds.
Confiscated	...	Nil	Nil
Secured	...	1,025 maunds	12,157 maunds.
<i>Habiganj—</i>			
Seized	...	372 maunds	12,884 maunds.
Confiscated	...	349 "	761 "
Secured	...	Nil	29,554 "
<i>Sunamganj—</i>			
Seized	...	...	11,000 maunds.
Secured	...	...	44,003 "
Confiscated	...	...	400 "
(b) —		Rice	Paddy
Sadr	...	10,501 maunds	...
Karimganj	...	3,260 "	3,083 maunds.
South Sylhet...	...	2,665 "	...
Habiganj	...	2,721 "	10,000 maunds.
Sunamganj	...	200 "	200 "

Note.—Rice issued includes paddy, seized or secured, converted into rice,

(c)—Prices upto Rs. 5 and Rs. 10 per maund respectively of paddy and rice seized Rs. 17 to Rs. 18 (average) per maund of rice purchased (secured) and paddy Rs. 10 per maund.

(d)—Prices paid for purchased paddy and rice were approximately equal to the market prices prevailing at the time when stocks were secured. Price paid for paddy and rice seized in connection with criminal cases were fixed by the Magistrates concerned.

(e)—The following quantities out of Government stocks were exported to Bengal through Bengal Government Agents, Messrs. Ispahani and Company, after the export ban was re-introduced, against the export quota of 7,300 tons of rice under the revised basic plan :—

Habiganj	...	5,000
South Sylhet	...	5,000 paddy.

Figures for export during the free trade period are not available—but the amount exported must have been considerable. There were no exports before free trade came in.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Was it the policy of Government that for paddy and rice seized or requisitioned the owners should be paid a fair price?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, they were paid approximately the market price.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Did Government enquire whether the prices fixed by the district authorities were in conformity with the prices prevailing in the market?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Government are aware of the prices fixed by the district authorities and they considered cases on their merits. In some cases the prices offered were fair and in certain cases I had to increase the rate.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Is it a fact that the rice distributed to Government servants at concession rates was secured or procured from the cultivators at a rate dictated by the Government?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: That rate was not dictated by Government. Government gave due consideration to these rates and in certain cases the rates were increased.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact that good rice was secured from the cultivators and worst possible rice was distributed to the Government servants of Shillong?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Shillong is supplied by Messrs. Steel Brothers from the Assam Valley and not from the Surma Valley.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: With regard to the market rate what period was taken into consideration by the district authorities?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: At the time when these were secured.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it not a fact that some rotten stocks of some tea gardens were taken by Messrs. Steel Brothers and given to the public of Shillong?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir. My Friend has got a scent of an incident but not the full facts. Under the orders of the Government of India certain camps were established throughout the Province to deal with panicky exodus and food stocks had to be kept ready in certain camps what are called Civil Supplies Movement camps. There was no necessity to use the food stock and the rice was made over to Messrs. Steel Brothers at a fixed price and the stocks were replenished by new rice. Only in one instance, it was found that the rice which was taken delivery of from Messrs. Steel Brothers was really very bad because rain water had leaked into the godown and so the rice was soaked.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it not a fact that a Subdivisional Officer in the district of Sylhet, in May last, took an account of the individual farmers about their paddy stock and let them know that the paddy would be requisitioned, seized or secured by Government?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me definitely that when the actual position of the stocks of individual farmers were taken up, they were given to understand that their paddy would be secured or seized by Government?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I deny that statement, Sir. There was no survey of the stock of the farmers.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Are Government aware that the cultivators were offered a lower price for their paddy, and they naturally got panicky?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I saw no signs of panic and in fact no report was made to me to that effect.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Are Government aware that when the price of paddy was fixed at Rs.10 by the District Authorities at Sylhet, the market price was then over Rs.16 ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, my Friends are probably confusing two dates, else they would not have made this statement—the date on which the District Officer or his Agent told the cultivator that so much paddy was being taken from him and that he would be given the market price of that day and the subsequent date on which the delivery of the rice actually took place when the price perhaps had gone up. The rate that was paid to the cultivators was scrutinised and paid to the cultivators on the day when the paddy was seized or secured.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Premier take it from me that when the market rate was Rs.22 per maund, the Officers secured or seized them at Rs.10 per maund ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I received complaints to this effect but on a personal enquiry I found that it was not so.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: May I know through whom the Hon'ble Prime Minister made the inquiry ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The inquiry was made through the usual channel, *i.e.*, through the District Authorities and the Subdivisional Officers.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Premier please accept my challenge and come to the locality and ascertain facts ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, the seizure of paddy took place immediately after the free trade was started, *i.e.*, by the 15th of May last and now being the end of the year, I don't see any benefit will accrue if an inquiry is started now.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Does the Hon'ble Prime Minister admit that if an inquiry is made and if what I say is found to be correct, then the cultivators will be paid some more amounts ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, if the cultivators have got any documentary evidence of the quantity of paddy that they delivered.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it not a fact, Sir, that the Government agents, in some cases, refused to take delivery of the secured paddy and that the owners were asked to refund the advance which were paid to them ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have had no complaints of this nature upto now. If my hon. Friend can give me any specific instance, I will see that the Government implements their promise.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Will Government take delivery of the paddy that was seized or secured by Government by paying the remaining money ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Surely, Sir.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Are Government aware that the public impression is that the Government are charitable to their own employees at the expense of the poor cultivators and, if so, will Government try to remove that impression ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I refute that charge, Sir.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: The Ministers are liars.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Perhaps the Hon'ble Speaker has heard the remark. One sees only through his own glasses.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It is highly improper to make such remarks.

Supply and distribution of Kerosene

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked :

*65. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Their present policy regarding the supply and distribution of kerosene in the Province ?
- (b) Whether it is a fact that there is no ban on the distribution of kerosene ?
- (c) Whether Government have introduced ration's system in distributing kerosene in the Province ?
- (d) Whether the same procedure is followed in each of the subdivisions of each district of the Province ?
- (e) Whether Government are aware that the condition of Habiganj Subdivision has become very bad due to the present system of distribution of kerosene ?
- (f) If so, who is responsible for such a state of affairs ?
- (g) Whether any public body or individual was asked for co-operation by the local authorities of Habiganj in the matter of supply of kerosene to that Subdivision ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

65. (a), (b), (c) & (d)—Under orders from the Government of India supply has been cut down to 50 per cent. of the offtake of 1941. The basis of the system of distribution is the Bengal Directive adopted by the Government of Assam, a copy of which is placed on the Library table. This is followed everywhere.

(e)—No.

(f)—Does not arise.

(g)—No.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(To which answers were laid on the table)

Encroachment of lands in Nowgong by immigrants

Srijut MAHI CHANDRA BORA asked :

65. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The names, if any, of village grazing ground (*i. e.*, village commons and professional grazing reserves) that have been recently thrown open to settlement in the district of Nowgong ?
- (b) The names of grazing reserves (village and professional) in the district of Nowgong, that have been encroached upon and occupied by immigrants without authority ?
- (c) Whether any steps have been taken by the authorities for their immediate eviction ?
- (d) If not, why not ?
- (e) Whether the Hon'ble Premier received a wire and a representation from me dated the 23rd and 24th September 1943 respectively, complaining about unauthorised occupation by immigrants of a number of village grazing reserves in Juria Mauza, Nowgong ?
- (f) If so, what steps have been taken on those complaints ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

65. (a)—1. Dhingarati village grazing reserve.

2. Chalapathar „ „ „

3. Dhupaguri „ „ „

4. Jakoruabil „ „ „

5. Botodrowa Borbheti „ „ „

6. Ditto Saruphisa „ „ „

(b), (c), (d) & (f)—No information is available except that encroachment in Juria Mauza was complained of. The Deputy Commissioner was asked to deal with the alleged encroachment in accordance with the land revenue policy of Government which permitted eviction.

(e)—Yes.

Purchase and sale of paddy and rice in the Province by Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company

Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAIN asked :

66. (a) Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a copy of the agreement or contract at present subsisting between them and Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company, for purchase and sale of paddy and rice in the Province ?

(b) If so, whether Government propose to lay on the table the figures, subdivision by subdivision, showing the amount of rice and paddy purchased by Steel Brothers and Company, during the current calendar year up to the 30th September 1943 ?

67. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The names of subdivisions in the Province where Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company, have been making their purchases of rice and paddy ?

(b) Whether they have kept any separate record of such purchases made by Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company, in the different subdivisions of the Province ?

(c) The quantities of rice and paddy supplied by that Company to the (i) Defence Services and (ii) Labour employed in Defence Services during the aforesaid period ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

66. (a) & (b)—The hon. Member is referred to replies to starred questions Nos. 46 (c) and 47 (a) asked by Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee at this session of the Assembly.

67. (a)—Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company are operating throughout the Province excepting Surma Valley from where they withdrew on the introduction of free trade by the Government of India.

(b)—No.

(c)—The hon. Member is referred to reply to unstarred question No. 29 (b) (i) asked by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan at this session of the Assembly.

Purchase of paddy and rice by Government Agents

Srijut JOGES CHANDRA GOHAIN asked :

68. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The total quantity of paddy and rice purchased by Government Agents till 31st October 1943 ?

(b) What quantity out of this purchase was supplied to—(i) the civil population of the Province, (ii) the Military and (iii) the labour engaged in Military and allied works ?

(c) The quantity of paddy and rice exported out of the Province by Government until 31st October 1943 ?

(d) Under what conditions the Government Agents for the purchase of paddy and rice inside the Province have been appointed ?

(e) Whether Government propose to lay on the table a copy of the contract, if any, made on this behalf with the Government Agents ?

(f) If not, why not ?

69. (a) Is it a fact that the management of all the Government Stores excepting Dibrugarh has been given to private companies ?

(b) If so, why ?

(c) Do Government propose to give management of Dibrugarh Store also to a private company ?

(d) If so, when ?

70. Will Government be pleased to state what arrangements they have made regarding supply of sugar in the Province ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

68. (a), (c), (d), (e) & (f)—The hon. Member is referred to replies to starred questions Nos. 47(a), 48(a) and 46(a) and (c) asked by Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee, at this Session of the Assembly.

(b)—The hon. Member is referred to a reply to unstarred question No. 29 (b) asked by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, M. L. A., at this Session of the Assembly.

69. (a)—Yes. In Dibrugarh, Golaghat and Hill Districts other than Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Frontier Tracts supplies are under the direct supervision of officials, while the stores at other places are being managed by the Assam Supply Agency Limited and Surma Valley Supply Agency.

(b)—In order to facilitate keeping and recording of accounts in a commercial way and to avoid losses to Government.

(c)—Not yet. Accounts of previous issues are under preparation and examination; when these are finished then the suggestion will be considered.

(d)—Does not arise.

70.—Sugar is a controlled commodity and the quantity allotted to this Province is being distributed according to population basis.

Rules for granting free-studentships and backward scholarships

Srijut JOGES CHANDRA GOHAIN asked:

71. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether it is a fact that the rules for granting free-studentships and backward scholarships in educational institutions have recently been revised?

(b) If so, what is the position of the Ahom boys according to the new revised rules?

(c) Whether they have been given the same privileges as that of the Muslim, Tribal and Scheduled Caste boys?

(d) If not, why?

(e) Whether Government received any representation from the All-Assam Ahom Association and their representative in the Assembly to consider the cases of the Ahom boys in the same way as those of the Muslim, Tribal and Scheduled Caste boys in respect of granting free-studentships and backward scholarships?

(f) If so, whether this has been considered at the time of revising the rules on the subject?

(g) If not, why not?

(h) Whether Government propose to consider the case of the Ahom boys on the line suggested by their representative in the Assembly and the All-Assam Ahom Association as stated in question (a) above?

(i) If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied:

71. (a)—No. They are being revised.

(b) to (d)—Do not arise.

(e)—Yes.

(f)—They will be considered in due course.

(g)—Does not arise.

(h)—The Ahoms now constitute a separate community and their cases will be considered on their own merits.

(i)—Does not arise.

Price Control officers

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS asked:

72. Will Government be pleased to state, the number of Price Control Officers appointed up to date in the Assam Valley and the community to which each of them belongs?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

72.—No Price Control Officers have been appointed by Government so far.

Requisition of villages for Military purposes

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI asked :

73. (a) Is it a fact that villagers of some of the villages of Sylhet Sadar Sub-division, have been ordered to vacate their villages forthwith for some Military purposes ?

(b) If so, will Government be pleased to state what arrangements have been made to provide those villages with shelter and land ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

73. (a)—It is not understood exactly to what villages the hon. Member refers, but it is a fact that Military needs have occasioned the requisitioning of a number of homesteads all over the Province and not only in North Sylhet Subdivision.

(b)—Full compensation for removal and for loss of income has been paid to these villagers, and Deputy Commissioners have been directed to try and find land for their maintenance elsewhere, if possible.

Remuneration to Copyists and Typists in the Criminal Branch and Revenue Branch of Government

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked :

74. (a) Are Government aware of the fact that the copyists and typists in the Criminal branch and Revenue branch of Government get a very small amount as their remuneration ?

(b) Are Government aware that this small amount is inadequate for their maintenance in view of the increased prices of articles ?

(c) Whether Government propose to adopt a scheme to increase their remuneration ?

(d) Is it a fact that according to correction slip III to rule 2, Chapter X of the High Court General Rules and Order, the copyists and typists are entitled to Rs.50 and Rs.80 a month respectively ?

(e) Is it a fact that Government in their letter No. J. 62/451-53-G. J. of 19th January 1940 committed themselves to increase the remuneration of copyists and typists from 2 annas to 2½ annas ?

(f) If so, what has been the result of this commitment ?

(g) Is it a fact that since then the economic condition of the country has become worse ?

(h) Are Government aware that the average income of the typists and copyists of Subdivisional Officer's Court, Habiganj is much below the standard amount ?

(i) Are Government aware that one of the two typists of the said office had died recently ?

(j) If so, do Government propose to withhold appointment of a hand in the said vacancy in order to enable the existing hands to earn more ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA replied :

74. (a) & (b)—Government have received representations to this effect, and have given them sympathetic consideration.

(c)—The remuneration of copyists and typists has been increased from 2 annas to 2½ annas per folio, and of mappists by 25 per cent. The consent of the High Court to this decision has only recently been received, but the increases have been given retrospective effect from 1st April 1943.

(d)—The Rule quoted by the hon. Member is the "Criminal" Rule. The corresponding "Civil" Rule is however the same. The Rules are to the effect that the number of copyists and typists must not be greater than, will ordinarily admit of each copyist earning an average Rs. 40 and each typist an average Rs. 65 per month, and that, if practicable, a minimum of Rs.50 for copyists and Rs. 80 for typists should be aimed at.

(e) & (f)—Government committed themselves, and the result is as in (c) above.

(g)—Government are not prepared to dispute the proposition.

(h) & (i)—Government have no information.

(j)—Instructions have been issued by Government, and approved by the High Court, that additional hands are no where to be entertained in these Departments unless the minimum standard of earnings has been reached.

Number of Educational Institutions in the Province

Maulana ABDUL HAMID KHAN asked :

75. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The total number of Government and Aided High Schools, Middle English Schools, Normal Schools and Colleges in the Province ? (Figures for Government and Aided Institution to be shown separately.)

(b) The total number of students reading in these institutions during the year 1942 ?

(c) How many of these students were Hindus and how many were Muslims ?

(d) Total expenditure incurred by Government under Primary, Secondary and Collegiate Education in the year 1942 ?

(e) The average expenditure incurred by Government on each student during the said year ?

(f) The expenditure incurred by Government for Muslim and Hindu communities for general education in the year 1942 ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

75.—The figures below are for the year 1942-43 and exclude the Anglo-Indian and European Schools and Colleges.

	For males	For females
(a)—Total number of Government High Schools ...	23	2
Total number of Aided High Schools...	108	18
Total number of Government Middle English Schools.	7	4
Total number of Aided Middle English Schools	279	21
Total number of Government Normal & Training Schools.	3	...
Total number of Aided Normal & Training Schools.	...	2
Total number of Government Arts Colleges (including Sylhet Sanskrit College.)	3	...
Total number of Aided Arts Colleges...	6	4
(b)—Total number of pupils reading in Government High Schools.	9,906	739
Total number of pupils reading in Aided High Schools.	21,804	4,098
Total number of pupils reading in Government Middle English Schools.	665	574
Total number of pupils reading in Aided Middle English Schools.	18,038	1,945
Total number of pupils reading in Government Normal & Training Schools.	255	...
Total number of pupils reading in Aided Government Normal & Training Schools.	...	31
Total number of students reading in Government Arts Colleges.	1,220	...
Total number of students reading in Aided Arts Colleges.	864	171

(c)—The figures are not available and it will take a long time to collect figures from subordinate officers.

(d)—Total expenditure incurred by Government for :—

	For males	For females
	Rs.	Rs.
Primary Education	10,44,579	1,18,940
Secondary Education	11,29,319	2,08,690
Collegiate Education	3,05,320	18,644

(e)—Average expenditure incurred by Government on each student for :—

	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
Primary Education	3	3	6	2	15	3
Secondary Education	12	4	6	16	7	3
Collegiate Education	146	8	1	109	0	5

(f)—Separate figures of expenditure are not available.

Settlement of lands in the Mechpara and Bijni Raj Court of Wards Estates

Maulana ABDUL HAMID KHAN asked :

76. Will Government be pleased to state—

- How many bighas of land are now lying uncultivated in (i) the Mechpara and (ii) Bijni Raj Court of Wards Estates ?
- How many bighas of land have been made khas in each of the above mentioned Estates by sale owing to non-payment of rent by the Jotdars and Raiyats during the last 10 years ?
- Of these, how many bighas of land have been settled with the Raiyats and how many bighas still remain khas ?
- How many bighas of land are still kept as grazing reserve and how many have been kept as khas under Jamadarhat Kachari (Joypur Dihi) in Mechpara Wards Estate ?
- How many bighas of uncultivated land under the Mechpara Wards Estate have been settled in connection with the Grow More Food Campaign during the last 2 years ? (The figures to be shown Dihi by Dihi.)
- What steps have been taken by the Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara, the respective Managers of the Bijni Raj, and Mechpara Wards Estates and their subordinates to make the Grow More Food Campaign a success in those Estates ?
- Whether Government issued any instructions to these officers in this respect ?
- If so, with what result ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

76. (a) (i)—In Mechpara 9,056 bighas which includes approximately all the uncultivated and untenanted lands.

(ii)—In Bijni Estate approximately 1,31,000 bighas including lands unfit for cultivation, beels, rivers, forests, grazing grounds, etc. Most of the available land fit for cultivation have already been settled.

(b)—Mechpara	... ..	54,457 bighas.
Bijni Raj	... ..	48,167 bighas approximately.
(c)—Mechpara	} settled with Raiyats	24,982 bighas.
		} Khas	29,475 bighas.

This khas land includes lands which were previously settled and brought under cultivation but subsequently purchased by the Estate in execution of decrees for non-payment of rents and thus became khas. These are mostly in occupation of prospective tenants and are under process of settlement.

Bijni Raj	... settled with Raiyats	... 32,057 bighas approximately.
	· Khas	... 12,748 ,, ,,

of which roughly 3,000 bighas have been eroded by rivers.

(d)—Grazing reserve	... ..	1,470 bighas.
Khas	... ..	1,800 ,,

(e)—In all 10,479 bighas as detailed below:—

Lakhipur Tahsil	...	...	...	...	5,170 bighas.
Chunari	..	..	..	..	175 ..
Balabhila	..	..	..	..	1,387 ..
Balijana	..	..	..	..	417 ..
Goalpara	..	..	..	..	1,060 ..
Jamadarhat	..	..	..	..	2,270 ..
					10,479 ..

(f) to (h)—The Deputy Commissioner and the Managers and their subordinates have taken up the "Grow More Food" campaign as one of their duties and have been explaining the necessity of the campaign to the cultivators in the course of their tours. Many meetings were held in rural areas to impress upon the cultivators the need of growing more food by taking up more land for cultivating food grains. The Hon'ble Ministers of Finance and Judicial also addressed largely attended meetings on this subject explaining the necessity of cultivating all available lands with food grains. As a result of all these activities Aus and Aman cultivation increased by about 20 per cent. in the last season and more increase is expected in the winter rice crops.

In view of what has been stated and done the necessity for issuing separate instruction to the Deputy Commissioner and other officers did not exist.

Commission paid to Government Agents for purchase, supply and distribution of foodstuffs.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked:

77. Will Government be pleased to state—

- The amount paid or likely to be paid as commission to various Government Agents appointed for the purchase, supply and distribution of foodstuffs during the year 1943-44?
- The total monthly cost for the Department of Supply, opened in various Districts of the Province inclusive of the cost of commission to Government Agents?
- The arrangements made by the Government for the supply and distribution of controlled foods in the rural areas of the Province?
- Whether Government propose to organise the opening of Co-operative Stores in each choukidari panchayat circle of the Province?
- Whether Government propose to eliminate the non-official agencies and make future purchases through a reliable staff of permanent Government servants?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

77. (a)—

	Commission paid		Commission likely to be paid during the remaining months of the year	
	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	a. p.
Shaw Wallace and Company	82,539	0 0	60,670	0 0
Steel Brothers and Company	1,94,440	8 0	2,72,216	8 0
Assam Supply Agency Limited	9,846	10 0	46,728	6 0
Surma Valley Supply Agency and Company.	16,148	14 0	31,611	2 0

(b)—Rs. 88,000-0-0.

(c)—As for rice and paddy Government have made purchases through their Agents Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company Limited, and District Officers. From such purchased stocks District Officers issue rice and paddy at controlled rates through shops in areas where there is scarcity. As for imported commodities these are purchased or arranged by Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company, Calcutta, on behalf of Government and despatched to Assam. These are received in the plains Districts of Assam *minus* Golaghat and Dibrugarh Subdivisions *plus* Shillong by the two Distribution Agencies, the Assam Valley Agency Limited, Gauhati and the Surma

Valley Supply Agency, Shillong. Elsewhere in the Province they are received by the District and Subdivisional Officers. The two Agencies distributed the commodities according to fixed quotas to wholesalers selected and registered by the District Officers and these wholesalers in their turn issue goods to their registered retailers in rural areas according to quotas. Where the Agencies are not operating issues are made to wholesalers or directly to retailers according to circumstances by the District Officers.

(d)—Government will give all possible facilities if the public care to organise such stores and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies reports that 200 such Societies have already been registered and papers of some 300 more are under scrutiny.

(e)—Government do not think that any useful purpose will be served by eliminating non-official agency.

*Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is Shaw Wallace and Company an indigenous concern?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Shaw Wallace and Company is a Firm of repute and if by the word 'indigenous', my hon. Friend means an Indian concern, the answer is in the negative.

*Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: May I know from the Hon'ble Premier what is the rate of the commission paid to each of these Companies—Shaw Wallace and Company and Steel Brothers and Company?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: From the answer to a Starred Question, my Friend has already come to know of the rates of commission. However Sir, I will repeat it. Shaw Wallace and Company is given a commission of one per cent. on all the purchases, while Steel Brothers and Company is paid at the rate of 3 annas per maund for the first 95 thousand maunds and then at the rate of 1 anna 6 pies per maund. As regards the Assam Supply Agency Limited and the Surma Valley Supply Agency Limited, I can say that they get their commission in every three months. They get 10 per cent. commission for the first 25 thousand maunds and 1 anna 3 pies for the rest.

*Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: May I know the names of the persons of the Surma Valley Supply Agency and Company?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I understand there are only two persons—one is Khan Sahib Abdul Kaher of Sylhet and the other is Rai Bahadur Jiban Ram Goenka.

*Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it a registered Firm, Sir?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: An agreement was signed by these two people, and I don't know whether this is a registered Firm or not.

*Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is Rai Bahadur Jiban Ram Goenka a share-holder of Shaw Wallace and Company?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Do Government pay anything to Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company for forwarding any food-stuff to our Province?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are we to understand that the commissions are paid to that Company on all the commodities purchased?

*The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir.

Barpeta-Tarabari Road

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS asked:

78. (a) Is it a fact that the Barpeta-Tarabari Road is going to be abandoned by the Public Works Department?

(b) If so, what are the reasons therefor?

(c) If not, why no repair-works have yet been done to the said road?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied:

78. (a)—No.

(b)—Does not arise.

(c)—Repairs are in progress and will be completed by the end of February 1944.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: The answer to (c) is vague, Sir. My question is "If not, why no repair-works have yet been done to the said road?"

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: The repairs are already in progress, Sir.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: Sir, no repair has yet been done.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Our report is otherwise, Sir. The work has already commenced.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: No, Sir, it is not true. No repair has yet been done.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member is supplying information which the Hon'ble Minister denies.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister enquire into it and if no repair has yet been done, will he take, steps, Sir?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: We made enquiries recently, Sir, and we have got telegram from the Subdivisional Officer that repairs are in progress and will be completed by the end of February next.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: Is there any date mentioned on the telegram on which the repair has been taken up, Sir?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: I have already replied, Sir.

Re Public Works Department contracts

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS asked:

79. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the Government of Assam has made any request to the Authorities of the Bengal and Assam Railway to the effect that preference should be given to the local people as far as possible in the matter of service, contract, etc., under them?

(b) If not, why not?

(c) If the answer to question 79 (a) is in the affirmative, do Government propose to enquire and state how many contracts have been given to Assamese contractors for the work of doubling the Railway lines (i) from Golokgonja to Amingaon and (ii) from Pandu to Tinsukia by the Bengal and Assam Railway?

(d) Whether Government are aware that not a single contract has yet been given to any Assamese contractor for doubling the Railway lines by the Bengal and Assam Railway from Golokgonja to Amingaon in spite of there being many experienced and reputed Assamese contractors even with lowest rates?

(e) Whether Government propose to represent the matter to the Authorities of the Bengal and Assam Railway?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied:

79. (a)—Yes, in respect of service under the Railway only.

(b)—Does not arise in regard to service. In regard to contract request is being made now.

(c) and (d)—Enquiries are being made.

(e)—Yes.

Assam Motor Transport Organisation

Maulavi NAMWAR ALI BARBHUIYA asked:

80. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the Assam Motor Transport Organisation is a public concern within the special cognizance of the Ministry?

(b) Whether the whole establishment is a Government one?

(c) Whether the rules and procedure that are applicable to other Government servants in the matter of appointment, etc., are also applicable in the case of the employees of the said Organisation?

- (d) If so, whether they have been followed in the cases of appointments that have hitherto been made under the Organisation ?
- (e) If not, under what order or rule the Motor Transport Controller has been authorised to make appointments ?
- (f) Whether there is any limit to the number and value of posts that the Controller is authorised to make without reference to Government ?
- (g) If so, what is that limit ?
- (h) The number and value of posts that have been made by the Controller up till August 1943 (i) without reference to Government and (ii) after making reference to Government ?
- (i) Whether the Controller advertises the vacancies in the local newspaper or in the *Assam Gazette* ?
- (j) If not, why not ?
- (k) Whether any educational qualification is essential for any one of the ministerial or technical posts of the Organisation ?
- (l) If so, whether any open and public endeavour was made to advertise to the public in order to obtain the best available persons in each individual appointment ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

80. (a) & (b)—It is a Government concern.
- (c)—Yes, in general. As intimated to the Assembly when the vote for the establishment of the organisation was obtained, it has a quasi-commercial purpose for the maintenance of the economy of the Province in war time conditions. The ordinary service rules are in process of modification and adaptation to the Organisation which is of a temporary character.

(d)—As far as might be, in consideration of the experimental character of the Organisation and the necessity of speed, if the interests of the public were not to suffer.

(e), (f) & (g)—As a working arrangement, the Controller has been allowed to make appointments within the scope of the venture, as from time to time settled in discussion with the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge, in the categories of clerical and lower technical personnel. The administrative, accountancy and superior technical personnel are chosen in consultation with the Minister-in-charge.

The fixation of a money limit for pay scales in posts filled by the Controller, is under consideration.

(h)—Statements showing the appointments with a nominal roll of executive and higher technical personnel are given below. These exclude the numerous appointments on daily rates or wages. Some of the appointments included in the nominal list, have been discussed with Government. Others have been made by the Controller and his Assistants.

(i)—The posts of Group Assistants and Section Assistants have been widely advertised and the lists remain open.

(j)—The process of advertisement is not wholly suited to present conditions, when technical and specialised personnel are mainly engaged in essential services and are not free under the war time Ordinances to transfer their services. The policy of the Government of India is to discourage advertisement where it would hamper the war effort by enticing essential personnel away from their posts. This applies also to some extent to clerical service as there is a tendency among such personnel to seek for better immediate prospects which, if not checked to some extent, would lead to disorganisation in every sphere.

Appointments in the Organisation are of a temporary nature, but men of tried efficiency and reliability are required, so that nomination and negotiation with previous employers and with the authorities responsible for the working of the Ordinances has been necessary. No sooner were the offices of the Organisation opened and lists of requirements posted at such offices, than they were flooded with applications for employment.

(k)—The posts being temporary, specific qualifications have not yet been laid down by rule; each post has had to be dealt with on the merits.

(l)—Yes. The search for suitable personnel has been arduous and constant.

Statement referred to in reply to unstarred question No.80(h) asked by Maulavi Namwar Ali Barbhuiya, M.L.A., at the November Session of the Assam Legislative Assembly, 1943.

List of employees, area by area, Assam Transport, as at 31st October 1943

Clerks—

Serial No.	Areas			Surma Valley Hindu	Assam Valley Hindu	Muslim	Outside Province	Anglo-Indian	Christian: European	Others Khasi	Total
				(1)	(2)							(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1	Head Office, Shillong	..	..	80	3	12	14	3	1	16	129
2	Nowgong	..	..	9	32	1	11	..	..	..	53
3	Jorhat	..	..	5	24	1	2	..	..	..	32
4	North Lakhimpur	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
5	Dibrugarh	..	..	6	25	1	1	..	..	2	35
6	Darrang	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
7	Surma Valley	..	..	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	4
Total		..	..	106	85	15	28	3	1	18	256

Drivers—

Serial No.	Areas			Surma Valley Hindu	Assam Valley Hindu	Muslim	Outside Province	Anglo-Indian	Christian	Others	Total
				(1)	(2)							(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1	Head Office, Shillong	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	2
2	Nowgong	..	..	42	41	39	5	..	2	..	129
3	Jorhat	..	..	31	49	22	12	..	3	9	126
4	North Lakhimpur	..	..	..	1	5	..	..	..	..	6
5	Dibrugarh	..	..	19	37	18	13	..	..	21	108
6	Darrang	..	..	1	9	6	1	..	..	..	17
7	Surma Valley	..	..	10	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Total		..	..	103	137	90	31	..	5	32	398

Handyman—

1	Head Office, Shillong	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	2
2	Nowgong	..	..	23	39	45	9	..	..	8	124
3	Jorhat	..	..	24	53	27	..	..	..	11	115
4	North Lakhimpur	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	Dibrugarh	..	..	14	32	28	..	..	..	14	88
6	Darrang	..	..	..	6	4	..	..	..	..	10
7	Surma Valley	..	..	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	11
Total		..	..	72	130	104	9	..	..	35	350

Serial No.	Areas	Surma Valley Hindu		Muslim	Outside Province	Anglo-Indian	Christian	Others	Total
		(1)	(2)						
		(1)	(2)						
<i>Technicians—</i>									
1	Head Office, Shillong .. .. .	..	..	1	1	..	..	4	6
2	Nowgong .. .. .	..	9	1	..	..	..	3	13
3	Jorhat .. .. .	..	2	32	6	27	..	4	71
4	North Lakhimpur .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	Dibrugarh .. .. .	..	..	16	5	..	..	..	21
6	Darrang .. .. .	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	1
7	Surma Valley .. .. .	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	1
Total ..		4	57	13	28	..	..	11	113

Helpers—

1	Head Office, Shillong .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	5
2	Nowgong .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3	Jorhat .. .. .	..	..	26	12	..	..	..	38
4	North Lakhimpur .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	Dibrugarh .. .. .	..	..	9	7	..	..	..	16
6	Darrang .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
7	Surma Valley .. .. .	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	1
Total ..		1	35	19	..	..	..	5	60

Serial No.

Areas

Menials—

Serial No.	Areas	Surma Valley Hindu		Muslim	Outside Province	Others	Total		
		(1)	(2)						
		(1)	(2)						
1	Head Office, Shillong .. .. .	..	..	4	..	1	3	12	20
2	Nowgong .. .. .	..	..	..	8	..	2	4	14
3	Jorhat .. .. .	..	..	1	19	2	4	3	29
4	North Lakhimpur .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	Dibrugarh .. .. .	..	..	..	6	2	..	9	17
6	Darrang .. .. .	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
7	Surma Valley .. .. .	..	..	3	..	..	..	..	3
Total ..		8	34	5	9	28	84		

Grand Total .. 1,261.

List of Officials, Group Assistants and Section Assistants as at 31st October 1943

Serial No.	Names	Designation	Date of appointment	Present salary	Nationality	Remarks
1	Mr. R. Mc. K. Adamson	Provincial Motor Transport Controller.	11th Nov. 1942	Rs. 2,700	British.	
2	Mr. H. Hussain	Deputy Provincial Motor Transport Contoller.	22nd July 1943	900	Assam Valley Muslim.	
3	Mr. S. K. Mukherjee	Chief Technical Officer	16th Aug. 1943	1,300	Hdidu (Outside Province).	
4	Mr. T. C. Barlow	Accountant	7th Dec. 1943	600	Anglo-Indian.	
5	Mr. J. C. Wall	Personal Assistant	1st May 1943	300	European (Resident in India).	
6	Mr. L. Barbora	Engineer	4th Mar. 1943	700	Assam Valley Hindu.	Reverted to Police on 8th November 1943.
7	Mr. K. C. Roy	Stores Assistant-in-charge	16th Nov. 1942	250	Surma Valley Hindu (Domiciled.)	
8	Mr. N. K. Das Gupta	Draftsman	1st Apl. 1943	275	Hindu (Outside Province).	
9	Mr. C. L. Nicholls	Workshop Superintendent, Rungamatty.	1st Nov. 1942	1,500	British.	
10	Mr. G. H. Cooper	Area Manager, Dibrugarh	10th Nov. 1942	1,200	Ditto.	
11	Mr. H. E. C. Paxton	" " " Nowgong	24th Mar. 1943	700	Anglo-Indian.	
12	Mr. S. Shanks	" " " Jorhat	8th Sep. 1943	1,050	British.	
13	Mr. G. C. Andrewartha	" " " Tezpur	20th Sep. 1943	900	Australian.	
14	Mr. H. R. Cloy	Group Assistant	1st Apl. 1943	250	Anglo-Indian.	
15	Mr. L. A. George	" " "	7th June 1943	400	Armenian.	
16	W. C. Donaldson	" " "	26th Aug. 1943	350	European.	
17	Mr. H. K. Mah	" " "	1st Oct. 1943	250	Sino-Burman.	
18	Mr. H. R. Bhattacharjee	" " "	15th Sep. 1943	250	Surma Valley Hindu.	
19	Mr. U. N. Bardoloi	" " "	23rd Sep. 1943	250	Assam Valley Hindu.	
20	Mr. S. R. Gupta	" " "	11th Oct. 1943	200	Outside Province (Domiciled Bengali).	
21	Mr. S. N. Sarmah	Section Assistant	4th May 1943	170	Assam Valley Hindu.	
22	Mr. G. M. Lyngdoh	" " "	1st May 1943	170	Khasi Christian.	
23	Mr. D. Ledger	" " "	23rd July 1943	220	Anglo-Indian.	
24	Mr. P. D. Rajkhowa	" " "	15th Sep. 1943	170	Assam Valley Hindu.	
25	Mr. N. G. Dutt	" " "	1st June 1943	220	Outside Province.	
26	Mr. V. P. Saha	" " "	27th Jan. 1943	170	Ditto.	

List of Officials, Group Assistants and Section Assistants as at 31st October 1943—concl.

Serial No	Names	Designation	Date of appointment	Present salary	Nationality	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	Mr. A. K. Sen	"	1st July 1943	Rs. 170	Surma Valley Hindu.	
28	Mr. K. Chakravarty	"	6th Sep. 1943	170	" "	
29	Mr. M. M. Borah	"	1st July 1943	170	Assam Valley Hindu.	
30	Mr. N. B. Dass	"	14th July 1943	170	Surma Valley Hindu.	
31	Mr. K. K. Sen Gupta	"	22nd Oct. 1943	170	" "	
32	Mr. R. C. Das	"	23rd Aug. 1943	170	" "	
33	Mr. A. C. Hazarika	" (Trainee)	22nd May 1943	100	Assam "	
34	Mr. P. K. Ganguli	"	23rd Aug. 1943	170	Outside Province.	
35	Mr. P. K. Baruah	"	2nd July 1943	170	Assam Valley Hindu.	
36	Mr. N. G. Baruah	"	15th Sep. 1943	170	" "	
37	Mr. N. N. Bhuyan	"	9th Sep. 1943	170	" "	
38	Mr. I. Konger	"	1st Oct. 1943	220	" "	
39	Mr. S. S. Saikia	"	1st May 1943	170	" "	
40	Mr. K. Barua	"	10th May 1943	170	" "	
41	Mr. H. K. Dutta	"	30th Sep. 1943	170	" "	
42	Mr. R. N. Barthakur	"	29th Sep. 1943	170	" "	
43	Mr. G. K. Sarma	"	27th Sep. 1943	170	" "	
44	Mr. A. Chaudhury	"	1st July 1943	170	Surma "	
45	Mr. M. S. Yadava	"	1st Oct. 1943	220	Outside Province.	
46	Mr. A. V. Raghaven	Office Assistant	14th May 1943	220	"	
47	Mr. W. G. Damma	Area Manager	20th May 1943	On loan from Tea Industry allowance Rs.700.	British	Returned to Tea on 24th June 1943, temporarily. Due to return to Assam Transport early in November.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ASSAM TRANSPORT AS AT 31st OCTOBER 1943

Wages Group (Monthly Rates)

Wages Group (Daily Rates)

	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Total No.								
	12	30	60	65	95	100	150	160	200	220	230	300	-/12/-	1/4-	1/6-	2/-	2/2-	2/14.	3/-	3/12-	4/-	5/8-	6/-	8/-

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
Clerks	105	85	59	6	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	256
Drivers	173	225	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	398
Handiman	350	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	350
Technicians	1	1	5	2	1	1	27	25	21	23	1	..	113
Helpers	..	12	..	..	..	..	..	35	13	..	..	..	..	..	60
Menials	..	49	..	..	..	..	..	35	..	..	..	..	..	..	84

Total .. 1,261

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: With regard to (e), (f) and (g) Sir, is there any Board that makes appointments in the Motor Transport office?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There is no Board for making any appointment, Sir, but there is a Sub-committee consisting of myself, Mr. Whittaker in his capacity as the Secretary of the Economic Advisory Board, the Finance Secretary and the Provincial Motor Transport Controller. We select candidates and make out a list of candidates who are interviewed by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: May I know, Sir, why an Indian member is not taken in the Sub-Committee while most of the employees are Indians?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is a Sub-Committee and there is an Indian Member in the Minister himself. If my hon. Friend means why no non-official has been taken, it is because there is no necessity for a non-official at this stage when the institution is at its infancy.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact, Sir, that the Hon'ble Prime Minister is the President of the Sub-committee and he is always out-voted by the members?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There has been no occasion, Sir, up till now like that. We have been working harmoniously.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Whether the rules of the Public Service Commission have been dispensed with in regard to this office, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, this is a semi-commercial organisation and under the direction of the Government of India, we are framing new rules.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Are there no other commercial organisation or department under this Government, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: None now, Sir.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: I think the Forest Department is a semi-commercial department, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, it is not semi-commercial in the sense of this one.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Question No.80(h) Sir. In the last sentence of the answer we find, Sir, "Others have been made by the Controller and his Assistants." May we know, Sir, who are these Assistants?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There are two Assistants, Sir. One in the Technical Branch Mr. Susil Kumar Mukherjee and the other in the administrative side Mr. Haidar Hussain.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: It has been stated in the reply "Some of the appointments included in the nominal list, have been discussed with Government." In this connection may I enquire from the Hon'ble Prime Minister whether he was consulted when Mr. S. K. Mookerjee was appointed.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I know whether, when Mr. T. C. Barlow was appointed the Hon'ble Prime Minister was consulted or not?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, at that time the Provincial Motor Transport Organisation had to be built up immediately and I was not consulted in the appointments of his office establishment. Mr. Adamson, the Controller was given a free hand, but, for the executive posts, that is, for the

posts of Group Assistants, Area Managers, Section Assistants and the Trainees, I was consulted and the selection was made by the Sub-Committee and the candidates interviewed by the Controller.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: When Mr. J. C. Wall was appointed was the Hon'ble Prime Minister consulted, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, this appointment is included in his office establishment and Government was not consulted at the time of making the appointments in his office.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Then, Sir, what can we understand from the printed reply. "The Hon'ble Minister in charge is consulted and Government is also consulted at the time of appointment." So far as these high salaried posts are concerned, I find the Hon'ble Prime Minister or the Minister in charge was not consulted. So I cannot reconcile the answer, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: As I have already stated, Sir, the executive appointments are made in consultation with Government but in so far as the appointments to his office is concerned, the Minister is not consulted. This is so in case of the offices of the Heads of Departments here. In regard to the appointments in the office establishment of a Head of the Department the Minister is not consulted.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Are we to understand Sir, that as a result of the consultation with the Hon'ble Prime Minister the Muslims have been eliminated from the posts of Group Assistants and Section Assistants?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is unfortunate, Sir, that in the list which was made of 50 candidates by the Sub-Committee presided over by me—the list contained the proportional number of different communities—most of these candidates failed to pass the examination when certain questions of costing was put to them and those candidates had to be eliminated.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, when Mr. Andrewartha, an Australian, was appointed on the 20th September 1943 now drawing a salary of Rs.900, was the Hon'ble Prime Minister consulted?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Instead of proceeding that way the hon. Member may ask what are the appointments made in consultation with the Hon'ble Prime Minister?

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: The answer will be that he is not in a position to say that, Sir.

Mr. RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Are we to take that the Fundamental Rules of the Government do not apply to this Department?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, normally the Fundamental Rules are not applicable to this Organisation. We are preparing rules of service and appointments for this Organisation and also financial rules.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Up till now, this Organisation is not controlled by any of the rules of Government, it seems.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, the normal rules.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I know from the Hon'ble Prime Minister since when Mr. Adamson is drawing his salary. We find the date of his appointment here; it is 11th November 1942 but since when he is drawing his salary since—that day or from any subsequent date?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The hon. Member is aware that the services of Mr. Adamson was loaned to this Government for 3 months. After the end of the 3 months, Mr. Adamson was appointed Provincial Motor Transport Controller by the Central Government because that post was created by the Central Government.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Sir, is Mr. Adamson a Burma evacuee?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: All I know, Sir, is that he was in charge of the fleet of the Burma Oil Company. Whether he is an evacuee or whether he was working in India, because Burma Oil Company works in India also, I am not aware.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact, Sir, that in this organisation persons serving in Burma Oil Company are given all sorts of privileges?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I do not accept that general and sweeping remark but I had occasions to hear such complaints from certain quarters. Mr. Adamson was asked to explain. He said that he had taken a few of his old assistants who had worked with him because he found them not only reliable but also capable.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Sir, is it not a fact that Mr. Adamson has built up this Organisation from a scratch and when there was practically nothing existing?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes he had built it up from a scratch. Whether he had to rely on his former Assistants is more than I can say. Of course when he said that he knew the work of any particular officer, he must have an idea of this particular officer's experience, knowledge and capabilities.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. Further Supplementary Questions may be put next day. The Question hour is over.

Discussion re food situation in the Province

Now the discussion on the Motions about the food situation in the Province may proceed.

1. Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY to move:
"That this Assembly do proceed to consider the food situation of the Province."

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY

2. Maulavi NAZIRUDDIN AHMED to move:

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN

"That this Assembly is of opinion that the extremely grave situation arising out of the acute shortage of food-stuffs and the abnormal prices thereof in the Province be taken into consideration."

3. Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN to move:

"That this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do constitute a special Committee of seven members consisting of officials and non-officials, with non-official majority to be nominated by the Government to draw up a definite programme to deal with the economic and food problems of the Province and to regulate the supply policy."

Amendments to Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury's Motion on the food situation of the Province to be discussed on 23rd November 1943.

1. Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE to move:

"Taking the food situation into consideration this Assembly is of opinion that in order to effectively tackle the present food situation and to improve the economic condition of the Province the Government do take the following measures amongst others at once:—

- (1) To open registers in villages immediately throughout the Province with a view to record (a) the name of each cultivator, (b) the area of his land under paddy cultivation, (c) total quantity of crop when harvested, (d) number of members of dependents in the family of each cultivator below and above 12 years of age separately.
- (2) To prevent export from the Province before knowing the actual surplus, if any, and to allow inter-district export of foodgrains within the Province.
- (3) To pursue vigorous anti-hoarding drive.
- (4) To prevent profiteering by all possible severest means.
- (5) The Grow-More-Food Campaign be properly handled by an expert and qualified officer.
- (6) To set up Regional Food Advisory Boards throughout the Province to regulate the production, supply and price.

Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAJ: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are met to-day further to discuss the problem of food and economic situation in the Province which has cropped up directly out of the war situation. In this greatest war in history we in this hitherto much neglected Province find ourselves in the front line and are to await the onslaughts and brunt of the enemy's wrath in this part of India.

Sir, do not all these entitle us to consideration by the Government of India, His Majesty's Government or even of the United Nations, whom we have provided with base of operations to fight the Nipponese menace in this war?

I will presently explain what I would like them to do for us. The Military authorities and their personnel should not insist on falling upon any article of food and other necessaries of life, save what our Government and the people voluntarily offer to them for gain, through suitable machinery to be set up for the purpose. It will not do if their purchase of rice is only restricted or regulated. There are other articles of food whose food value is well known to the House and which supply the nutrition for the human system. There are the vegetables, milk, meat, eggs and fish.

I am glad to find that the Military authorities have established farms for the production of vegetables and it may not be necessary to purchase vegetables for them in the open market. As for milk and eggs it is well-known to the Members of this House that by scientific process these two commodities can be packed and preserved and transported across the seas for use by the Military personnel. The other day I was glad to hear from Mr. Whittaker that steps in this direction have actually been taken by the Military authorities and it will no longer be necessary for them to make purchases of these commodities from the open market. The slaughter of hundreds of thousands of cows for meat purposes have generated heat among the civilian population and have evoked angry protests from them all over India. I would appeal to the Military authorities to stop this without delay and I may tell them that if they persist in this it will not only impoverish the people of India but will infuriate and disgust them. I hope our Government will join in this protest of the people and will urge upon the authorities to import meat and fish from abroad.

If the British Government can transport meat from South America, Australia and New Zealand for the civilian population, there is no reason why they should not be able to import meat into this country to meet the needs of the Military personnel. To supplement their own supply of meat by imports from abroad, the Military authorities may set up farms to rear cows, sheep, pigs and poultry. In any case it is impera-

(7) To introduce ration cards throughout the Province.

(8) To make adequate arrangements for supplies of all kinds of essential food-stuffs and other necessaries of life."

2. Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAJ to move:

"That after the word 'Province' at the end of the original Motion the following be added:

'and that this Assembly is of opinion that the Government do take the following amongst other measures without delay:

(a) Introduction of rationing all over the Province including the rural areas; and

(b) Fixation of price of all essential food-stuffs including milk, meat, eggs and fish."

3. Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEB to move:

"That after the word 'Province' at the end of the original Motion the following be added—

'and that this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do refrain from making any purchases of rice or paddy on their own account.'"

Amendment to Maulavi Abdur Rahman's Motion regarding constitution of a Committee to draw up a programme to deal with the economic and food problem of the Province, to be discussed on 23rd November 1943.

1. Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAJ to move:

"That for the original Motion the following be substituted:

"That this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do set up a Standing Committee of seven Members of the Assam Legislature, five to be elected from this House, one to be nominated by the Government from among the Members of the Legislative Council and the Minister-in-charge of Supply to act as its Chairman, to advise the Government from time to time on problems and policy connected with civil supply of the Province."

2. Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY to move:

"After the word Government in the fourth line the following shall be added:

'and to be taken from all parties of the Province.'"

tive and high time that the Military authorities stop laying their hands upon our own meat supply—which is very inadequate indeed. The mal-nutrition that has resulted from this scarcity of meat will make this generation and the next generation pay very dearly indeed.

Coming next to the part expected of the Central Government, I am constrained to think that this Government has not yet received the consideration that it deserves in the hands of the Central Government. Is it because that we do not possess a powerful Press in this Province or is it because our Government lacks the initiative and energy in this regard? Bengal, our neighbour and the other front-line province is getting an assistance of $11\frac{1}{2}$ crores of rupees in the form of loan and of which they have repaid only 50 lakhs. Even for the Grow More Food Campaign they have received a grant of $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of a crore. I will refuse to believe that any project of this Government can be turned down by the Central Government's refusal to extend financial assistance to us.

What do we need is not, therefore, freedom from want of money, but want of comprehensive economic planning on the part of the Government. No one knows how long this war is going to last or when these operations will go out of our sight and hearing. It will interest the House to know how the Britishers were planning to meet the food situation before the war actually broke out. Prices of essential food-stuffs were controlled from 1932 in anticipation of this war which broke out in 1939. In this connection the House will permit me to quote from a booklet written by Sir John Russell, Director of one of the biggest Experimental Stations of the United Kingdom. He writes—

“Then came ominous rumblings of the war machine on the Continent, and gradually it was realized that if war should come, Britain would be in a worse position in regard to food production than she had been in 1914. Steps were taken from 1932 onwards to prevent prices of certain things, especially wheat, potatoes, sugar, beet and milk, from continuing to fall, and to keep them at a level ensuring a minimum production of 15 per cent. of the requirement of wheat and about 25 per cent. of the requirement of sugar. The Land Fertility Scheme of September 1937 encouraged the application of lime and basic slag to land that needed it; proposals were made for helping with drainage. These various steps prevented matters getting worse and allowed of rather better wages so that men could be kept on the land.”

But here in this country the last two years of overhanging Jap menace have not driven us to action on any great plan and it is this absence of plan that has led to the incredibly high loss of human lives in Bengal for which those responsible will stand condemned before the bar of world opinion. Coming to the food producing activities of this Province I feel compelled to make rather an unpalatable criticism. I want to refer to the land settlement policy of this Government. I know that an important section of this House is behind the Government in this regard. I also know that some eminent persons elsewhere in India have recently tried to focus attention on the millions of acres of culturable waste land in this Province. With all respects to these persons, I must tell them that there has been a callous disregard of facts on their part. I would only invite them to facts and to examine them carefully and with sympathy.

There is one fact to which I want to invite the attention of the House, is that three quarter of these lands are comprised in the Excluded and the Partially Excluded Areas of this Province and which are for that matter beyond the reach of this House. And of the rest of the quarter, the Government have accepted the policy of throwing open lands to outsiders from Assam in the Districts of Nowgong, Kamrup and Darrang.

The relevant figures are interesting indeed. Coming to Nowgong we find 12 lakhs of acres of culturable waste land, a good bit of which is included in the Partially Excluded Area of the Mikir Hills. If you pit this with Cachar you will find the comparison is favourable and almost parallel. In Cachar, in which is included the Excluded Area of the North Cachar Hills, there are 11 lakh acres. In Kamrup and Darrang Districts together there are 9 lakh acres which compare favourably with Sylhet with 8 lakh acres. Can any one of my hon. Friends from the Surma Valley justify this invasio

into the Assam Valley Districts of outsiders from Bengal on the face of these facts without themselves consenting to let them into their own Districts? My hon. Friends of that Valley were even asking the Ministry to resign when in last May this Government had to submit to the food grains going into Bengal under the free trade policy of the Central Government. Should we not expect this consideration from them to stand with us in our resistance to this invasion by mass immigration from Bengal into the hearths and homes of a more backward section of the population of this Province, namely the plains tribal classes? In this respect my association is one of the first in the Valley to raise its voice of protest against this encroachment of settlement of outsiders, on two grounds; that any available land may not be adequate for the growing indigenous population, and the growing immigrant population who have made Assam their home. I want to make it perfectly plain that I am not actuated by any bias against the great Muslim community, whose sense of justice and fair-play based on the concept of Islam, I greatly admire. Nor am I swayed away by any prejudice of valley consideration as it is always my endeavour to remain above this.

I will invite the House to another fact that after all every year we are adding to our population, more than a lakh of people and every year there are these hundred thousand more mouths to be fed. Even at the top of that if this House insists that more men are to be imported into this Province the result will spell disaster. Sir, the tribal population of the plains Districts are going to be very badly affected. I have with me a charming communication from the Editor, the *Nayak*, an organ of the Tribal peoples and in this he has indulged in angry language and has gone to the length of questioning the *bonafides* of this Government.

Sir, it is in their name, it is in the name of the wider interests of this Province and its population that I appeal to the Government to abandon this policy without delay. The Hon'ble Prime Minister was pleased to state in this House the other day in an earlier stage of this debate that this move of the Government has met with only mixed reception in the Province and I hope the Government will see their way to revise their policy with a view to discourage further settlement of land with outsiders.

Coming to my own amendments, Sir, by the one with regard to the food situation, I have sought to draw the attention of the Government to two of the most vital and elementary measures which have saved England, Germany and other war-ridden countries from ruin, namely, all-out rationing and fixation of price.

Sir, as regards rationing I may tell the House about an Assamese saying, which says "If you distribute whatever you have, it is bound to be sufficient." It is now an exploded theory that rationing should be undertaken when there is sufficient supply. It is now accepted that it should be undertaken to mitigate the rigour of hardship in the case of deficient supply. I hope the Government will be pleased in any case to extend rationing to the sub-urban rural areas adjoining the Municipalities. I may tell the House that such areas are now included within the A.R.P. areas of A.R.P. towns and these areas are as thickly populated as the Municipal areas themselves.

As for fixation of price, I would request the Government to fix a bottom or floor price of rice and paddy in order to protect the growers.

Passing on to the Standing Committee which I have proposed, it is my intention to regularise the whole thing by giving this Legislature a voice in its constitution. I need not tell the House that we cannot share the discussion of policy with elements, outside this Legislature which we find in the Economic Advisory Board as constituted. I have suggested five from this House and one from the Upper House as we are one hundred and eight and they are only twenty-two. So the Upper House is not unfairly treated in my proposal. So far as this House is concerned, we may have the same hon. Members now sitting in the Economic Advisory Committee.

I am glad the Hon'ble Prime Minister said that in this matter he would be guided by the verdict of this House. I hope my hon. Friend Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan will be pleased to accept my amendment.

With these words, Sir, I beg to resume my seat,

Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEB: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my amendment is intended to request the Government to refrain from making any purchases of rice or paddy on their own account. My proposal will, I am afraid, sound rather unorthodox to many of my hon. Friends here, but as I will presently show, Sir, I have got good reasons for putting forward a proposal like this.

Sir, from the trend of discussion it appears that the whole weight of opinion is being focussed only on the problems of distribution. I am afraid, Sir, as about this food problem supply is as much big a factor, if not bigger, as the question of distribution and if the supply question could have been solved properly, there would have been no problem at all for distribution, excepting of course the question of transport. I was wondering, Sir, when I saw that the Hon'ble Prime Minister did not speak a word to enlighten this House as to what progress had been made in this Province on the question of producing more food or what new policy the Government was going to adopt to produce more for the Province. We have not heard a word about the success or failure of the Grow More Food Campaign. The Hon'ble Premier was pleased to refer to what huge quantities of pulses, atta, flour, sugar, mustard oil and salt his Government has been able to procure for this Province from outside. We had such a list from the Hon'ble Premier during the last Budget Session also in connection with food debate. The Hon'ble Premier has tried to take some credit for what he has done in this direction. I was wondering, Sir, if it ever occurred to the mind of the Hon'ble Premier that instead of having to procure from outside we could have produced most of these articles within this Province to the great benefit of cultivators and consumers and much of the troubles taken could have been avoided thereby. In fact, Sir, excepting the salt, all other articles—dal, atta, sugar and mustard oil could have been and can even now be produced in this Province and instead of having to import we ought to have been, by this time, able to export some of this stuff. I submit, Sir, the Province has got vast possibilities of expansion so far at least as agriculture is concerned and if we could fully utilise our resources there would have been no need for any rationing or price control to-day. Sir, the Provincial Government has got to supply huge quantities of rice for the Military. The Tea Industry also is depending on the Government for its rice requirements and the Hon'ble Premier told the Assam Legislative Council in June last that the Provincial Government has got to purchase also for the Burmese establishment now in this Province, for the Oil Industry and also for the town areas as the normal trade channels had stopped to work after air raids at Imphal. As for the Tea Industry, Sir, the Hon'ble Premier told the Legislative Council, if I remember aright, that the Government was requested to purchase one maund of rice for the Tea Industry for every maund purchased for the Military. The Government of Assam has got to supply 14 lakhs of maunds for the Military and presumably, Sir, the Tea Industry requires also the same quantity of rice in addition to what they themselves produce. We had it from the Hon'ble Premier in the Upper House that the Tea Industry has produced 30 lakhs of maunds of rice this year. I submit, Sir, well organised and highly efficient as the Tea Industry is, it can very easily increase its produce of rice by 50 per cent. next year if it will only care to do so and that will go a great way to relieve the Government and the civil population as well. I expect, Sir, the Hon'ble Premier will exert all his influence with the Tea Industry in that direction and I am sure, Sir, Mr. Whittaker can also carry his association with him in this matter. Then about the supply for the Militaries, the Hon'ble Premier told the Upper House that he had reduced their quota to some extent and had also requested the Army authorities to import some of their foodstuffs from outside. May I in this connection request the Hon'ble Premier to move the Army authorities to have their requirements of rice and wheat produced in this Province by their own machinery? I submit, Sir, mine is not at all a fantastic proposal. Very recently, Sir, the services of one of our Deputy Directors of Agriculture have been placed at the disposal of the Central Government and Mr. Handique has been appointed the Director of Military Vegetable production in Assam. Well, Sir, if the Military can have their own vegetables produced in this Province, I don't see any reason, Sir,

why they should not also be able to produce their own paddy or wheat here. In fact, Sir, I am sure they can produce more quickly and more efficiently than our Agricultural Department believe as they do in action. The Government of Assam has decided to lease out surplus lands to cultivators. One hon. Member has recently made a suggestion in the Central Assembly that surplus lands in Assam should be settled with Bengal's landless labourers for cultivation and has urged upon the Central Government to intervene in the matter. I submit, Sir, in these matters it is high time that we should move in a more thoughtful manner. These landless labourers from Bengal or from anywhere else are mostly destitute, without any resources and without any initiative and we can only expect very meagre result from their work. Whereas if we bring in a little more imagination, a little more drive and will in the matter, we can utilise our surplus lands far more usefully by scientific planning and up-to-date methods of cultivation. I submit, Sir, this very important matter of extending our cultivation should not be dealt with in the old chaotic manner as the present Government is going to do. Coming direct to my proposal, I submit, Sir, if we could induce the Military authorities to have their own requirements of rice and wheat produced in this Province, they will employ the latest scientific methods in the task and we can very confidently expect the maximum of result. We have seen pictures of big machineries being flown over the air and I am sure, Sir, the Military authorities can easily import motor tractors and harvesting machines, seed and manure by Air Service from England or America immediately. So I submit, Sir, it would be a great service done to this Province if we could have induced the Military to take up this work. From the point of view of post war reconstruction also, Sir, we don't think it would be advisable to parcel out all our surplus lands in this slipshod manner. We must put a stop to any further fragmentation of our lands. We expect collective farms to develop in our country also after the war and from the point of view, Sir, I feel it extremely urgent to press upon the Government my proposal to induce the Military authorities to give a start to our future collective farms here and now. Sir, the Military authorities cannot remain indifferent to the food problem of the civil population of the country. In fact, Sir, the Military had to come to the rescue of Bengal by lending the services of a host of their officers and also by releasing some of their foodstuff for the famine-stricken people of Bengal; and is not prevention always better than cure? If they have got to come to the relief of the people at the last stages, is it not far better that they should think over the matter at the very initial stages? And as I have already said, Sir, if the Military can have their own vegetables produced on their own account, there is absolutely no reason, Sir, why they should not also be able to produce their own rice or wheat as well.

Sir, I had no mind to take up old memories, but I feel I must say a word or two in defence of the attitude we took in the past on this question within this House as well as outside. I am sorry, Mr. Whittaker is again absent to-day. Mr. Whittaker was pleased to use the term 'bark' in describing what we did in this House in the last Budget Session. Sir, I don't grudge him this vanity if he thinks that for being a British Lion, it is only his own exclusive privilege to roar and that all else must bark. Sir, the Government of Assam thought that the Province would have a huge surplus—we doubted the same in the absence of exact statistics. The Hon'ble Premier and Mr. Whittaker think we must give credit to the Government for it has been found to be correct in its estimation of surplus. Sir, my hon. Friend Mr. B. N. Mookerjee thinks even now that the surplus theory is a myth. But agreeing for argument's sake that there has been a real surplus, I may say this, Sir, that if we doubted we doubted to help the Government and the people of this Province and we can quite legitimately claim, Sir, that when the Provincial Government had to take up their case to the Central Government for free trade being stopped, their hands must have been very much strengthened by what opinion some of the hon. Members in this House and the people outside expressed on this question of surplus. And, Sir, I can boldly make this assertion that had not this free trade been stopped then the condition of Surma Valley at least would have been far far worse than the worst that

has fallen on any part of Bengal. And from that point of view, Sir, I claim the Government of Assam had much reasons to be thankful to all those who barked at that time.

Sir, we had it from the Hon'ble Prime Minister that during the days of free trade at least 30 lakhs of maunds of rice must have gone outside the Province. Sir, it appears the Province was able to go on in spite of this huge drain in addition to what the Government had already supplied to the Bengal Government as per their agreement. Sir, it is admitted on all hands that we have got a bumper crop all over the Province this year and with the ban on export continuing we can very easily imagine that as for the coming year this Province will have more than sufficient for itself. If that is so, Sir, I don't see absolutely any reason for the Government to enter into the paddy market and create any unnecessary disturbance there. If the Government will only look after the transport facilities, the normal trade channels can very well supply the town areas and others requiring to purchase. I submit, Sir, the price of rice would not have risen so high had not the Government in a panicky mood tried to stock as much as they could. If the Tea Industry and the Military will take care of themselves, normal conditions will very surely soon revive. If we have really got a surplus and if the export ban is there, where is the case for any stocking on the part of the Provincial Government?

Sir, Mr. Whittaker was very much concerned that the cultivator should get his proper price—nobody disagrees with that—though this over-anxiety on the part of Mr. Whittaker for the cultivators of this Province appears rather to be very much interesting to us. The poor producer—he must be wondering, Sir, where were all this sympathy and patronage hiding when for years together he had to struggle against low price, rent collector, money lender and a host of others who were driving him to the verge of ruin! Sir, the Government shall be quite justified and in fact it must see that the cultivator gets proper price for his produce, but at the same time the Government has also got to see that the consumers, mostly of the lower middle classes with scanty income and the landless labourers living on the mercy of their employers do get their morsel of food at a price which they can afford to pay. The Government shall have no justification to pamper one class of society at the cost of—nay at the ruination of other classes. Sir, it is admitted on all hands that the mortality figures in Lakhai and Baniachong thanas would not have risen so high had the people got sufficient food to eat; and who will deny that most of these people were denied proper nourishment because of the prohibitive price of rice and other articles?

Sir, the Government thinks it must have some stock in its hands to stabilise the prices and also to fight against the hoarders. I do realise, Sir, that the hoarders have done a lot of mischief in the past and as a pest of society the hoarder have got to be dealt with very severely. But my most humble submission to the hon. Members of this House in this connection is that the shop-keeper is not the only hoarder responsible for all the mischief—there are others too and we must deal equally with them. Sir, I will lay unhesitatingly the whole blame for this hoarding business primarily upon the Government itself. When they decide to get some stock, their agents get out offering any price without any relation whatsoever to the attending circumstances. A panic is created in the market; the producer thinks if he can hold on for some time he will get more. The Tea Industry gets nervous and sends its agents to buy at any cost; the private consumer with some means thinks Government is taking away all the foodgrains and unless he can have some stock for the future his whole family will die of starvation; and nobody can blame the private consumer, Sir, if he thinks that he cannot rely upon the Government constituted as it is at present, so far as supply of food to the civil population is concerned, and on that assumption he tries to help himself as far as it lies within his financial means. And thus, Sir, a great stir is created in the market—the rice that was selling at Rs.12 in the morning goes up to Rs.22 in the afternoon. And in the midst of this panic and consternation the shop-keeper and other adventurers in the rice market think that the millennium is come and they must reap the fullest benefit out of this opportunity. Thus, Sir, I submit it is the panicky buying on the part of the Government that gives start to this soaring of prices so high

and induces the shop-keeper and others to hoard. It is the Government that gives the start to the vicious circle.

So, Sir, my humble submission to the Government is—withdraw from the rice market, there is absolutely no reason for you to go and create unnecessary disturbance there. Let the rule of demand and supply have its play; nobody will lose anything by that.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, although I have been given this privilege of speaking before Mr. Goldsmith I am very fully conscious that I shall not be able to make any more useful contribution to the debate on this question. My hon. Friends on the right, particularly Mr. Mookerjee, have said almost everything that could be said on the subject. I am proud, Sir, that Mr. Mookerjee's speech can be treated as a learned treatise on the subject. Knowing all my limitations, I feel that I shall not be true to myself—or rather I may be considered a great fool—if I did not take this opportunity of giving vent to the pent up feelings of the last eight months at what has happened on account of the policy followed by Government.

Sir, an important announcement has been made by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, an announcement which I do not think has been made by the Prime Minister of any other province, and that is this: he has said it quite clearly that in this matter he will be guided by the vote of the House. I thought, Sir, that there was a great deal of interference on the food policy pursued by the Provincial Governments by the Government of India, and that as a matter of fact the latter exercised dictatorial authority which at times compelled the province to make mistakes. The House as well as the country will feel assured by the assurance which has been given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister that he will be entirely guided by the vote of the House. Therefore the responsibility, which was the responsibility of the Government before, is now the responsibility of this House.

But, Sir, I wish to make a few observations, because this is the place where we can make this safely. Outside it is very difficult to carry on any agitation against the food policy on account of the very brittle provisions of various Ordinances. The provisions of the Ordinance are so brittle that a slight breath can break them.

This Food Department has been converted into a sort of preserve for some officers and people. We have heard a great deal of invitation for co-operation; but we cannot take such invitation at their face value. When we remember that communist workers who have without any honorarium or allowance devoted themselves to the cause of supplying food to those who are in need of it, have been arrested without rhyme or reason, we cannot believe that Government is really sincere in their invitation for co-operation. The instance of the arrest of Srijut Bistu Ram Bora, a worker of Dibrugarh arouses some suspicion. The instances of the arrest of four gentlemen who had gone to Patharkandi for the purpose, are clear instances of the malafides on the part of Government officers. So long as this continues it is very difficult for the Government to expect real and sincere co-operation. We shall follow the lip-sympathy of the Government in this matter. They will say that they want co-operation and we shall say that we are giving co-operation. As a matter of fact, there will be no clear co-operation, hearty co-operation so long as Government does not change its policy of repression.

Sir, a system of rationing has been introduced in some places. I do not mind so far as imported articles are concerned, so far as sugar, atta, flour and other things are concerned, because we may possibly leave them out; but when the control system of rice was introduced, no classification was made for fine rice and coarse rice. So, I submit, a most serious blunder was committed by the Government—rice just now supplied by the Government on the controlled price is unfit for human consumption. Of course, I know Sir, there are persons in this House who are more sympathetic, who are more after protection of the dumb animals than the human beings, who are more for the relief to the begging people than the starving people inside their houses, but still Sir, it must be admitted that rice which is being now sold by the Government at their controlled price is rice which is really not fit for

human consumption. But we are supposed to give that rice to the ailing patients, to our children to eat and to use that rice for hospital patients. Is it not sheer cruelty? Fortunately, Sir, there are some able persons who will try to get better quality of rice stealthily and therefore sick persons are still alive; therefore children are not dying for want of food. This rationing policy of Government has been commented by Mr. Mookerjee—5 seers of sugar for a whole family of 30 people, 2 seers of atta and 2 seers of flour for the whole family no matter whatever may be the number, has encouraged or rather has tended to create some dishonest persons—dishonest of course in the eye of law and useful so far as the safety of human life is concerned. Sir, the policy of the Government is that I steal, we steal, thou steal, you steal, he steals or she steals and they steal. It sounds like a conjugation of the verb 'steal' but it represents exactly the policy of Government. How can this be remedied? Of course suggestions have been made by my hon. Friend Mr. Mookerjee and by other speakers on the subject. Sir, if the Government does not want to multiply the number of such individuals, if the Government does not want to convert honest people into dishonest people, they should immediately make a classification of different grades of rice, so that people who are used to finer quality of rice may be able to purchase them not in darkness or stealthily. That is the policy which they must immediately follow. And as regards distribution of sugar and other articles, a more rational system of rationing ought to be introduced. I am speaking particularly about Shillong where the system of 5 seers for the whole family has been introduced for the whole month. I asked one officer who is connected with the Supply Department "How are you managing with this rice because no middle class family can really eat that rice"? He said "I have a stock". Then I asked; "You have a stock; how long will it last"? He replied; "We do not take rice so much; we take bread, rooti and chapati". I said it is still more difficult. How can you manage with chapati? "But there it is, Sir." Those who are clever, those who can take the risk are getting their food. Those who are afraid of the Law Courts, must necessarily pay more or go without food.

Sir, this difficulty has also arisen on account of want of allocation of food between Military requirements and civil requirements. A point which has been touched by my Friend Mr. Blennerhassett and also by my Friend Mr. Whittaker is that there ought to be a strict rationing system in the Military Department. Their rationing is more easy and if they get what they actually require then a large quantity of food will be released for the civil population. There is no doubt about that. On the other hand what I want to say is that the Military get more things than they actually want. As a result we see a large quantity of rice, flour and atta are thrown into the river on the ground that they have become unfit for consumption. They throw out what would have lasted us for months. That must be checked. My hon. Friend Mr. Blennerhassett pointed out in course of a question as regards milk as to why Military should get so much milk. They have got condensed milk powdered milk, etc. Therefore Government should lay down that so much of everything should be reserved for the civil people and the rest can be given to the Military people, because both civil and Military people are equally important. If the civil people die entirely then for whom these Military people are defending this country? The British, the American and the other soldiers coming from the different parts of India to this Province cannot colonise the whole country after turning out our enemy from the borders of this Province. Therefore, Sir, I say that the civil population should not be allowed to die of starvation. So a rational policy ought to be followed by Government particularly with regard to rice. Why should not there be a limit to the quantity of rice that will be required by the Military Department? We know, Sir, what a vast quantity of rice is taken by the Military people from the Assam Valley Districts. The House probably knows that about 20 crores of rupees are going to be spent shortly on the Railway projects in this Province. That means, Sir, that a huge number of labourers are coming to Assam from outside. All these labourers including the large number of soldiers that we have got here, have to be fed from the produce of this Province. Sir, there is no limit to their requirements and consequently a large reserve is always kept for them

which are sometimes wasted. So Sir, what I say is that the Government of Assam should definitely lay down a condition that they are prepared to give so much quantity of rice to the Military people and not an unlimited quantity as now. But Sir, we find that they are not making any arrangement like this. We know, Sir, that a large quantity of rice was lying by the side of the road from Gauhati to Dibrugarh for the use of the various evacuee camps and labourers' camps; during the rainy season all these rice were spoiled and they were distributed in the Dibrugarh town, when there was a shortage of rice. That rice, Sir, was absolutely unfit for human consumption because they were spoiled on account of long storage. So Sir, it is clear that so much rice was not necessary for the use of the Military Department. We know, Sir, that when the present Viceroy assumed office, he released a large quantity of foodstuffs from the Military reserves for the use of the people of Bengal. This shows that there is always an excess of foodstuffs at the disposal of the Military Department. Instead of storing such a large quantity at a time, it will be better if it is rationed in a proper way.

Then Sir, another point on which I ought to lay stress is the observations made by Mr. Mookerjee and Mr. Surendra Nath Buragohain with regard to land settlement policy of Government. In this connection I like to say that this policy is a wrong one and it will do no good to those for whom it is intended. This land-settlement policy is intended for making more food available but we all know, Sir, that the immigrants who come with large families are themselves put to distress. In fact it will be impossible for them to grow more articles of food for others; they will not be able to grow sufficient food necessary to meet their own demands. They will not be able to grow food which they themselves require. Besides this, Sir, the immigrants who come from Bengal always select a low-lying place and the result is that during the flood it becomes necessary for Government as well as other charitable Institutions to feed them and protect them. Therefore, Sir, it will not help us at all if we follow the present policy. On the other hand if Government revise their Land-Colonisation system and advance money to people in the congested area and induce them to come to the reserves which will be thrown open to them, then in that case they may apparently improve the situation. That will not increase the number of people to be fed but at the same time it will increase the output of the Province. So instead of following the present policy of bringing the people from outside the Province, Government ought to follow the policy just stated by me. Because as I have already said the immigrants will not be able to help us in the matter—rather we shall have to help them; in fact we will have to feed them for some years by which time the situation will naturally be worse. So, Sir, if I am permitted to offer any advice to Government, it is that they should interfere as little as possible with the natural laws of the country and that when they come to a decision on a particular point and when they decide to take a particular line of action after careful consideration, they should issue orders promptly and they should see always that those orders are properly carried out. Sir, I have always noticed that it takes a long time for Government to communicate their particular order to the officers concerned and the officers also take a long time in carrying out that order. Sometimes it so happens that before an order reaches the officers who are to execute it, a fresh order is passed by Government and the result is that the whole thing becomes topsy turvy. Government ought to adopt certain line of action after a careful consideration so that it may be as correct as possible. They should also see that these orders are carried out in the very spirit in which they are meant, else Government will become unnecessarily unpopular on account of the heinous action done by their subordinates. If they in this way pursue a considered course of action, I am sure, it will be beneficial to the people of the Province. Now, Sir, the Government of Assam has got the entire responsibility of the food situation, and the Hon'ble Premier has stated on this floor of the House that they are going to be guided by the wishes of the House. As such we now become responsible for giving correct and proper advice to Government and to help them in carrying out their orders. As a matter of fact, the entire responsibility—

the entire burden of the whole situation is now being thrown on the representatives of the people by the Hon'ble Prime Minister. Sir, one thing to which the attention of the Hon'ble Prime Minister has been drawn more than once is regarding the rationing of rice. Government fixed the price of rice for the public, but Government themselves purchased it at a much higher rate than the controlled price. So, Sir, it is clear that they themselves broke their own law, because though the Government price of rice was at Rs.26 per maund, their own agents were purchasing rice at Rs.28 to Rs.31 per maund up to 15th of October. Sir, I say when the Government themselves purchased rice at a higher price, how can the price be lower? There can be no explanation for this, Sir. I may tell the House that some of the local people at Gauhati approached the Deputy Commissioner about this and the Deputy Commissioner telephoned to the Secretary of the Supply Department and he said quite bluntly that this rule did not apply to the Government agents. Can that position be justified, Sir?

When Government themselves purchase at a higher price, how can they expect the other people to purchase at a lower price? So, Sir, I submit that such action cannot improve the situation.

Adjournment

The Assembly then adjourned for lunch till 2 P.M.

After lunch.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the Motion of Mr. Mookerjee and I endorse all the words he has spoken in support of his Motion.

I have heard the Hon'ble Leader of the House, Leader of the European Group hon Members from the Muslim League Party and the other hon. Members on this side of the House with great interest. They expressed some very good sentiments. They have made suggestions and criticisms, some of which are really in the interest of the people of the Province. I accept some of their suggestions, but not all. But it is not merely the expression of sentiments or enunciation and explanation of policy which will lead to its solution. A useful and workable plan is required to be formulated. I shall make an attempt to clarify some of the issues which are before us or which will be found relevant for tackling the food question.

If we scrutinise the speech of the Hon'ble Premier and the explanation he has given to the House, we cannot become confident of the future. The Hon'ble Premier is complacent. He expressed satisfaction for the past policy of Government and presented before the House the bright prospect of future. But asking certain questions to the Premier I shall prove that nothing has yet been done to end the food deadlock and nothing can be done until the plan formulated by us is taken up by the Government.

Could the Government save the people of Baniyachong from death and starvation? Could the Government give people rice at controlled price? Could they stop the illegal supply to Bengal which ultimately strengthened the hands of Bengal hoarders and filled the pockets of local hoarders? Could they discharge their duties towards starving and dying population of Bengal by supplying rice to our maximum capacity? Could they check corruption amongst Government rank? Could they save the tea garden labourers from mass starvation (*A voice: question*) which is going to endanger the life of the whole Province. No, they could not.

As regards the future policy of Government as described by the Hon'ble Premier, I apprehend that would lead the Province to a worsened condition. We find no assurance from the Government that the enemy in the food front, the persons who are mainly responsible for the deaths of lacs of our brethren in Bengal and of the miseries of our people in Assam, i.e., the hoarders would be caught and defeated in their game and people would be guaranteed food? In his explanation the Hon'ble Premier says, Sir, that if any anti-hoarding drive is given at present 95 per cent. of the population would be affected. I am surprised to hear such observation from the Hon'ble Premier. I always stay in producing areas and from my experience I

can definitely say that only 25 per cent. of the population of the Province grow food grains above the need of their families. The hoarder is he who for the purpose of profiteering stocks rice and withhold the rice from the market. Of course there are peasant stockists too, and I can say from my experience, that they will release their stocks voluntarily if a mass campaign is run by trusted leaders of the Province of different organisations by imbuing patriotic feeling on them. I like to take you to the memoirs of the past "Swadesi" days. Only the people's patriotic sentiment if roused to its proper peak would make all hoarding impossible.

The Hon'ble Premier has rather by-passed the question of the drive against hoarders and the statement has gone to shield the game of hoarders. The policy has let loose the reptiles to bite the people to death with all their venoms.

I like to point out the remedy suggested by the hon. Mr. Whittaker who in course of his speech said that cunning hoarders could be defeated if only Government could have sufficient stocks to release in the open market whenever occasion demands and cause the hoarders a financial loss thus defeating them. The proposition sounds all right, but the question is how the Government is going to acquire the stock? Unless the dirty game of the hoarders are baffled with the co-operation of the people Government shall not be able to acquire stocks. Our past experience, the experience of Government and the personal experience of hon. Mr. Whittaker will awfully justify that for acquiring the stocks how Government and the Indian Tea Association had to compete with the hoarders in all the rice markets of Assam and how on occasions they had to surrender to the hoarders' clique—from Dibrugarh to Dhubri—for acquiring for whatever stock they could procure. The hon. Mr. Whittaker's own agencies had to surrender to hoarders in the Assam Valley; the Government could not secure sufficient stocks to introduce rationing in towns and industrial concerns including Indian Tea Association, railway concerns and others to feed their own people properly. You cannot beat hoarder with hoarders stick. You must have your own stick, *i.e.*, the stick of your co-operation with the people to beat the hoarders otherwise all plan will fall through. We may take a lesson out of the experience of Bengal Government. Bengal had a bumper crop of Aus and according to some, 5 crores of maunds of paddy were produced. Was the plan for buying Aus paddy successful? No, they could buy only 25 lacs of maunds of paddy and rest went out of their grip. When the stock is limited, *i.e.*, insufficient to feed the people of the Province, the clever hoarders know the limitation how far Government can go and compete by releasing stock. At some point or other Government must come to its tethers and when hoarders in their turn will play their card and beat the Government.

Then again my hon. Friends from the other side, though they admitted the existence of hoarders and alleged exports outside the Province by them and the exploitation of the people inside the Province to the point of starvation have urged upon Government to increase the number of checking stations. But our previous experience proves that only appointment of a few dozens of checkers cannot stop the flow of rice. It only increases the number of bribe takers. Only the wall of people's organisation with proper authority can check on checkers themselves.

Some hon. Members think, Sir, Government should stop purchasing from the open market. This is another ridiculous proposition to give scope to the hoarders. If we take the whole of India into consideration the food grains really run short today. It is an admitted fact. Hence for the equitable distribution, control and rationing Government must purchase foodstuffs to the requirements of the people.

What is happening in Bengal, our sister Province, and what its repercussions are upon ourselves is too glaring to need any description. What is taking place there is not just an ordinary famine, but a fundamental social calamity without parallel in the history of our people. Villages are being depopulated, agriculture is cracking, rural economy is thrown into chaos, social morality is steeply declining due to hunger and destitution. Mortality among women and children is taking a terrific toll leading to the mass extinction of a whole generation. The whole race is rapidly being transformed into a huge mass of destitutes. Thousands of these destitutes are rushing to Assam with epidemics in their train for food and shelter and hundreds of

them are dying uncared for on the streets of our Province to our standing shame. We all know that Bengal's calamity is not hers alone. What is happening in Bengal today is only a prelude and pre-warning to what is going to happen to-morrow in the rest of India, including, of course, Assam, if we cannot stem the tide.

It is in such a situation when the Front is in danger and the rear is in flames that the hon. Members are meeting in this session of the Assembly. Therefore we are expected to give a united, bold and far-sighted lead. Otherwise, the entire Province is doomed to disaster.

Let us now see how in this situation the Ministry of Assam have discharged the responsibilities and how the hon. Members have played their role as representatives of the people.

Even when the food crisis in Bengal, Malabar and some other places of India came to the forefront, both the Government and the people in Assam were sitting complacent. It was thought that if guards be posted on the frontiers of Bengal and Assam against export of rice and paddy from Assam, she would be saved from scarcity. This complacency shattered into pieces when the Central Government revoked bans on inter-provincial export. Then was there panic on all sides. Prices of rice and paddy began to mount like anything. It was under such circumstances that the Ministry took the right decision of convening a Food Conference at Shillong on the 24th August 1943. But the Congress, the premier political organisation of the Province, was by-passed. Congressmen were not invited to the Conference.

The Conference however accepted some sound principles, namely (1) price-control, (2) stock-control, (3) rationing and (4) people's co-operation in solving the food crisis. But how far the Government have worked up to the recommendations of the Conference to which they were a party?

We must have a plan for the preservation and distribution of the *Amon* or *Sali* crop. The food crisis is already visible in some parts of Assam. What is necessary for this purpose is to control the entire paddy and rice stocks of the Province, to control their maximum or minimum prices for purchase and sale and to introduce a rationing system on an individual basis. In the absence of any one of these three basic measures, in the next year the people will be left to their future as Bengal was left to its fate in the past ten months.

Controlling the price of rice or paddy must go hand in hand with the controlled prices and supply of manufactured goods like sugar, atta, flour, mustard oil, salt, kerosene, coal and standard cloth. These are not all food materials, but a reference to these commodities is about as important and relevant in this debate as rice.

Rationing is by no means less important than control. But rationing has different bearing for towns and the countryside. For towns it must include rice, while for the rural areas rice rationing is needless. As for the other commodities, just enumerated, there are universal demand both in rural and urban areas. Hon. Mr. Whittaker raised a question of experts of which we are short in number. I can cite several examples where people on their own initiative has introduced rationing very successfully. In Lumding, under the guidance of Food Committee, people did not get kerosene commodities has been introduced and formerly many people did not get essential commodities has been introduced and formerly many people did not get kerosene oil at controlled price there. To-day the Food Committee, after meeting the demand of the Lumding town could save 25 tins of kerosene. No expert was required. Only people's organised co-operation is the guarantee in making the rationing a success.

As for the tea garden labour, Sir, which accounts for about 12 per cent. of the total population of the Province, I am convinced that despite complacency which marked the attitude of the hon. Mr. Whittaker there is the urgent need for improving the position in regard to rationing. Let me enlighten the House with some

facts in tea gardens which I got from various sources. The facts similar to which I was informed, have been communicated to the Government Indian Tea Association and hon. Mr. Whittaker by the General Secretary, Sylhet-Cachar Cha Bagan Mazdoor Union on the 11th August 1943.

Tea garden owners to-day supply their labour population with ration. But without going into further details only a superficial observation will reveal how insufficient the quantity is. Every adult tea garden labour generally takes 6 to 7 seers of rice per week. The authorities only supply to working heads only. Let me take one garden for instance. Derby is one of the big concerns in the district of Cachar. About 1,000, with no less than 3,000 dependents, work in that garden. One male can earn Rs.6 and female Rs.5 a month. A chart containing a list of supply to each individual is given below as the monthly account:—

Rice 14 seers at Rs. 4, Salt 2 seers at as.3 Mustard oil 4 chhataks at as.2, Pulses 2 seers at as.6 and Kerosene oil 12 chhataks at as.4.

Total Rs. 4-15-0.

Thus 2 members of a family of 5 get rice 28 seers, salt 4 seers, mustard oil 8 chhataks, pulses 4 seers, kerosene oil $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers, total at Rs. 9-14-0 which they are to pay out of Rs.11, the total amount they earn.

The total requirement at least being 72 seers of rice for a family of 5, the family can get only 30 seers, i.e., they get ration for 13 days only. Of course there is variations from garden to garden which only lessens or increases the number of starving days by 2 or 3.

Now the hon. Members can imagine how the food position in tea gardens may now stand. As a result, dropsy, dysentery, etc. have broken out in an epidemic scale in Bhubander, Palat and other gardens in the district of Cachar. I have been informed that 4 persons have already died of starvation in Derby and one in Bhubander. There may be similar cases in other gardens too.

This situation may lead towards an uncontrollable position. If 12 lakhs workers in their desperation come out of the gardens in search of food, loot, anarchy and diseases etc., may break out threatening the very defence system. So it is in the interest of all that food situation in tea gardens must immediately be tackled and ration must be increased according to the requirement of the entire family. Otherwise complacency as expressed by the hon. Leader of the European Group in saying that there is no Baniachong in tea gardens will vanish in the thin air. I hope the Government will intervene in the matter and the Planters too. I hope Government will seriously consider this matter.

As regards the co-operation with the public, I see that posters have been posted throughout Shillong showing that the Prime Minister of Assam is determined to solve the food problem and he seeks the co-operation of all. This is a very good spirit. But what will be the form of this co-operation is the question of all questions. It is such a problem that it cannot be tackled unless we all put our heads together. It is not the Economic Advisory Board to whom power should be delegated for improving the situation. The Board is neither a statutory body nor has it any popular sanction behind it. The people of the Province will not be, I am afraid, very eager to co-operate with the Board. So there must be people's Food Committees to be organised and encouraged in Assam. The Hon'ble Premier has reminded us that when there is an Economic Advisory Board, there is no need of a separate Food Board. But this Economic Advisory Board is a creation of Section 93 Administration, adopted unceremoniously by our popular Ministry. His Excellency the Governor is its President and its Secretary is the spokesman of the European vested interests in Assam. Though there are some official members in it, the Board is dominated by officials and representatives of vested interest. The Hon'ble Premier has narrated its advantage of having the representation of army, transport and other purchasing agencies in it. We do not grudge these representatives putting forward their view points before the Board. But these people having no direct interest in the destinies of our people must have no say in formulating the food policy of the Province. On the other hand, their opinion is necessary for a correct

solution of the problem. It is a standing shame on the part of any Government which enacts a law, but cannot enforce it for the good of the people. Such a Government forfeits the right to rule. Have you not seen that the mere threat of civil disobedience was sufficient to put thousands of Congress leaders and workers into jail for indefinite period; but the irony of fate is this that the civil disobedience is now rampant in all the markets—civil disobedience which is now hitting the people—and Government is powerless to check it. It does not befit a Government to lay the burden of their weakness at the door of the people. Had the people been morally so high as is desired by the Hon'ble Premier, the form of the present Government too would have been otherwise. Yes, people are to be blamed because they tolerate a Government which cannot protect them, which cannot save them from the clutches of the profiteers.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I hope the hon. Member will finish.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Yes, Sir, I am finishing soon. Sir, in almost all important towns of the Province the people have formed Food Committees on their own initiative. These Committees are certainly of representative character as they consist of members taken from all sections of the public. They have already done essential service to the people in Sylhet, Shillong, Dibrugarh, Dhubri, Lumding and in many other places. They have been co-operating with Government in popular measures which really benefit people. Representatives from all these Food Committees met at Shillong on the 21st November 1943 in the All-Assam Food Conference and placed their valuable suggestions before the Assam Government. An All-Assam Standing Committee with Rai Sahib D. C. Das as President has been constituted in that Conference. The public is expected to co-operate with it as it includes persons from all sections of the public and Government therefore should not dissociate from such a popular Committee. The Assam Government is requested to recognise all the Food Committees and to give facilities to form Food Committees in each district, subdivision, police station and circle wherever they have not yet been formed and members should be elected by the people, and in all of them all sections of the public should be represented.

I urge upon Government to take up the following programme which has already been circulated through a pamphlet by the Assam Organising Committee Communist Party of India:—

1. The future crop (*Amon* and *Sali*) from the hands of the hoarders should be saved.

For this:—

(a) Purchase and sale of food grains by private traders should be banned. All forward purchases should be declared illegal and nullified.

(b) Government should buy in co-operation with the popular Food Committees and Kisan Committees sufficient stock to ensure adequate and successful rationing in all Municipal areas and also for Tea Gardens, Railway and other essential industrial workers.

(c) People's Food Committees elected in general meetings, Co-operative Societies, Kisan Sabha Committees or 'Dharmagolas', organised and controlled by properly elected village Panchayets, should be allowed to purchase, store up and sell food grains. Indian Tea Association also should be allowed to keep stock for feeding the tea garden labourers. But all such stockists should be legally compelled to keep permit tickets specifying amounts stocked by them so that it may be easy to detect illegal hoards and prevent illicit trading.

(d) All competitive buying should be stopped.

(e) Anti-hoarding drive should be run ceaselessly by the Government in co-operation with the People's Food Committees. After meeting the local needs with the de-hoarded stocks, surplus may either be bought by the Government or the authorised agencies according to their need. For carrying out anti-hoarding campaigns, Food Committees should be allowed to organise meetings rallies, processions etc.

(f) Government must run an anti-corruption drive in its own ranks and specially in the Civil Supply Department.

2. Ensure supply of essential commodities, such as Standard cloth, kerosene, sugar, salt, *dal*, oil, etc., at a cheaper rate to the rural population and lower down the price of rice in a corresponding manner.

For this:—

(a) Supply of essential commodities should be arranged in co-operation with the Village Committees properly elected and composed of all sections.

(b) Encourage formation of People's Co-operatives on wider basis and ensure supply to these.

(c) The minimum selling price of rice for the peasants should at once be fixed at Rs.10 to Rs.13 per maund and the selling price should at once be fixed at Rs.12 to Rs.15 in towns according to quality.

3. General rationing (including rice) should at once be introduced in all Municipal areas and commercial centres. A rationing unit should consist of not less than 10 chhataks of all food grains including pulses, per head, per day and 15 chhataks per day for manual labourers.

4. Transport arrangements should be made for quick distribution of stocks in different areas including tea gardens through the co-operation of the Military Authorities.

5. The fate of more than a million of tea garden labourers should not be left to the sole charge of the Planters. Government must see that the tea garden labourers get adequate ration to keep their body and soul together with their families.

For this:—

(a) Government should keep close watch over the ration system in the tea gardens.

(b) The tea garden labourers with their families must get the supply of rice and other essential commodities including standard cloth at the pre-war rates from the tea estate owners.

(c) The Government must ensure regular supply of rice and other essential commodities to the Tea Estate owners for their labourers and also keep close watch over the stock.

6. Arrange adequate relief measures for the local population and Bengal destitutes.

For this:—

(a) Introduce immediate dole-system in adversely affected areas in co-operation with the local Relief or Food Committees.

(b) Open cheaper grain shops for people with low income. Teachers of Primary Schools and Government Aided and private institutions, students in hostels and messes should also get their ration of rice through these shops.

(c) Government should open more relief kitchens and destitute homes for Bengal destitutes and arrange for their repatriation in their own homes when fit, or settle them in cultivable fallow lands in Assam.

(d) Immediate steps should be taken to fight epidemics in Baniachong and adjacent areas by sending more doctors and more medicines immediately. Barley, sago, milk and sugar should be doled out to poor sufferers from the epidemics.

7. Send utmost help to Bengal.

For this:—

(a) Stop all illegal supplies outside the Province in co-operation with the people's Food Committees and arrange more supply to Bengal up to our maximum capacity.

(b) The Government and the Public Relief Committees should unitedly try to raise more cash and kind for Bengal's help and send them down immediately there.

8. To carry out a successful food policy to save Assam from the impending catastrophe—all unity is urgently needed. So, Government should immediately release all the Congress and Communist prisoners and withdraw all bans from such workers so that their full co-operation may be utilised in serving and saving the people of Assam.

I shall now draw the attention of hon. Members of the House to the fateful movement of the last Baw crops of the Subdivision of Sunamganj, which would help the hon. Members to decide how Amon crops are to be saved. Experience teaches discretion. The United People's Food Committees are essentially necessary. These Food Committees would have been more powerful had the Congress leaders been released to join these Committees. In taking the food situation of the Province the popular Congress leaders would have served these Committees had they been released. I know them very well, their spirit of sacrifice for the people, their love for the people and the country will drag them to the immediate vicinity of solving the food problem. To sit tight and do nothing is criminal and betrayal to the suffering population of the Province. Unless and until the nationalist leaders are out of prison bars to strengthen the united effort of the patriots for solving the food deadlock, the deadlock will never be ended, the hoarders can never be detected and the people can never be saved. So, I appeal to all the Members of this House to unite and demand the release of the Congress leaders. I beseech the members of the Congress who are outside the prison to join with the Muslim League to demand the release of all patriots and I also beseech the members of Muslim League party that if they want to bend the bureaucrats they should make vigorous attempt for the release of political prisoners. Simply vigorously attacking in speeches will never serve the purpose. It is high time for action. Bureaucrats who do not like the release of political prisoners have been strengthened if persons who want to bend them do even refuse leave to the Motion for allowance to security prisoners. It is not for our speech the bureaucracy will be defeated; it is by effective and united action the bureaucracy can be bent. So I fervently appeal to the hon. Members of this House to unite to effect the release of the Congress leaders, which will end food deadlock, which will bring life to the hesitating and callous colleagues and which may even bring national Government in Assam to strengthen our cause of defence against the Japanese aggression.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: May I know from the Hon'ble Premier how long he will take to reply?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I will try to be as brief as possible. I will only lay down certain principles and say that the Government plan is the rational plan. I think I will be able to finish within 30 or 40 minutes.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Shall we be able to finish the debate by 4 p.m.? I do not think. Then we shall have to sit late.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I can suggest another solution. It is both a Government matter as well as a matter in which all sections of the House have taken interest. Probably there will be very little work on the 29th and also on the 30th. We can finish on the 29th or 30th.

Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: May I suggest that the time limit be extended?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: We may sit late this evening or the debate may continue till the 30th.

Mr. C. GOLDSMITH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the food question has become an acute problem as well as a very knotty one. We cannot be exhaustive. We can suggest only the broad principles on which the Provincial Government is to act. According to me the food question falls into three main heads—(a) procurement and conservation, (b) regulation for distribution and (c) execution and supervision.

(A) Paddy is the main foodstuff of our country. This is an article which is not coming from outside. But Government must be in possession of this article to be able to control its price and regulate its distribution. Anything that a man does not possess he cannot control. Therefore paddy being the main foodstuff must be under the direct control of the Government. As suggested, Government ought to be the principal or only large scale buyer and conserver through licensed and recognised dealers and agents. Advantages of this will be the following:—(i) It will be possible to regulate price and therefore the cultivators will know when to sell and whom to

sell and what they will get and accordingly they can adjust their requirements and can buy with that money other necessary commodities of life. (ii) The cultivators who form the mass population and for whom we are here will not be at the mercy of the traders and middle-men. (iii) If that is done there will be no scramble for paddy and the price will not rise abnormally high. We know that the Steel Brothers and tea gardens began to buy at very high rates. prices went up by leaps and bounds. When the Steel Brothers began to buy there was scramble and naturally the price rose, (iv) It will be an automatic deterrent to the crime of hoarding. If the people know that they can sell their paddy at a good price at any time of the year they will release it. (v) Government can do justice to the cultivators *i.e.*, the mass people, for a uniform price can be fixed throughout the year. This is what the people want. That will enable Government to get paddy at any time of the year from those who want to sell. (vi) Government can know if there be surplus of paddy or not and can export to get better price and find proper market if there be tendency to lower the price level too much. Yesterday I heard from a talk that price has fallen considerably in the Surma Valley so much so that it has gone down to Rs. 10 to 12 a maund of rice and there were people who went to the market with rice, but there were no buyers. When there is a bumper crop this year there will be a tendency to a greater fall in price of paddy and rice. If Government fix a uniform price for the cultivators then I think they can get rid of all these difficulties, (vii) For the protection of the cultivators Government should fix a reasonable bottom or floor-price below which Government will not buy and ceiling-price above which also they will not buy. This price can be thrashed out in the Economic Conference or Food Committee that will be set up, but the main guiding principle should be for the sake of the mass people, *i.e.*, cultivators, a machinery should not be set up whereby—export being closed—cultivators will be made to sell at a very low price and not enable them to buy other necessities of life the prices of which have risen from 100 to 500 per cent. Now this is the case with regard to paddy.

As regards other essential foodstuffs they are as follows—salt, sugar, dal of various kinds, *atta* and mustard oil. As the rest of India, particularly, the western provinces are getting these articles in plenty we do not see why Assam should get in such limited quantity so that there is not enough stuff to go round with the result that the prices are high and sold in the black markets. As to how these can be procured I can point out to a clue which if availed of will help our Provincial Government. There is an institution established in America which is called the U.N.R.R.A. which is proposing to help those places which need relief. I may be permitted to read the relevant portion that appeared in the Press. It is very brief.

“Meanwhile the extent of starvation in India is being urged upon the Council as one of the principal arguments in favour of U.N.R.R.A. aid to India. It is in the three eastern Provinces—Bengal, Assam and Bihar, which have been the hardest hit by famine, that most of the Allied military bases are situated.”

Here is something which has been discussed in America while our own Governments in India have not taken as much note of, as they ought to have. Now this shows that there is a good case for the Provincial Government to approach the Central Government and the Military authorities. The reason for approaching the Central Government—for supplying the necessary commodities is that the Central Government knows what is the surplus of the different provinces and how they are being sold, and the the reason for approaching the Military authorities is that they can release stocks and can provide facilities for transport. At the present time every kind of foodstuff is being rushed into Bengal from all over the world and at time may come when there will be plenty in Bengal and acute shortage in Assam. Now I think here is a good case for Assam where we can approach the Central Government and get a loan of the same enthusiasm that has been extended to Bengal. Who knows that in the near future Assam will not be a famine-stricken area as regards principal foodstuffs? As Japan's tempo of aggression may increase in the next few months it is the bounden duty of the Provincial Government to approach the Central Government and His Majesty's Government and also the Military authorities to come to our help.

(B) Now, the second head in the question of food is the regulation for distribution. When foodstuffs are procured, rules of rationing and distribution must be promulgated. A Department of Supply or Committee or Conference, whatever it may be, can function to deal with this food situation ; but the main principles that have to be borne in mind are these :

Firstly, that all—rich and poor, high and low—should have equal chance in getting these foodstuffs.

Secondly, foodstuffs should reach not only the furthest corner of urban areas but also the rural areas.

(C) The third head on food question is execution and supervision.

Whatever rules are promulgated it should be the duty of the Department or the Committee to see that the rules enforced are executed in the most swift and effective manner without respect of personalities.

Sir, we realise that the Supply question is a very complicated one which is taxing the brain of not only our Premier here but also the Premiers of other Provinces where Ministries function. The Central Government is also thinking about it ; the solution is no easy thing. The subject requires a separate and exclusive portfolio of a Minister. We realise that. We have heard on the floor of the House that checks are necessary because there is a lot of corruption ; misdirection or misappropriation is going on. Now, to check this we have seen that officers are needed to check those who are in charge of checking, then further officers are needed to check those officers, and in this way a hierarchy of officers checking each other is needed until it reaches the Hon'ble Premier. In that case it will be very hard for the Hon'ble Premier to deal with them. Therefore it is up to the country at this time to understand that a real change of outlook, a change of mentality and a change of heart is necessary. Sir, this question is no longer a provincial question only. It has become an all-India question. When one Province suffers all the Provinces should go to the help of the needed Province. Therefore this Province, which all know is suffering, should approach the Central Government. We also realise how people, even of some responsibility and respectability, only look to their own interests instead of their neighbours also. This is the time to show sympathy, brotherliness, pity and self-sacrifice. Nationalists of course carry the day both in the Press and platform, and when these nationalists are concerned only with their own interest, they cannot be called true nationalists. A true patriot is one who not only loves the trees, stones and rivers of this country, but his fellow-countrymen. I appeal to all members of this House that have influence over the public to bring home to them that now is the time for exercising their good qualities of thrift consideration for others, sympathy, pity, brotherliness and self-sacrifice for their fellow-countrymen who are suffering to-day. During trials and suffering these virtues find their full play and these virtues are greatly in demand at this time in our country. I agree that if the Economic Conference already existing is not enough, a Food Conference ought to be instituted where all shades of opinion and all interests will be represented. In such Conference the mass people, the cultivators should be adequately represented so that their viewpoint may not go unrepresented.

With these words, I resume my seat.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, please forgive me if I do not start my speech on a note exactly in tune with matters which are entirely relevant to the subject under discussion, for in course of the debate some members have chosen it as another opportunity to inveigh against my community in general, and even against certain individuals of it in particular. For myself, I have long passed that stage when this kind of thing worries me or even distresses me ; it does neither of those things any longer. My shoulders are broad ; moreover they have become hardened by the continuous application of the lash. But I have a duty to those whom we represent, and certain charges have been made against my Industry with which I must deal. In passing, Sir, may I remark that abuse is not logic, nor is invective good reasoning, and the free use of both of these in this debate has in no way helped the subject under discussion, contributed one iota to the common weal nor added one got to the dignity of this Assembly. Yesterday my friend Mr. Mookerjee appealed for

cessation to these mutual recriminations, a compromise of our differences, and the compromise of them, and unified co-operation. So far as we are concerned, Sir, we offer our unstinted co-operation here and now (*hear, hear*).

Now, Sir, let us get back to the things which are really relevant to our discussion. It has been said that the Tea Industry has laid in vast stocks of foodgrains to the detriment of other sections of the community. It has been further said that these stocks were laid in and bought competitively, thereby causing prices to rise. Let me first deal with the first part of that charge. The Tea Industry is responsible for 11 lakhs of people, and so far as those under the control of those whom we represent are concerned, not one of those people, even when grain was almost unobtainable at any price, when it was practically off the market, at any time went hungry or uncared for. Mr. Whittaker the other day reminded you that we had no Baniyachong in the Tea Industry, and I repeat his reminder.

This responsibility, this task of feeding 11 lakhs of people could not have been left to chance, and we in all prudence laid in stocks of grain which were carefully built up. These were not in excess of our requirements of safety, and in fact there were times when, because grain was being held back from the market by hoarders, our stocks fell below the safety line. Buying in the Surma Valley was long ago concentrated in one central buyer so as to eliminate competition from the market. Since the end of June this year gardens of the Assam Valley have, through an arrangement with Government, bought under one head, so that they could not have possibly competed in the market. It so happens, Sir, that I help on the buying side of this arrangement and therefore I know what I am talking about. It follows then that these two charges are inaccurate. Contrary to being obstructive to Government our policy has assisted Government, for can it possibly be imagined by any body that Government could have even considered the introduction of price control if the tea industry had failed to ensure the food safety of so large a section of the population—to the tune of about 11 lakhs of people—for had they remained unsatisfied, ultimately, to struggle for their needs and become a competitive element in the market all attempts at control must have been frustrated. A starving man cannot bargain for food; and no price control scheme can possibly work unless Government have large stocks. Sir, I may mention incidentally that, irrespective of cost on the recommendation of the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association and its Calcutta principals we supply our labourers with rice at Rs. 5 per maund and paddy at Rs. 3 a maund, and everybody may participate in that scheme irrespective of whether they are workers or whether they are dependants. I submit, Sir, that this fact alone must have had a very beneficial effect.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: On a point of information, Sir, is ration at concession rate given to children who are not working in the gardens?

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: What does the hon. Member mean by that?

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: I mean there are children who do not work in the gardens? Are they given rice at concession rate?

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: The question is far too general. I cannot answer it. It extends even to the hinterland of the Naga Hills. If specific instances are given I may deal with them.

Mr. Karuna Sindhu Roy is at least one pace behind in his information. For in the matter of imported commodities, we are getting them by our own arrangement for our people. All commodities for our people's needs are all provided for separately and they in no way cut across the needs of the remainder of the populace for our scheme is quite separate and is in no way burdensome on the Provincial coffers.

I will not repeat the recommendations advanced the other day by Mr. Whittaker, but, I will say that we hope they will assist Government in framing their policy for 1944. I associate myself whole-heartedly with the remarks of the hon. the new Member, Mr. Buragohain, when he asks Government to set up machinery to regulate army buying, especially, in matters other than rice, I mean, in matters of meat, fish, vegetables and other things which are so essential to the community, so that the needs of the civilian population may not go by the board. If one single thing has emerged from

this debate, it is that no Government can succeed in its policy or putting it into effect, especially in matters, of public importance, such as the question of food supply is, unless it has the co-operation of the people. It has further been made clear that a large section of the people have done their best to obstruct Government without any regard for the interest of their fellows—in fact to the detriment of the people—so long as they acquire wealth themselves, smuggled foodgrains over the border and otherwise held them back from the market or tampered with the people's food. For the condemnation of these despicable beings we have no words too strong. We are glad to see the lead given by the Chief Justice of Bengal in dealing with offences of this nature. I hope that the Courts of this Province may see their way clear to follow that lead, as has so frequently been advocated from these benches, that they will in fact see to it that the punishment of these individuals is made more fitting to their beastly crimes.

One word more and I will close. We have a vigorous Grow More-Food-Campaign. May I suggest a Waste no Food Campaign and that that campaign should be carried to the ranks of the army as well as to the ranks of the civil population, and that a part of that campaign should include machinery for the punishment of those who do waste, no matter how highly they may be placed.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I congratulate my hon. Friend, Maulavi Abdur Rahman on his presenting before this House a vivid picture of the food situation of his constituency—the sourness of expression that he had to take recourse to, is nothing but a true reflection of the feeling of public against the district and subdivisional personnel entrusted with this responsible task. I had an opportunity of exchanging views with other members hailing from different places in Assam and from what I could gather I can say that the same situation prevails in each of those places. District and subdivisional personnel entrusted with these responsible task of supplies appears to be intoxicated with the powers and appear to be reluctant to part with it and any offer of co-operation by individuals or by bodies is construed as intrusion and is unceremoniously rejected. Mr. Whittaker the other day said that rationing and selling of essential food commodities by Government agencies are measures, undertaken in war time, only to check the capacity of hoarders; but the manner in which rationing and distribution is carried out in my subdivision instead of helping the consumers has tended to help the hoarders and black-marketeers.

Sir, I gather from the Hon'ble Premier that rationing was directed to be introduced in my subdivision as far back as June last, but unfortunately up to the day of my leaving the town, *i.e.*, 16th November, rationing has not been introduced and as a result the licensed traders that purchase controlled foodstuff from Government stocks have been taking full advantage of the delay by transferring a large portion of the stuff to black markets. Sir, in our subdivision the atmosphere is surcharged with rumour to the effect that the personnel entrusted with distributing foodstuffs are in league with hoarders and the criminal delay in introducing rationing in my district and reluctance to take public into confidence lends support to the rumour. Sir, time is ripe and high that the officer now entrusted with the duty of rationing and supply should make room for fresher hands.

Sir, I also heard from the Hon'ble Premier that he has asked the District and the Subdivisional Officers to take the public into confidence in the matter of distribution of foodgrains that Government have collected for the benefit of the civil population. I submit, Sir, Mr. J. C. Gohain, Mr. Daulat Chandra Gohain and for the matter of that all Members of Legislative Assembly may claim to be the representatives of the people but none of us has been consulted by the Deputy Commissioner in disposing of the huge stock that was sent to Dibrugarh. On the contrary, Sir, the offer of co-operation was rejected. The other day at a meeting representing all sections of the public, a Food Committee consisting of the Chairman of the Local Board and the Municipality, and the public and all other interests was elected and a resolution was adopted by which the Deputy Commissioner was requested to recognise the Committee and with its

assistance to dispose of the stock of commodities. The Deputy Commissioner was informed about this, but I am informed that the Deputy Commissioner refused to accede to the public demand. To add insult to injury, two workers who were entrusted to mobilise public opinion against such an attitude were subjected to humiliation. One youngman in the person of Bishnu Ram Bora was arrested the other day and another a Muslim young man named Sarfaraj Hussain who was acting as Air Kaid Precaution Worker was discharged from his appointment on mere pretext. In such circumstances, I feel it my duty to urge on the Government to exercise strict control over the District officials in charge of Supply at Dibrugarh. I have heard from the Hon'ble Premier on the floor of this House that he is always anxious to afford all facilities to the civil population so that they can get all essential food commodities at a reasonable price. I for myself do not doubt the sincerity of Sir Muhammad in this matter, otherwise knowing as I do him, he would not have consented his picture to be represented in the propaganda poster which is more a caricature of him than anything, with his fore-finger raised which, as is well known to hon. Members is an oriental pose for one's determination to carry out one's purposes at all cost. I for myself assure him that he will have full co-operation from this section of this House in the matter of supply of food materials to civil populations and what I want of him is to direct his District and Subdivisional officials to respect his wishes.

Sir, the hon. the Movers of the several Motions have thrown out suggestions for easing the food situation in the Province. I am sorry I could not agree to all the suggestions. My hon. Friend Maulavi Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury, for example, suggested in his speech that in order to have 'more food' all the available waste lands should be thrown open to landless people. To this I am constrained to submit that cannot agree for, I feel that the remedy suggested will be worse than the disease. It is well known to the hon. Members of this House that there are landless people among the indigenous people. Much of the time of the Government will have to be spent in ascertaining to which of these two classes preference should be given. The demand for waste land in Assam is heavy and if waste lands are offered to immigrants then there will naturally feuds between the immigrants and as a result the peaceful atmosphere of the Province will be disturbed and the result will be that the indigenous or the immigrant people will not have a quiet time to grow more food. My humble suggestion is that the proposal for throwing open waste lands to landless immigrants or to indigenous population for the purpose of growing more food should be abandoned and in its place, the millions and millions of bighas of Sali paddy field that will lie fallow since December next should be brought under plough and in the cold weather, varieties of crops such as Ahu, pulses, vegetables, etc., may be grown. Much of the pressure on local crops may be relieved if the tea industry utilises thousands and tens of thousands of uncultivated high land now in their occupation by raising Ahu crops which flourishes on high virgin soil and which is harvested from June to August, *i.e.*, at a time when *Sali* paddy begins to disappear from the market. Tea garden high lands may be utilised for growing maize which is consumed as a staple food by a considerable section of the non-Assamese population in this Province and by their labour force. If the cultivators of Assam Valley are given facilities for growing Ahu crop, the output of paddy in the year may be increased by at least 50 per cent. if not more. This result may be achieved in much lesser time and at a lesser expense and trouble to the Government. The cultivator of Assam Valley who at present do not care to derive the maximum benefit out of their lands will be able to do so for all time to come and the economic condition of the Assamese raiyat will improve and the clamour for remission of land revenue which is a perpetual problem in this Province will cease.

The cultivators of Assam Valley has got yet to learn that their income may be increased by growing food materials such as Arhar, Masur, Mug, Khashari for every kind of which we are dependent on Bihar and Bengal. The trouble that the Government now have got to take to procure these stuffs from Bengal and Bihar may cease if the Agriculture Department of the Government of Assam is fully mobilised.

So, Sir, I join with Mr. Mookerjee in requesting the Government in all seriousness that the proposal to throw open all available, waste lands and *surplus* professional

grazing areas for growing more food may be abandoned as it will complicate the problem of producing more food in our Province and apart from the burden that the newcomers will be to the food resources of this Province, the Peaceful atmosphere of the Province will be disturbed owing to resultant conflict between the indigenous and immigrant population.

Sir, the assertion that our Province is a *surplus* one in the matter of paddy has been challenged in the press, platform and on the floor of this House and the Upper House. The high price level of paddy in this Province which should not have prevailed if the supply was larger than the demand falsifies the assertion. Let us not wrangle over this matter any more ; for this will not, in any way, contribute to the solution of the food problem of this Province. We have somehow or other nearing the end of the year 1943. We should thank God that He in His mercy has saved this Province from widespread calamity that has befallen to our sister Province, Bengal. We have a prospect of bumper *Sali* and *Amon* crops to go along the year 1944. Let us all by sinking all difference of party politics gather our heads together to make the best of the crop that is before us. Broadly speaking it should be our first concern to feed the Civil population throughout the year. This should be the primary concern of the military authorities that are stationed in the Province. Distress occasioned by scarcity of food, among the civil population breaks their morale which it is a military necessity to maintain. To be frank, however, the morale of civil population in the sub-continent of India has shattered and is rolling in the dust however much the B.B.C. from London and the All India Radio from Delhi assert to the contrary. The heart-rending news of thousands and thousands of deaths taking place in Bengal which is the chief rice growing Province in India has shattered the nerve of every man in India—North to South, East to West. So the military should be impressed that they should not in their own interest place any demand on the local produce of paddy until and unless the needs of the civil population for the whole year is satisfied. Military should be impressed that they should avoid waste. In the year of our grace 1943 when civil people by thousands both in urban and rural areas were pining for a *chatak* of rice and flour, the military in the several camps stationed in the Subdivision from which I come were throwing away thousands and tens of thousands maunds of rice and *atta* which were wasted owing to their long storage. It will be divulging no military secret when I say rice in its thousands of maunds were thrown on pits that the military had to fill in the construction of a new road in my subdivision. This I submit is a sad comment on what is called military finance and economy. The military should be impressed upon the imperative necessity of arriving at a correct estimate of their requirement of food-stuffs and they should be requested to stock foodstuffs to the extent of requirements accordingly the huge wastage of foodstuffs which is probably occurring in every part of India would not have occurred and the huge quantities would have been available for civil population and much of the distress underwent by the civil personnel would have been avoided.

Sir, military should be requested to co-operate with the Provincial Government in the matter of supply of foodstuffs to the civil population. Much needed co-operation between the military and civil administration is lacking as will be evidenced from a concrete instance I am presently citing. As was said by the Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture yesterday in reply to a question that the price of milk was fixed by the District Magistrate at Dibrugarh in consultation with the producers and the military authorities, the military personnel were directed to get certain percentage of the whole output of milk in the subdivision at that agreed and controlled rate. But the military in order probably to grab the share allotted for the civil population entered into contract directly with the producers or through middlemen to procure milk at a much higher rate than the controlled rate. The Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture and Livestock is complacently sitting in the belief that the controlled rate, which is reasonable, is prevailing in his native town, but the grim fact is that the controlled rate has long gone to the winds and milk is selling at Dibrugarh at 1 to 1½ seer a rupee. By a similar process,

the price of paddy, rice, vegetables, eggs, fish, etc., has been inflated and I make bold to say that the military authorities are responsible for the high prices of these commodities. Let the administration of Sir Saadulla strain every nerve to bring out a genuine co-operation between the military and the Provincial Government otherwise situation will stand in 1944 in the same way as it did in 1943.

Sir, as was said by Mr. Whittaker, Government was compelled to play the role of stockist and seller of paddy with a view to check profiteering by hoarders. I for one do not see any other way of checking high price. In such circumstances I cannot agree with my Hon'ble Friend Mr. Dev in urging the Government to step out of the scene, specially because when there are no non-official agencies in the Province to counteract the rapacious propensities of the speculators. Positioned as we are, Government shall have to undertake stocking and selling commodities and in doing so Government or other agencies should desist from purchasing paddy from deficit district. Dibrugarh is definitely a deficit district, in as much as more than 50 per cent. of its population being tea garden labourers, are non-growers of paddy, 10 per cent. are engaged in mining industry and 40 per cent. of its population are growers of paddy. I doubt whether there will be any surplus for 40 per cent. of population. If there be any, it will be required for 10 per cent. population engaged in mining and other industrial concerns of the subdivision. I appeal to the Government to persuade the tea industry to solve their own problem by procuring paddy from abroad or by growing paddy in their own lands of which it is in abundance.

Sir, while recognising the necessity of arriving at a surplus of paddy of each district on the lines indicated by the hon. Mr. Mookerjee I am afraid if the operations are not carried out with due caution, they would lead to such rumours, false though, that Government undertakes all these measures to seize all available paddy from the granaries. The agents of competing purchasers that go about in the villages spread such rumours for the purpose of their own and the credulous villagers sell out their stock out of fear of being robbed. As the situation stands in the country now, any attempt on the part of persons to counteract such false and mischievous propaganda is construed by the over-jealous, unintelligent and unimaginative police as offences under the Defence of India Act and thus villagers are left to the mercy of the agent. This happened actually at a part of the year last year in my subdivision. With these words I beg to resume my seat.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Mr. Speaker Sir, may I speak in Hindustani?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member always spoke in English and not in Hindustani.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Because there was no debate on food, Sir, so long. If you permit, Sir, I want to speak in Hindustani.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: If the hon. Member says that he cannot express himself tolerably well in English so far as the present subject of discussion is concerned then I can allow him.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: But the difficulty is, Sir, that there is no Stenographer who can take down Hindustani.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member may speak in Bengali.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: There is a rule in the Assembly Rules, Sir, that a Member may speak in Hindustani also.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Yes, of course there is a rule, I know, but the difficulty is that there is no arrangement for reporting such a speech. If the hon. Member undertakes to supply a transcript of his speech written in Bengali script, I can allow him to speak in Hindustani.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Then I shall speak in English, Sir.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, before we discuss our food position we should know what is our population. Sir, the population of Assam is 12 million according to 1941 census and over and above this there is military and other men connected with them whom we are to supply rice. I can take it that our total population is near about 13 million. Now the normal requirement of this population

will be rice, wheat, etc. This is only civil requirement. Over that we are to feed the military also. Our Province is considered as self-supporting, so far as rice is concerned, but it depends upon other Provinces of India for all other things. We have no wheat, sugar, salt, *dal*, etc., and we are to import them. The quota of wheat, sugar, and *dal*, allotted to the Province is very meagre and we are not getting them according to our allotment. One seer of *atta*, sugar, etc., cannot be sufficient for a man to maintain his health. We are living in war zone and we must get enough to eat.

We are to import all these goods through our agent. Sir, in this connection I want to say that the appointment of Calcutta Agent is not at all satisfactory. We must appoint agents at the places from which we are receiving the goods, who will supply all things under their direct supervision. The goods so far we have received, majority of them, are all below the standard quality though we have paid maximum price of it. We may have one Agent in the Punjab and the others in Bihar, Orissa and so on. This will be less expensive too. After we have received the goods here the difficulty begins from the time for want of proper distribution. Goods are stocked in private houses, requisitioned for the purpose, which are not at all suitable for godown purposes. Assam being damp in climate, the goods deteriorate and get spoiled for want of supervision. I know at Gauhati when a godown was opened nearly after a month or so of storage, almost all the bags of flour, *atta*, *dal*, were totally spoiled and they were thrown in the river. The public do not get enough to eat and the goods are spoiled like this as if they are no man's property.

Similarly, thousands of maunds of wheat are wasted at Gauhati godown. They are not fit for human consumption now and people are refusing to take the same. In this connection I read from the report of the Supply Secretary where he says that the District Officers are asked to release wheat which is being damaged. Had it been a case with the private dealer he would have been dealt with under the Assam Pure Food Act. Government should see that goods are properly stocked and cared. First of all we receive things of bad quality and over that this careless storage spoil them totally. I suggest, Sir, that one Agent for each district should be appointed and he should receive goods direct from the purchasing Agents so that extra cooly and other incidental charges will be saved. When the Government are doing business let them do it business like. The Agents will give the same to the wholesale dealers and they must see that the goods entrusted to them do not spoil or are wasted for want of proper care. They will sell them to the retailers and to the co-operative stores and to other dealers. All merchants who are assessed over Rs.10,000 should invariably be appointed as Government wholesale dealers, as they now cannot bring any goods on their own accounts. These men should be responsible for the goods entrusted to them. The Inspector of Supply should also inspect the godowns twice a month and report it to the Supply Secretary about its position.

As regards control of prices, I suggest, Sir, it should be maintained throughout, and Government alone can do so. The price rose accordingly with the Government Agent's demand. The new crop year is drawing near and we hope the Government will maintain their control. The standard they have fixed is not a fair one. I suggest in short that graded price should be fixed according to the quality of rice such as *Joha* and *Mota*. *Joha* may include all finer qualities and the *Mota* the inferior ones and that is the demand of all, and when Mr. Hailey, our Publicity Officer, went to Gauhati the same demand was placed before him by the Public.

I think a District Food Advisory Committee consisting of officials and non-officials be appointed to see that proper distribution of goods are made to all for whom they are meant.

Corruption is at its height in this Food Department and even good and honest traders also consider it a trade commission to be paid to the people who have hand in the matter. I think the proposed Advisory Board may minimise it to a great extent. Sir, instead of anti-hoarding drive, we must have anti-corruption drive in Assam.

Sir, the Government propose to start rationing from the 1st of January 1944 in every municipal town. Sir, in this connection I want to draw the attention of the Government to the statement made by Mr. W. H. Kirby, Rationing Expert of the Government of India, in the Central Assembly where he stated, "We shall not introduce rationing without first having the requisite stocks and reserves." What is our stock to-day? We shall not get Sali crop before February 1944 which the people of Assam are habituated to take. We have no enough wheat, *dal* and sugar. We must force the Government of India to supply us all these things in sufficient quantity before we start rationing. We must be very careful in this matter. The Hon'ble Ministers must take personal interest in this matter and should see the persons concerned whenever they go out on tour and they should not remain surrounded by the officials alone.

Sir, I think it my duty to say something about cloth. Sir, every cloth merchant is to take a license. Inspectors are appointed to help them in this matter and to give license. Government want to do good to them but these men take their delight in doing otherwise. I know at least in Gauhati big dealers are called by the officer in his house. Chalans are not passed unless they see him in private. Bales are seized as soon as they are taken delivery from the railway or steamer stations or even before that. I suggest, Sir, the members of the District Food Advisory Board or some other public citizens may be authorised to see to that. Such thing is not happening in Shillong where superior officers are at hand, but this sort of things happen in the plains where the Deputy Commissioners are over-worked and have no time to see to these personally.

The intention of the Government is laudable, but there is defect in actual working of the system which can be removed if they be more careful.

Sir, there is a general complaint from all the hon. Members against rice supplied in the Government controlled shop. In this connection I want to inform the House that there is one Assam Rice Mill Licensing Order, 1943, which requires the rice mills to unloss their Hullers to half of the quality which they had in pre-war time and that is why rice is not polished now-a-days. Government may amend it if they so desire.

Transport is the main difficulty of the traders and if this can be removed and if trade is allowed to run in its own way all the difficulties can be eliminated so far as supply is concerned.

Sir, Government have monopolized the rice business and no other traders are allowed to book any wagon of rice to any district of Assam; only Government Agents are allowed to do so. This order must be cancelled forthwith. It will facilitate the supply of rice throughout Assam. With these words, I resume my seat.

Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the food situation in Assam has thoroughly been discussed. I have no mind to make any lengthy speech on this point. I shall try to confine my discussion to only two points (i) export of paddy and (ii) opening of Survey Registers in villages as proposed by my hon. Friend, Mr. Mookerjee.

One of our hon. Friends whom I find here absent to-day raised the big question of inter-provincial relations and good will, etc. My Friend Mr. Mookerjee in his lengthy and thoughtful speech also referred yesterday to the distress of Bengal. He tried to prove that Assam is a deficit Province and at the same time he wanted to give the surplus paddy to our neighbouring Province. With all respects to them, Sir, I may say that their arguments are not intelligible to me. It seems to me that under the guise of inter-provincial relations, they pleaded for the restoration of free trade and wanted to abolish the ban on export of paddy.

We are very grateful that the Hon'ble Prime Minister invited from Members suggestions for formulation of future policy and appealed for their help in enlightening public opinion against the greedy and suicidal exports from the Province. So I venture to place my humble suggestions before the Government and this House.

Sir, we have our sincere sympathy for the distressed people of Bengal. I have also seen with my own eyes how the poor people are dying of starvation in our

neighbouring Province. But, Sir, it is our primary duty to save our family and our children from starvation. I have seen tragic scene in our villages, when the little hungry child asks his mother for food and says “কি ভাত দাও” and the poor mother with tears in her eyes expressed her inability to give her child one morsel of rice. We cannot allow, Sir, our children to die of starvation and the history of Bengal to be repeated here in Assam.

Just at the time of my starting for Shillong, hundreds of poor villagers of my locality whom I represent here, approached me and gave me a mandate to convey their message to the Government that the export of paddy should be stopped. I am also very glad to learn that the Government has adopted the same policy which we want and are determined to stop the export of paddy from the Province. I shall go back to my constituency with the great consolation at heart that we have been able to stop export of paddy from the Province.

We are also very glad to learn that it was the “himmat” of our Prime Minister who raised the voice of protest against the order of the Central Government and he has again re-enforced the ban on free trade and has stopped the export of paddy from the Province. Thus he has given relief to the thousands of poor families of our Province. So our heartiest congratulations go to him for his courageous action and *duas* of the lacs of hungry people of our Province have gone to the Almighty Creator whose merciful hands mould the destiny of the whole universe.

Sir, I find here that my hon. Friend, Mr. Mookerjee, has again come forward with his amendment. He wants to open registers in villages immediately throughout the Province with a view to record (a) the name of each cultivator, (b) the area of his land under cultivation, (c) the total quantity of crop when harvested and (d) the number of members dependent in the family of each cultivator below and above 12 years of age separately.

Cultivators are the real backbone of our society. They may be called the real food suppliers of the country. I apprehend, Sir, such survey registers as proposed by Mr. Mookerjee may create a confusion and a panic in the mind of our people. It is our duty to keep up the morale of the cultivators. So in view of the present abnormal circumstances prevailing in the country, we should not do such things which may harass our ignorant and poor cultivators and their confidence and sense of security should be maintained.

With these words, Sir, I resume my seat.

Mr. BINODE KUMAR J. SARWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, much has been said about the difficult question of food situation of the Province by the hon. Members of this House. Sir, the scarcity of foodstuffs is felt badly in Darrang district also from where I come. We have got in the district from which I come several military camps and the population has increased 2 or 3 times more. Not to speak of paddy and rice, the prices of all other kinds of foodstuffs including firewood have increased considerably higher than the normal price. The Government servants drawing their pay up to Rs.200 a month have got some rice concession, but the poor ordinary class of people are most unfortunate. There are very poor people living inside the town who cannot have two full meals a day, as the price of rice is very high, as it is sold at the rate of 1½ seers a rupee. These people also cannot get sufficient supply of *atta*, sugar, *dal*, kerosene oil at controlled price rate. Similar is the case of poor cultivators in the villages, if not worse!

I would be glad if the Government would introduce a proper ration supply system as in Shillong for the other towns and tea gardens of the Province and ration the supply of rice, paddy, *atta*, *dal*, mustard oil and kerosine oil. As for rice, it is well that the Government servants receive some concessions. For others living inside the towns and Assam tea gardens there should be rationing of rice and paddy, but I would suggest that Government should fix some standard prices for them from time to time according to the conditions of crops in every district. If the Government would control the prices of rice and paddy the people living inside and outside the towns will be saved from hardships. Moreover, the people living outside the towns excepting the tea gardens, are mostly cultivators, whose means of livelihood is cultivation. From the paddy

they cultivate from their fields they manage all requirements of their families such as clothes, salt, oil, etc., and pay the land revenues. So paddy and rice rationing system will not suit the villagers who are mostly cultivators. The Government should control the prices of rice and paddy for all the districts, villages, towns and the Assam tea gardens according to their crop condition. There should be rationing supply system for the cultivators in the villages for articles like sugar, *atta*, *dal* and kerosene oil and mustard oil only. It is high time now, Sir, as the harvesting is at hand to fix some standard prices of rice and paddy according to the crop condition in every district. Sir, I have nothing more to say on this. I hope the Government and our Hon'ble the Premier will solve this difficult question of food supply to the advantage of all concerned. With these words, I resume my seat.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I see there are yet many hon. Members who want to speak on this subject. Therefore I wish to adjourn the House and adjourn the debate. Hon. Members know that 29th November is exclusively a Government business day, but the Hon'ble Premier has said that this discussion on the food problem in the Province may very well be considered to be Government business also. So if on the 29th we get time after the disposal of Government business we may resume the debate. Otherwise it would stand over to 30th.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A.M. on Monday, the 29th November 1943.

Shillong,

The 15th January 1944.

A. K. BARUA,

Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.