

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

THE ASSEMBLY met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 11 A.M., on Saturday, the 4th March, 1944

PRESENT :

The Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Speaker, in the Chair, the ten Hon'ble Ministers and forty-three Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: In the absence of Maulavi Abdur Rahman Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury may put the Question.
Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Very well, Sir, I am then putting the Question.

Requisition of houses for Defence purposes

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked :

*3. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether they have taken any steps to give accommodation and shelter to the people whose houses have been requisitioned for Defence purpose ?
- (b) Whether it is a fact that most of the people whose lands have been so requisitioned have not up till now been able to get lands for cultivation ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

3. (a)—Evictees are in all cases paid compensation, which includes the cost of removal of their belongings and the full value of their houses (in the case of cultivators). Temporary shelter has also been provided in a few cases, but generally speaking it is for the persons concerned to find accommodation with their friends pending settling down elsewhere.

(b)—Every effort has been made to find land elsewhere for the evictees and quite a large area has been provided. It is, however, by no means easy to persuade them to go elsewhere and many prefer to remain and earn good wages by working on military projects instead of taking up land in a fresh neighbourhood.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Sir, is it a fact that in some places Government informed the persons evicted from the area requisitioned that the area was not required now, and asked them to refund the money that the Government paid them ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: That Question is not within my knowledge, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are Government aware that many of the evictees have got no relatives or friends with whom they may find accommodation or take shelter ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: That may be so, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are Government prepared to provide land for those people immediately who have no friends or relatives ?

†The Question was put by Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury on authorisation.

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Yes, Sir. Government will consider that.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Are Government prepared to provide land to all the evictees?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Considerable land has already been provided to many evictees.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What kind of land, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Cultivable waste land as well as homestead land.

Running of passenger carrying trains without light in the compartments

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked:

*4. Are Government aware that many passenger carrying trains in the Province run without any light in the compartments?

*5. Are Government aware that all the passenger trains and mail trains are overcrowded and civil passengers do not get accommodations in trains specially in the intermediate stations?

*6. Are Government aware that the civil population is suffering beyond measure due to transport difficulty for all kinds of articles?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

4-6.—The Question relates to administration of Railways which is a Federal subject and over which the Provincial Government have no control. The Government, however, will bring these complaints to the notice of the Railway authorities concerned.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the interest of the travelling public could the Government do a little more than bring to the notice of the authorities concerned these complaints which are being made for the last two years and are increasing in gravity? At present it is becoming impossible to travel by train. The Members of this Assembly who have to travel overnight do so with candles purchased from the village bazars.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have replied, Sir, that all these complaints will be brought to the notice of the Railway authorities.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, may I know from the Hon'ble Prime Minister whether these facts were brought to the notice of the authorities concerned before these Questions were received from me?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: We had already received such complaints and brought to the notice of the Railway authorities and we are again going to press these to ventilate the grievances expressed in the House.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the Hon'ble Prime Minister aware that certain military personnel who travel in the trains that carry no light, actually carry electric bulbs in their pockets and fix them in the sockets?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am sorry, Sir, that neither the Government nor have I any information of this procedure.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, are Government aware that for having no light inside the compartment the civil passengers are losing their articles?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: To that effect also Government have no information.

Mr. E. H. S. LEWIS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, would Government consider in making representations to the authorities concerned that for the Upper Class passengers the guard might carry a stock of bulbs or candles which the Upper Class passengers could draw from him and which would be returned at the end of the journeys?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: This suggestion we will put in our representation to the Railway authorities.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, would the Hon'ble Premier consider issuing an order to his Ministers that they will do their next touring for the next month by Upper Class rail so that they will be able to know by experience all these difficulties and then take measures to remove them?

(No reply.)

Functions of the Assistant Controllers of Rationing

†Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked:

*7. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The functions of the Assistant Controllers of Rationing appointed recently?
- (b) Whether these posts were advertised and applications called for?
- (c) Whether any test was held before these posts were filled up?
- (d) Whether any quota was fixed for Surma Valley Moslems and Hindus for these posts?
- (e) Why only one Surma Valley Moslem has been appointed?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

7.(a)—An Assistant Controller of Rationing will be in entire charge of rationing in his area. He will act in consultation with and under the guidance of the Controller of Rationing (Deputy Commissioner). He will be responsible primarily for inspection of shops and wholesale establishments, etc. and detection and prevention of malpractices. His principal duty will be to guide the Sub-Inspectors and to keep a close watch over their activities. He will also make a percentage check of shops and wholesale establishments and attend sales.

(b)—Deputy Commissioners were asked to nominate suitable persons.

(c)—No.

(d)—No.

(e)—Two Surma Valley Muslims have been appointed.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact that Government took incumbents only from the Education Department?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is not quite so, Sir. But we consulted a large number of other Departments also.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: What was the special reason for appointing officers only from the Education Department?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: We wanted men with administrative experience and men who are generally held to be honest.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it meant that excepting the Education Department honest officers are not available in any other Department?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I never mean that, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Are the men of the Education Department considered by Government to be comparatively more honest?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is an expression of opinion, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I have asked this Question as I heard the Hon'ble Premier replying that for the sake of their honesty the people from the Education Department were taken.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I said that administrative experience is the primary factor for selecting these officers.

†Question was put by Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury on authorisation.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Is it a fact that some officers who were unsuited to the educational institutions were employed as Assistant Controllers ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is not so, Sir. All these officers were appointed after consultation with the Education Department and the Deputy Commissioners.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government please state whether they consider that the officers of the Education Department are more efficient in administrative affairs than the employees of other Departments ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Government believe that officers of the Education Department have got greater administrative experience than officers of clerical establishment. The officers of other executive branches of the service were wanted in their own Departments on account of expansion of activities in all those Departments.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Is it the idea, Sir, that the employees of the Education Department were not wanted by that Department ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: My hon. Friend may import any meaning whatever he likes to what I have stated. I said that the executive Departments were so over-worked that they were not in a position to release their officers and it was the Education Department which were willing to release some of their officers. And we have accepted most of the officers from that Department.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(to which answers were laid on the table)

Provincialisation of mofussil Dispensaries

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI asked :

3. (a) Are Government aware of the fact that the Bengal Government have already commenced provincialising important mofussil Dispensaries as a post-war reconstruction measure ?

(b) Are Government aware that the Jorhat Civil Dispensary is in a very deplorable condition and visiting Officers have recommended for its provincialisation ?

(c) Has the attention of the Government been drawn to the inspection notes of the Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals and the Commissioner of Divisions, dated 6th February 1940, and 19th November 1942, respectively ?

(d) Do Government propose to follow the example of the Bengal Government and provincialise this Dispensary immediately as a post-war reconstruction measure ?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN replied :

3. (a)—Government have no information.

(b)—Yes.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Government have no information of what the Government of Bengal have done. Provincialisation of not only the Jorhat hospital but all other hospitals, is desirable but Government were unable to do this so long, due to lack of funds. This suggestion will be borne in mind when definite post-war reconstruction schemes will be prepared.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: In view of the fact that the operation room of the hospital is in a horrible condition and also the in-door hospital is uninhabitable, will Government please take up the question of provincialising this Dispensary now ?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: The answer is already there in 3(d). I have nothing to add.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: Sir, the reply is that the question of provincialising this Dispensary will be taken up as a post-war reconstruction measure. My Question is whether in view of the fact that this particular Dispensary is in a dilapidated condition, do Government propose to provincialise it now and commence work immediately?

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN: We shall have to consider the matter again, Sir.

Control of the prices of all essential food-stuffs

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked:

4. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether they propose to control the prices of other articles as they did in case of rice and paddy?
- (b) Whether it is a fact that the present rate for paddy and rice fixed by Government is low as compared with the prices of other commodities?
- (c) Whether it is a fact that there has been an opposition from the cultivators of the Province against the present rate for paddy and rice fixed by Government?
- (d) Whether they propose to bring down the prices of other commodities along with the prices of rice and paddy?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

4. (a)—This Government have fixed the prices of all essential food-stuffs and the Government of India are fixing the prices of other essential articles.
- (b)—No.
- (c)—Government have no such information.
- (d)—Yes.

General discussion of the Budget and discussion on charged expenditure

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: General discussion of the Budget. Only three hon. Members want to speak to-day. Questions have been over within 15 minutes, so 3 hours and 45 minutes are now available for general discussion of the Budget to-day.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Sir, we have not yet held our party meeting; so, we are not in a position to say how many of us will speak.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: What have I to do with the party meeting?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Hitherto there had been no party meeting on the general discussion of the Budget. We usually hold party meeting on Demands for Grants. My hon. Friend Mr. Marak may take as much time as you permit him to speak on the Budget.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think only few hon. Members will probably take part in this discussion. I have got only three hon. Members' names. So, to-day I am not fixing any time-limit for a speech on the Budget discussion.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are meeting in this House at a time of unprecedented economic and political calamity. The victorious march of allied forces in Africa and Europe and the great tempo of military preparation in the East to crush squarely and completely the international fascist menace are hopeful signs for the morrow. But against the background of military success the failure to organise the social and economic life of the country, on a war footing, has become very conspicuous by contrast. At a time when the brave Indian army with other comrades in arms were busy annihilating the Germans and Italians in Africa, millions of their kith and kin in Bengal were also being pounded out of life due to the failure of the civil administration in the home front. Though the enemy failed to secure a military success on the war front they must have felt a touch of victory for having been able to inflict an indirect defeat on the economic front. And yet this defeat at home could have been avoided with a little more foresight and better planning. This economic defeat on the home-front is not yet over. It continues to steal its march in an under-current ravaging the whole country. Our little Province, situated as it is in a contiguous proximity of Bengal, is also having its own share of misery.

The millions of death in Bengal have focussed the attention and shocked the conscience of the whole world but the slow, progressive and protracted death of thousands of men and women of our Province have failed to draw the attention and rouse the conscience even of our own administrative authorities. Whereas the people of Bengal have had been dying for absence of food, our people have been dying for insufficiency of the same. In the case of Bengal the death was rapid and complete but in our case it is slow and progressing inch by inch. Probably the latter form of death is more painful though not so spectacular and hence less embarrassing to a callous and indifferent Government. And yet ours is said to be a popular Government based on franchise of the people and we are supposed to be enjoying a stroke of Provincial Autonomy.

The food of the Province seems to be moving again in the vicious cycle of last year. The harvest of winter paddy is just over and yet rice is selling at over Rs.16 per maund at the centres of production. The Government controlled retail price in Shillong and other urban areas is even now over Rs 18 per maund. The Government, says a recent press communique, are going to enforce a progressive reduction in the price of rice. It is a matter of common experience that the price of rice progressively increases from the time of harvest, guided by the fundamental law of demand and supply. But our Government have, it seems, their own notion of economics. When the price of rice ought to have been at the minimum they have kept the rates at a high level and when the price will automatically rise to the maximum they will keep the price at a low level. And when their attempts to control prices will be thwarted, as it is bound to be as a result of interplay of ordinary economic forces, they will throw the blame to the cultivators and traders alike. All will be branded as anti-social elements out for making individual profit at the cost of the community. I would warn Government to follow the path of common sense and prudence and instead of making futile attempt to set at naught the play of ordinary economic forces they should rather allow themselves to be governed by it. If they do not bring the price of rice to a minimum now, they will themselves lend stimulus to hoarding, black-marketing and profiteering. They say, famine in Bengal is man-made and so it is with us. Let us not forget the lessons so quickly. The voices of the dead and the still-dying are beaconing us to mend our ways so that others may live, shall I say, to enjoy the four freedoms—at least the freedom from want.

As an aftermath of continuous, mal-nutrition, specially among the wage earners, landless cultivators and lower middle classes, epidemics like malaria, cholera, typhoid are spreading by leaps and bounds. The whole of deep water belt of Habiganj is being quickly depopulated by the ravages of malaria. The village of Baniyachong, supposed to be the largest in area and in population in whole of India has already paid a heavy toll of human life. Out of a population of about 40,000, more than 8,000 people are already dead. It is a fact that the rate of mortality among children is so great that the Baniyachong Relief Committee did not find any opportunity to distribute children's garments, not that the children did not need them but that they had already left this world of hunger and cold, probably mocking from heaven saying "Thank you, you are late, we shall not come again to receive your charity." The cry of Baniyachong has evoked response from many quarters in the District and several relief organisations are working there. Our benign Government have also saved its face by making a belated attempt to send a batch of doctors to work in the village. True to the maxim "Better late than never", the Hon'ble Premier in the company of the Medical Minister had also honoured the village by a few hours' visit and the former in course of a short speech sermonised the people and admonished them on their lack of appreciation for sanitation and hygiene. I do not know how the people of Baniyachong took it. Even in their sick bed they must have laughed in their sleeves and said "spare us, please, the joke, we have resigned ourselves to our fate, for, have not you told us in the last November Session of the Assembly that nobody can undo the fate of an individual or of a community, if we are destined to die—nothing can save us and so we are dying." The procedure adopted by the Government to bring succour to Baniyachong people is patently defective. It is like watering a plant after the roots

are cut. The Government is supplying quinine. But can quinine function properly in a body which is not getting sufficient nourishment? Quinine is not a food. It is just a curative medicine. It is significant that the proportion of mortality among landless cultivators and wage-earners is more than among the middle-class though the former are a sturdier lot with a better developed physique. There is no room for doubt that it is the continuous under-nourishment that has shattered the health of once-a-time sturdy tillers of the soil, has reduced their power of resistance and made them an easy prey to vile malaria. I ask, whose is the duty of feeding the under-nourished people of Baniyachong? I know that the Hon'ble Prime Minister will come forward with statistics of paddy land in Baniyachong and will try to prove that there is enough food for one and all. My answer would be that the paddy land has not been socialised, on the contrary the land is concentrated in few hands, and that considerable portion of paddy in that Subdivision has already been taken away by the Government agents consisting of some veteran M. L. As., of this House, the supporters of the Government, who have purchased the stuff at an exorbitant rate, that these agents work under no ceiling price of the Government and that they have got a sufficiently long rope not to hang themselves but to strangle the famished people of Baniyachong and other rural areas. May I ask the stalwarts of the Moslem League who swear off-and-on by Moslem masses, whether this miniature Steel Brothers of the Surma Valley consisting mostly of their co-religionists are doing a yeomen service in the predominantly Moslem Sylhet? I may tell the Members of this House that malaria will not stop at Baniyachong. It is bound to spread much more quickly than many of us complacently imagine, till the whole of the plateau is in its grip. Unless checked even at this belated hour its victorious march will not stop short of reaching the frontiers where our gallant soldiers are busy, fighting the battle for democracy. That the problem of Baniyachong is as much a problem for the military as for the civil. If the military could be called up in Bengal to aid the civil administration in the distribution of food and medicines, it can very well be called in Baniyachong, Bamai and other infected areas to do at least spraying with anti-malarial drugs. A chain of in-door hospitals equipped with sufficient drugs and various nourishing foods should be opened at Baniyachong to house and treat the poorer section of the community. Fifty beds will be nothing short of a mockery. Every poor inhabitant of the village should be provided gratis with a mosquito net and assured nourishing diet at Government cost till cured and fit to resume his normal vocation in life. Like tuberculosis clinic, a malaria clinic should be organised in Shillong with hundreds of free beds for giving the poorer section a chance to recoup. My suggestion may appear to the complacent and lifeless administrative machinery to be utopian. But they should realise that no chicken-hearted measure executed in a slipshod manner can solve this problem of a devastating epidemic. It is Jama Raj who is now ruling at Baniyachong. Will the fatalist Premier of the Province be a silent spectator just to witness a tiny portion of his empire being liquidated by a preventable disease?

In the previous Sessions of this House I had tried my best to focus the attention of the Government to the urgency of chalking out an elaborate plan for food production as far as possible on the basis of self-sufficiency of the Province. The bogey that Assam has surplus production of rice has inoculated the virus of complacency among the cultivators and the Grow More Food Campaign has been proceeded with in an easy-going manner. Due to indiscriminate slaughter, there are now not enough draft-bullocks to plough the land, not enough milch cattle to produce sufficient milk and serious dearth of poultry is a sordid fact of the day. Vegetables and fruits are being purchased at a competitive price for the military. The Military Vegetable Production Scheme started with the laudable object of catering to military needs, independent of civil production could not as yet make any headway with the result that the civil population are going through unheard-of hardships for lack of a nourishing diet. The shortage of food-stuff is not confined to urban areas only but also to every rural area. The food crisis is not a new feature of our country and it always existed in peace time. The present war has only accentuated matters and

made worse what was previously bad. By a proper working of the Grow More Food Campaign England, now provides 70 per cent. of her food requirements as against 10 per cent. before the war. It has nationalised Agriculture and has given a subsidy of Rs. 202 crores for the production of food-grains. There is a perfect co-operation between the agriculturists and the expert officers of the Agricultural Department. But in our Province the whole thing is being attempted through the existing machinery of the Agricultural Department, inefficient in peace time and utterly useless at the present time of stress and strain. The co-operation of the people has been studiously avoided. There is a lack of sound working plan. There is no target figure of production for any of the principal agricultural crops. The allotment of acreage under different crops according to the provincial needs has never been worked out. Grow-More-Food has become the fashion of the day and the Department of Agriculture is proceeding in *laissez-faire* manner just facing the Budget any how. I am definite that in spite of the so-called food campaign there has been an actual shrinkage in crop acreage. I am told that many hundreds of acres of potato land are being forced to lie fallow this year for want of seeds. Potato is being sold in the black markets in Shillong at Rs. 25 per maund. The pulse and wheat seeds distributed by the Agricultural Department were mostly insect-infested and even 10 per cent. of the seeds did not germinate. The seeds were so bad that even cattle would not touch them. And all these seeds came from distant Bihar under the expert supervision of the Department of Agriculture and through a Government contractor, specially selected by the Ministry over the head of the Director of Agriculture, shall I say, for his business honesty and integrity of character. In the field of vegetable production the cultivators were forced to grow only country vegetables. Seeds of English vegetables that the Department supplied would not germinate. Numerous instances of the sordid failure of the Agricultural Department can be multiplied. The country is thoroughly fed up with the chronic inefficiency of the Agricultural Department. There is something inherently wrong with it. Though Grow More Food Campaign has made no headway there has been quite a lot of appointments to add to the paraphernalia of the Department, particularly in the gazetted rank. Most of the vacancies have been filled in by under-qualified people. The talented and qualified subordinates have been ruthlessly kept down. The present Director of Agriculture who has no academic qualification has a dread for qualified subordinates. He keeps them down ruthlessly and his gazetted satellites naturally follow the head and sometime even excels him. Of the officers recently promoted to the gazetted rank, all without exception, have never been in any university. Of the two Propaganda Officers, one was a discharged Excise Sub-Inspector and the other is a Urdu-knowing preacher, assisted in his office work by an English knowing clerk. Jobbery, nepotism and corruption are going on unchecked. An administrative machinery so built up cannot be expected to be efficient.

Increase of production of food-grains and economy in the use of food materials are the two fundamental factors that should draw the attention of the Government— increase of food production by double or triple cropping, where possible, securing higher yield by using improved seeds and manures and by substituting crops which have a higher nutritional value. Transfer of area from non-food to food crops, improvement in irrigation and drainage are some aspects of agricultural development which require immediate attention. All these require serious study and hence is the need for having more brains into the organisation than that has been put at present.

Sir, I have listened with rapt attention and care the Budget speech of the Hon'ble Finance Minister. In several places in his Budget speech, the Hon'ble the Finance Minister has mentioned about transport difficulties in the Province, and in some cases, he has mentioned that our Government had to do, and have to do, many things under the direction and advice of the Government of India.

Before I enter into the Budget figures, I feel it my duty to request our Government to bring to the notice of the Government of India a few salient points, which, in my opinion, are of the greatest importance, and the result of which has brought

lamentable distress in this Province. At the very outset, I admit that our Government is not responsible for the inflation, and that so far as transport difficulty is concerned, they are not wholly responsible. Before the war, in 1939, there were 179 crores worth of notes in circulation; now it is more than 700 crores. There is no denying the fact that money is wanted for the necessities of life, but supposing that if there were only money in this world and all the necessities of life would have disappeared, then what purpose of human beings would have been served by money? Men would not have eaten or worn money to keep their body and soul together. So, the demand of money in a country depends on the saleable and transferable necessities of life. Money lenders, rich men, Banks and Government Paper currency have opened their gates with a liberal mind. There is no difference between good or bad, real or unreal, worthful or worthless either in men or in things. The price or value of a thing depends on the relative quantity of money and saleable goods. So, it is the moral duty of every Government to keep steady the prices of saleable goods, because if the price of saleable commodities is very often changed due to the fluctuation of the purchasing capacity of money, the condition of both the producers and the consumers in the country becomes most uncertain. Nobody can proceed with a reasonable estimate, and, ultimately, everything turns to be something like a gambling. It is true that if the price is increased all on a sudden, the producers will make unexpected profit; but on the other hand, consumers with fixed incomes become the worst sufferers. Under these circumstances, the creditors will lose, but the debtors will gain. The combination of the two conditions, namely, scarcity of saleable goods and inflation is responsible for this miserable and disgraceful situation that is prevailing in the country now. The factories and fields which used to produce the necessities of life in this country are mostly engaged, either directly or indirectly, in war supplies. Moreover the supplies which we used to get from outside have also been stopped for the same reason; but the most amazing thing is that England, though in the very midst of war and always dependent on imported articles, has not suffered like us, because the increase of prices and decrease of money value is not so great there as in India. The demand has increased beyond imagination in this country. The Government with its very great purchasing power has become the competitor in the open market with the common purchasers. It has got claims over everything, and these claims are unbounded. There is no limit of price also. The present expenditure of the India Government under military Budget will bear this out. In place of 60 to 65 crores of rupees a year in pre-war years, the present expenditure is more than 700 crores, and this amount is being spent in purchasing men and goods. Now how can it be possible for the proverbially poor people of this country to compete with the Government for their necessities of life? Unless Government help us to solve this problem, there is no way out and the result is that people are dying of starvation and malnutrition. Sir, interested persons may say that as some of the people were not behaving properly and showing the tendency of becoming majors, though in their opinion they are minors, so just to teach them some lesson for their misconduct and misbehaviour the Government has been compelled to adopt this course in this critical war time. Quite so. Otherwise the food and cloth situation would not have come to such a pass in this country. In other countries the bare necessities of life of the civil population have not been over-looked in such a callous way as in this country. Even in this critical time of war, England is importing foodstuffs and clothings from far distant countries taking the greatest possible risk only to meet the demands of the country as far as possible. But here in India, not to speak of importing from other countries, the food and clothing of the half-starved and half-naked millions are being exported to other places (*question*). Now-a-days, it has become totally impossible to send the necessities of life from one place to another—you cannot bring the paddy produced in your land for your own consumption. There is no accommodation in railways, in steamers, in motor vehicles, etc. Everywhere you hear the slogan, "War Emergency". This cry is certainly for living like men after winning the war, but if we die for want of necessities of life before we win the war residing still at a distant place from the battle field, then what is the utility of this cry? And for whom is

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this cry? Sir, everything hinges on transport. The booking of articles has been stopped both in railways and in steamers. Due to petrol rationing as well as due to non-availability of tyres and tubes and other motor parts, the motor transport is also practically closed. So far as the passenger trains are concerned, the number of trains has been reduced to a very great extent, and the few that are running at present are so overcrowded that it is practically becoming impossible to travel. Not only that the trains are running without light, there is no fixity of time. So, the situation can better be imagined than it can be described. Country-boats are also sometimes requisitioned by the Government. From all these, it seems that as if, this Government has no responsibility. Sir, it may be very well said that all these are in the hands of the Government of India. But all these should be brought to the notice of Government of India, so that the present difficulties may be remedied as far as possible. The road condition is going from bad to worse everyday. Letters are received in six days in place of three days. So, the condition is a chaotic one. The motor organisation of the Provincial Government is also mostly used for the war projects. Private cars, trucks and buses have been requisitioned to a very great number. Even buses that are still running in some places have become unsafe and over and above that, men are found sitting on the roof of these buses. There is none to check all these. Everything, real and unreal, necessary and unnecessary, is going on in the name of war. This one word has paralysed the whole system. Sir, to win this war, the sympathy of the people of this country is wanted. But what is the present attitude of the masses? They openly say that our Government is unable to give them food and clothing which they want to live. They stand aghast to see the activities of the National War Front. So they do not bother for the war, because they think what worse can the war do? The attitude shown to the people of this country should not have been like the present one, which is meant for the enemies and not for the Indians who are dependent on and helping the Government in their war efforts. It is the duty of this Government to make all these clear to the India Government. The present feeling of the people should be changed, and this cannot be done by the present activities of the National War Front about the expenditure of which we hear many ugly things. Sir, I can boldly say that if the present attitude of the people is changed, it will be an asset which has no parallel. Let the people understand and feel that our Government is there to save the people from all sorts of calamities, and not for collecting revenues and taxes only. If the present policy is changed and people get their food and clothing just to keep their body and soul together, the Government will find the whole country at its back. Sir, I admit that by the present policy, Government has succeeded a good deal, but this is only relating to a very small section of the people. Some unemployed men and a few agitators for freedom have surrendered to the Government by running after the golden deer, namely, inflation. Many of them have reaped the harvest no doubt, but they are very insignificant in number. If this position is not made clear by the present Government to the India Government, this Government will be failing in their duty and men like myself will openly challenge their honesty and allegiance. As I have already said, I do not hold this Government responsible for the inflation, but I will hold them responsible and guilty for colossal negligence if they do not ventilate the feelings of the people of the Province and act for their safety.

Sir, we were debtors to the British Government before the war, but as it is now, we are creditors. Certainly, it is very much encouraging and a matter for rejoicing. But being the possessor of such an enviable big position and creditor of such a huge amount, namely 600 crores of rupees, the wretched condition of India still exists. And why? The day has come when everybody should feel that money is not wealth. The problem, *viz.*, that there is wealth in the country but not the money, may be solved but the problem that there is money and no wealth cannot be solved. On the other hand, if there be little wealth with plenty of money, the position is called inflation and the result is the very high price for commodities when rich people rejoice and the poor die. The present position in this Province is like this. Sir, I am sure that the Government shall have to adopt a policy which will check this inflation

and the result will be that those who joined hands with the Government from the golden deer, will realise their position and will surely retreat from their present place and their attitude will be just like the present attitude of the general mass. So, Government should stand on sound and solid footing to win this war and for that the Government should respect the general desire of the people and make arrangement for their food and clothing and prove their *bonafides* that this Government want to see its people to live like human being in the truest sense of the term. If this is done, the victory will be ours. Moral victory is real, the physical victory is uncertain. Sir, after I have made this request, I hope our Government will do the needful in this matter.

Now, I shall enter into the Budget figures. Sir, the Hon'ble the Finance Minister has said that in the revised estimates for 1943-44, they now anticipate a revenue surplus of Rs.7,53,000 in 1943-44 instead of a deficit of Rs.8,09,000 estimated in the original Budget. Not only that, he has moreover said, since these revised estimates were prepared, they have received later figures from the Forest Department and the Government of India, which indicate that Forest receipts are likely to be 4 lakhs in excess of those included in the revised, while the share of income-tax divisible pool is likely to be 11 lakhs higher than the usual forecast of India as lately as December last. Against this additional 15 lakhs on the receipt side, they have entered into certain additional commitments which are likely to increase the expenditure side of the Budget by one or two lakhs. Now deducting 2 lakhs for the additional commitments, the surplus will be 13 lakhs more, the final result being a total surplus of Rs.20,53,000, instead of a deficit of Rs.8,09,000. Sir, in saying this, the Hon'ble the Finance Minister conveniently forgot about the Treasury bills to the value of two crores which will be outstanding on the 31st March 1944. To calculate the loan as an income is really amazing.

Now, about the Budget which has been placed before us, Sir, I am sorry, I cannot congratulate the Finance Minister. The income from Forests should be considered as capital, in my opinion. The regeneration work is nil. The after-effect will be more disastrous. The liability of the Government under the head "State Provident Fund" will rise to about Rs.1,19,21,000 on the 1st April 1944. This amount is going on increasing year by year.

Sir, the Government is rejoicing on the increased revenue from hemp. They have prohibited opium but they are encouraging hemp. If the Government have really the good intention of saving the people from ruin they should check the spread of the consumption of hemp.

Under the head Medical you will find that the provision for the next year is less than the current. So also under the head Public Works Department and the reason for allotting less money under the Public Works Department is rather curious. The reason advanced is that the advantage of postponing such work as is non-practicable lies in reducing inflationary tendencies at present and results in storing up work to be included as part of post-war reconstruction scheme. It is also to be borne in mind that it is uneconomical to carry out work at the present high rates with the limited funds available which will go much further if taken up after the war is over. Sir, the road throughout the Province is in such a deplorable condition that one should not be challenged when one says that the Public Works Department of the Assam Government is not functioning at present at least for the civil population.

As regards General Administration, there is acute shortage of Magistrates and Sub-Deputy Collectors and the public is suffering beyond measure. Under no circumstances should this condition be allowed to continue.

In the Budget Memorandum the Government has remarked that the general improvement of the economic condition of the people resulting from the high prices obtained from crops and the increased earnings of labourers, contractors, etc., on the large defence projects at present under construction has led to transfer of landed property on a large scale and to an increase of litigation in the current year, which it is anticipated, will continue while the present prosperity lasts, and this accounts for

the increase in the revised Budgets under the head Stamps. Sir, if there be a general improvement in the economic condition of the people, may I enquire of the Hon'ble Finance Minister why people are selling lands. Certainly one section has been benefited by this war, but the other section—the majority of the people have suffered. So in all fairness we should admit that general improvement in the economic condition has not taken place. Sir, by not admitting the distressed condition of the people the Government is doing double mischief. Firstly, they are not doing their part, at the same time they are standing in the way of the people and no help is forthcoming from outside.

In the matter of foodstuffs the Government policy may be called a 'dog in the manger policy'. It is well and good if they can take up the entire supply in their own hands, instead of doing that they are dealing in a few things whereas leaving the rest in the hands of others, and moreover, articles in which they are dealing are not available in the market. Sir, sometime, I understand, there was sufficient salt at the disposal of the Government at Gauhati, while the people of Nalbari were going without any salt, the reason being the transport difficulty. May I ask the Hon'ble Minister whether even one or two trucks of the Assam Motor Transport Organisation were not available for carrying salt from Gauhati to Nalbari? This Organisation was started with definite assurance of removing the transport difficulties of the civil population. But alas! what do we find now? Sir, the Government is responsible for the moral degradation of the people of the Province. Their callousness in every matter is making the employees of the Government in many cases corrupt. For the low paid employees there are two alternatives, either to starve or to take recourse to unfair means. Naturally most of them take shelter under the latter category. Unless the Government takes necessary steps the situation will be well out of control and a time may come when it will be very difficult for Government to eradicate the evil which may gain ground very deeply.

Sir, as promised, Government has formed Food Committees. But no meeting has yet been held in many places and the Committee members in many cases do not know who is the President or the Secretary of the Committee and who is responsible for calling the meetings. This sort of half-hearted work is reprehensible. We are hearing many ugly rumours about blank cheques signed by some officers of the Motor Transport Organisation and also of stores at Rangamati Workshop as well as auction of vehicles of the Organisation before the notified date.

As regards Standard cloth, the Hon'ble Minister would have been quite right in saying that Standard cloth is sold at a fixed rate all over India except Assam. Instead of saying that Standard cloth is sold at a fixed rate all over India the Government has taken credit that they are getting more revenues from the old sources as well as revenues from new sources—as for example, the receipts from licence fees regarding the Assam cotton cloth and yarn dealers licence and for stamping cloth and yarn. But in spite of all this, many people are starving and many important works are being neglected. This Budget has been prepared at the cost of the nation building works.

Under Grant No 9—Charges on account of Navigation, Embankment and Drainage works the Government want Rs. 7,31,700. It would be found at page 45 of the Budget. Whereas at page 2 where the expenditure from the revenues has been shown, the Government require under "Voted" Rs.4,47,000 and at page 6 where financial statement of capital expenditure has been shown, Government has shown under "Voted" Rs.2,92,000. The total of these two figures amounts to Rs. 7,39,000. Why is this discrepancy?

At pages 134 and 136 the total Demand for Grant Nos.25 and 26 under "Voted" is Rs.38,68,300 whereas the total Demand under "Voted" at page 2 has been shown as Rs.38,61,000. This point is also not quite clear to me.

Sir, I will not take any more time of the House and I resume my seat with the hope that the points raised by me will not go in vain.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER : Mr. Speaker, Sir, having listened now to no fewer than four war time Budgets, one lesson I have learnt is never to take too seriously either the existence of a small deficit or a small surplus because it is quite certain that the revised estimate or the actuals will

usually prove that the Finance Minister has been wrong. That, Sir, is inevitable in war time and is not a criticism of Finance Department. The present Budget is a good deal better than most of us had hoped. The Minister's review as usual is competent and his picture of 1943-44 and his analysis of 1944-45 is accurate and fair. But the Minister's report, Sir, is that of an auditor whereas what I should like to get is a picture painted on a very big canvas; what I should like is a report from the Managing Director of Assam Unlimited instead of an analysis, however masterly, by a Cost Accountant on the various departments of the firm of Assam Limited.

I suggest, Sir, that a function of the Members of this Assembly is to deal with the major issues revealed by the Budget rather than to condemn or to praise the particular sums of money given to a particular department. Within reason too, I consider the Budget is more important as allowing the imagination to dwell on 1946 and 1947 rather than as conducting a *post mortem* for 1943 or an analysis of 1944. The poet Browning puts my argument better than many words when he says "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" I should like to discuss this Budget, Sir, on the lines of the reach that is possible for Assam and leave the Finance Minister to argue about what is already in his grasp.

The Finance Minister's picture is on the whole optimistic but if you break it down into its component parts, you will find large chunks of pessimism because the Budget is once more largely one of windfalls, most of which are quite clearly not likely to recur.

Without boring the House with the manner of my calculations, I would ask them to accept my arithmetic. Under petrol, anticipated to yield Rs.25 lakhs, there is a windfall compared with pre-war actuals of no less than 22 lakhs; under Excise, yielding over 40 lakhs compared with actuals of 20 lakhs; under Forest Department, yield of 20 lakhs. Forest Department will produce Rs.38 lakhs in 1942-43, there is a windfall compared with pre-war actuals you will find there is a windfall of boom revenue of 14 lakhs. Cloth control, on which I agree with most of the scathing references of my Friend Mr. Mookerjee, will produce an unexpected increment of 4 lakhs from fees and fines, whilst the prosperity of the cultivator has increased the Stamp revenue by 5 lakhs. Agriculture, the expansion of which department is one of the most welcome features of the Budget, has receipt item of Rs.15 lakhs, of which at least 5 lakhs must be ascribed to revenue which arises out of the expenditure of the large grants-in-aid made by the Central Government under the Grow More Food Campaign. Now, Sir, if my arithmetic is correct, you will find the windfall revenue of this Province in 1944-45 amounts to no less than 70 lakhs of Rupees. Now 70 lakhs is approximately 25 per cent. of Assam's peace time revenue. This total of 70 lakhs is the direct outcome of war and when the war ends most of these items will disappear with very little corresponding deduction on the expenditure side. In other words, the comfortable statistical picture drawn by the Finance Minister is on an analysis, an extremely uncomfortable one. The comfort is temporary but the discomfort and danger will inevitably and shortly follow unless Government bring forward a relief operation.

Last year I stressed the need for increasing revenue, whether by taxation, cancellation of remissions or development of waste land, increased crop production, etc. In some respects this demand has already been met, for the yield of land revenue is the highest on record. Agricultural Income-tax, mainly owing to the prosperity of the Tea Industry, has produced a record revenue and much of the expenditure on colonisation scheme and the Agricultural Department will, in due course, also produce some revenue.

But there are other sources of revenue open, for example, there could be an increase in Stamp duties which would yield Government a larger share in the present and temporary prosperity. If we could secure sufficient transport to import consumers' goods it would be practicable and profitable to impose a Sales Tax. Under excise there is little doubt that Assam's production of foreign liquor, of such dubious quality, Sir, that it is known as "Dikom Death", could and in my opinion should, be more heavily taxed. Nevertheless, were all these proposals be introduced immediately, the

yield would not cover the 70 lakhs of "windfall revenue". When we have taxed ourselves to the limit and developed all of the undeveloped areas, this Province will still be unable to lift the standard of living of its people much beyond a bare subsistence without substantial assistance from the Central Government. I should like to see this Assembly adopt a working slogan of special application to this Province of Assam. "Horse power per head equals income per head". This may be rather crude but I assure you it is a great deal truer than many other general propositions in economics. The more mechanical helpers are provided for each pair of hands, the more that pair of hands can produce daily, the more the owners of those hands will be able to consume, and the more those hands produce, the more taxable wealth there will be in this Province. On Agriculture alone this Province cannot prosper. Its economy is unbalanced just as our food rations are unbalanced.

We have too much rice and too few vitamins. We have too many ploughs and too few tractors; we have too many *dhenkis* and too few oil engines.

The present Viceroy, as well as his predecessor, has emphasized the essential oneness of India. It seems to me that the only practical translation of this essential oneness is that the parts within this whole shall not by accident enjoy greatly varying degrees of prosperity. At present we are confronted with the anomalous position that a Province like Assam which is an operational area is suffering all the ills of inflation, because the Central Government, which commands all the transport resources, cannot pump into this Province of Assam a supply of consumers' goods to meet the bare necessities of life: because Assam has undertaken to supply large quantities of rice for the Army, the impact of these orders has lifted the Assam price level higher than any other province in India. We have the ridiculous position that provinces in the rear, which are not beset with the war problems of Assam, are enabled to cash in on war time prosperity by doubling and redoubling existing industries, by starting new industries with the direct financial assistance from the Central Government, by manufacturing articles of war which are sent to Assam and choke the lines of communication in the Province which might otherwise have been available for importing essential goods. The plain truth is that other Provinces are profiting by the geographical accident that Assam is nearest to enemy territory, that Assam's communications are required primarily for munitions of war, and that it has not been able to add to its three major industries, *viz.*, oil, tea and coal. If, therefore, as successive Viceroys urge, India is a geographical entity and an economic whole, let the Government of Assam put these viceregal pronouncements to the practical test. It is high time fairly the country's prosperity amongst the participating units. Economic adversity such as Assam is now undergoing cannot be shared with other Provinces. In many respects it is a privilege to live under these adverse conditions because, for example, Assam's adversity was undoubtedly a contributing factor in the recent victory in Arakan. But though adversity cannot be shared, prosperity can and must be shared. In 1937 the Niemeyer Award gave Assam annually from Central resources Rs.30 lakhs. Whether or not that Award was a just one in 1937, it is manifestly an unjust one in 1944, and will become increasingly unjust as the years go on and our windfall revenue decreases. I can see no escape whatever from that proposition. In the case of the last two Budgets, Sir, I had the dubious satisfaction of diverting to myself a great deal of the criticism which ought to go to my Hon'ble Friend the Finance Minister. I hope that Members on this occasion too, will continue this pleasant practice. My Friend Mr. Deb, my hon. comrade Mr. Roy and my absentee Friend Mr. Rahman will devote some of their attention, and, I hope, their agreement to my present remarks. The case for more Central assistance to be given substantially and regularly is overwhelming. This case is not weakened because the present Government has, by prudent and economical finance, produced what is for practical purposes, a balanced Budget. This case remains strong even when Assam has increased its taxation and developed its agricultural resources. At present an increase in Stamp duty would bring in revenue, as would further increase in Excise. A Sales Tax, Sir, would produce substantial revenue if only consumers' goods, which the Central

Government say, exist, and which I have not yet seen, could be given transport to this Province. Similarly, Sir, the agricultural income-tax would produce a much higher yield if the Tea Industry could get, first of all, cheaper imports of essential foods, second, get coal instead of an expensive wood fuel and third, get fertilisers to increase the crop. But essential foods cannot be imported in sufficient quantity because the Railway has to carry munitions. The Tea Industry cannot get sufficient coal to make its crop because the Central Government's Railway engines now burn Assam coal instead of Bengal coal. Fertilisers cannot move because Military stores have got a higher priority. Assam, therefore, which is prepared to raise money by taxation, finds the yield of existing taxation much diminished and new taxation unprofitable because the Central Government has got a stranglehold on the economic life of this Province. On any showing—financial, political and economic—the case for a revised assistance from the Centre is, I think, irresistible. What is a Rs.30 lakhs Award against the fact that when the fog of war lifts, there will be lifted from this Province Rs.70 lakhs of windfall revenue. I must remind the House and particularly my hon. Friend Mr. Roy, of the Russian proverb that those who live amongst wolves, must learn to howl. I suggest respectfully that this Government should practise howling and with professional skill from now on. (*Hear hear.*) I would also suggest with respect that wolves have also ot teeth and an occasional display of teeth might produce money where howling would not. Two days ago the Central Government announced an excise of two annas per pound of tea. Now, Assam produces about 280 million lbs. of tea so that the excise will yield $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores of rupees, which is more than the pre-war revenue of this Province. I must repeat this. The Central Government will levy an excise of two annas per pound on the produce of Assam alone which will produce $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores of rupees which is more than the peace time revenue of the Province. I suggest that here and now is a case for howling and for claiming a share in this excise on much the same lines as Bengal and Assam receive a share in the export duty on jute.

I welcome the decision to earmark Rs. 25 lakhs for a Reconstruction Fund. But let us be quite clear what this 25 lakhs of rupees means. As a contribution to the post-war problems of this Province, it is what the most celebrated inter-national economist Lord Keynes once described as "chicken food for the dragons of war". I wish those words to be underlined "Rs. 25 lakhs is chicken food for the dragons of war". Every other province, Sir, except benighted Bengal, is thinking of reconstruction in terms of crores, even a small province like Sind. On the wireless yesterday, it was announced that the Punjab Government are introducing a Budget with a surplus of 3 crores and 86 lakhs of rupees. Assam too, Sir, will have to begin to think and act in terms of crores and not lakhs.

On this subject, Sir, of the relation between the Centre and Province, I wish to refer to one aspect, *viz.*, requisitioning. I am not going to refer to requisitioning of tea garden properties. We hear a good deal about scorched earth and the policy of denial to our enemies. In Assam, Sir, we practise the denial policy against our friends. I refer particularly to the requisitioning of schools and colleges by the Military authorities. I know that this Government has put the strongest protest to the Government of India but I hope they will do so again. To justify retention of school buildings in the fifth year of war on the plea of Military necessity is entirely discreditable. I moved about this Province a good deal, perhaps nearly as much as the Hon'ble Premier, and I have seen with joyful surprise the speed at which the army—the American army in particular can erect first class buildings. Either school buildings which have been requisitioned should be released or buildings should be put up by the requisitioning authorities elsewhere for use as schools. In England, which has suffered much from bombing and which is now housing hundreds of thousands of troops from overseas, I doubt very much whether the education of children is suffering for want of accommodation or whether the housing of Military personnel has been allowed to

encroach on children's schools. In Assam, Sir, where no buildings have been destroyed by bombs, the education of our children is suffering and that suffering should cease forthwith.

Having said some harsh things about Government, there is much to say that is praiseworthy. Government decision, and a bold decision in the matter of cancelling the land revenue remission against the wishes of many Members of this House, has been fully justified. The fact that so many cultivators rushed to pay their arrear land revenue suggests that the cultivator is a very much shrewder person than his so many vocal champions in this House think. I like to believe that the cultivator could be persuaded that increased taxation will work to his benefit. It is the common man, Sir, the cultivator, who is going to rebuild this Province. In England the common man is asking to be allowed to pay tax at a rate of Rs. 3 per week for the security of the Beveridge Plan; in Assam there will come a time when the common man will agree, but I don't think he will ever ask, to pay taxes to a Government which has a genuine plan.

On their handling of price control of rice and paddy, Government are to be congratulated. The maximum prices are high, perhaps the highest in India, but the main point that we must continue to emphasize is that the consumer, whether it is a large company or a humble individual, can always buy at or below that maximum control price and that, Sir, if my information is correct, is a good deal better than the scheme now operating in our neighbouring province. There has been no panic in Government's policy of price control and events have shown its wisdom.

In another respect Government have done a good job. They have stated a case to the Central Government which has wrung, I think "wrung" will be best word, from that Government the cost of the Assam Rifles, increased grants for Grow More Food, increased grants for A. R. P. as well as the Sales Tax on Military petrol. I hope Government will not weary of such well doing.

A point of criticism is the facility with which Government issue control orders. Too often these orders are issued without bothering the slightest, whether there is any machinery to implement them. For two months there has been a control order fixing the price of Gur at 6½ annas a seer. I have travelled throughout the Province and I have yet to find any person who has bought Gur at even double the control price. Government seem to delight, Sir, in putting the brakes on instead of taking the brakes off. I agree that for a lame man a crutch is a necessity. But Government give the crippled citizen of the Province so many crutches to carry in search of these articles whose prices are said to be controlled that he cannot move (*Hear hear*). We, Sir, live in a crippled Province: we need an occasional crutch but we certainly do not need a bamboo *bari* of crutches. Crutches are good to us. The only forms of control which I should like to see practised is self-control by Supply Department. I had a dream the other night, Sir. In this dream I saw the Supply Secretary one morning come to his office. He was standing with his back to the fire. He called up the office cat, the office Chaprassi and the Head Clerk and asked this assembly "What can we control this morning? What is left to control?" The cat, as in Alice in Wonderland, only grinned. The Chaprassi said "There is nothing left, Sir". The Head Clerk said the only thing left to control was the "Economic Advisory Board". Hearing this, the Supply Secretary wrote out his resignation and declared his intention of joining the European Group to discover how his many control orders really work in practice. There are so many other points about this Budget which called for comment that I shall be defeating my policy if I go into details on minor issues. I want to end this speech with a story told by Mr. Winston Churchill. In the port of Liverpool there are a very large number of deep docks with concrete walls. One day a small boy fell into one of these docks and was in danger of being drowned. He was rescued by an ordinary seaman who disappeared after the boy was brought out of the dock. About a week later the seaman was walking in the streets of Liverpool when he was accosted by a fierce looking woman. She said "Are you the person who rescued my son from drowning in the dock?" The seaman replied "That's me, Madam". "Well" said the woman, "you are the very man I am looking for. Where is my boy's

hat?" Well, Sir, that story covers my case exactly. I am interested to see that Government rescue this Province rather than in seeing that department "A" gets a little bit more than it got last year. I am more interested in the little boy having been saved than in the fate of his hat. In other words, Sir, the important things about this Budget are not what have been put in, but what have been left out. It is not 1944 that matters but 1946. It is not what the Finance Minister has in his grasp but what he should be reaching out for. The austerity and the adversity of our present days of Assam are nothing if the people of this Province can live more abundantly in future and by future I mean the near future and I hope, Sir, the Assembly will underline these remarks and Government will undertake the job of implementing them.

Babu BIPIN BEHARI DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Budget presented before us is not at all encouraging from the Scheduled Caste's point of view. I am really surprised to see that no special provision has been made for the spread of education amongst the Scheduled Caste people. It is a well known fact that the Scheduled Caste people are extremely backward in education and nobody in this hon. House can deny it. From the Budget Memorandum it seems that an Assistant Inspector for the education of the Tribal people has been appointed. It is good that the Ministry has taken such a move to improve the education of the Tribal people who are also equally backward like that of the Scheduled Caste. There is a Special Officer for Muslim Education also. But strange it is that Government do not feel any necessity to make any such provision for spread of education amongst the Scheduled Caste people. Their number is not negligible and I am at a loss to understand why the Government is so unsympathetic towards them. Since the time I have come to this Assembly, I am trying my level best to draw the kind attention of the Government to the pitiable condition of the Scheduled Caste people in the matter of education. If it is at all the desire of the Government, to spread education amongst them, a Special Officer should be appointed without any further delay to look after their education. An experienced officer serving in the Education Department may be appointed for the purpose. For the expansion of education sufficient number of scholarships and free-studentships will do a great deal towards this direction. Scholarships in the Medical, Engineering and other fields of education should also be specially reserved for the Scheduled Caste boys. Scholarships for the intermediate boys should be provided to give them encouragement to proceed further. We have been hearing for a long time that the Education Manual will be revised and due consideration will be given to this matter. But I don't know whether the consideration period will ever come to an end. However, may I suggest to the Hon'ble Education Minister to issue a circular giving some concessions to the Scheduled Caste boys with regard to free studentship both in the Schools and colleges before the next session begins.

I like also to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Education Minister to the need of a Hostel in the Habiganj town which has become an important centre of education. The living is undoubtedly cheap there and if a Hostel is established there, poor students will get some facilities to have education. In establishing a Hostel, there, money is necessary for the construction of a building. I hope that land may be available for the purpose, free of cost. Would Government kindly provide money for that—may I hope to get an assurance from the Hon'ble Education Minister on this point?

More money should be provided for giving increased grants and new maintenance grants to Tols. In this connection I like to draw the kind attention of the Hon'ble Education Minister for providing increased grants to *Nityamayee Chatuspati* in the Habiganj town which is one of the best Tols in the district. If an enquiry is made, I hope the Hon'ble Minister will be convinced about its efficiency.

There is a great demand of medical men in our Province for reasons known to all. We are always requesting the Government to establish a Medical School at Sylhet. But it is difficult to understand why the Government is not taking any action towards that direction. May I know from the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge the reasons for taking no action?

Last year the Hon'ble Premier gave an assurance on a Cut Motion moved by me to substitute Homeopathic, Kaviraji and Unani medicine for Allopathic as they are less costly. The Local Board Dispensaries are not in a position of rendering useful service to the people for want of medicine. Will Government give due consideration to my suggestion which is likely to be of immense help to the people? Thousands of people are dying for want of proper treatment and I hope Government would make no further delay in introducing these cheap but effective forms of treatment. Lastly I will request the Government to give more attention towards Baniachong so that, at the advent of rainy season malaria may not make its appearance once more in an epidemic form. The village Bamai also deserves the same treatment as malaria epidemic is prevalent there also. If timely precaution is not taken by the medical department, the disease may spread not only throughout the subdivision of Habiganj but throughout the district of Sylhet by gradual steps.

Grow More Food Campaign is doing well no doubt, but it would do more if a campaign for eradication of water-hyacinth had been started in the Province of Assam. In the Surma Valley districts water-hyacinth is a great obstacle towards growth of paddy. A large portion of paddy land remain uncultivated owing to the abnormal growth of water-hyacinth. So I request the Government to take drastic steps to remove this menace immediately. As a member of the Agricultural Board I raised this question several times in that Committee but nothing has been done yet. So, I request the Hon'ble Premier to take up the matter earnestly which will help a great deal to solve the food problem of the Province.

The public of Habiganj are suffering a great deal for the abolition of the Railway line from Habiganj to Shaistaganj. We expected that Government would supply motor buses and trucks for carrying goods and passengers but up till now nothing has been done. Of course I am against monopoly, because monopoly concern is likely to be callous to public grievances. There is a Motor Association at Habiganj which has been serving the public for a long time. Even when the Railway line was not in existence this Association served the public when there was no train communication. At that time the travelling passengers had not to wait at Shaistaganj for a long time. So I request the Government to supply motor buses and trucks and petrol in sufficient quantity to this Association, for maintaining the traffic from Shaistaganj to Habiganj.

Lastly, I like to deal with the rice and paddy purchase policy of the Government in the Surma Valley Districts. May we know what was the principle in giving contracts and whether any tender was called for? There are many ugly rumours of favouritism and nepotism in the matter and I would strongly urge upon the Government to disclose the names of the contractors, the procedure followed in distributing these contracts as well as the terms and conditions thereof. For the purchase of rice and paddy in the Surma Valley Districts, may I know whether the rate was same in all the Subdivisions. I also like to know whether any payment has been made. If so, at what rate?

For the information of the hon. House, I may say that the rates of rice and paddy per maund were Rs.14-4 and Rs.8 only respectively from the 15th of January to 31st January 1944 in the Subdivision of Habiganj. The rates of rice and paddy per maund were Rs.14-4-0 to Rs.15 and Rs.8-8-0 respectively during the first week of February and the rate of rice at present varies from Rs.10-8-0 to Rs.12-8-0 only and the rate of paddy is stable at Rs.7 only.

There is a strong rumour that in spite of a lower market rate, payment has been made at the rate of Rs.20 per maund for the supply of rice and Rs.10-8-0 per maund for and Rs.4 in case of rice. If it is so, the margin of profit would stand at Rs.2 in case of paddy committed by Government but it is desirable that Government agents or contractors should not be paid more than the market rate plus a reasonable commission. If it is not done, the poor cultivators are deprived of a fair price of their produce and the very intention of Government is frustrated. I hope the Government will clear the whole

position and let us know the actual state of things. I also request the Government to let us know whether any weekly report was submitted to the Subdivisional Officer stating the rate of rice and paddy and other food-stuffs.

I like to add a few words to draw the attention of the Hon'ble the Revenue Minister. At Habiganj in the last sale of fishery mahals, one fishery on the river Ratna in block No. 1 was not put to sale. I am informed that it was settled privately. If that is true, it is really a great loss to Government, because all other fishery mahals fetched a very high price, more than double the previous year's bid.

With these few words, Sir, I resume my seat.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Sir, as we heard from the Hon'ble the Finance Minister, Assam has become the front-line Province. It is very very unfortunate that we are experiencing various difficulties in extra expenditure and other things. We can say so much that we must prepare ourselves to meet all eventualities which may come to us in future. The war has upset us in various ways and people are suffering very much, as we heard from the hon. Members who spoke before me. On the other hand, war is doing very great good to some people and for the country. It is actually so. The war is accelerating various activities of the people and we are in a happy position financially, if the actual situation of the Finance is to be such as the Hon'ble Finance Minister stated in his Budget Speech.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: *Hear, hear.*

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Some lakhs of Rupees of deficit has been converted into surplus. As we heard from the Hon'ble the Finance Minister that people are struggling for better result of their agricultural produce and also finding some means to create money. This war is really a blessing to certain class of people and certain persons.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: You should be sent to the front line.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: I was ready to go but authorities do not allow me to do so, as my age is too advanced.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What a pity?

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: In the Garo Hills, there was starvation in 1941-42. Mr. Mookerjee has said, Indians are suffering more than the people of Europe. How can he say this? We have not been suffering from bombs, etc. We have not been experiencing bombing and its consequences.

The hon. Mr. Whittaker, the leader of the European group did not say so.

(*A voice*—how does he know?) because he is an European who is well informed of the news in England, his home country.

Sir, really many people are benefiting and taking advantage of this war, as for instance, big contractors etc. As some people say, Hitler is the person who is blessing nations of the Earth in disguise.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order.

Adjournment

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

(The Deputy Speaker took up the Chair.)

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, my hon. Friend Mr. Mookerjee was interrupting me. I know, Sir, he is a zeminder, rich man, who enjoys only one weather throughout the year—during the cold weather he goes to warm country and during the warm weather he goes to cold country. So he does not know what is the suffering of the poor people.

Now, Sir, I must give a few instance of the statement I made in connection with the war that war is a blessing to some people. There are some Garo graduates. They were without any post. They were competing for Assam Civil Service in vain but as soon as the war broke out they have been provided. There are 6 Garo Lieutenants now ; one is a Lieutenant and the rest are 2nd Lieutenants. They are drawing much higher pay than some of the Extra Assistant Commissioners. These are the blessings of the war. In big places like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras we know there are many graduates sitting idle not, even drawing Rs. 15, 20 or 30 a month.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER : The hon. Member is to speak to the Budget.

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK : Most of the people sitting idle have been provided in the various branches of the Military jobs and those ancillary to it and they are enjoying higher salaries. Sir, I must not waste the time of the House and now I will come to the Budget. I don't go to the budgetary figures, Sir, because the able hon. Members have already pointed out the facts and figures of the Budget.

I shall speak one or two words regarding the Land Settlement Policy. This land settlement question concerns indirectly the question of Line System and this question is a matter of great complication and difficulty. This matter is bone and flesh and life and death for the Assam Valley people. Sir, I know definitely well that the Hon'ble Finance Minister, from the very beginning was wholly against this Line System. Unfortunately, Sir, in addition to that our Hon'ble Revenue Minister also is opposed to that. Now we see, Sir, in the Budget Speech at page 3 that the Government have drawn a Resolution in this connection in August last. Government have issued a Resolution to this effect and instructions have also been issued to the District Officers to this effect. Now regarding this land settlement—deforesting some of the grazing sanctuaries, dereserving some grazing Reserves, and also some forest Reserves—to make enquiries about all these things a Special Officer was appointed. I do not know, Sir, whether Government notified to the public concerned that there will be an enquiry like this so that they might get a chance of expressing their want, grievance and inconvenience. Of course if it was done so, so far so good but if it was not done so, the people concerned would be extremely disappointed and this would create public inconvenience. I am not against this land settlement question but my wish and desire are only this that settlement of land should be made with the indigenous people first and when the number of indigenous people is exhausted then of course settlement can be made with the foreigners or immigrants.

Sir, what we see about these immigrants here in the Government Resolution, I need not go through it. Hon. Members are well aware of this. I see Government will get more revenue by this scheme, premium will be paid in instalments only. Sir Assam Government is being pressed by the Central Government to expedite this matter. As the Hon'ble Finance Minister spoke that Assam Government is being pressed to do away with the Line System immediately which will affect very seriously the population of the Assam Valley, I am now only one with him. After ten years my family will be multiplied by ten or fifteen members, or families, and I would be the first person to agree to the scheme of land settlement provided sufficient provision is made for future generation ; otherwise there will be a great or rather serious starvation ; and landless people will be multiplied in our Assam Valley. I am not speaking for my personal matter only, I am speaking on an average basis.

Sir, I have got another complaint to make. When a person is allowed to cultivate land outside his district, he is not allowed to take his paddy to his home. Hon. Members will find no justification for this. I hope the Hon'ble Minister of the Cabinet will kindly see to this.

Now, this scheme, of course, has some good motives. First, there will be more revenue and secondly we will get more food-stuffs by multiplying the population and increasing the settlement. But, Sir, more money alone will not serve the purposes. My request to the Government is that they should see to the interest of the raiyat

and Projas without being satisfied with, only getting more money for the time being. Sir, there was a Resolution regarding the preservation of grazing fields but that Resolution was rejected by the House. I am one of those persons who was sorry for that.

The motive of that Resolution was good: to produce more and better milk supply and to increase the cattle-property of the country. Sir, the price of cattle now-a-days is very very exorbitant. I don't know the price prevalent in this side of Upper Assam but in Garo Hills side, the price of one plough cattle is more than Rs.150. So, Sir, will it be possible for any immigrant or a new comer who will settle in new land in a new place having no house, no money in hand, plough cattle and other necessary agricultural materials to produce more agricultural produce in a year or two without securing good plough cattle? Will he be able to support himself, his family and at the same time to render aid towards the Grow More Food Propaganda? Will he be able to help the Grow More Food Campaign of the Government? Not very likely, Sir. So, it will be much easier or simpler to make settlement of land with the indigenous people, who are already there with their plough cattle and their family homes.

I would like to mention another thing, Sir. In 1942-43, I addressed a letter to the Hon'ble Premier with my friend Mr. J. Lasker, M.B.E., expressing our difficulty and apprehension of shortage of paddy and rice. We went to the Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow for his advice who advised us to write to the Hon'ble Premier stating the fact that there is apprehension of shortage of paddy in the Garo Hills and to ask for the people for the grant of some thousands of maunds of paddy. We then came up personally to see the Secretary of the Supply Department and also the Hon'ble Premier and they gave us some hope but as soon as we returned to Tura the Deputy Commissioner, although he first advised us to do so, wrote against our attempt saying that there were plenty of paddy in the Garo Hills. When the Deputy Director and the Director of Agriculture wanted to help the people of Garo Hills with agricultural loan, in this matter also the Deputy Commissioner, Garo Hills stood in its way. The Director of Agriculture proposed to give Rs.40,000 on that project and he asked the Inspector of Agriculture to call for a list of persons to whom agricultural loan will be distributed and the list was prepared by the senior Agricultural Demonstrator and submitted to the Deputy Commissioner of Garo Hills.

Then the Deputy Commissioner, Garo Hills, said that no agricultural loan was necessary, nor was there any need for it. So the matter ended there. But, Sir, I say, it was a pressing need for the purpose of Grow More Food Campaign in Garo Hills. This is the way the matter is dealt with in Garo Hills although Government was quite willing to help the people of our District. Grow More Food Propaganda is not known in Garo Hills up to date. Sir, I am very glad to note that the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Medical and Public Health is going to do something as revealed from the Hon'ble Finance Minister's Speech, for checking epidemics.

As regards communication, Sir, I have got to say a few words. This matter in the Garo Hills especially is a very important one. His Excellency the Governor of Assam visited our District on the 16th of January last and halted at Tura to spare his valuable time in visiting the important roads of the District to know personally the actual condition of communication there. Sir, this may be at the instance of the Central Government's scheme to make new road and to improve roads throughout the whole of India. Sir, there was a circular letter issued by the Government of Assam wanting information in connection with this scheme. This scheme is great consolation to me and to the people of the Garo Hills who are always crying for better communication in that District. Sir, our headquarters has no direct connection with the headquarters of the Province. During the Congress-Coalition Government my Colleague Mr. Momin and myself had an interview with the then Premier and as a result the Premier passed an order to the Minister concerned at least to prepare an estimate for the construction of the important bridges if possible, for

two and afterwards I also received a letter from the Secretary, Public Works Department, Mr Pannell, who has now retired, that the matter was being taken in hand by the Government. But, Sir, this could not develop any more probably due to war. As I said, Sir, this war is a blessing for many places, but is running and doing much harm to some other places. The project to improve the road from Lakhipur to Mankachar, that had already been surveyed for the purpose, could not be given effect to and had to be postponed. This road passes through an important place called Phulbari which is known to the Hon'ble Premier. When the main river swells the bridge over it is washed away and as a result hundreds of bullock carts that come to cross the bridge are held up and cannot cross; and the Deputy Commissioner's order is that after sun-set no crossing over the ferry is allowed. This situation remains so until the rainy season is over. Therefore, Sir, I hope the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge will kindly take up this matter in right earnest when there is already a scheme for this. If this is given effect to it will be a great blessing to us all.

The Deputy SPEAKER: The hon. Member has spoken for 25 minutes and so I ask him to finish his speech quickly. If he has more to say he may do so during the time of any cut Motion concerning this subject.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI: In case there is no cut Motion to this regard what will be his position, Sir?

The Deputy SPEAKER: Whatever may it be, it is my duty to see that the time is most economically used (*laughter*).

Mr. JOBANG D. MARAK: The most important point before us now is food supply. In this matter, the procurement, equitable distribution and price control are the cardinal points to be taken into consideration.

The question of procurement of paddy is uncalled for in the Garo Hills for the coming year, I think. Because, the yield of paddy crops is exceptionally good in the year 1943-44.

Salt is the most essential commodity of all food-stuffs. It should be controlled; I mean the commodity itself should not be controlled. Its price, of course, must be controlled.

I see, Sir, here in Shillong and in other town like Dhubri, Goalpara, Gauhati, etc., salt is sold in every shop, and not only in the Government Agent shops. But in Tura, there is only one solitary shop where salt is sold at the Tura Bazar for all the people of Garo Hills who come to that *hat*. Hundreds of people throng at a time, to get salt at the shop; some persons—women and children,—are knocked out and pushed down from the cement platform of the verandh of the Government Agent shop, and many have to return home without salt. This is due to want of proper method of distribution and not due to shortage of commodity itself. After His Excellency's visit to Tura I was once strolling towards the Tura bazar when I met one of the Government agents. He was running to the petition writer as he wanted to submit a petition to inform the Deputy Commissioner that there was not a single grain of salt in Tura. Then I ran to the Deputy Commissioner with him and told him this fact. He at once sent an express message to the Deputy Commissioner, Dhubri asking him for a loan of two hundred bags of salt. The Deputy Commissioner of Dhubri complied with this request and sent two hundred bags of salt to Rowmarighat; but on arrival of the commodity there it was found that not more than 16 or 17 seers of salt was there in each bag. The Marwaries who were to take delivery of these bags refused to accept them on this ground. The result was that there was no salt at Tura for some weeks. This was not due to shortage of the commodity but was due to the negligence on the part of the officers to make necessary arrangements for the supply in time.

The other day when the hon. Member Srijut Paramananda Das moved the adjournment Motion, I was trying to speak on this subject, but the Hon'ble Speaker did not hear me and I had not the chance to speak. I do not know, when the Hon'ble Premier visited Tura recently, whether anybody brought this fact to his notice or not.

(The Hon'ble Premier—No body spoke to me about it).

I am sorry, I had to come to Shillong before the Hon'ble Premier visited Tura on account of my son's illness.

Sir, one word more and I will finish. I was a member of the Board of Communications, but unfortunately I had to remain absent from its meeting. Sir, the most important thing about communication is the extension of the South Trunk Road of Assam through the Garo Hills, to connect the Tura-Mankachar road. When this will be done it will be all right for us. This will be either a provincial highway or a national highway. It will be national highway because it will go upto Bahadurabad. So, this project can be considered either as a provincial highway or a national highway. Sir, one of the District roads is also incomplete, and the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge is aware of this fact. Our Tura Bajajdoba road is incomplete; the portion from Tura up to the 25th mile is motorable. The remaining 15 miles towards Bajajdoba should also be completed, and when this is done, it will be very convenient for Government officers to visit Tura. Of course, I am not concerned so much with the facilities for the visiting officers, but I want better permanent communication for the public of the Garo Hills. This project should be taken up in the first year's scheme as there are schemes for making and improving roads in the District up to the 10th year of the scheme. I hope the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge will kindly see that this most important part of the road is taken up in the first year's scheme.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, as usual I will begin with a Persian verse—the translation of the verse is that the condition of those who fall in the strong current of a river in the dark night cannot be expected to be known by those who live at an olympian height or heaven just like here in Shillong. Sir, it is God alone who knows the condition of the millions living in the villages, and nobody can imagine it. Every thing is available but these poor people cannot get any thing by any means. They come to the town—not once but many times—but they do not get what they want. The traders and merchants are now privileged people. But the consumers who are the backbone of the nation, do not get what they require for their daily life. I think the Hon'ble Premier who travelled throughout the Surma Valley very recently this year had the occasion to know it at the time of attending the meetings of the National War Front or rather the National Waste Front. Sir, sugar is unknown to the villagers and as regards other commodities, they do not get them except in the black market. It is said that the cultivators are richer now as the agricultural produce and paddy are fetching more money than before. It is a fact, but we should consider that they do not get paddy throughout the whole year. If they exhaust the whole amount of paddy that is grown at a time, what will happen when there will be failure of crops? They can sell their paddy at a high price to-day to purchase other commodities or to satisfy the hunger of the Supply Officer or Inspectors, but what will be their condition to-morrow? Do the Government know what is being happened to their plough cattle? Sir, they are dying no doubt of epidemics and they are being sold also at a very high price.

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : Sold to their cultivators?

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI : Cultivators, in order to purchase their necessaries of life, sell their cattle when they are hard-pressed. Sir, I like to press that there should be a check to this sale and there should be some sort of arrangements for the treatment of cattle which are dying of epidemics. Sir, I would have congratulated the Government for the supply of eatable commodities to the public but for their failure in stopping the corruption amongst their officers, traders and merchants—it is they who have aggravated the situation. They are encouraging corruptions here and there.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : *Hear, hear.*

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI : Very inefficient people are being employed, Sir. I want that this should be stopped and the Government should take steps for stopping corruptions of all kinds.

Sir, I can say about small-pox in the village that is also going very rapidly in Surma Valley. I do not know anything of this in Assam Valley. It is going on in an

epidemic form. I think Public Health Officers have not been able to cope with the situation for want of medicines. I request the Government to take steps to take up these things also in right earnest.

Sir, now I want to go ahead for future and like to say about Post-War Re-construction Scheme. Sir, I do not know about this encouraging and hopeful future of thing which we never expected before. Sir, of these schemes which are being taken or which are not being taken we do not know. I should like to place some demands before the Government with the hope that full consideration will be given at the time of taking them up. Sir, Surma Valley is subject to flood every year and we know, on many occasions our Hon'ble Prime Minister replied to some questions whenever put in this House, that this Government have no capacity to tackle the matter. Sir, in connection with Post-War Re-construction I hope, the Hon'ble Prime Minister will take it up as it is a big problem, say a big scheme. Surma Valley is always in difficulty and in trouble for this.

Sir, again I say about some small things, *i.e.*, about construction of some roads and *khals* and bridges. I want to include if they are not already included. I heard that Chairmen of the Local Boards and Subdivisional Officers met in a meeting in Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow someday (I do not know which day) when they discussed these things. I do not know the result of the discussions but I say, Sir, my suggestions for taking up the following may be taken into consideration:—

Sheola Bridge,
Sada Khal Bridge,
Sylhet-Cachar Trunk Road,
Kaliganj Road (from Kaliganj to Karimganj),
Dighirpar Road, from Churkhai to Bhanga, and
Athgram Road from Karimganj.

Sir, I want to say that our Province is in want of two things, paper mills and power looms. We have no mills. Sir, I hope that Government will try to take advantage.....

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: What is the second mill, Sir?

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI: Cotton mills.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member should speak distinctly.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI: Sir, so long no person, and no company did take up these things. For want of these two kinds of industries this Province is suffering a great deal. I hope this will also be taken into consideration in time. Sir, one thing I may stress. I am really congratulating the Government for taking up the re-organisation of the Assam Provincial Madrassa Board which was overdue for a very long time. Sir, I hope this will solve the Moslem Educational problem in future. Sir, I am afraid when I see the provision. I think, it is a very poor amount and efficiency will suffer because better hand will not be available for this purpose and already, Sir, we have heard many things about Madrassa education and its examination. Every year we find that question papers are made out, and this year also as in other years in the newspaper *Janasakti* of the 10th *Falgun* you will find under the column "চিহ্নিত বাস্তব" there is a criticism of the wrong action of the Madrassa authority. Sir, I am afraid, if efficient hands are not taken to control the entire Madrassa education these will continue and Madrassa education will suffer. I find only Rs.25 as allowance have been provided for the Secretary. I do not know how the Secretary will take the responsibility for this amount. It is not an honorary job. I do not know the real position. I hope this will also be considered by the Government at the time of taking up this problem in right earnest. With these words, I resume my seat.

Maulavi BADARUDDIN AHMED: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the outset I thank the Hon'ble Finance Minister, in spite of great stress and strain and anxiety he had for the Government during the period of the financial year that is coming to close, he has been able to make the Budget a surplus one by about half al akh and at the same time having set apart a sum of Rs.25 lacs in the Reserve Fund for Post-War Re-construction Scheme.

As the War is waging in the Assam frontier the Province is threatened with a menacing situation and the Government to cope with the situation have taken steps by way of procurement scheme, supply of foodstuffs from outside the Province, controlling of the price of all essential commodities and supply of free rations to the low paid Government servants. For all these schemes I must thank the Government. But the policy and the procedure by which these schemes have been put into practice deserve adverse criticism.

Government appear to be very anxious to run the administrative machinery and so they are pleased to supply free rations to the low paid Government servants. Should not Government think of the lot of the low paid employees of the Local Bodies? They are also as much hard hit as the Government servants. A day-labourer, to-day earns more than what an employee of the Local Body earns. There has been a tendency on the part of every employee of the Local Bodies to go out of the Board and to take to some private undertaking. If the Government do not come to the rescue of the Local Bodies, administration of these may come to a standstill in the near future. The Local Bodies cannot be expected to impose fresh taxation on the rate payers who have already been overburdened with the existing taxation and the abnormally high prices of the essential commodities of life. I understand the provisions of the Essential Services Ordinance have been extended to the Local Bodies, employees. If it is so, and if an employee goes out, will it be justifiable to haul up a man under the Ordinance when under the provisions of the same he does not get the benefit?

Sir, I am happy to note that two local Agencies have been appointed in the Surma Valley for procurement of rice and paddy. But it is sad to note for the Assam Valley where paddy is produced in greater quantity than Surma Valley, the appointment of the procurement Agency has gone to one and only to one foreign company; and still more sad to note that another appointment for procurement of other local produces such as dal, gur, mustard seeds has also recently gone to the outsiders. It is a fact that Assam Valley people for want of capital cannot take to business. Here, Sir, capital is furnished from the Government treasury. No justification I can find for this step-motherly treatment towards the Assam Valley people by our popular Government.

The Hon'ble Finance Minister has rightly observed that during the year prices of the foodstuffs, except sugar and salt have gone to three or four times higher than the pre-war prices. The Government have taken the supply of the foodstuffs and other commodities in their hands and rationing has been introduced in the Municipal towns. Have they been able to bring down the prices to some appreciable minimum? I should say, Sir, no! The supply of the foodstuffs is below the required minimum. The villagers hardly get $\frac{1}{2}$ a seer of sugar for a family of 10 to 15 members for a month. For dearth of sugar they take gur from bazars at the abnormally high price of Re.1-8-0 per seer. During the early part of the year for transport difficulty no imported gur reached the Mangaldai Subdivision. Now the price of local gur has been controlled and as a result of this,—gur has disappeared from markets. Those who cannot go without sugar or gur have been now under the circumstances compelled to go to black markets. So, Sir, we have been taught to steal. The poor people who cannot afford to pay the price in black markets used to take common salt as a substitute of sugar or gur. In the latter part of February stock last of salt in the Mangaldai Subdivision was exhausted and many of the poor villagers had to go without food for several days together for want of salt. Sir, if the reason of this anomaly is asked the reply can be anticipated. The stereotyped reply will be the transport difficulty. I also admit for Military movement there is transport difficulty. This difficulty must be good for all times and for all imported goods. But you will be surprised to hear that this transport difficulty is not met with when *arhar* dal is imported to Mangaldai. In Mangaldai there is already more than four thousand maunds of *arhar* dal in stock and again during the last week of February nearly one thousand maunds of the same dai had been sent in spite of the repeated intimation to the Government to stop sending *arhar* dal. The space which required for sending *arhar* dal might have been utilised for sending salt and other necessary goods.

Sir, it is happy to note that the villagers like to have their quota of controlled goods from the Consumers Co-operative Stores. For this reason numbers of Stores have been organised ; but for dual control over the organised Stores many of them have not got their registration in Mangaldai. The Subdivisional Officer is the man on the spot who is the only authority to supply the controlled goods to the Stores. Even if a Store is organised by the honorary organisers and the circle officer, if the Subdivisional Officer does not oppose it, the store does not get the supply. If the application for its registration is sent direct to the Registrar, it requires a long time before it gets its registration. For this dual form of Government over the Consumers' Co-operative Stores in Mangaldai desired numbers of stores have not come into existence. Hence whatever supply the Government had been able to give to the people it had come mainly through the retail dealers. It depends entirely on the honesty and good sense of the retailers.

Since the demand of food is increasing from all corners of the earth it is a time to grow more food. In spite of this demand some cannot grow food just for their requirement for want of land. Government must take a definite policy of land settlement. It should not be left in a hazy and uncertain state. If cultivable wasteland is available it should be settled with the landless people of the Province forthwith ; this step will, at least, lighten the burden of feeding these landless people. For want of a definite policy for settlement of land batch after batch of landless people from outside have been coming to this Province. Once a definite policy is adopted the door of immigration will be stopped for good.

To some extent the question of Grow More Food Campaign may be solved by releasing waste and jungle lands lying under the possession of the Tea Association of Assam and settling them with the landless. The companies have kept them lying waste for long years past allowing them to overgrow with jungle. These jungles have become a menace to the paddy fields which lie within the neighbourhood of these jungles. Government should take steps to release all these lands even on payment of compensation and settle them with the landless of the Province.

Khan Sahib Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am glad to congratulate our Finance Minister for presenting a surplus Budget before the House. It is no doubt very gratifying to find that even amidst the gloomy economic atmosphere of our neighbouring Provinces—Bengal and Orissa and nay the whole of India, he has been able to draw a very happy picture of our Province. Our Budget is certainly an index of our poverty and plenty, misery and happiness, our fall and rise in the scale of human values.

Post-War Reconstruction and planning are in the air to day, and are engaging the attention of both the Government and the public. The Hon'ble Finance Minister has given much importance to the post-war planning and schemes. In the very beginning of his speech he says :—

“While committed to all these inevitable and necessary expenditures Government has not been unmindful of the fact that deficiencies of the present expenditure in our Nation-building Departments will have to be made up for in the post-war period. We have therefore decided to conserve part of our resources to be spent with better advantage after the war. The Post-war Reconstruction Fund which we propose to inaugurate from next year provides for this”.

So we may call it as the first Post War Reconstruction Budget.

But, Sir, we find that he has not explained the principles on which the reconstruction planning will have to be based. The activities of some of the All-India Post War Reconstruction Committees have aroused in our mind some misgivings and apprehensions. I may mention Educational planning of the Central Advisory Board for the Post-War Educational Development by Mr. John Sargent—Educational Commissioner to the Government of India and the now famous economic planning by Sir Ardeshir Dalal and other non-official leaders.

It was the policy of the Government of India Act of 1935 to decentralise, but it seems that the attitude of the Reconstruction Committees is to take us back to the Pre-Reform age and centralise all the power in the hands of an United India. The future of

our Provincial Autonomy is in danger and I sound a note of warning to every Member of the House who should learn a lesson from this and be ready to safeguard the interests of this country.

Now Education is a provincial and voted subject. But Mr. John Sargent under the guidance of Hon'ble Sir Jogendra Singh, the President of the Central Advisory Board proposes :—

“It is desirable that the Central Government should relieve the Provincial Government of the financial responsibility for the University Education.”

I am repeating—

It is desirable that the Central Government should relieve the Provincial Government of the financial responsibility for the University Education.

Thus, in the name of financial relief, the Central Board wants to bring Education—at any rate, University Education—under the direct control of an Akhand or United India and make it a central subject.

Not only this. Mr. Sargent has confessed that ‘Education as envisaged by the Central Advisory Board embodies many of the educational ideas contained in the original Wardha Scheme issued under the auspices of Mr. Gandhi’.

Again, he has expressed his helplessness and says—“Between them they have undertaken nearly all the spade work and my task has been limited to editing the materials which they produced”.

So it seems that Mr. Sargent, our Educational Adviser to the Government of India, was acting as a glorified clerk, an editor, a tool in the hands of his superior and unwillingly gramophoned his chief, the President of the Board's voice.

It may be within the recollection of this House that Wardha Scheme started under the then Congress Government raised a storm throughout the whole of Muslim India and the Government was compelled to withdraw the Scheme. It seems that the Central Advisory Board is working as a *Benamadar* of the Wardha Committee. They want to Gandhi-ise in the whole of India. Moreover, Sir, they have prefixed the word ‘national’ before education. We do not believe in one Nation Theory. The people of India are not one nation, but they are, in the words of Molotov, multinational. Any planning based on one nation must be resisted at all cost, because education cannot be considered apart from culture and everyone knows that in this country these are expressions of widely divergent cultures. Legislature is the most effective organ of our public opinion, and I shall be failing in my duty if I do not bring it to the notice of the Government that the Sargent Educational Scheme is brimful of many controversial subjects both in principle and in their execution, and cannot be accepted until it has passed through the strict and rigorous test of thorough examination. May I urge upon the Government of Assam to move the Government of India, so that the anti-Muslim educational planning adumbrated by the Central Board may not be proceeded with.

Sir, we understand that the present Director of Public Instruction, Mr. Sen, is going to retire very soon and the question of appointing a new Director of Public Instruction is under the consideration of the Government. May I bring it to the notice of the Government that after the advent of the British administration in Assam no Muslim has ever been permanently appointed as Director of Public Instruction. In the past Muslim education has suffered much and the educational needs of the community have not been adequately satisfied. We know that now a chance has come for appointing a Muslim as Director of Public Instruction. I must clarify my point on this issue. I have no interest in any particular candidate. Any suitable and competent Muslim officer will satisfy our demand. I am sure, I am only voicing the opinion of the entire Muslim public of the Province when I say that the present chance of appointing a Muslim officer if lost will seriously wound the feelings of the Muslim public in general and Muslim Members of the Legislature in particular.

In the words of our Finance Minister though Education claims the Lion's share in the Budget I am not happy for his attitude towards the Muslim Education. In last June a very historical Assam Muslim Educational Conference was held at Sylhet under the Presidency of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. But I am surprised to find, Sir,

that many of the unanimous demands of the Muslims such as to open at least two Islamic Intermediate colleges in the Province have not received the consideration it deserved. We hope that Government will kindly give effect to the recommendations of the Conference and establish two colleges—one in each Valley. We are, however, glad to find that Hon'ble Minister, Education has kindly recommended his scheme for making provision in the Budget for reorganisation of the Assam Provincial Madrassa Board and for an Assistant Inspector of Schools which is long over due. We also appreciate the policy of the Hon'ble Minister of Education for his proposal of appointing a truly 'porhesgar' and scholar Ulema as the principal of the Sylhet Alia Madrassa.

In this connection I desire to express the general opinion of the Muslim Community that the representation of the community in Class I and II of the Assam School Services is deplorably poor. All are aware that the number of Muslim Head and Assistant Head Masters and Muslim Deputy Inspectors is disgracefully small. It is urgent that this genuine grievance of the community should be redressed as early as possible. I request the Hon'ble Minister of Education to take immediate action by extending the principle of Muslim representation in Class I and II of the Assam School Services.

With these few words, Sir, I resume my seat.

Srijut JOGES CHANDRA GOHAIN: Mr. Speaker Sir, the preparation of a Budget entails a lot of troubles and mental anxieties. Our Finance Minister who is mainly responsible for the Budget of the Province had surely to pass through many a worried night in preparing the Budget under discussion. The Hon'ble Finance Minister deserves our thanks on that account. The Hon'ble Finance Minister moreover presented the Budget with a fine speech explaining the complexities in simple and lucid language and further therein he has given many informations which we could not gather from the Budget. The Budget under consideration on the whole though not quite as bright as we desire is not a gloomy one. In this abnormal time we cannot hope for a better Budget. I, therefore, heartily congratulate the Hon'ble Finance Minister.

Before coming to the Budget, I think, it will not be out of place to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Ministers that many Members of this Hon'ble House feel themselves disappointed and discouraged to place their suggestions before them as they very seldom give heed to these suggestions. Not to speak of taking action on these suggestions and grievances, some of the Hon'ble Ministers easily manage to forget them as soon as the Budget is passed and the session is over. By the above, I speak the minds of many of my Friends and I hope the Hon'ble Ministers will give due consideration they deserve.

The sources of income of the Assam Government are not very elastic and they are few. Unless the Nation Building Departments are fully developed, the future of Assam is nothing but gloomy. If we are to keep pace with other advanced provinces of India, the Government must be prepared to develop our Nation Building Departments at all costs. But from the Budget Speech of the Hon'ble Finance Minister we learn that development of Nation Building Departments are left to be included as part of "Post-War Reconstruction Schemes" and for the purpose a fund has been created. These works will be taken up only sometime after the cessation of hostilities and no body can say positively when the hostilities will cease. Hence unless the fields for these works are kept ready and prepared, the Post-War Reconstruction Schemes will have a difficult task.

The Budget shows an increment on the receipt side by many lakhs, say from Land Revenue by about 21 lakhs, from Provincial Excise by about 10 lakhs, from income-tax by 11 lakhs and further the Government is relieved now from meeting the cost of the Assam Rifles to the extent of 8 lakhs. Out of all these Government could have easily given something more for the Nation Building Departments. Still I hope our Government will see their way to give something substantial for the Nation Building Departments.

The main source of income of the Assam Government is land revenue. More than a third of the total income of our Government comes from this source alone. The rate of land revenue of the Province is the highest in India and now it has reached the maximum stage further than which will be nothing but robbing the people. This year Government have completely withdrawn the remission of land revenue on the ground that the cultivators are getting high prices for their produces. But Government have failed to consider that though they are getting high prices for their produces, they are on the other hand to pay high prices in many other ways to get their daily necessities of life. So in my opinion the Government is not fully justified in withdrawing the land revenue remission in toto.

The policy of increasing income by throwing open lands to outsiders is a dangerous policy which has recently been adopted by this Government. Government should first of all make provision for the children of the soil for their future extension. If greed for our future generation, we can on no account be a party to such a policy. Let Government first of all ascertain the area of land fit for cultivation. Then keeping apart a sufficient portion of it for the children of the soil for their future extension—the rest, if there be any, may be settled with outsiders of certain denomination.

It is true, a very large area of land in different parts of Assam are lying waste. But the greater part of these so-called waste lands are either very low-lying lands called 'Jalduba' or land lying on the hill sides—unfit for cultivation. If all these classes of lands be settled, the ultimate result will be, instead of securing a source of income, the Government will have a constant source of expenditure only. The Government will have to incur expenses for improvement of these areas; damages of crops by floods will compel Government to give up land revenue by way of remission; further, Government will have to pay compensation too for damages of crops by flood and lastly they will have to incur expenses by way of relief. I hope the Government will take into consideration the above before launching the campaign of throwing open further lands to outsiders. If lands are settled with paupers having no cattle or capital the object of the Grow More Food Campaign also will be frustrated.

Of all the subjects under discussion, Supply and Civil Defence are the most important to us at the present time. After the 93rd Government, when attempt was made to reform the Ministry, it was mainly in consideration of these two issues that the present Ministry could secure the support of many of the Members. So the Ministry cannot now shirk the responsibilities on these two issues. I shall now confine my speech to these two issues only.

As regards Civil Defence—up till now the Department has not been tested and we have not been able to examine their fitness or of what metal they are made of. So long what we have seen of them, we find most of the officers of the A. R. P. to move about in the streets on motor cars, either on official duty or meeting friends and relatives or enjoying pleasure trips. They cannot move an inch without a car—so hardy they are. When petrol is so much in scarcity for the public, the A. R. P. officers are allowed any amount of petrol for their use. Whether they use it in enjoyment of pleasure trips or in discharge of official duties, there is none to check or question them. These A. R. P. officers have got nothing to do and they have been enjoying pensions for future works. Though we are not sure how they will fare during a raid, we get samples of their works now and then. In Dibrugarh town the A. R. P. Department took up census of the population there. Relying on the above census figures of the A. R. P. Department, it was decided to issue ration cards from the 1st of December, 1943. But on examination it was found that these census figures are full of inaccuracies and mistakes. So the issue of ration cards was postponed to a later date. This time also the Department was entrusted with the census works. On enquiry just on the eve of my departure from Dibrugarh I came to learn that till then even numbering of the houses have not been finished. On such a sense of duty and responsibility of these officers on whom we rely for our safety in case of a raid. It is true Government have been spending liberally for the safety of the people, but I doubt if Government have taken any notice as to

the ability and reliability of these officers who have been entrusted with such heavy responsibilities. Whatever it may be Government have done something for the urban areas but they have done absolutely nothing for the rural areas.

As regards supplies of foodstuffs and cloths, Government have budgeted to lay out over five crores on these accounts. The money thus laid out for procurement of foodstuffs and cloths is an investment and if properly managed it will not only mitigate the sufferings of the people, but the original sum laid out will return to the coffer with interest. But what we find in actual field? Government have laid out a big amount for purchase of foodstuffs and cloths and entrusted certain officers with the management of the same. If the officers thus entrusted duly perform their duties, be fair and just in their dealings, that will greatly help in mitigating the sufferings of the people due for want of necessities. But the defect lies here—selfish motive prompts some of these officers to disregard the intention of the Government, to meet their own ends. Government too do not care how the matter has been going on. Thus being unchecked the question of supplies has been going on from bad to worse day by day.

Then, again when the goods come to the market, the shopkeepers distribute them at the rate and quantity suited to their will. There is none to check and the customers are at the mercy of the shopkeepers.

Government have controlled the prices of certain commodities. But this is all in papers. None to enforce and check them. Many commodities cannot be had in open market but you will get them in abundance in black market. These are all naked truth, but none to check. In some cases they are going on at the connivance of the officers in power and concern.

Government have appointed a set of Sub-Inspectors, and Inspectors to check and control prices. But these inexperienced and young officers are too simple for the clever shopkeepers. They have totally failed to check black-marketing and control prices. So I beg to suggest that in supplement to these young officers other experienced officers and some non-official gentlemen also in their respective localities be empowered to check and control prices.

During the last November Session there was a Food Debate for five days. Many suggestions were made to improve the condition of supply. What steps Government have been taking in these respects, I do not know, but in actual field till now we don't find any improvement, but in some cases it is rather getting worse.

In my opinion the amount laid out by the Government for procurement of foodstuffs is quite sufficient for the purpose and it will to a great extent mitigate the sufferings of the people provided the distribution be fair and just and there be proper checking. Government must look to and work to this end. But the amount laid out for purchase of cloths should, in my opinion, be increased, so that besides the standard cloth, other varieties of cloths and also threads can be distributed from the Government stores. If Government for some reasons cannot lay out an increased amount on this account, then I beg to suggest that a few well-to-do and reliable firms in each Sub-division be permitted to import cloths and threads directly from the mills. Such firms should be limited in number to facilitate checking.

A Food Committee was formed by Government and published in the Gazette sometime in December, 1943. I do not know of other towns but in Dibrugarh the Committee has not been called by the Deputy Commissioner. What this delay is due to? Was the Committee formed to hoodwink the public? However, I draw the attention of the Hon'ble Premier on these points.

It was announced long ago that within the Municipal areas, ration cards would be issued from the 1st of December, 1943. Government failed to issue ration cards then. Thereafter it was announced that ration cards would be issued from the 1st week of January, 1944. This time also Government failed. Now Government have appointed a set of Assistant Rationing Officer for issuing ration cards. It means there will be delay of another two or three months in issuing ration cards. It is very difficult to understand the intention of the Government for delaying matters which they themselves

admit to be very urgent. We hope, with the issue of ration cards the public will be much relieved of their troubles they now experience. So I hope the Government will do its best for issue of ration cards as early as possible.

I am afraid I am taxing the patience of the hon. Members. So I shall dwell on only another point and finish my speech.

Since the formation of the present Ministry my community due to its backwardness in matters of education has been drawing pointed attention of the Government to grant a few special scholarships in schools and colleges, to increase the percentages of free-studentships in Government High Schools, and grant a number of free-studentships in aided and Middle English Schools like the tribals, scheduled and Moslem boys. The Government promised to take up these cases while revising the rules of the Assam School Manual. I do not know whether the revised rules are ready now and whether the claims of the Ahom community have been favourably considered and their prayers granted. But in the Budget under review I do not see any provision being made on the above account. Hence I hereby beg to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Education Minister to this point.

With these few words, I beg to resume my seat

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A.M., on Monday, the 6th March, 1944.

SHILLONG,
The 30th March 1944. }

A. K. BARUA,
Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.