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**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 Monday, the
29th November, 1943

PRESENT

The Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Speaker, in the chair, the ten Hon'ble
Ministers and fifty-three hon. Members

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(to which oral answers were given)

Re: Supply of Sugar and Gur

Maulavi BADARUDDIN AHMED asked :

*66. (a) Are Government aware that the people of the Province specially those
living in the interior are at present feeling the dearth of sugar ?

(b) Have Government supplied Gur in any Subdivision of the Province ?

(c) If so, why no Gur has been supplied in the Mangaldai Subdivision ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

66. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes.

(c)—Before Mangaldai could get its quota of 3,492 maunds of Gur export was
controlled by the United Provinces and all further imports of Gur into Assam were
stopped.

Maulavi BADARUDDIN AHMED: Have Government taken steps to give
fresh supplies to the Subdivision ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: We have indent-
ed for the current year about a lakh maunds of Gur, and if we get it from the United
Provinces, surely Mangaldai will be given its quota.

Maulavi BADARUDDIN AHMED: What is the quota for the Subdi-
vision ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It would depend
upon the quantity that we can import.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: With regard to (a), what steps are Govern-
ment taking or intend to take to supply sufficient quantity of sugar to the interiors ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The same
arrangement as for the other imported stuff.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Are Government aware that at present in the
interiors of all parts of the Province no sugar is available except in the black
market ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: We have got
no such report from the Subdivisions uptill now.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Will the Hon'ble Prime Minister take it from
me that at least in my part of the Subdivision, no sugar is available in the interiors
except in the black market ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: As my hon. Friend takes the responsibility of the statement, I shall make an enquiry and remedy the situation.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Are Government aware that no sugar was supplied for some months to the Reid Sanatorium?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am sorry to hear that. If the authorities of the Reid Sanatorium approached me I could have given some sugar to the Sanatorium.

Re: Mati Jaigirdar, a Communist worker

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked:

*67. Will Government be pleased to enquire and state—

- (a) Why the mother of Mati Jaigirdar of village Latu under Police Station Karimganj was rudely treated by police officials in the month of October 1942, while attaching her property?
- (b) Whether all her essential belongings including bedding and utensils, etc., were taken away by the Police?
- (c) Whether Government are aware that she has been experiencing hardships for want of articles thus snatched away?
- (d) Whether Mati Jaigirdar is a communist worker and his name was included in the list of persons to be released and submitted to Government by the Secretary, Surma Valley District Committee in October 1942?
- (e) Whether Government propose to withdraw the warrant against him for allowing him to work amongst villagers to infuse the spirit of defence in them, against any Japanese aggression?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

67. (a)—No complaint has been received to that effect.
- (b)—No. Only the properties of Motilal Jaigirdar were seized and no objection was raised on account of ownership by any other person.
- (c)—Not to the knowledge of Government.
- (d)—His name was included in the list.
- (e)—If he surrenders to the orders his case will be considered on its merits.

Supply of rice in Shillong by Government

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked:

*68. (a) Is it a fact that the rice supplied by Government to the different Regional Centres at Shillong for the public is generally bad in quality, and in some cases it has been found unfit for human consumption?

(b) If so, what steps Government have taken in this connection?

(c) Will Government be pleased to state whether any examination was made of the quality of rice supplied to the public before it was actually put to the market?

*69. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the Hon'ble Ministers have been pegged to the Regional Rice Supply Centres at Shillong for the purpose of getting foodstuffs which have been rationed by Government at Shillong and for obtaining certain foodstuffs at controlled rate?

(b) If so, whether they are getting their supply of rice from these Regional Centres or from somewhere else?

*70. Will Government be pleased to lay on the table the names of the shareholders of Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company, the Government Agent for the purchase of rice and paddy in Assam ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

68. (a)—It was undermilled according to the provision of the Assam Under Milling Order issued at the instance of the Central Government and contained too high a proportion of paddy.

(b)—Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company Limited, Government Agents, who supplied the rice, have been asked to improve quality and Government are also thinking of amending the Under Milling Order.

(c)—No, but the stock was known to be undermilled.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : May I know whether the rice supplied by Messrs. Steel Bros. was purchased in the open market or from the millers ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : They had to buy a large quantity of rice. They therefore purchased sometimes in the open market from our cultivators which is known as '*Dheki chhata chaul*', and also arranged with some millers that their entire products would be handed over to the Steel Brothers & Co.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Will the Hon'ble Minister please state wherefrom Messrs. Steel Bros. procured the rice that I presented to him the other day ? From the millers or from the open market ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : It will be difficult for me to say whether the particular sample which was handed over by the hon. Member was bought in the open market or was delivered by any mill. In my reply to the Food Debate, I shall make a detailed statement about what this Under Milling Order is, how it originated and what is its effect, and what the Assam Government is doing to have this Order modified by the Central Government. Therefore I do not propose to make a detailed statement at this stage.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Was this rice inspected by anybody before it was accepted by Government ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Unfortunately not ; Government have got no inspecting staff.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Is there no system of inspecting these articles before they are accepted by Government ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : No, Sir. A suggestion has been made that because the Military have put their own officers to inspect rice, Government should see whether for their purchases they should not appoint their inspectors.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Will Government see that such bad quality rice is not supplied to the officers of Shillong ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Not only for officers of Shillong, but throughout the Province ; Government have insisted upon Messrs. Steel Brothers to improve the quality of rice supplied.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

69. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Hon'ble Minister, Local Self-Government and Hon'ble Minister, Civil Defence, bring their rice entirely from their home granaries and Hon'ble Minister, Forest and Hon'ble Minister, Judicial, partly. All other Hon'ble Ministers are getting their rice from Regional Centres at controlled rate.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Does any of the Hon'ble Ministers go to the black market for their supply of rice ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I cannot speak for the others, but I have not gone so far.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

70.—Government have no list and to obtain one, their Registered Office in the United Kingdom will have to be addressed.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government please take necessary steps to obtain a list of shareholders from their Registered Office?

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

Supply of paddy and rice at controlled rate

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked:

*71. (a) Are Government aware that the quantity of paddy and rice that is required for the District of Sylhet is not available in the District at the controlled rate?

(b) If so, will Government be pleased to state what steps they have taken to ensure regular supply of paddy and rice at controlled rate in the District?

*72. Will Government be pleased to state the number of persons who died of starvation and its resultant disease in the Province during the current year? (Figures to be shown Subdivision by Subdivision.)

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

71. (a)—There was some shortage of supply when Price Control was introduced but now rice is available at well below controlled rates.

(b) When there was scarcity Government released their purchased stocks at controlled rates.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I enquire from the Hon'ble Premier what is the present rate, as he says 'rice is available at well below controlled rates now'?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: In the district of Sylhet, I have had reports from many hon. Members of this House that in certain localities of the Habiganj Subdivision price of rice has gone down as far as Rs.12 per md.; in other parts it is Rs.16 to 18, whereas Government controlled rate from 15th November is Rs.21.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I know the names of the hon. Members who have given this information?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Many hon. Members of this House have given this information.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: With regard to (b), will Government state if it is possible for them to fix prices for different qualities of rice and paddy according to quality?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: This is another matter about which a detailed reply will be given during the Food Debate.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Is it not a fact that better rice is available in shops in Shillong and they are not appearing in the market on account of the controlled rate?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is perfectly correct, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

72.—The number of deaths between 1st August 1943 and 31st October 1943 in each district, the main or contributory cause of which was starvation is as follows:—

Sibsagar...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Darrang...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Lakhimpur	...	...	...	...	...	0
Kamrup...	...	...	...	...	...	88
Goalpara	...	...	...	...	...	35
Garo Hills	...	...	...	...	...	0
Sylhet	...	...	...	...	...	74
Cachar	...	...	...	...	...	41
Khasi and Jaintia Hills	...	...	...	...	...	0

No report from Nowgong has yet been received. No figures by Subdivisions are available. All these mortality cases occurred amongst the destitute and diseased people of Bengal who came to Assam.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are we to understand that no people of Assam died in Assam due to starvation?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: That is the report of our district officers.

Number of deaths at Baniyachong

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked:

*73. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The number of deaths which occurred in Baniyachong (Habiganj Sub-division) from 1st April 1943 to 31st October 1943?

(b) Their sources from which the above information has been collected?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN replied:

73. (a)—Assuming that the hon. Member wants the number of deaths from malaria, the number is 1,700 approximately.

(b)—Sub-Assistant Surgeon in charge, Baniyachong Dispensary.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My question is quite clear. I do not know why the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge is assuming that I wanted only death roll due to malaria. From the question it is clear that I asked the number of death which occurred in Baniyachong (Habiganj Subdivision) from 1st April 1943 to 31st October 1943. Why is the Hon'ble Minister assuming that I wanted the number of deaths due to malaria only? Why should she assume like this, Sir? I want a straight answer.

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: An enquiry will be made, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: When, Sir?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: As soon as possible.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are we to understand that Government did not get any information regarding deaths other than deaths due to malaria?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: The Medical Department gets the report of the number of deaths due to various diseases and not for other reasons.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I did not want to know from the Hon'ble Minister regarding the reports of the Medical men only. I wanted the reports of deaths from all sources?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: The questions were sent to me and I rightly assumed that the figure wanted was the result of malaria.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May we expect that the Hon'ble Minister will in future take care to go through the letters of our questions a bit carefully?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: That is done, Sir.

Present Civil Surgeon of Khasi and Jaintia Hills

Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV asked:

*74. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) When Major Haythornthwaite was appointed as the Deputy Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Prisons, Assam?

(b) What were the special reasons for which this post was created?

(c) Whether he was particularly chosen for this post (i) by seniority or by (ii) qualifications?

(d) Has Major Haythornthwaite's appointment as Deputy Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, caused any supersession of the claims of any officer senior to him?

(e) Whether the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Prisons has an Assistant Surgeon as his Personal Assistant?

- (f) How duties have been distributed between the Inspector General, the Deputy Inspector General and the Personal Assistant to the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Prisons ?
- *75. Will Government be pleased to state—
- Whether Major Haythornthwaite is also the Civil Surgeon for the Khasi and Jaintia Hills ?
 - If so, for how long he has been posted as Civil Surgeon at Shillong ?
 - Whether he has to attend the Hospital and also the Jail in Shillong ?
 - What is his total pay including the allowances ?
 - Whether he has to tour the District as Civil Surgeon ?
 - For how many hours a day he has to work as Civil Surgeon at Shillong ?
 - For how many hours a day he has to work as a Superintendent of Jail ?
 - How many dispensaries are there in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills which he has to inspect ?
 - For how many days in a year he is required to remain on tour to inspect these dispensaries ?
 - Whether he has any office hours to attend to as Deputy Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Prisons ?
 - If so, what are they ?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN replied :

74. (a)—16th February 1943.

Hospitals due to war.

(b)—Heavy increase in the volume of work of the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals due to war.

(c)—He was appointed in the interest of economy and for administrative convenience.

(d)—As the appointment is purely of a temporary nature, no question of supersession arises.

(e)—Yes.

(f)—The Personal Assistant disposes of much of the routine matters and the Deputy Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Inspector General of Civil Hospitals divide among themselves the other work as found convenient from the point of administration. When Inspector General of Civil Hospitals is on tour, Deputy Inspector General of Civil Hospitals is able to dispose of important matters during the former's absence which otherwise would have been delayed.

75. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Since 17th February 1936.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Rs. 1,500 + £ 30 O. P.

(e)—Yes.

(f)—Approximately 6 hours a day and often more and he is always on call including during the night.

(g)—One hour weekly always whenever called by the Jailor. Files are also sent to him at other times.

(h)—Ten (including Shillong, Laban and Jowai Mission and Travelling Dispensaries).

(i)—No fixed minimum touring days are prescribed.

(j)—Yes.

(k)—When Inspector General of Civil Hospitals is in station, the Deputy Inspector General of Civil Hospitals attends about one hour or more but when the former is absent from Shillong he attends from 2 to 3 hours or more per day as may be necessary to attend to urgent works.

Re : Hoarding of small coins

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*76. (a) Will Government be pleased to state Subdivision by Subdivision the total number of cases filed in the Courts of Assam for illegal hoarding of small coins ?

(b) Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a statement showing Subdivision by Subdivision the total number of convictions in the Province together with the names of persons or companies convicted and the nature and extent of conviction in each case for committing the said offence ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI replied :

76. (a)—A statement showing the number of cases filed upto 31st July 1943 is placed on the table. Later information, though called for has not been received in time.

Total number of cases filed in courts for illegal hoarding of small coins

Nowgong	3	Dhubri	13	
Garohills	2	Dibrugarh	6	
Gauhati	1	Jorhat	7	
Barpeta	1	Sibsagar	4	
Silchar	11	Golaghat	9	
Hailakandi	1			
District Darrang	}	Sylhet	1	
„ Naga Hills		Nil	Karimganj	3
„ Lushai Hills		Nil	Sunamganj	5
„ Khasi and Jaintia Hills		Nil	Habiganj	3
		Maulavibazar	3	

(b)—A statement based on the information received upto the 31st July 1943, from all districts is laid on the table.

Statement showing total number of convictions in the Province together with names of persons or companies convicted and extent of conviction for committing the offence of illegal hoarding of small coins

			Rs.	a.	p.	
Nowgong ...	(1) Tilok Chandra Sarma ...	Fined	400	0	0	reduced to Rs.250 on appeal.
Garohills ...	(1) Dhan Bahadur Jogi ...	Fined	50	0	0	in default, 15 days' R.I.
	(2) Hasta Narayan Newar ...	Fined	677	2	0	
Dibrugarh ...	(1) Badri Raut ...	Fined	25	0	0	in default, 1 month's R.I.
	(2) Jitu Kurmi ...	Ditto				ditto.
Golaghat ...	(1) Nadura Borah...	Fined	50	0	0	
	(2) Lilaram Gogoi ...	Fined	10	0	0	
	(3) Thanuram Gohain ...	Fined	4	0	0	
	(4) Sono Mistri ...	Fined	18	0	0	
	(5) Kalia Sonawal ...	Fined	20	0	0	
	(6) Gajananda Datta ...	Fined	7	0	0	
Hailakandi...	(1) Labchand Ranka ...	Sentenced to 4 months' R.I. but acquitted on appeal.				
			Rs.	a.	p.	
Sylhet ...	(1) Siddek Ali ...	Fined	500	0	0	in default, R.I. for 6 months. Set aside on appeal
South Sylhet	(1) Abdul Goni ...	Fined	60	0	0	in default, R.I. two months.
Habiganj ...	(1) Pralhad Ch. Saha ...	Fined	100	0	0	Ditto.
	(2) Ramani Mohon Roy ...	Fined	300	0	0	in default, R.I. three months.
	(3) Hafiz Mea ...	Fined	50	0	0	

†Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Are Government aware that even the local treasuries are unable to supply sufficient quantities of small coins even if requisitioned?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Government have received no complaint to that effect.

†Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that the Karimganj Sub-treasury refused small coins when they were requisitioned?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I shall make enquiry.

†Mr. R. A. PALMER: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that the same applies to Dibrugarh also where we have been facing difficulties regarding small coins?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: An enquiry will be made, Sir.

†Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: Are Government aware that in Sunamganj small coins of Rs.4 was found with one man and he was arrested?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I am not aware of that, Sir.

†Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: Is there any limit as to how much small coins a person may possess with him?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I shall require notice of that question.

†Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: May I know from the Hon'ble Minister approximately how much small coins have been sent during the last 2 or 3 years to treasuries?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I cannot say approximately. Last session I submitted a detailed statement of the increases that have been made of small coins in the treasuries.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Are Government aware that in some of the treasuries Poddars were detected by the police for supplying persons with small coins and realising annas 4 per rupee for this?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Government have no information.

†Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Is it a fact that pice and half anna have gone out of circulation?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: May be to a certain extent.

†Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Is it a fact that there are banks touring in the villages and exchanging small coins on commission?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Government have no information.

†Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Will Government take action if any such cases are reported?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: If specific cases are brought to the notice of the Government, Government will surely make enquiries.

†Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: Will Government be pleased to issue a circular so that police officers do not arrest small traders for possessing small coins not exceeding Rs. 10 or 15?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I think, Sir, there is a limit beyond which the traders are not expected to accumulate small coins. If there will be difficulty.

†Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Are Government aware that one trader was arrested for accumulating small coins to the extent of Rs. 90 and that when he was produced before the Thana, he was released?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Sir, instead of putting these questions, if the hon. Members would draw the attention of the Government when such cases occur, I think, Government will certainly make inquiries.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is there no limit for an individual for hoarding small coins?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think, one single question will do. The hon. Members may ask what is the criterion of hoarding?

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Will the Hon'ble Minister state the amount of small coins a particular individual can accumulate?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: The amount is not fixed, Sir. It depends on the circumstances of the case.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government take necessary steps so that in future the district treasuries may get regular supply of small coins from the Central Government?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Government have already taken steps in this regard. If necessity arises, Government will take steps again.

†Maulavi BADARUDDIN AHMED: Have Government fixed any criterion for hoarding?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: It is difficult to fix the amount; it will depend upon the circumstances of the case to possess the small coins.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: The Hon'ble Minister has already said that there is a limit for hoarding the small coins. May we know what is that limit, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: A big merchant may require a bigger amount while a small merchant may require a lesser amount.

†Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: Has hoarding been defined anywhere, Sir?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Yes, that is the question.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it a fact that Government employees in dealing with small coins in the treasuries are practising corrupt practices?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: So far as we know there is no basis for that accusation, Sir.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Are Government aware that there is a specific case against one employee in the district of Sylhet and that he is now under trial?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: There may be a particular specific case but it does not mean that there is a general case.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Do Government take care to ascertain whether these small coins are circulated into the areas or they disappear after they are supplied to the individual treasury?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: There is no reason to presume that they disappear after they are supplied to the treasuries.

Motor Transport Organisation

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY asked:

*77. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Who is the Motor Transport Controller, Assam, at present?
- (b) His pay and qualification for holding the post?

*78. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether any post is held by the wife of the present Motor Transport Controller in his office?

- (b) If so, what is that post and what are her pay and qualification for holding that post in that office ?
- (c) Whether it is a fact that she is next to the Motor Transport Controller in the matter of office control, etc. ?
- *79. Will Government be pleased to state—
- (a) The pay and qualification of the present Accountant of the office of the Motor Transport Controller, Assam ?
- (b) Whether the post was advertised before it was filled up ?
- (c) If so, who were the candidates and by whom it has been filled up ?
- *80. Will Government be pleased to state—
- (a) The pay and qualification of the present Office Manager of the office of the Motor Transport Controller, Assam ?
- (b) Whether the post was advertised before it was filled up ?
- (c) If so, who were the candidates and by whom it has been filled up ?
- *81. Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a statement showing—
- (a) The number of persons (*viz.*, Group Supervisors, Section Assistants, Clerks, etc., except the motor drivers and handymen) appointed by the Motor Transport Controller since the creation of the Department (to be shown cadre by cadre with their respective scales of pay showing the number of posts held by each community under each cadre) ?
- (b) Whether the communal ratio fixed by Government has been followed in the matter of appointment in the said establishment ?
- (c) If not, why not ?
- (d) Whether it is a fact that the number of Muslims in that establishment is very few ?
- (e) If so, why ?
- (f) Whether it is a fact that appointments in the said establishment are made from time to time without any advertisement ?
- (g) If so, why ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

77. (a)—R. Mc. K. Adamson.

(b)—*Salary*—Rupees 2,700 per mensem.

Qualifications—B. A. Engineering, Cambridge, England. Sixteen years' service with Burma Oil Company in administrative position on the Fields Side—which includes transport organisation. Organiser for entire scheme for evacuation of oilfields personnel from Burma, including all transport work involved. Twenty years' experience of all types of motor vehicles. On loan temporarily from Burma Oil Company, Limited.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I know, Sir, who asked for the loan of this Officer and who gave information about this expert ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, when the question of having a Motor Transport Organisation in this Province was decided, the Government of India said that if a suitable man was appointed as the Provincial Motor Transport Controller, they would give us some lorries for operation on our roads. The hon. Members perhaps remember that last year when almost all the lorries were taken to the Indo-Burma road, at that time the Burma Oil Company offered the loan of this Officer.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Did they give out of their own accord ?

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

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: What is the justification of appointing him at such a high salary when the Indian Civil Service Officers are appointed on a lower pay ?

†Speeches not corrected by the hon. Members concerned.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Government of India selected him and they are also bearing a part of his salary.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Since when he is drawing his salary at this rate?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think, this question was put the other day also.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: It was not finished, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I remember that this question was put and the Hon'ble Premier also gave the reply. The hon. Member will get the chance of putting this question again.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: When I will get the chance of repeating, the question, Sir?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: When we shall come to the unstarred questions, the hon. Member will get the chance he desires to have.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: All right, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

78. (a)—No. Mrs. Adamson as her contribution to the War effort gave her voluntary and unremunerated service to assist the Controller in his office, in the absence of any suitable alternative, and continues to do so.

(b)—Does not arise.

(c)—No. The Deputy Controller, Mr. Haidar Hussain, I. P., is the next to the Controller. Prior to his appointment on July 22nd, 1943, Mrs. Adamson occasionally worked under the supervision of the Controller during his absence on tour and made decisions where necessary subject to his confirmation regarding domestic affairs of the Organisation.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, will Government allow the wives of other Officers who would volunteer their services to help their husbands for the efficient discharge of their war and other works?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, where the Organisations are well-established, there is a provision for a Deputy to do the works when the Head of the Department is out but this Organisation was built up from nothing and it had to be built up very urgently. Mrs. Adamson gave her voluntary services to the Organisation before we could appoint any Deputy to Mr. Adamson.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Is she giving the same service uptill now?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir. I am told that she even now attends office.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Who allows Mrs. Adamson to work there—whether Government or Mr. Adamson himself?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Government do not know anything about that. Probably Mr. Adamson allows her to come and help him.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Is she responsible to anybody?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: She is not responsible to Government. She only keeps supervision over the domestic affairs of the office during the absence of Mr. Adamson.

†Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: What is meant, Sir, by domestic affairs?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Domestic affairs mean routine duties and other works of minor nature.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are we to understand that the Deputy Controller is incompetent to do the work?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: As I said, Sir, the Deputy Controller has been appointed only from 26th July last whereas this Organisation came into existence long before his appointment.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, the Hon'ble Premier has replied that even now she is working there. May we know why she works now when a Deputy Controller has been appointed?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: She comes to the room where her husband works and under the direction of her husband, she now and then supervises the works of the office.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Will the same privilege be extended to the Colleagues of the Hon'ble Premier?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Does this question—from Provincial Motor Transport to the Colleagues of the Hon'ble Premier—arise, Sir? (*Laughter.*)

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: We find, Sir, that Mrs. Adamson is working there even after the appointment of a Deputy Controller. Why not then the same privilege be extended to the Colleagues of the Hon'ble Premier?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: This privilege may be extended sometime. (*Laughter.*)

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: We want to hear it from the Hon'ble Prime Minister. (No reply was given.)

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: One point is not clear, Sir. Is it the contention of the Government that because Mrs. Adamson is in charge of the domestic affairs of the Controller while he is at home, she is also in charge of the domestic affairs in his official capacity too?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: My reply has been just the reverse, Sir. Mrs. Adamson is not in charge of the office, she only supervises the work.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Will Government be pleased to see that Mrs. Adamson does not work in place of her husband from now since a Deputy Controller has been appointed?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The suggestion will be considered, Sir.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact that without the consent of Mrs. Adamson the Controller does not do anything?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have no information, Sir.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it a fact, Sir, that sometimes Mrs. Adamson signs cheques on behalf of her husband?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have no information, Sir.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Will Government look into the matter?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have already said, Sir, that I will consider the matter.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it a fact, Sir, that Mrs. Adamson puts the clerks 'takids' to these people to finish the work in one hour which as a matter of fact should take 7 hours?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: All these details are unknown to me, Sir. It is curious that my Friends have got very minute details of the domestic arrangements in the discharge of duties of the clerks in

this particular office. As I said Mrs. Adamson supervises the work of the clerks under the direction of Mr. Adamson when he is busily engaged in formulating policy or in other serious matters.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact, Sir, that an appointment letter of an employee was issued under the signature of Mrs. Adamson?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have no information, Sir. But it may be that Mr. Adamson made the selection after the usual test and he might have gone out of the station when Mrs. Adamson had signed the appointment letter on his behalf.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What are her qualifications, Sir?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Why this question? She holds no post as the replies show. One qualification is quite patent—she is Mrs. Adamson. This is quite sufficient.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

79. (a)—The pay has been fixed at Rs. 600 in the scale of Rs. 175—175—200—50/2—400 (Efficiency Bar)—450—50/2—600—600 (Efficiency Bar)—650—50/2—750. His qualifications are a fellowship in accountancy on seven years' articles and seven years' practical experience with prominent commercial firms.

(b)—No. The appointment was made in consultation with Government.

(c)—Does not arise.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, why the pay has been fixed at the beginning at Rs.600?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: As I stated, Sir, the day before yesterday, Mr. Barlow was appointed as soon as the office was established without consulting the Government. Later on I reviewed the position when an application for a higher salary was sent by Mr. Adamson with his recommendations. After going through the qualifications of Mr. Barlow and also because of the volume of work it was decided to fix a scale and he was given Rs.600 on the scale because he was getting Rs.550.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government be pleased to state the names of the well-known firms where this gentleman served for 7 years?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I cannot give all the details but I know of two instances—one he served as the Accountant of the Planting Group of this House and another he served in the Assam Oil Company.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What was his salary while he was serving in the Planting Group, Sir?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have not enquired of that, but, Sir, it was in the neighbourhood of Rs.400.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Is it a fact, Sir, that petitions were submitted by some passed Chartered Accountants?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, I have not received any such petition. As a matter of fact, Sir, we are wanting a Chartered Accountant. If my hon. Friend will give me the name, I shall be obliged.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: One Mr. Sen from Bengal applied for the post

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, we did not receive any such application.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Will Government advertise the post?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, when we will appoint the headman of the Accounts Branch we will appoint after advertisement.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, I could not follow the answer to question No.79(b).

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

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The reply is "No. The appointment was made in consultation with Government."

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, in reply to a supplementary question of mine yesterday and even a minute before to-day the Hon'ble Prime Minister said that when Mr. Barlow was appointed he was not consulted. But now he says that at the time of appointment Government was consulted. Which statement should I take, Sir?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, the original question is 79(b) "Whether the post was advertised before it was filled up?" My answer is "No." I could have stopped there without giving my Friend any further information. Now I have been frank to say that when he was first appointed Government was not consulted. Then there was an application from Mr. Barlow for increase of salary which was recommended by the Controller. Then I went through his case thoroughly and I found that he should be given certain higher salary and Rs.600 was fixed.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

80. (a)—There is no present incumbent.

(b) & (c)—Do not arise.

81. (a)—The hon. Member is referred to the statements given in reply to unstarred question No. 80 (h) asked by Maulavi Namwar Ali Barbhuiya in this Session of the Assembly.

(b) & (c)—So far as possible, but the range of qualified candidates for the various categories is very limited especially in view of the competition from Military and other service, and many of the candidates who show promise can only be considered for apprenticeship training.

(d)—Yes.

(e)—For the reason already given that applicants with experience or who showed evidence of capacity were few. Muslims are in excess among the labour entertained by the Organisation.

(f) & (g)—In the first instance when the nucleus was being formed some appointments were made without advertisement, after making many enquiries and closely studying the market for technical staff. Now all posts, except those of drivers, handymen and daily labour are advertised, and large numbers of applications are received, but mostly from persons with no experience whatever.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: May I know, Sir, why the number of Muslims is very small in the cadre of clerks in this office, *i.e.* out of 256 clerks we find there are only 15 Muslims?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: My Friend has given me this information, Sir. I will look into it.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government be pleased to state out of 47 appointments shown in the list how many of them were appointed in consultation with Government?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It will be difficult, Sir, to speak about 47 appointments of which I had previous consultation. If my hon. Friend will mention any particular appointment, I will reply to that.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The other day there were some questions about it. The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, a statement was laid on the table.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, I could not ask any question.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There were 47 appointments and if Mr. Mookerjee will help me in speaking of a particular appointment then I can say whether I was consulted or not.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May we know, Sir, when this Organisation was started?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: About November last year.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Since when Mr. Adamson is drawing his salary at the present scale, namely, Rs. 2,700 a month.

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: For the first three months his salary was borne by the Burma Oil Company. Thereafter he has been drawing his salary at this rate of which half is paid by this Government and the other half by the Central Government.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My point is, Sir, whether he is drawing his salary from the 11th November or three months after the 11th November and since when he is drawing his salary at Rs. 2,700?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have already stated that in my answer. For the first three months his salary was not paid by this Government.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Since when he is drawing his salary at Rs. 2,700.

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: After three months from his appointment.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Is it not a fact that when the Hon'ble Premier first came before this House with a Motion, his salary was shown as Rs.1,000 per month at the beginning rising upto Rs. 1,500 according to number of vehicles?

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

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: It was shown in the Explanatory Note, Sir, which is even now with me and here you will find that so long as the vehicles will be from 100 to 200 his salary will be Rs. 1,000 and when the number of vehicles will be from 300 to 400 his salary will be Rs.1,500.

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I shall be obliged if I get the paper for my reference.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: It will be found at page 6 of the Note 'Provincial Controller' (monthly).

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am obliged to my Friend for handing over this Explanatory Note to me. At the time when I moved for the vote of the House to start this Motor Transport Organisation various questions were asked. I think it is better to read the underlying portions which my Friend has underlined:—"The Assam Government have been able to secure the services of an expert to start this control and on his advice have also decided to manage the transport now available to them as a commercial enterprise, but on terms that will be calculated to bring no nett revenue to the revenues, while at the same time involving no ultimate loss. He has been loaned by the Assam Oil Company, through the good offices of the Indian Tea Association and at this initial stage his services are given gratis. The system will be worked on thorough-going business principles with this object in view, the staff engaged, which will be expert, in their functions and, so far as competent men are available, found within the Province, being appointed on an entirely salaried basis under the Controller. The services of the Controller himself have been obtained on a no-cost basis for a period to initiate the scheme." Now at page 6 under the head *Establishment*—it runs as—"In the present scheme it is essential that there will be a Central Authority and, initially, three Area Authorities, each of whom will be responsible for the transport placed under his control at Gauhati, Jorhat and Dibrugarh respectively.

It is not yet clear whether these 'Area Authorities' will either initially or ultimately exercise the functions of 'Regional Transport Controllers' and have some measure of control over transport other than that belonging directly to this scheme. It is assumed, however, for the purpose of this note that whatever is ultimately decided upon, only such proportion of their salaries as can justly be debited to the scheme will be carried by it, and the figures given below relate solely to the amount debitable to it. The same remarks apply to the 'Central Authority's establishment.' The figures given below are done according to costing account and only that portion of the salary has been shown for the purpose of costing of the scheme. This does not represent the total salary of the different appointments made. For example, my Friend will

†Speeches not corrected by the Hon'ble Minister.

find that there is provision for an Accountant on Rs. 1,000 for the first 100 vehicles and Rs. 2,000 when there will be 200 vehicles.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, is this the idea that as soon as the number of vehicles will be increased his pay will be Rs. 2,000? In that case I am sorry I can not agree with the Hon'ble Premier, it is not there.

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Let me be given the opportunity to explain. This costing account which was placed before the House does not represent the actual salaries drawn by a particular officer. It will be difficult for a lay-man to understand. It is the costing account that shows the cost of an officer when the Organisation possesses a certain number of vehicles. If the Organisation possesses 100 vehicles then the salary which will be costed to the scheme will be Rs. 1,000 of the Provincial Controller. When the vehicles will be 300 to 400 the salary will be Rs. 1,500. Similarly, although uptill now we have no Accountant drawing a salary of Rs. 1,000, because just now we have heard that the Accountant gets only Rs. 600, the costing account shows that when there will be 100 vehicles the *Accountant* will receive Rs. 1,000, when 200 vehicles, the salary will be Rs. 2,000, when 400 vehicles, the salary will be Rs. 2,500. Similarly the *Clerical Establishment*. The whole thing is shown below after the *Total*:—Cost per vehicle per month, and so on. So what is given here is not the actual salary drawn by a particular officer, but what part of the salary will be costed on this scheme. So my Friend's question is explained in this way.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: It has not been explained, Sir. The figures are quite different there.

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The hon. Questioner finds difficulty to understand all this.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I do not know whether it will be right on my part to say that none in the House has been able to understand the account. The point is this, Sir. The Hon'ble Premier has said that so far as the Accountant is concerned it has been shown at first Rs. 1,000, than Rs. 2,000 and then Rs. 2,500. But actually even now he is drawing Rs. 600. There is no question about that, Sir, because here the maximum has been shown; if a man can be had at a rate lower than that there is no objection; had it been more then I would have pointed out. But as far the Controller is concerned, my supplementary question was "since when this Controller is drawing Rs. 2,700", the reply was "from the beginning". So, Sir, this explanation was simply a hoax. If it would have been the case that after drawing Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 1,500 even for one month or two months his salary was increased due to the exigencies of the pressure of work, or anything else, in that case the explanation given by the Hon'ble Premier would have held good. But, Sir, at the very beginning he showed that the maximum held good. be Rs. 1,500. My point is this that so far as the Controller is concerned we were shown one figure and now he is drawing about the double of that figure and that also from the very beginning and we were deliberately misled which is not fair.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member is not to discuss the matter now. Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My request to you, Sir, is that according to Rule 40 of the Assembly Rules, when there are several questions relating to this matter and when it is agitating the House so much, you would kindly allow us half an hour's time after the business of today is over to discuss the subject.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now, with regard to this Motor Transport Organisation we have got six questions today against the name of Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury. As the hon. Members know there are also a large number of unstarred questions which came up for supplementary questions the other day. All those questions have not yet been disposed of. As I notice the trend of supplementary questions I find that the hon. Members are putting the same supplementary questions over and over again taking advantage of the similar nature of the questions put on different dates. So after the hon. Member has finished putting all his supplementary questions relating to this matter if he presses that a discussion should be allowed under Rule 40 I may consider it. I don't think that all the questions

†Speeches not corrected by the Hon'ble Minister concerned.

fixed up for today will be finished now. So when all the questions would be finished tomorrow I shall consider the request of the hon. Member whether a discussion should be allowed after 4 p. m. under Rule 40 of the Assembly Rules.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Has that salary been fixed at Rs. 2,700 as a result of costing?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir. That was the salary Mr. Adamson was drawing from the Burma Oil Company and that was the salary fixed by the Central Government for him, of which half is paid by the Assam Government.

†Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: May I know from the Hon'ble Premier why not a single son of Assam was appointed as Area Manager?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: We tried, Sir, to get local people for this post but we did not get any suitable man. If any man with administrative capability was available he did not know anything about the motor transport. As the Area Manager has got to see that his area is properly occupied and the maximum amount of work done, one with knowledge of running motor transport is more suitable to the post than one without any experience of it.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: May I enquire of the Hon'ble Premier why not a single Muslim was appointed as Group Assistant, Sectional Assistant and Area Manager?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: This question was asked the other day and the Hon'ble Premier replied.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What is the present number of vehicles in this Department?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Every day we are getting new additions. But the Government of India has promised to give all-told one thousand vehicles to this Province of which three hundred will be given to Tea Industry for handling of their goods and the balance is for the Province. I will inform the Government of India that it will be difficult for the Province of Assam to find funds for purchasing more than five hundred vehicles. We have not reached that five hundred limit as yet but the Organisation has now over three hundred and less than four hundred vehicles running.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Is it not a fact that this Organisation has developed in a manner far beyond the scope of what was originally foreseen and in fact, it is still developing and therefore it is almost impossible for the Government to lay down any set of hard and fast rules concerning it?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Blennerhassett is correct, Sir. This Organisation is developing and in order to reply to a set of remarks of my hon. Friend Mr. Mookerjee I may say that not only the vehicles are being employed for carrying shingles which is a matter of supreme and urgent importance for developing the roads at the cost of the Defence Department but the lorries of this Organisation have been placed with the Public Works Department to carry on their work and with the Forest Department to extract timbers of the forests and bring them out to the market and also to some private persons who are doing transport business in this Province.

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: In view of the recent development of this Organisation and in view of the reply given by the Hon'ble Premier, is it the intention of the Government that the whole Organisation should be left to the whims of the Controller?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It has not yet been established.

†Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Is it a fact that the cost is prepared month by month?

†The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There is monthly report, Sir.

†Speeches not corrected by the Hon'ble Minister and the hon. member concerned.

Adjournment Motion re: failure of Government to control some Government officers of Karimganj subdivision who had been attempting to frustrate the Grow-More-Food Conference at Patherkandi.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg leave of the House to move:

"That the House do now adjourn to discuss the following important matter of urgent public importance and of recent occurrence, namely, the failure of Government to control some of the Government officers of Karimganj Subdivision who have been attempting to frustrate the Grow-More-Food Conference which is to be held at Patherkandi, even by withholding the permission previously given."

Sir, the Patherkandi affairs have already been placed before the House and the Hon'ble Premier has assured us that he has been taking action. Though the arrest of "Hamlas" will not now affect the holding of the Grow-More-Food Conference organized by the Surma Valley Kishan Sabha as the persons arrested have been bailed out, the date of the Conference has to be shifted to 2nd and 3rd December 1943. I got a telegram yesterday from Comrade Prabodhananda Kar, Secretary, Surma Valley Kishan Sabha that the permission formerly given for the Conference has been withdrawn. The telegram reads as follows: "Permit Surma Valley Grow-More-Food Conference Patharkandi withdrawn pray intervention". Now, Sir, expenditure has been incurred in propaganda works, leaflets, and invitation cards have been printed; the President elect has come from Calcutta and has been waiting at Sylhet to preside over the Conference. Hundreds of Kishan Samities have incurred expenses for sending delegates to the Conference.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: No lengthy speech is necessary. The Hon. Member is to explain only the occurrence. Dates have been changed and permission withheld. Is there any permission for holding the Conference on the 2nd and 3rd December? This is the material fact to be placed before the House. It may be that the first permission has been withheld and a second permission has been given. Is the hon. Member in a position to say that no second permission has been given? The hon. Member says that the dates have been shifted to 2nd and 3rd.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: As the dates have been changed they perhaps applied for permission and now they have sent this telegram.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am afraid I cannot contribute anything to this discussion, because my Friend, Mr. Karua Sindhu Roy, came to my house with Comrade Abdulla Rasul, the President Elect to this Conference only three days back along with his other Kishan workers. The complaint then made as also the complaint now made on the floor of the House, is that six labour members who are alleged to be the life and soul of this Conference which was going to be held on the 29th November were arrested. I enquired of my hon. Friend if he got any details why they were arrested, but he said he had no information. I have asked for a report from the Subdivisional Officer. Even today he is not sure on what ground some of the workers have been detained. It may be that the preparation could not proceed on account of the detention of these workers and the dates have been changed to 2nd and 3rd December. Whether they have applied for fresh permission, whether permission has been withheld—this my hon. Friend has not been able to say. I also have not got any report from the Subdivisional Officer up till now. I think the best course for my hon. Friend will be not to try to adjourn the House on this matter when he is not sure. But if he can place the real facts before me, even by telegram I will ask the Subdivisional Officer to give permission to hold a real Food Conference.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: On that assurance may I issue the invitation cards and leaflets?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Is my hon. Friend sure that permission has been withheld?

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Yes, the Secretary has wired like that.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: What is that telegram ?

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: I got the first telegram on the 25th November which says "Valley Conference postponed 2nd December arrange Rasul preside". Yesterday again I got the second telegram "Permit Surma Valley Grow-More-Food Conference Patharkandi withdrawn pray intervention". After I was informed that the date has been shifted to 2nd December, I got this telegram.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: On what date the telegram was issued ?

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: On the 27th.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Why was the date changed—the telegram does not say.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Some persons were arrested and they have now been bailed out.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Whether the date was changed on account of the fact that permission was withheld ?

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: No, the date has been changed because those workers have been arrested.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Very well, the Hon'ble Premier has given an assurance and I do not see why the hon. Member should press.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: So that I may issue the invitation cards and.....

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I cannot take the responsibility. It is admitted that they got permission to hold a Food Conference on the 29th November. Now, excepting the bare telegram my Friend has no other facts to place before the House. The telegram only says that permission to hold the Food Conference has been withheld. It is also not clear on what ground. If my Friend can get all the facts and give them to me, I will see if it is really an arbitrary order. If it is an arbitrary order I will set aside that order. But if the Subdivisional Officer has got some basis upon which he has refused permission, I will have to make a thorough enquiry before I supersede that order.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: In view of what has been said by the Hon'ble Premier I do not like to press for leave to move my Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member does not press for leave for moving his Motion. So it is not necessary for me to decide whether the Motion is in order or not.

Presentation of the authenticated schedules of authorised expenditure in relation to Supplementary Demands for the year 1943-44

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Sir, I beg to present the authenticated Schedule* of authorised expenditure in relation to Supplementary Demands for Grants for 1943-44.

The Assam Debt Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 1942

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now we shall take up consideration of further amendments, if any, to the amendments made by the Assam Legislative Council on the Assam Debt conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 1942.

No further amendments have been tabled.

Now the hon. Members are aware of the amendments which have been made to the Assam Debt Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 1942. These are the amendments and there have been no further amendments to them. So I am putting the amendments to the House. The amendments are to this effect:

*See Appendix F.

“That for clause 2, the following shall be substituted :—

‘2. In section 2 of the principal Act—

(i) For clause (c) the following shall be substituted, namely :—

‘Creditor’ means a person to whom a debt is owing and includes his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, and it also includes a Co-operative Society registered under the Co-operative Societies Act (II of 1912).

(ii) For clause (e) the following shall be substituted, namely :—

‘Debtor’ means a person who owes a debt and who earns his livelihood mainly by agriculture, and includes his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns.’ ”

Does the House agree to these amendments ?

(After a pause.)

As there is no objection I take it then that the House agrees to these amendments. A message will be sent in due course to the Assam Legislative Council to this effect.

The Assam Revenue Tribunal Bill, 1941

The Hon’ble the SPEAKER : There are 20 amendments. As I read the amendments I think amendments to clause 3 should be taken up first. The first amendment stands in the name of Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy.

Clause 3

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Sir, I beg to move that for clause 3, the original clause, namely, the following shall be substituted :—

Constitution of Tribunal.—“3. The Provincial Government shall constitute a Tribunal to be called the Assam Revenue Tribunal. The Tribunal shall consist of one member possessing the qualifications of a High Court Judge as laid down in section 220(3) of the Government of India Act 1935.”

Sir, it was I who first submitted the Revenue Tribunal Bill, but withdrew it when the Congress-Coalition Ministry assured me that a Government Bill would be introduced. Hon’ble Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri introduced the Bill when he was in office. The present Government has introduced the same Bill with little alterations. But, Sir, in the Select Committee the Bill has been so mutilated that the purpose for which the Bill was introduced has been frustrated. I suggested in the Bill, for the curtailment of expenditure, that only one non-official member should constitute the Revenue Tribunal. The Select Committee has increased the number, and thus increased the expenditure. The present Member has been allowed a salary of Rs.3,500 per mensem. A non-official member can be available at a much lower salary, say, Rs.1,500 a month. I do not think His Excellency would be unreasonable enough to fix a big salary if a non-official member, or even two non-official members, are available at a lower salary. When there are three Members, we need pay the non-official members at least Rs.2,500, Rs.1,500 for the President and Rs.1,000 for the other Member. Moreover, Sir, an official whoever he may be is to be given some allowance which will not be less than Rs 500 a month. Therefore the Tribunal which the present Bill seeks to constitute will cost at least Rs.3,000 per month. If my amendment is accepted, Government will save at least Rs.1,500 per month.

Then, Sir, the question of efficiency shall also be raised. We have seen from the many judgments coming from the Calcutta High Court that lawyer Judges are not inferior to Indian Civil Service Judges. Coming to our Province for instance, can it be denied that a Mr. P. C. Dutt, an Hon’ble Mr. B. K. Das (yourself, Sir), a Sir Muhammad Saadulla, a Mr. P. L. Shome, the present Advocate-General, and Srijut Chaliha, etc. are not less efficient than a Dawson, a Scott, a Higgins, a Cantlie? They can perform their duties as a Member of the Revenue Tribunal as Mr. Scott, Mr. Desai and Mr. Higgins have done.

With these words, I move my amendment for the acceptance of the House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That for clause 3, the original clause namely, the following shall be substituted:—

'3. Constitution of Tribunal.—The Provincial Government shall constitute a Tribunal to be called the Assam Revenue Tribunal. The Tribunal shall consist of one member possessing the qualifications of a High Court Judge as laid down in section 220(3) of the Government of India Act, 1935.'"

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I am sorry I have to oppose this amendment. As the hon. Members of this House know, this was the original provision in the Bill, but the Select Committee after careful consideration of the whole matter came to the conclusion that a three-Member Tribunal should be constituted as in Bombay. This Bill has been modelled on the Bombay Act, and therefore the Select Committee thought it desirable to have a Tribunal of three Members. The Select Committee after very careful consideration came to the conclusion that a single-Member Tribunal is not desirable. Sir, the Revenue Tribunal as the highest Tribunal in revenue matters occupies the position of High court. It is known to the hon. Members that in the High Court also in a Court of Appeal, Reference or Revision, a Bench is constituted of two or three Judges. The constitution of this Tribunal therefore must be such as to inspire confidence in all and sundry who have recourse to it. At present we have a single-Judge Tribunal; we pay him the highest salary next to the Governor. Now, if we can provide for three Judges with the same amount, I think there is certainly justification for having three Members. It will be admitted on all hands that three heads put together are always better than one. The hon. Mover of the amendment has laid much stress on economy, but if we only look to economy we may impair efficiency. So, both from the points of view of economy and efficiency I think the House will agree with me that the constitution proposed in the Bill is the best, and we also have the analogy of Bombay in this matter. With these few words I oppose this amendment.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That for clause 3, the original clause, namely, the following shall be substituted:—

'3. Constitution of Tribunal.—The Provincial Government shall constitute a Tribunal to be called the Assam Revenue Tribunal. The Tribunal shall consist of one member possessing the qualifications of a High Court Judge as laid down in section 220(3) of the Government of India Act, 1935.'"

The question was negatived.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that in line 2 of sub-clause (2) after the words "shall be" the words "non-officials and" shall be added. Here the intention is that the President and the Members of the Tribunal shall be non-officials and appointed for a term of 5 years, etc. It is very simple and we want to get rid of officials and so I suggest that there should be a non-official for a term of 5 years. I think the Hon'ble Minister will have no objection to it.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That in line 2 of sub-clause (2), after the words 'shall be' the words 'non-officials and' shall be added."

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: I have to oppose this Motion because the Motion standing in my name would be entirely nullified if it is adopted. I think it is a pity to exclude officials. With these words, I oppose the Motion.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I beg to oppose this amendment. The Revenue Tribunal is the highest Tribunal in revenue matters. It must have an official with long experience in revenue matters. The revenue cases, as all the hon. Members know, are very much complicated and an officer dealing with such cases must have the benefit of experience and intimate knowledge of the working of revenue administration. Non-officials, with all respects to the Members of this House, cannot be expected to fill up the void if the official proposed is eliminated altogether. Sir, I think, I have already drawn attention of the hon. Members of the House that this Bill has been modelled on the Bombay Act and in the Bombay Act also they do not have an entirely non-official body, but they have got one official in their Tribunal. So I oppose this amendment, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The question is :

"That in line 2 of sub-clause (2), after the words 'shall be' the words 'non-officials and' shall be added."

The question was negatived.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT : I beg to move, Sir, that in sub-clause (3)(a), the words "shall be a non-official, and" shall be omitted. In moving this amendment I can do no better than once again draw the attention of the hon. Members of this House to the minute of dissent of Mr. Whittaker to the proceedings of the Select Committee. To what has already been said by Mr. Whittaker I would like to add that it appears at least probable that revenue settlement survey of Sylhet is bound sooner or later to occur. It is perfectly certain that a number of appeals will be preferred during and after that survey which will require the assistance of a very well qualified and experienced administrator. I think, it is desirable to leave the question of whether the President shall be an official or non-official open ; so I do urge upon Members to accept my amendment thereby making it possible to choose the services of an official with special qualifications when necessary. I have said enough to show that it is desirable to leave it optional as to whether an official or non-official should be the President.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :

"That in sub-clause (3)(a), the words 'shall be a non-official, and' shall be omitted."

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to oppose the amendment that has been moved by my Friend, Mr. Blennerhassett. Sir, I am not convinced by the argument put forward by Mr. Whittaker in his Minute of Dissent or by what has just been said by the hon. Mover of the amendment. The contention in the minute of dissent is that hon. Mr. Whittaker apprehends that there will be dearth of suitable non-officials for the post of the President of the Revenue Tribunal. I do not share the same view. I do not think that there will be such a contingency where in the course of five years one suitable non-official to hold the post of the President of the Tribunal will not be available. Even supposing that suitable non-officials are not available, I think the definition that has been given of the word 'non-official' in the Bill covers a much wider field. The definition is like this : "Non-official means a person who at the time of his appointment does not hold any office of profit under the Crown in India". That means that besides other non-officials, retired officials will also be eligible for the post, and as such there is no justification for the apprehension about dearth of suitable non-officials. Non-officials with High Court Judge's qualification are still not more even in the Province while retired officials with the same qualification will not, I think, be wanting even to man the whole Tribunal. This contention therefore has hardly any substance.

Secondly, Sir, I do not think that on point of principle, it is at all desirable to put an official at the head of the Revenue Tribunal. The Revenue Tribunal will have to deal with cases in many of which Government will have a direct interest. In such circumstances I think it undesirable to have an official at the head. In the case of the Public Service Commission a statutory safeguard has been provided, wherein it is stated that the Chairman of the Public Service Commission will neither be an official nor will be eligible for any post under Crown after his retirement. The Public Service Commission has to deal only with recruitment of services and has no occasion to decide any issue where Government's interest is directly involved. So, Sir, if in case of a body like the Public Service Commission it was found necessary to provide a safeguard like this, I think it is all the more necessary to make the Revenue Tribunal independent of officials who will have to be dependent on this Government.

Thirdly, Sir, I do not know what will be the position, if an official, if appointed as President, has yet sufficient time to retire even after completing the period of service under the Revenue Tribunal. Will he be allowed to revert to his previous posts ? If so, it would hardly be possible for him to work freely and independently. At any rate, the position would be embarrassing to him. For all these reasons, Sir, I think it is not only undesirable, but positively harmful to have an official as the

President of the Revenue Tribunal. Mr. Blennerhassett has raised the question of legislation with regard to land-revenue matters.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: On a point of personal explanation, Sir. I did not say that, I said land settlement survey of Sylhet.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: I do not know, Sir, what the President of the Revenue Tribunal has got to do with regard to the land-settlement survey.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Again on a point of personal explanation, Sir, I said during the course of which and after, many appeals are bound to be preferred.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: There is no reason, Sir, why an efficient non-official or retired official will not be able to deal fairly with these cases, particularly when they will have the privilege of having the benefit of the advice of one of the most experienced officer in revenue matters as one of the Members of the Tribunal. So, Sir, it is extremely undesirable for all these reasons to put an official as Head of the Revenue Tribunal. The Select Committee on which I had the honour to sit considered the question in all its aspects and agreed that the Head of the Revenue Tribunal shall be a non-official.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also rise to oppose the Motion moved by hon. Friend Mr. Blennerhassett. Hon'ble Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen has made it perfectly clear that it will not be desirable to have an official as the President of this Revenue Tribunal but, Sir, I think, he has missed one point. The real position will be found if the hon. Members care to see the second paragraph below the list containing the names of the members of the Select Committee on the 1st page. It runs thus: "It was further pointed out by the Revenue Secretary that before the present Bill could become law, the Secretary of State would have to dereserve the post of Member Revenue Tribunal which had been at present reserved by him for a Member of the Indian Civil Service." Sir, everything is hinted there. My hon. friend Mr. Blennerhassett has mentioned the name of his Leader. Sir, it is quite natural that Mr. Whittaker himself being an *ex-official* and also at present being an official, will like that an official should be in charge of this Department. Sir, his whole idea is to nullify the effects of this Bill. It will be found in this Bill that one of the Members is the Commissioner of Divisions. If he wanted that there should be only one official, in that case Mr. Blennerhassett could have stated that the Commissioner should be the President of the Revenue Tribunal. Now it is clear that this is not his point, that the Commissioner should be the President. He wants that the President should be some other official. Now if his amendment is accepted, then in that case two will be officials; then what about the remaining one? It has been defined as already mentioned by my hon. Friend, Mr. Sen, that a retired Government servant will be regarded as a non-official Member so far as this Bill is concerned. Sir, we want to get back the right which has been taken away from us by the reservation of this post by the Secretary of State for India for a Member of the Indian Civil Service. After we have taken all these troubles—spent so much of our money, so much of our time and papers,—Mr. Blennerhassett, by moving one amendment, wants to take away everything from us.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Not to take away but to make optional.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I am sorry, Sir, I cannot support him because I am not of that official mentality which can persuade me to support his amendment. If this amendment is accepted and if Government also becomes a party to it, I think, it will be a very bad day for us. It has been already said by my hon. Friend, Mr. Sen, that the Hon'ble Minister who was in-charge of this Bill and who also sat in the Select Committee, was of opinion that the President should be a non-official. So, Sir, I hope the Hon'ble Minister will also oppose the Motion and will set the matter right by safeguarding our legitimate claim.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also rise to oppose the Motion on principle that it has been clearly realised by the House that I do not like to associate myself with the official elements. In the Select Committee, where I had the opportunity to serve, after a strenuous discussion, we had to yield to accept

only one Member as official. The President should be a non-official Member. In that Committee, the hon. Mr. Whittaker fought to the last to convince the Members of the Select Committee to accede to his wishes that the President at present should be an official one, but we were not convinced and so we had to adopt the principle that the President should be a non-official one with certain qualifications which are laid down in the clause. Now I think, Mr. Blennerhassett has taken the initiative to move the amendment on the Note which was attached by Mr. Whittaker in the Report which was submitted by the Select Committee. Mr. Whittaker mentioned that the President shall be a non-official and the reasons he ascribed therein were that there may be circumstances which may make it particularly desirable to appoint an official President. This was his view, Sir. He also said, that a proper non-official person may not be available, and that even if a non-official person is available, his qualification may not always be superior to those of senior officers of Government. These are the arguments which Mr. Whittaker advanced in the Committee and he also made these things clear in his Note.

Sir, I may submit that the idea that qualified non-official persons may not always be available, is not fully correct. It is the experience of this Hon'ble House that there are non-official persons who have practised or have been practising in the Hon'ble High Court with standing reputation and if the Government of Assam do decide that one of those people should be given a chance of being the President of the Tribunal, I do not see, Sir, there can be any dearth of suitable candidates. With this view we are all through fighting for a non-official one. Indian Civil Service officers, which are probably in the minds of Hon'ble Mr. Whittaker and of the Hon'ble Mover of this amendment, are superior to non-official persons even though the non-official persons have attained the legal experience of long standing. I cannot associate myself with this idea because an experienced man is always superior in his judgment when required to give a decision in any matter. With these views in mind, Sir, I do not agree with the hon. Mover of this amendment.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Members have already anticipated me in opposing this Motion. This point, I think, was debated upon at the time when the Bill was taken into consideration. When Mr. Whittaker mentioned this point, I think, if I remember aright, my Friend Mr. Sen gave a reply to him. Now Mr. Blennerhassett thinks that an official may be necessary to dispose of appeals arising from settlement operations and other cases, but we have already got one official in the Tribunal, of course, in the place of the Commissioner of Divisions, we now propose to have the Director of Land Records. I think the House will agree with me that the Director of Land Records will be a senior officer of the Indian Civil Service having a good deal of revenue experience to his credit. I think, his presence will be sufficient to safeguard the interest of those people who may have a chance to appeal from settlement operations. There is another aspect of the matter, Sir, which has not been touched upon by my predecessors, that is, from the point of view of economy also we cannot leave the post open to an official—by official, we of course mean Indian Civil Service officers only. The House will see that we have laid down the qualification of the President of the proposed Tribunal that he must have the qualification of a High Court Judge and under section 220(3) of the Government of India Act, 1935:—

“A person shall not be qualified for appointment as a Judge of a High Court unless he—

(a) is a barrister of England or Northern Ireland, of at least ten years standing, or a member of the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland of at least ten years standing; or

(b) is a member of the Indian Civil Service of at least ten years standing, who has for at least three years served as or exercised the powers of, a district judge.”

So, the President of this Tribunal will have to be a senior officer of the Indian Civil Service and I have calculated that an officer of Indian Civil Service putting in at least 10 years will draw a pay of Rs.1,350. So we cannot have an officer for

less than that amount. But our proposal now is to have a Bench of three Judges and on the analogy of Bombay, and in Bombay, I may inform the House the President of the Tribunal draws Rs.1,000 per mensem and we do not propose to give the President a higher salary than that. So from the point of view of economy also it will not be expedient to keep this post open for officials. I think the object of the amendment is to have a President with Judicial and Revenue experience. Retired officers of Government, Sir, having such experience will not be wanting and they are included in the term non-official. So I say there is no point in omitting the term 'non-official' from the clause.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That in sub-clause (3)(a), the words 'shall be a non-official, and' shall be omitted."

The question was negatived.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury is then to move amendment No.6*.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: I am not going to move it, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Then amendment No.7 is to be moved.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I beg to move: "That in lines 2 and 3 of sub-clause (3)(b), for the words 'Commissioner of Divisions' the words 'Director of Land Records, Assam' shall be substituted."

Sir, when the Bill emerged out of the Select Committee this matter came up for consideration whether the Commissioner of Divisions will have time enough to serve as an associate member of the Tribunal. The Commissioner of Divisions was asked whether it would be possible for him to serve on such a Tribunal. After going through the matter the Commissioner wrote on 1st November 1941 that it will not be possible for the Commissioner to do this work in addition to his own. So far as the Commissioner's duties are concerned, although appellate powers have been taken away from him, he has got to remain engaged on touring throughout the Province in connection with the inspection and other duties and since Assam has been drawn to the front line of the war his duties have still more increased. So, I think, it will not be possible to spare him for the Membership in the Revenue Tribunal. In view of this, Sir, we have decided to substitute him by the Director of Land Records. Now the Director of Land Records' headquarters is at Shillong and although he is a touring officer, I think, he can well attend the sittings of the Tribunal whenever required. And moreover this Director of Land Records is an officer of extensive experience in revenue matters and he has also intimate knowledge of the working of Revenue Department inasmuch as this officer has to deal with settlement operations also. So we propose to substitute him and this amendment has been proposed as a measure of expediency and convenience.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That in lines 2 and 3 of sub-clause (3)(b), for the words 'Commissioner of Divisions' the words 'Director of Land Records, Assam' shall be substituted."

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: On a point of information, Sir, will there be any occasion in which an order of the Director of Land Records, Assam, is likely to be revised or reviewed by the Tribunal?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Generally I think there will be no cases from the decision by the Director of Land Records. But when any settlement of Revenue will be in progress, I think, there will be some such occasion for an appeal from his decision. But in that case we can have a temporary substitute.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: If there is no provision in the Act how can there be a substitute? But there is an alternative in the proviso in the case of "Commissioner". Here it is mentioned that "when the appeal or application for revision is against an order of the Commissioner of Divisions, or when there is no

*Maulavi Muhammad MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY to move:—
That sub-clause (3)(b) and the proviso thereunder shall be deleted.

Commissioner of Divisions, this Member shall be the Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Revenue Department". There was an alternative provision. But here in what the Hon'ble Minister moves there is no alternative provision.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Unless the hon. Member opposes the Motion, I am going to put the Motion before the House.

What about the proviso?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: We have already omitted that proviso.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: I think that can be made in the next amendment.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: But there is no amendment.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: I refer to amendment No.8*.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It is wanted that the proviso be deleted. The Hon'ble Minister's position is this that if the "Director of Land Records" be substituted for the "Commissioner of Divisions" then this proviso may be omitted. This is his case. If the House accepts that the words "Director of Land Records" should be there then there is no necessity for the proviso.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: This can be done in this way, Sir. The present proviso runs thus:—

"Provided that when the appeal or application for revision is against an order of the Commissioner of Divisions, or when there is no Commissioner of Divisions, this Member shall be the Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Revenue Department." I think, substitution of the words "Director of Land Records" for the words "Commissioner of Divisions or when there is no Commissioner of Divisions" will, I hope, serve our purpose.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: I think, Sir, that amendment can be allowed.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think no hon. Member is going to speak on this Motion. Then I am putting this question before the House.

The question is:

"That in lines 2 and 3 of sub clause (3)(b), for the words 'Commissioner of Divisions' the words 'Director of Land Records, Assam' shall be substituted".

The question was adopted.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I may move the next amendment.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think then that amendment No.8 is not necessary as it falls through.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Then, Sir, I beg to move like this that in lines 2 and 3, of the proviso for the words "Commissioner of Divisions" the words "Director of Land Records, Assam" be substituted wherever they occur.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Yes, that will serve the purpose.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: I do not think, Sir, that will be quite appropriate because there is another expression "or when there is no Commissioner of Divisions" which also require to be deleted. So I think it would be better if the words "Commissioner of Divisions, or where there is no Commissioner of Divisions" be substituted by the words "Director of Land Records". That is the whole phrase is to be substituted by the expression "Director of Land Records".

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Very well, the Mover may put down the amendment as such.

*8. The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN to move:

That in line 3 of sub-clause (3)(b), for the "semi colon" a "fullstop" shall be substituted and the proviso thereunder shall be deleted.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned for lunch, till 2 p. m.

After lunch

Clause 3. (contd.)

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I have since looked into the point which was raised by my hon. Friend Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen. I am advised that the Director of Land Records has no appellate powers and he will not be called upon to decide any case out of his decision. So as advised Sir, I would like to retain this amendment No. 8.

I beg therefore to move that in line 3² of sub-clause 3(b), for the "semi-colon" a "fullstop" shall be substituted and the proviso thereunder shall be deleted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:
"That in line 3 of sub-clause 3 (b), for the 'semi-colon' a 'fullstop' shall be substituted and the proviso thereunder shall be deleted."

The question was put and adopted.

Amendment No.9* I think stands barred and so it is not to be moved.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I beg to move that after sub-clause (4), the following shall be added as sub-clause (5):—

"(5) The President and the non-official member shall be paid such salary as may be prescribed".

Sir, originally when the Bill was drafted and when it was considered by the Select Committee we were under the impression that the salary of the Tribunal will be fixed by the Governor and therefore we did not like to make this provision. But we have since been advised that this sub-section³(3) of section 296 does not apply to the Tribunal which will be constituted by the Legislature. So we have to make this provision for the salary of the Members and the President. There will be one official. So we need not fix his salary. As regards the President and non-official Members we have to prescribe the salary and we have left it to be prescribed by the rules. Hence I move this amendment.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That after sub-clause (4), the following shall be added as sub-clause (5):—

'(5) The President and the non-official member shall be paid such salary as may be prescribed'."

The question was put and adopted.

The question is:

"That clause 3, as amended, stands part of the Bill".

The question was adopted.

Then I am taking clause 2.

Clause 2.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Sir, I beg to move "That in line 1 of sub-clause (3), for the word 'Tribunal' the words 'The Tribunal' shall be substituted".

This is only a verbal error which may be rectified.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That in line 1 of sub-clause (3), for the word 'Tribunal' the words 'The Tribunal' shall be substituted."

The question was put and adopted.

The question is:

"That clause 2, as amended, stands part of the Bill".

The question was adopted.

*Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury

9. Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury

to move:—

Maulavi Abdur Rahman

That in line 2 of sub-clause (4) for the word "Member" the word "Members" shall be substituted.

Clause 4.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy is now to move his amendment with regard to clause 4.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: I will not move it,* Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That clause 4 of the Bill stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 5.

The question is:

"That clause 5 of the Bill stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 6.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That clause 6 of the Bill stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 7.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: I beg to move that in line 3, for the word and figure "Section 5" the words "this Act" shall be substituted.

This amendment is only to clarify and remove the ambiguity of the words.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That in line 3, for the word and figure 'Section 5', the words 'this Act' shall be substituted".

The question was put and adopted.

The question is:

"That clause 7, as amended, stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 8.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: I beg to move that in line 4 of sub-clause (2), for the "colon" a "full-stop" shall be substituted and for the proviso thereunder the following sub-clause shall be substituted as sub-clause (3):—

Act IX of 1908. "(3) In computing the period of limitation, the provision of the Indian Limitation Act, 1908, applicable to applications for review of a judgment or order of a civil court shall, so far as may be, apply to applications for review under this Section".

This is only to substitute the proviso by a separate sub-clause.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Amendment moved:

"That in line 4 of sub-clause (2), for the "colon" a "full stop" shall be substituted and for the proviso thereunder the following sub-clause shall be substituted as sub-clause 3:—

Act IX of 1908. "(3) In computing the period of limitation, the provisions of the Indian Limitation Act, 1908, applicable to applications for review of a judgment or order of a civil court shall, so far as may be, apply to applications for review under this Section".

The question was put and adopted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That clause 8, as amended, stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 9.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: I beg to move that in line 7, for the words "said date" the words "date on which this Act comes into force" shall be substituted.

This is only to remove the ambiguity.

*Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy to move :—
That clause 4 shall be deleted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :
 "That in line 7 for the words 'said date' the words 'date on which this Act comes into force' shall be substituted".

The question was put and adopted.

The question is :

"That clause 9, as amended, stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 10.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : I beg to move that the word 'same' occurring in line 2 shall be deleted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :

"That the word 'same' occurring in line 2 shall be deleted".

The question was put and adopted.

The question is :

"That clause 10, as amended, stands part of the Bill".

The question was adopted.

Clause 11.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : I beg to move that in line 5 of sub-clause (1), for the word "matter" the word "matters" shall be substituted.

This is only a verbal error to be rectified.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :

"That in line 5 of sub-clause (1), for the word 'matter' the word 'matters' shall be substituted".

The question was put and adopted.

The question is :

"That clause 11, as amended, stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Clause 12

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : I beg to move :
 "That in lines 2 and 3 of sub-clause (1), between the words 'shall' and 'frame' the words 'from time to time' shall be inserted."

These are also verbal mistakes which are sought to be rectified.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :

"That in lines 2 and 3 of sub-clause (1), between the words 'shall' and 'frame' the words 'from time to time' shall be inserted".

The question was put and adopted.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : That in line 1 of sub-clause (2), for the words "The regulations" the word "Regulations" shall be substituted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :

"That in line 1 of sub-clause (2), for the words 'The regulations', the word 'Regulations' shall be substituted".

The question was put and adopted.

The question is :

"That clause 12, as amended, stands part of the Bill."

The question was adopted.

Schedule

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : I beg to move :
 "That in serial numbers 4, 6 and 7, the word 'The' shall be inserted before the names of the Acts and Regulation".

This is a grammatical mistake which may be rectified.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Amendment moved :

"That in serial numbers 4, 6 and 7, the word 'The' shall be inserted before the names of the Acts and Regulation".

The question was put and adopted.

The question is :

“That the Schedule, as amended, stands part of the Bill.”

The question was adopted.

Clause 1.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is :

“That clause 1 stands part of the Bill.”

The question was adopted.

Title and Preamble.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is :

“That the Title and Preamble of the Bill stand part of the Bill.”

The question was adopted.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: I beg to move that the Assam Revenue Tribunal Bill, 1941 be passed.

Sir, this Bill had a very chequered career. It was introduced in the Budget Session of 1941. Then it was referred to the Select Committee. The Select Committee sat on the 28th July 1941 and the report was submitted in September and was presented to the House on 1st December 1941. But the detailed consideration was not proceeded with as the Ministry resigned. In the November session of 1942 the Bill was not presented to the House for consideration ; but in the last Budget Session it passed through the second reading. The third reading was however postponed. As a result, a considerable delay had occurred in the passing of the Bill. Now, as the Bill has been considered clause by clause, I hope the hon. Members will agree to waive the objection under rule 70 of the Assembly Rules and allow the Bill to be passed at the same meeting.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved :

“That the Assam Revenue Tribunal Bill, 1941 be passed.”

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I like to say a word with regard to what has just been said by the Hon'ble Minister. I think no one in this House will object to the Bill being passed or raise any technical objection to its passing even today. But what I like to submit is that even if it is passed today there is likely to be considerable delay in having the assent of His Excellency unless the sanction of the Secretary of State is received for the dereservation of the post of the President for the Indian Civil Service Officers. In the report of the Select Committee it is mentioned like this in paragraph 2: “It was further pointed out by the Revenue Secretary that before the present Bill could become law the Secretary of State would have to dereserve the post of Member, Revenue Tribunal, which had been at present reserved by him for a member of the Indian Civil Service. During the interval which must necessarily elapse between passing of the Bill and its becoming law it will be possible further to examine cases from other departments which might be properly termed ‘revenue cases’ so that they might be included in the list proposed to be drawn up in clause 4(3) [re-numbered 5(3)] of the Bill as a supplement to the Schedule”.

What I like to know from the Government is whether the delay that was apprehended when the Bill was before the Select Committee two years ago has been shortened by this time. If the sanction has not yet been received, I do not know how long shall we have to wait to make it an Act even if this Bill is passed now. I think the Hon'ble Minister will inform the House whether the sanction of the Secretary of State for India or dereservation of the post has been obtained and if not, when we can expect it. If it has not already been received, I hope Government will take steps to have it done without further delay.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: The answer to the question that has been put by my hon. Friend Mr. Sen is in the negative. We have not received any sanction yet, but the matter is under correspondence and I shall surely consider the suggestion that this should be obtained as early as possible. The position is this: if the Bill is passed in this House to-day it will be sent to the Upper House ; so it will take some time before the Bill is finally passed and becomes ready for the assent of the Governor, and I am sure His Excellency the Governor will take the speediest steps to obtain the sanction of the Secretary of State for India (*hear, hear*).

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Before I put the question to the House I may inform the hon. Members that there was the message of His Excellency the Governor to the House under Sub-Section (3) of Section 82 of the Government of India Act before the Bill was taken up for consideration. The proceedings would thus show that there was the message sent by His Excellency the Governor as required by Sub-Section (3) of Section 82 of the Government of India Act.

The question is :

“That the Assam Revenue Tribunal Bill, 1941, be passed.”

The question was adopted.

***Discussion re the food situation in the Province**

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: This finishes the business of the day, and I would like to know whether the House wishes to proceed with the Food Debate to-day.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, I want to make one request. As many hon. Members have taken part in this debate and I have taken voluminous notes, it will be much better if other hon. Members speak to-day, and I am given the chance to speak to-morrow.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Very well. The House will now proceed with the further discussion of the Motions on the Food Situation in the Province.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not without a sense of diffidence that I rise to join in this debate on the vital problem of the day, namely, the food problem. Sir, I naturally feel that those leading Members of our Party whose presence in this House and outside would give us inspiration and guidance in the solution of this problem are not in our midst to-day. They have been left behind the prison bars, for how long nobody knows. Therefore I feel I am rather out of context and out of tune.

Sir, this contingency was visualised by the Congress as soon as war broke out. Those who have studied carefully the Resolutions of the All-India Congress Committee and the Working Committee of the Congress must have noticed that they emphasised the programme of self-sufficiency for each regional unit, specially with regard to food and clothing. Perhaps that aspect of the Resolutions did not receive consideration in this side of the country in the way it was expected to do, but this war has clearly demonstrated to us the evil effect of centralisation of industries. Sir, if it so happens—we do not wish it to happen—that some particular areas where we have got our textile

*1. Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY to move:—

“That this Assembly do proceed to consider the food situation of the Province”.

2. Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY

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 foodstuffs 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 Chudhury'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

industry are bombed (I am not giving any names because that would be giving out Military secrets), what would be the result? Perhaps ten minutes' air attack would make India half naked for ten years. That being the position, it would have been much better if we could develop the spinning wheel industry, if we could develop our agricultural resources and try to become self-sufficient, specially when our transport system has been congested by demands of the Military.

Sir, it is not a little amusing to find that our National War Front Leaders have at last thought it fit to take to the cult of spinning wheel. But they are preaching it through people who have neither the experience nor the perseverance that the *charka* demands, and it is not for me but for the Leader of the National War Front to say how far the movement has succeeded.

Sir, in this state of affairs people are confused, and perhaps no less the State. We always find an attempt on the part of different units of administration to transfer the responsibility for this crisis to different shoulders. Mr. Amery would try to shift it on the Provincial Governments, and the Provincial Governments try to throw it on the Forces over which they had no control, and the Central Government similarly try to shift the burden on others. And in the midst of this confusion the people would at least lose confidence on those to whom they would naturally look for protection. At the beginning of this crisis, the Provincial Governments undertook the responsibility and introduced provincial bans, but soon after, perhaps on the results achieved being not satisfactory, the Central Government thought it fit to interfere, and in May last they had unceremoniously stepped in and introduced free trade in certain provinces with a view

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.

(7) To introduce ration cards throughout the province.

(8) To make adequate arrangements for supplies of all kinds of essential foodstuffs and other necessities of life".

2. Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAIN 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 foodstuffs including milk, meat, eggs and fish'".

3. Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV 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 BURAGOHAIN 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'."

to relieve the acuteness of the problem. But there was little co-operation from the provinces and our Hon'ble Premier also in a public statement resented the interference on the part of the Central Government. Of course, I do not know what effective step he could take to remedy the mischief. But whatever it may be, we found as a result that our neighbouring province, Bengal did not fare any better while Assam grew definitely worse. It did not make Bengal rich in food, but made Assam poorer. So again the matter was left to the Provincial Governments. Only the other day we found in the papers that the Food Minister in one of the Houses of the Central Legislature declared again that the administration of the food policy was the central responsibility. What is the implication of that declaration, I cannot say, but if that really means that the Centre will take up the entire responsibility for feeding the people, I think, we have very little to do in this House in this matter. Any way, Sir, from all these incidents we find that there is lack of cohesion between the different units of the administration and there is no coherence and consistency in the principle adopted for tackling this problem. Sir, the other day Mr. Whittaker compared the Government with a ten cylinder internal combustion engine. It may be so, but if there is leakage of compression, even the ten cylinders would not work—the machine will not develop necessary powers to tackle its own problems. In the District of Sylhet in the early part of May last a freezing order was issued, probably, at the instance of the Deputy Commissioner. From my discussion with the Director of Supplies, I find that he had no knowledge about it, but the hon. Members hailing from the District of Sylhet will perhaps all bear me out that for some days all the officers available from all the branches of the Subdivisional and District administration, were drafted for the purpose of ascertaining the stocks of all stockists and cultivators in excess of 25 maunds of paddy and that the stockists and cultivators having excess stock were ordered not to dispose of this stock without the permission of the Government. People did not understand the motive underlying this action. The officers who went to execute this order, could not explain to the people why they were taking that step. But it gave some unscrupulous officers a wide charter for corrupt practices. There were frantic efforts on the part of the cultivators to conceal their stock or to dispose of it anyhow or to give a declaration of a stock much below their actuals. The result was an unnecessary wastage of money and incorrect estimates of the stock position in the District. Then afterwards out of this stock some quantity was requisitioned by the Government and was distributed to the Government employees at concession price and the owners were offered a price which is much below the market price. Even though there was no price control at the time, they were made to accept Rs.8 or in some cases Rs.10 per maund of paddy when the prevailing rate was Rs.15 to Rs.18 per maund. So people considered this a highhanded action on the part of the State and they did not know what the limit of State interference would be. This also tended in some way to shake the confidence of the people in the Government.

Sir, we have heard so much in the course of this debate about that poor creature—named hoarder. Perhaps, if he could be brought within the precincts of this House hairs of his head would have been pulled down one by one and he would have been in a terribly miserable plight. But I submit, Sir, that this hoarder as also black market are the creation of the Government. Why do the people hoard and why is there the black market? People hoard because there is either an actual shortage or an apprehended shortage. There is the black market because the white market is so scarce. Therefore, I submit to this House that piece meal interference on the part of the State has been responsible for the creation of the hoarder and also the black market. Hoarding is not the cause but effect of food shortage natural or man-made. Who would not say that some amount of hoarding has not been done by some hon. Members of this House and the Hon'ble Ministers? If there is a thorough search in the houses of the Members of this House and the Hon'ble Ministers, I believe, at least 3 or 4 months' stock will be detected in many houses.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : You are judging by your own standard.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : I have not even one week's stock in my house—I can assure my Friend about it. Whenever we were invited

for a dinner, we found that we were treated with the best quality rice. Where was it available, Sir? Here in the town of Shillong, it is reported that the controlled rice is of very inferior quality but still, Sir, you will find that in many houses good quality rice is being used. That shows that many people are maintaining a good stock to carry them at least for three to four months. Why it has been so? It is because the people think that whatever the State may declare, it cannot ultimately come to the rescue of the starving people or save those who are in distress or help them from the clutches of the speculators. So it will be their natural tendency to keep by a stock as a provision for the evil day. That is why many people hoard more than what they would stock in normal times. This is one class of hoarder and the other classes of hoarders are those who hoard for speculative purposes. I submit that speculation is an unavoidable feature of the present economic system. There is speculation in all other spheres of life and in all other commodities. So those who deal in food grains would naturally be tempted to make a speculative buying. Unless the State can control all speculations, why should you pounce upon the speculators of food grains alone? I, of course, hold no brief for those people but I say that the natural tendencies cannot be checked by penal laws alone. The remedy of all such speculative business lies elsewhere. After all these criticisms, if I am asked to suggest the remedy, I will at once plead my inability. I feel that there can be no cut and dried policy by which this problem can be solved. Some of the hon. Members of this House have suggested formation of Committees in which the Members of this House should be in majority. We think that we are the monopolists of wisdom in the Province but in all humility I would say that these Committees may not be able to remedy the situation because there are some inherent defects. State control and the private enterprise—these two things—cannot go hand in hand. The State wants to control supply and leaves the production in private hands; how can these two things run parallel for a long time? The State must take the entire control of production and distribution of food grains. If it is not done, I am sure, our efforts would ultimately come to a tragic end. Now if the State comes into the picture at all, it must come as a friend, as a helper and not as an intruder with a pistol in its hand. Let it play games with all the cards on the table; let it not play fast and loose with the people. All hectic buying, ill-conceived control and unplanned distribution must be stopped. The essential thing is that the confidence of the people must be restored. We find, Sir, that some new channels of trade have been opened and that the old channels have been blocked. We have seen, Sir, that new people are coming in the trade as dealers in kerosene and sugar, etc. People with long years of experience to their credit have been ousted from the line. It gives room for nepotism and heart burning in others. Provision must be made for those who are thus thrown out of the trade. The State must see that all people get their proper share in the process of Government distribution. And as regards the creation of big monopolies, I hope the Hon'ble Premier will see his way to stop it.

Sir, something must be said about the land-settlement policy of this Government. Government is not slow to take the Assembly into confidence in respect of commitments of a few hundred of rupees in the increased salary of three lecturers of the Law College or in respect of some minor changes in Municipal boundaries. We would naturally expect to be given a chance to discuss the important question of the land-settlement policy of the Government. Sir, the initiative in the matter of food and land-settlement policy ought to have come from the Government; but it is really unfortunate that we have to discuss this important matter on the initiative of some private Members. This land settlement policy has been motivated by 3 considerations—(1) Grow-More-Food, (2) More Revenue to the State and (3) Provision for landless People. Sir, how far the purpose of Grow-More-Food can be served by importing any new population from outside the Province, I do not understand. There if it was the contention that the cultivable waste land should be brought under the plough, then there are enough landless people within the Province who would readily take up the job. Internal migration of people from one district to another would have been the right solution. While there are innumerable land hungry people within the borders

of the Province, there is no point in inviting people from outside the Province and being offered permanent rights in the land. Then in importing people from outside the Province we are to consider about other things. What is the density of population in this Province? What should be the standard of density? What should be the decent standard of living? What should be the acreage for each family to constitute an economic holding? I have got some figures, Sir. In Europe 250 persons per square miles is considered to be the optimum population. If the total area of this earth is given to rice cultivation it can support 300 persons per square mile. The density of 250 persons per square mile works out 40 persons per hundred acres. But in the whole of British India the density is 118 persons per 100 acres. In Assam population per 100 acres of sown area is 135 next only to Bengal, Bihar and Madras and equal to the United Provinces. So in that view of things we cannot say that Assam can admit of further import of people, unless there is simultaneous attempt towards improvement of agriculture and also introduction of new industries. There must be a balance between agriculture and industries. In Assam the ratio of improved crops to the usual cultivation is .06 whereas in Bengal the proportion is about 13, in the United Provinces it is 13.9, in Bihar it is 18.2. So if there is an attempt at intensive cultivation, if there is an attempt at introduction of more industries, if there is a simultaneous attack on the problem from all sides, I admit, there might be scope for more population in the Province. But without proper planning, if we import people from outside, we do not solve the problem; rather we complicate the problem for future. Haphazard growth of population would create snags in the way of future development of the Province. It is only the economic aspect of the question and not the political that should influence the decision of this Government. Do you want in Assam a race of weaklings and imbeciles, ill-fed and ill-clad? Do you want to enact Bengal again in Assam? Or do you want in Assam that there should be a race of healthy, sturdy and long lived people? If you want that, you should seriously consider whether by throwing open land without any sort of planning and colonisation, you are solving the problem or you are complicating the problem. Influx of new people means further commitments of Government financially, in their education, sanitation and communication. Have the Government been able to solve the problem even for the existing population? These are the points which, I submit, this Government should seriously consider. They must see that the economic standard of this Province do not further deteriorate. We want both qualitative and quantitative progress. My concluding appeal to the Hon'ble Premier will be—care more for the dying bird than for its plumes.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Mr. Speaker Sir, though I do not think, I shall be able to make much useful contribution to this debate, I feel that I shall be failing in my duty if I do not take part in this discussion over food problem which is really the most vital problem for all of us to-day. Sir, from what we have already heard from the different hon. Members coming from the different parts of the Province, I think, there can be no doubt that the food situation is still very serious. The situation that prevails in different parts of the Province also seems to be almost of the same nature. So, without going much into the details, I propose to make some general observations with regard to the problem before us.

Sir, in spite of the fact that the price of rice is falling in different parts of the Province and shows a tendency of further fall, I think that the situation is still sufficiently alarming and is full of dangerous possibilities. The Hon'ble Premier, on the other hand, seems to be optimistic about the future. He seems to think that the measures Government has already taken are bearing fruit, though not to the extent expected by them. I respectfully disagree with his contention, Sir, and I see no reason to share his optimism. To me it seems that measures already taken have been totally ineffective and inadequate. They are mostly half measures adopted when it was rather late and that also without any well-thought-out and comprehensive scheme. In this connection, Sir, I cannot do better than refer to what Sir George Schuster, ex-Finance Member of the Government of India said in the food debate in the House of Commons the other day. I do not remember his exact wordings but so far as I

remember he said that it was a story of half measures and vacillation and failure on the part of Government to take adequate, comprehensive and timely action. He further said, if I remember aright, that there was no attempt to develop a comprehensive scheme. I fully share this view and to me it also seems that the causes that led to the abnormal rise in price and the scarcity that prevailed in the Province during the last six months still remain, at least the major contributing causes have not yet ceased to exist. Unless effective steps are immediately taken to remove all these causes, I am afraid, Sir, there is no justification for optimism for the future.

Sir, the Hon'ble Premier has again raised a question about deficit or surplus of rice production this year and his contention is mainly based upon figures of statistics. He, however, himself admits that these statistics are not as reliable as they ought to be. If that is so, I do not think it at all profitable to fight over the faulty figures of an unreliable statistics. But the fact that prices are falling and sufficient supplies are still coming to the markets of the Province, seem to have emboldened the Hon'ble Premier to insist that his contention of last Session is supported by facts. It should not however be forgotten that after we held the debate over the food situation in last March, we had two bumper crops, I mean the *Buro* and *Aus* crops. And if sufficient rice is now coming to the market, I think, it is due to these two good crops. But, Sir, even if we take it for argument's sake that the Hon'ble Premier's contention that the Province was in surplus, is correct, I think, that makes the Government case all the more worse. If the Province was in surplus what was the justification for such high level of prices that prevailed all throughout the Province for the last six months? That price level was clearly beyond the reach of 95 per cent. of the people. I do not think, Sir, anybody in this House will deny that it is the primary duty of every civilised Government to arrange for an adequate supply of all essential foodstuffs to all the people at fair and reasonable price; and if the price level of rice, the most essential of the foodstuffs, continued to remain for the last six months at a point where overwhelming majority of the people cannot reach, the Government has admittedly failed in that primary duty. Whatever might be the charges against the Bengal Government's administration of the food problem this much can be said that the province was admittedly a deficit one and as such there was some justification for a rise in price there. But what can be the justification for such phenomenal rise in this Province even when it was in surplus? Sir, if the price level for the last six months is an indication, I do not think the Government can deny that they failed to control the situation. I think the greatest indictment against the administration of the Supply Department is that the price level ruled over 700 per cent. above the normal even though the Province had a surplus.

Sir, if we analyse the situation, I think, I shall be able to show, as I have already said, that the main contributing causes that led to such abnormal rise this year still exist. To me it seems that there are four main causes which have led to the present position in Assam. The first is the lifting of the ban on export and also surreptitious export by different channels. I think there is still much scope for export, open and surreptitious, though the ban has been restored. I am sure, if we now say that the Province will be a surplus one in 1944, the Government of India will call upon Assam to supply large quantity of rice to the provinces that are in deficit and if Assam agrees to supply to other provinces at the present stage then our position is not likely to improve. If the Assam Government cannot resist such a demand then the first cause that I have mentioned, will for all practical purposes continue. I think at least for sometime Assam has ample reason to plead its inability to come to the rescue of others. First of all Assam has to meet a huge Military requirement and to feed a large population that has come to this Province from outside in connection with Military projects. Secondly, Sir, Providence has been rather unusually kind to us for the last two or three crops and it is unsafe to rely solely on the Province for the next crop. As Assam is subject to floods almost every year, it is prudent to apprehend that floods or some unforeseen calamity may fall upon us next year and as such we must have some reserve for such a contingency. Thirdly, the price level indicates

that the Government has not been able to do its primary duty, I mean the duty of making available to the people of the Province the essential foodstuffs at a fair and reasonable price. Unless and until that duty is discharged by the Government, it cannot afford to be charitable to other provinces. Sir, when I say this I certainly do not mean that we should not give any help to the needy provinces, or that I am lacking in sympathy with them. My idea is that Government should first of all try by all means to lower down price to a point which is within the reach of our masses and stabilise our position. And after that is done, if we have any surplus that can be spared for other provinces, I shall be the first person to recommend that. As we are to protect our own people first, I do not think there is anything to be ashamed of in pleading with the Centre to give us at least sometime to stabilise our own position before going to the rescue of others. And I hope that the Central Government will not force Assam to supply the needs of other provinces as long as the price level of our chief food grains, *i.e.* rice and paddy, is not brought down to a point which will be accessible to the people of the Province. But if the Centre insists for export to other provinces before that time, the first cause that I mentioned will remain.

The second cause, I think, Sir, is large scale competitive purchases. I don't know whether Government have taken any step to stop this. I think the Hon'ble Premier has said the other day that they will have come to an agreement with the Tea Industry of the Assam Valley that they will not go into the market separately. Government will give a share of their purchases in the Assam Valley to the Tea Industry but we do not know if similar arrangement has been made in the Surma Valley. Moreover barring the Tea Industry, there are other industries, big employers of labour who have got to purchase rice or paddy for their own labour. If they begin competitive and large scale purchases, again the whole market will be upset. So unless competitive purchases are stopped the same upheaval that happened in 1942 will recur in the next year.

The third cause, as I understand it, Sir, is currency inflation. Of course this Government is not really responsible for that but I don't think, they would deny that currency inflation is one of the contributory causes for the rise of prices. Government of India is reported to be considering measures to check inflation; but this Government should also press upon the Centre to take early and effective steps. Unless they do it, whatever other measures they may take to stop the rise of prices, will be of little avail.

The fourth cause, which I think is the most dangerous among the contributory causes, is loss of public confidence. I think nobody in this House will deny that public have lost confidence in the power of Government to control the food situation. Black market is still the order of the day. Not to speak of other places even in the capital town of Shillong, for many of the articles of foodstuffs if not all, people have to go to the black markets. The activities of black market are so wide spread in spite of Government's control that people cannot be blamed if they feel that Government is either unwilling or unable to stop them and as such they have no other alternative than to tolerate this evil. If we analyse the situation in order to find out how the public morale was so much shaken, I think, it will not be out of place to mention that when the rice problem was not acute in May and June 1942, prices of other foodstuffs showed a tendency to rise. Government then began price control but that control hopelessly failed. Black markets began to rise in all parts of the Province. Government practically took no steps to check that. All articles of foodstuffs began to be sold in the black markets even under the very nose of the authorities. As even the officials could not procure articles of foodstuff without recourse to the black market, it cannot be said that they did not know of the existence of the black markets. Hoarding and profiteering went on almost unchecked and the result was, Sir, that people lost all confidence on the power of the Government to control the situation and was rather forced to encourage black market as for their most essential foodstuff they had no other means than to go to black markets. The Hon'ble Prime Minister the other day tried to find fault with the public for going to the black markets. But I think he would excuse me if I say that when one feels the dire necessity of essential foodstuffs like salt, sugar or mustard oil without which he cannot manage even for a day, he has no other alternative than to go to a black market, particularly when he knows

that complaint to the authorities is likely to fail if proper "Tadbir" is not made. Thus people began to lose confidence in the power of the Government and these things went on for some time and the hoarders and profiteers were emboldened to defy law. In such a state of things the ban of rice export was lifted by the Government of India. The people became still more panicky and the situation was aggravated within the twinkling of an eye. The price of rice went up from Rs.15 to Rs.30 in course of a fortnight in spite of all attempts on the part of the Government; even after the ban was restored, the situation could not be controlled until about a fortnight ago when with the imminent prospect of a bumper harvest, prices began to fall even below the Government's prescribed price. If prices rise in spite of Government's efforts and fall without it, it is difficult for the public to have much faith on Government's action. So, I say this is the most dangerous of the contributory causes. Unless you can restore public confidence, unless you can keep up the morale of the people, I say it would be impossible for the Government to tackle the situation. Unless people are made to feel that it is the Government and not the hoarders or profiteers that are ruling the Province, that Government has the power to suppress black markets and Government has the strength and will to stop profiteering and hoarding, unless this confidence can be restored, I don't think, Sir, it will be possible for the Government to control the situation. Now, coming to the articles of foodstuffs other than rice, they are wholly imported from outside and as such much easier to control than rice which is wholly produced in the Province. With regard to those other articles what is the position? It is no doubt true that Government is importing on their own account some quantity of some of the articles of foodstuffs like Dal, sugar, salt and the other things; but I think however large their import may be, that is only a fraction of the Province's requirement. I don't know if Government has any control over the balance of the Province's requirement in these articles. Even with regard to the articles that are imported by the Government, I think, there is no planned system of distribution. It has been rightly pointed out by my hon. Friend Mr. Whittaker the other day that almost the whole stock or at least the major portion of it is stuck into the bottlenecks of the subdivisinal or district headquarters, where again, some individuals get those articles and that also occasionally whereas there is a greater number who do not get it at all. In the villages scanty stock is allowed to go and of that again the major portion finds its way to the black market and the result is, for want of equitable distribution, Government's indent of these articles is making very little impression on the black market which is practically the only market that is ruling in the villages. This morning I asked a supplementary Question with regard to supply of sugar. I hope many of the hon. Members coming from different parts of the Province will corroborate me that sugar has become very scarce in the interior of the Province. Though the Government's controlled price is 8 annas a seer, I think black market's rate is Rs.2 per seer, if not Rs.2-8-0. Thus most of the people in the villages and in the towns also have even now no other alternative than to go to the black market for these things, although Government are themselves indenting and distributing some of the articles of foodstuffs. So, even with regard to these articles of foodstuff, Government has failed to control the situation. I, therefore, feel that unless the whole problem is studied in a comprehensive, systematic and methodical way and remedies found out, we have no reason to feel optimistic for the future. Half measures have failed and a planned remedy is urgently necessary. I therefore suggest that let the Government make a comprehensive and well-thought-out scheme for supply and distribution of all essential foodstuffs in consultation with the representatives of the people. A provincial food committee has been suggested by some hon. Members, but I think the Members of the Legislature should not monopolise that committee. Other interests, such as traders, consumers and transport services should also be represented there. Any way I think Government should not be contented with a half-hearted measure. They should make a comprehensive scheme for the supply and control of all articles of essential foodstuffs and make a methodical system whereby distribution is made to all throughout the Province. Even with regard to

the foodstuffs which they are indenting they should make a well-thought-out plan whereby every circle and every village get their quota and that quota is equitably distributed to the people. It is no good indenting articles unless they are properly distributed. Government should also take all possible steps to restore public confidence. In this connection, Sir, I think I cannot too strongly urge upon the Government that this is the time to release those so-called political prisoners. I hope Government will not deny that they are the real leaders of the people and that they command immense influence with the masses and as such their hearty co-operation at a time like this would be much helpful in restoring public confidence. If Government consider it to be a bold step, I think that bold step is justified by the circumstances. If Government cannot restore public confidence and if they still remain contented with half measures, I am afraid, a repetition of what happened in the year 1943 is inevitable in 1944.

Srijut RAM NATH DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, much has been said by many hon. Members of this House in the way of giving suggestions how to improve the difficult food situation in the Province. So I do not like to repeat them. But, Sir, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not add a few words to this discussion.

About the quality of supplied articles, much has already been said; but, Sir, I should like to say something about the quality of salt supplied by Government in the District of Sibsagar. Sir, in the District of Sibsagar, mainly in the Jorhat Subdivision, black salt is being supplied by Government to the public and the public is compelled to consume this black salt. The very nature in which this salt is given to the public by Government, will show that compulsion is being used by Government on the public to consume this black salt. Registered shop-keepers are allowed to sell black salt and these registered shop-keepers are to purchase this salt from the Government Agency at the ratio of 1 to 7 bags, i.e., one bag of black salt and 7 bags white salt. If the registered shop-keepers do not buy that bag of black salt, they are not allowed to buy the 7 bags of white salt. Therefore, the registered shop-keeper has to purchase the whole quota so that he can sell salt to the public and this is being done against the will of the general public, since the year 1942. Why this black salt which is unfit for consumption is sold, Sir, to the public? If there had been scarcity of salt then the selling of that salt would have been justified. But so far as we know there is enough stock of white salt. So I request the Hon'ble Premier to stop selling of this black salt in the Subdivision of Jorhat.

Then coming to the quality of Dals which have been indented by Government, Sir, the quality of *guta masur* is much inferior to that bought by private shop-keepers. Therefore sometimes people do not like to purchase the *guta masur* supplied by Government and they prefer to buy the better quality supplied by private firms and shops. Government should see to bring better quality of this Dal in future.

Speaking about the system of rationing, I should like to say that although this scheme is adopted in order to meet the demands of the public equitably and to stamp out the black market, yet, Sir, its desired object will not be achieved, without strict supervision over the management and proper vigilance of the supply staff. In my own District, particularly in the Jorhat town, sugar is distributed, according to ration cards at an average of $\frac{1}{2}$ *powa* per week per man which is much below the requirement, through the medium of a rationing co-operative store managed by Government officer. But we find that sugar is being sold in the black market at the rate of Rs.200 per bag. My point is this: if the system had been properly supervised by the authorities concerned and if the supply staff would have been vigilant, this sugar that is being sold in the black market at Rs.200 per bag could have come from no source and there would have been no chance for black market.

The next point I want to mention is this. There are many other articles which constitute food apart from the articles bought by Government on Government account and these articles are supplied by individual firms or traders who have been on that line from a long time past and the position of these firms and traders is now made insecure in the sense that they have been driven to such a position that they feel it to be so. My point is this: I do not mean to say that there should be no price control, no licensing system to deal in certain articles, for them, but, Sir, there

should be no frequent requisitioning of their shops and godowns, filled with foodstuffs and other articles. In such circumstances they were driven to the impression that the Government was bent upon to destroy their trade, and to drive them away from their trade. They could have understood the need of requisitioning houses, Sir, if the houses and shops requisitioned would have been utilised only for the purpose for which they were meant. In one case at Jorhat town in a private trader's shop requisitioned for the purpose of the Rationing Co-operative Store, a Bank namely "Bharatia Central Bank" has been placed. This palpably shows that the requisitioning of that shop was not justified. Under these circumstances it is no wonder on the part of the private traders and shop-keepers to think that the Government is determined to destroy their trade. My only point is that these people should not be treated in this way; there should be a limit to everything. I therefore submit, Sir, that Government should also look to the interests of those traders who are supplying articles which constitute our food, apart from the articles supplied by Government, so that the public may not suffer.

Lastly, Sir, I would like to say something about the land settlement policy of the Government. Government, Sir, in the guise of "Grow-More-Food-Campaign", have decided to open some land to the outsiders, even by de-reserving the professional grazing reserves, and in order to carry out that design they have appointed an officer to examine how far the reserves are surplus to the requirement of the graziers only; but, Sir, they have not appointed him to examine whether the lands that are lying uncultivated and the reserves which they are going to de-serve now, are beyond the requirements of the population of Assam—that means the indigenous people and the immigrants who have already got settlement, and their future generations. Sir, Assam is bounded practically on all sides by hills. If the lands that are at present found surplus are given away for settlement with outsiders without reserving anything for the future generations of the indigenous people as well as the immigrants who have already got settlement, where will these people go in case of want of land in future? They can only expect to go to the neighbouring province of Bengal having, as we know, no land even for the people of that province. Sir, a Government which do not look to the interest of the future generation of its own people cannot be called a good Government, and we cannot support any measure which adversely affects the well-being of our future generations. We, on this side of the House, urge upon the Government to withdraw their policy of opening lands to outsiders and to consider the matter very seriously, so that the development of the future generations of Assam may not be hampered in any way. I again appeal to Government to review their land settlement Resolution by which they seek to throw open lands to the outsiders at the cost of our future generation.

With these few words, I resume my seat.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am glad that my hon. Friend Srijut Ramnath Das, who comes from my place, *i.e.*, Jorhat, has placed the case of Jorhat so elaborately before the House. I have only four points to bring to the notice of the Government and I am sure after I have finished my hon. Friend Mr. Buragohain will follow (*A voice*:—He has finished.)

Now, Sir, Mr. Ramnath Das was talking of Jorhat Rationing Co-operative Society. He said that that was a Government institution. I submit, Sir, that he was wrong. Perhaps he calls it Government because the Chairman of this Co-operative Store is the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner may be the Chairman, but the other members are non-officials and I think all of them paid a sum of Re.1 per share for the formation of the Society, and therefore it cannot be called a Government institution. Any way because the Deputy Commissioner is the Chairman and the Manager of the Co-operative Society is a Government servant, therefore, people's impression is that it is a Government institution. I wish non-official members had taken greater interest. What my Friend wanted to impress upon the Hon'ble Minister in-charge is that sugar and atta are now being distributed from these stores and that sugar and atta are both controlled articles and it is believed that private people cannot import these things from outside. If this is correct, how is it that atta and sugar which are available only from the Co-operative Stores go into the black market? That is the question that my hon. Friend has put to the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge. I hope

the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge will inform the House whether these things are available also to private traders. If so, under what circumstances.

The next point that I want to urge upon the Hon'ble Minister is that my information is that the Steel Brothers are buying rice from the millers now at Rs.22 per maund, and Rs.22 perhaps is the controlled price announced by Government. If Steel Brothers buy rice from the mills at Rs 22, they surely will not lose because they will supply the rice to the Government, to the Military or to the Indian Tea Association at that price and earn their own commission. But what will be the fate of the private traders who have been dealing with rice for so many years? Well, if they are also to buy from the mills at Rs.22, at what price they will sell to the customers?

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: They should go out.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: If Steel Brothers go on buying rice from the mills at Rs.22, you will simply shut out private traders altogether. I hope Government will kindly look into this point.

Then, Sir, my third point is that there are certain registered small retail shopkeepers in the villages. I do not know whether there are such shops in the Surma Valley. But in my District there are such registered shops. The price at which these village retailers have been asked to sell their articles, is the same as those at which the town retail shops sell their articles. That is the same rate is to be charged both by the village shopkeepers as well as by the town shopkeepers. Now, these village shopkeepers and the town shopkeepers are to get their articles from whole-sellers in the town. If the village shopkeepers and those in the towns take their articles from the same source, how can you expect village shopkeepers to sell at the same price? What about transport expenses from town to village?

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: In my District they are allowed to buy at a lower rate to meet the expenditure of carriage.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: At least in our part of the country this has not been done. I hope the Government will kindly see to this, because the village retailers are to pay for the transport of the articles. There must be some difference in the price prevailing in the villages and the price prevailing in the town.

The fourth thing that I want to bring to the notice of the Hon'ble Minister is that there is a road called the Commissioner Ali running from the Trunk Road to a place called Donaigaon. Donaigoan is a place where there is a very important 'ghat'. It is on the Brahmaputra near Kakilamukh.

This Commissioner Ali is 12 feet wide. It is being widened to 24 feet now. That is at least my information.

This Commissioner Ali joins the Trunk Road with Donaigaon. On both sides of this road there are hundreds of acres of paddy land and paddy was grown and there was a luxuriant crop. You know, Sir, that in my part of the country it is now time to reap the paddy. Now to widen this road lands of some people by the side of the road have been requisitioned. Contractors came in, employed their coolies and hoed down the paddy and carried earth along with the paddy under the road in spite of the protest made by the people. The people said "we will reap the paddy, why not wait for 7 days and then take away the earth and widen the road". But they cried only in the wilderness and nobody listened to their request. So, Sir, thousands of maunds of paddy have been hoed down and brought under the road. Is this Grow-More-Food Campaign?

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: There is enough surplus.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: I sent a note to the Deputy Commissioner and perhaps the poor Deputy Commissioner had no hand in the matter because there were stronger hands acting and there is nobody to check these authorities.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it stronger than that of our Hon'ble Prime Minister?

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: I do not know how these people are going to be compensated. Will they be paid only the price of the land or will they be paid also the price of the paddy, that is to say the paddy destroyed? I hope the

Hon'ble Minister-in-charge will kindly enquire into this matter and try to meet the grievances of the people who have been so badly treated. Liberal compensation may bring some relief to these miserable people.

Srijut GHANASYAM DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the very outset I must thank my hon. Friend Mr. Rahman for bringing in this debate on the food position in this Province. Thereby he has given us an opportunity to speak on the food situation in the Province. Sir, it is the only place where we can open our mouth, it is the only place where we can ventilate the grievances of our constituency. Otherwise, outside this House we have no place to speak about the food situation in this Province.

Sir, in the course of the debate much has been said against the Government in matters of supply, distribution and control, much has been said against the Deputy Commissioners and Subdivisional Officers. However, Sir, I will not dilate on those points, because now I feel that the atmosphere of whole of Assam has been surcharged with a feeling of demoralisation, corruption and distrust between the Government and the public. Sir, time alone will heal everything. If the main problem of the food situation in the Province is improved, everything will be set right in course of time. Sir, in the course of the debate, most of my hon. Friends have thrown numerous criticisms and suggestions to Government and I also desire to add my own regarding the food situation in the Province.

The Government certainly deserves certain amount of commendation for the way in which they have so far tackled the food situation in the Province. But I am afraid, their policy as adumbrated in their recent Resolution regarding the allotment of lands with the landless people is bound to end in failure. Apparently Government intend to throw open the surplus available lands in the professional grazing reserves and unclassified State forests to that landless class with a view to raising more crops for the coming year. I shall show, Sir, that this policy is a misconceived one and is calculated to do immense mischief to the inhabitants of the Province much less to solve the food situation. A glance at the Forest Administration Report will show how speedily and appreciably the areas of professional grazing reserves and unclassified State forests are being reduced by the encroachment which have been made by the immigrants in an organized basis. Protests from the local people and professional graziers have not been cared for and this process of encroachment has been allowed to go on unheeded and unhampered by the Government on various pleas. In recent times the land has become so alarmingly scarce that as a result of this reduction the professional graziers as a class, have been compelled to sell their cattle and abandon their Khutis from their reserve grounds. I do not know what is the condition in the other parts of the Province, but this is the condition of Kamrup, Nowgong, and Darrang Districts. And as a result of this food policy of the Government, milk, milk products and draught animals have been extremely scarce.

Sir, I want to know from the Government whether the interest of the graziers as a class should be sacrificed to providing the landless people with lands to produce more crops or whether these graziers should be allowed to prosper and contribute to the welfare of the society at large. Hitherto the graziers have supplied the vital needs of the community in the shape of milk and milk products and draught buffaloes besides contributing to the provincial exchequer. Can we expect the same measure of contribution from the landless people whom the Government is going to patronise? As a matter of fact, I am bold to say that society will not derive any benefit and the Government will not gain the same amount of contribution from these landless immigrants. On the other hand the Government must be prepared to lay aside every year a certain amount of revenue towards granting flood relief to those people.

I may inform the House that most of the Reserves are situated alongside the Brahmaputra river and are low-lying areas over-grown with thatch grass and due to sandy configuration and prevalence of floods every year the soil is not adaptable to any profitable cultivation. "Sali" paddy cannot be grown in those localities and the "aush" paddy will be a hazardous task. In these circumstances, any expectation of more crops by throwing open the surplus areas of grazing reserves will be entirely wrong.

The House is aware that the graziers have really satisfied the vital needs of the community and are useful members of the society as any other amongst ourselves. To the graziers the cultivator looks up for his plough cattle and milk for his family and the man behind the plough counts so much for the "Grow-More-Food Campaign". Today, Sir, I have been constrained to lay particular emphasis on this point because I am convinced that if the process of reduction in the areas of Reserves proceeds at this pace, the graziers as a class will be extinct from the society.

I can as well anticipate that the Government will try to excuse themselves by saying that there are enough surplus lands to meet the needs of the professional graziers; that they propose to allot those lands to the needy immigrants and that exigencies of war warrant a speedy action and that they are going to do this under the pressure of the Central Government.

I quite realise that provision should be made for enough food production and the staggering happenings of Bengal should not be allowed to occur in Assam. But our Ministry do not appreciate the true condition of this Province. As a matter of fact, they have rather an exaggerated notion about the availability of the cultivable lands.

I can at once tell the House that the surplus land is a myth and so far as grazing land is concerned, there is not enough land to meet the actual needs of the graziers. In a Question put by Mr. Aditya about the economic holding of a person, Sir, the Hon'ble Revenue Minister replied that he was not yet aware of it.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: How long the hon. Member will take ?

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: Another 15 minutes, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Then I adjourn the House till 11 A.M. tomorrow.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A.M. on Tuesday the 30th November, 1943.

SHILLONG,

The 20th January 1944.

A. K. BARUA,

Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.