

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

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 2 p.m. on Friday, the 14th March 1947.

PRESENT

The Hon'ble Mr. Debeswar Sarmah, Speaker, in the Chair, eight Hon'ble Ministers and fifty-four Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

Management of the river system of the Province

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA asked :

- *19. (a) Are Government aware of the havoc done to this Province by its untrained river system ?
(b) Are Government aware that in the absence of river control the irrigation scheme cannot work successfully ?
(c) Do Government propose to open any Department for the management of the river system of the Province ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY replied :

19. (a)—Yes.
(b)—Government are not aware that in the absence of river control the irrigation scheme cannot work successfully in all places, but Government are aware that in some places it may not work successfully.
(c)—The solution lies in expanding the Embankment and Drainage Branch and carrying out observations and experiments in this matter. Necessary qualified personnel is not available. Government is considering the proposal.

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA : Have Government made any attempt to find out any expert in the line ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : Yes, Sir, we are in correspondence with the Government of India.

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA : Did Government try to requisition the services of some of the experts who visited India recently ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : Some of the experts did come to Assam and made observations and we have got their correspondence.

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA : Did Mr. Savage visit Assam ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : I think, not.

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA : Did this Government make any attempt to invite him to this Province to study the problem and give his opinion ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : There are others who came to Assam and who have examined the problem, but if we find that Mr. Savage is a very great expert we shall consider the question.

Srijut MAHENDRA MOHAN CHAUDHURY : In view of the urgency of the matter will Government consider the desirability of sending some persons for training outside the Province so that the work may begin immediately ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : I do not understand the value of training outside. In fact, Sir, we have already written to a gentleman in Bengal who is supposed to have a great deal of experience in river training and we hope we shall get his services to advise us how this work can be done.

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA : Have Government got any expert in this Department at present in Assam ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : No, Sir, we have no expert now in respect of river training.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA : Are Government aware that the Government of India have taken up the Mahanadi and Damodar Valley schemes ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : How can we travel to Mahanadi and Damodar Valley ? What is the relevancy ?

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA : River training is a big problem, and we have got no expert. But by the help of the Central Government we can take up the project. The Central Government have taken up these schemes in other provinces. If the Government of Assam move the Central Government properly I am sure the latter will take up the Brahmaputra Valley and the Surma Valley schemes also. Recently I had been to Delhi and I had some consultation with the members of the Damodar Valley scheme and they told me that the Central Government were very much sympathetic to the river training schemes in the Provinces. I, therefore, think that if the Assam Government represent the matter to the Central Government they will consider the question favourably.

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : What is the Question, Sir ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The Question is: what interest are the Assam Government going to take in this project and how are they going to approach the Central Government ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : The point is this: a certain gentleman, Lt. Col. T. M. Oag, Director of Navigation, Central Water Works, Irrigation and Navigation, came to Assam and submitted a report. He has given us a long report which we will have to examine before we can do any thing about it.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Mr. Sen's contention was that if the Central Government are approached they would come to our assistance.

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: That we are already doing, Sir.

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA: May we know at what stage the negotiations are pe. ding between the Central Government and this Government?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: If I am permitted, I may explain the position, Sir. Though this is not my subject I am interested in it as a lay man. The position is this: various data are necessary in connection with the subject matter of this Question and unless these data are collected and surveys made no expert can help us. We are in correspondence with the Government of India regarding collection of any further data and nature of survey necessary for expert to help us with his advice.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Are these data being collected?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Yes, some are being collected, I am told.

Shri SATINDRA MOHAN DEV: Have this Government got any experts to collect data?

Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA: Who is to find out what data are to be ascertained? Have the points been fixed so that enquiry may be started in this matter?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: I have already stated that we are in correspondence with the Government of India and we are also considering inviting a gentleman from Bengal, who is known to be an expert in river training, to come to Assam and examine the problem.

Srijut MAHENDRA MOHAN CHAUDHURY: If the Central Government do not help us will the Assam Government abandon the scheme altogether?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: That is a hypothetical Question, Sir.

Srijut MAHENDRA MOHAN CHAUDHURY: The Hon'ble Minister has said that the matter is under correspondence with the Government of India and no final reply has been received from the latter. Suppose the Government of India.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The rules do not permit us to suppose.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Are we to take it that this Government have not approached the Government of India for any help in the matter?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: I have already stated several times that we are in correspondence with the Government of India. Some of the experts of the Government of India have already come and they are asking

for certain data. They want some more data regarding this matter. That is the position at the present time, and so this correspondence will be going on.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Hon'ble Mr. Satindra Mohan Dev wanted to know whether laymen could collect data for these experts?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: I am myself a layman and I cannot answer that Question.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I add one thing, Sir? The data will be collected on the basis of the enquiry of the Central Government. The experts want some data before they can come up here and take up the question by themselves. They do not want to waste their time. I am interested in this matter as Minister-in-charge of Planning and Development, and I can say that the data which are required by the experts and the Central Government experts will be collected and we shall submit the same to them and then they will take up the matter.

So far as the collection of data are concerned I think, this Government can, though not fully, but greatly help them so that the proposed work may be taken up.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: By their present officers?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Yes, Sir.

Unprecedented flood of the Buridehing

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH asked :

*20. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they ascertained the cause of the unprecedented flood of the Buridehing last year?

(b) Is it a fact that change of course of the Noa-Dehing is the cause of this devastating flood?

(c) Is it a fact that the Noa-Dehing may be trained to take its own course if operation is undertaken before March?

(d) If so, what prompt steps have been taken by Government to avert such floods in future?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY replied :

20. (a)—This is ascribed by Government of India and our experts to the blocking of the course of Noa-Dehing by thick deposition of boulder in its bed whereby the water in the Noa-Dehing was diverted into the Buridehing.

(b)—Not exactly so. See reply to Question 20(a).

(c)—It is a possibility, and not yet a fact, that the Noa-Dehing may be restored to its old course.

(d)—Work is in progress to this end. The work is being executed under the control of the Political Officer, Tirap Frontier Tract. The expenditure during the current year is expected to be Rs. 38,000.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: In reply to starred question No. 20(b), the Hon'ble Minister, if I heard him aright, said "See reply to Question 20(a)". How can he say that? It is a Starred Question.

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: Sir, the Question is: "Is it a fact that change of course of the Noa-Dehing is the cause of this devastating flood? In reply I said "Not exactly so". And then "See reply to Question 20(a)".

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister has missed my point. It is a Starred Question. The Hon'ble Minister has got the answer printed before him which the other hon. Members have not got.

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: I am sorry, Sir, but the Question 20(a) has already been answered. But in any case, Sir, I will correct it and say, "As I have already given a reply to Question No 20(a)".

Shri SATINDRA MOHAN DEV: Sir, if the Political Officer is an expert in the matter, cannot his services be obtained for river training?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: Sir, the Political Officer is one who will supervise the work to be done to remove some of the stony and woods that are blocking the course of the river but the work will be done by the labourers.

Shri SATINDRA MOHAN DEV: Sir, is it not with regard to diverting the course of the river?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: That is not diverting the course of the river.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: When will the work be finished, Sir?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: I cannot exactly say that, Sir.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(To which answers were laid on the table)

Purchase of handloom cloth

Maulavi MAKABBIR ALI MOZUMDAR asked:

64. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether they have ascertained the net loss suffered by Government for the purchase of handloom cloth from Madras and disposing of the mill quota of the Province?

(b) Who are the officers responsible for this loss?

(c) Whether any enquiry was held in the matter?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE replied:

64. (a)—The Government have suffered no loss.

(b) & (c)—Do not arise.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA:** Sir, is it a fact that the purchase of handloom cloth from Madras was made at an abnormally high price?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** Might be, Sir.

*Speech not corrected.

*Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Sir, is it not a fact that the hand-loom cloths that are being supplied from Madras are not liked by our people as our people are not in the habit of using them and so the Consumers Co-operative Societies are put to great trouble ?

*The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, it is upto the Consumers Co-operative Societies either to accept them or to refuse them. These are not coming now but came before.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Is it outside the quota ?

*The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: At least outside the present quota

*Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Will not they suffer if they do not accept the hand-loom cloth ?

*The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: No, Sir.

*Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA: Who are the sufferers, Sir ?

*The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Those who purchased them.

*Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA: Sir, who was responsible for this loss to the consumers ?

*The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, is that a Question ? What is the meaning of that Question ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It is not clear.

*The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: There is no meaning in it. Where is the loss ? Those who purchased it it was their duty to see whether they would be in a position to sell them, whether the price was high or low. It was certainly not the duty of the Government to see to it.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Will the non. Member amplify his Question ?

*Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA: Whether the purchasers purchased these cloths under the direction of Government ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: No. A purchaser may go to a shop and may or may not buy.

*Speech not corrected.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA :** Were these controlled cloths ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : That Question is to precede the other one.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA :** Was it not controlled by Government ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Has the hon. Member got his reply ?

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA :** Sir, the Hon'ble Minister agreed that the Government purchaser purchased the cloth and the public suffered the loss. Who was responsible for this loss to the public ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** Government did not suffer the loss.

***Babu JATINDRA HATH BHADRA :** For whose fault the consumers suffered the loss ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** The consumers suffered the loss for their own fault.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA :** Sir, did not the Government agency purchase it and put it into the market for sale ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** If there was any loss, they will suffer for it.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA :** Sir, was not there any Government servant to conduct the purchase ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** Yes, Sir.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA :** Then is he not responsible for the high price ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** Certainly not, Sir. How can a Government officer be responsible for high price.

***Srijut MAHENDRA MOHON CHAUDHURY :** Did Government fix the price ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** No, Sir.

***Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA :** Is it not the duty of the Government to look to the interests of the consumers ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE :** That Question does not arise here.

***Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA :** When Government servants are intervening in the matter of procurement of this cloth, it must be the duty of this Government to look to the interests of the consumers ?

*Speech not corrected.

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** Government's duty is to help the procuring agents. They did their part.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Mr. Sen's point is that there is a great dearth of cloth in Assam. Government appointed agencies and also lent officers for their assistance. When there is this dearth, should not Government see to the fact that cloths are purchased at a reasonable rate so that the consumers are not put to unnecessary hardship?

***Shri SATINDRA MOHON DEV:** There is no choice to purchase or not to purchase. I think that they have got no choice left to accept or reject. They are bound to accept.

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** That is a question of Co-operative Society. Certain choice is there. If they want to remain part and parcel of the Provincial Co-operative Textile Society, it is up to them whether they should remain in the Society. Government has not compelled any consumer to purchase this cloth at a higher price. Government has issued no direction to the consumer that they must buy this cloth at this rate.

***Babu SURESH CHANDRA BISWAS:** Is it not a fact that these cloths were supplied to the consumers on some occasion as Id or Puja?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** That might be, Sir. There was no other cloth that was available that the consumers could afford to purchase. Those who could not, did not purchase.

***Shri SATINDRA MOHON DEV:** Is it not a fact that Government issued a circular to the effect that unless hand-loom cloth is taken, mill cloth will not be given? Is there any circular like that?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** At present there is no circular like that. It might have been previously.

***Shri SATINDRA MOHON DEV:** Has Government rescinded that circular?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** There is no compulsion at present.

***Shri SATINDRA MOHON DEV:** Is it a fact that the circular is still in force?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** No, Sir.

***Shri SATINDRA MOHON DEV:** Will Government take it from me?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** I am not going to take it that way. I am not going to take that omnibus sentence.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA:** Is it a fact that the procuring agents are cheating the people and Government help them? (Laughter.)

*Speech not corrected.

***Babu RABINDRANATH ADITYA**: Does the Hon'ble Minister realise that there is something wrong in the selection of quota and the procuring centres ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE**: This cloth was not purchased during the life time of the present Ministry, and even if it was not done during the life time of the present Ministry, I may say this much that no other cloth was available at this time. That was the only variety of cloth that was available in the market at that time. The war situation was very grave, and it was thought that some time might come when we would not be in a position to import any cloth. So they purchased whatever was available. That was done by the procuring agent. They say that they did it and exercised their common sense or business brain. Government cannot be blamed for that.

***Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA**: Are not Government aware that even now the right type of cloth is not procured, *Dhuti* and *Sari* are scarce and unwanted cloths are thrust on subdivisions ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE**: Beggars cannot be choosers. We have been allotted the quota and we know that we are getting some such cloth which are not at all required by us. If we refuse, we will lose that. That is the position. We have taken this up for the last one year. On the 10th January there was a meeting at Delhi. I placed all the facts before that. It is not the case with Assam alone. In other provinces the same difficulty arises. We are not getting *dhutis* and *saris* in sufficient quantities as required. Some times cloths of the width of 39 inches and 7 yards in length are issued. All these things are not in the hands of Government. Government have taken it up. If we say 'no', we will lose the quota.

***Shri SATINDRA MOHON DEV**: If the Ministry has changed, the same Minister is in charge of the same portfolio.

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE**: I am sorry for the colossal ignorance of my hon. Friend.

***Babu JATINDRA NATH BHADRA**: Will the Hon'ble Minister take up the matter with the Government of India and purchase the right type of cloth ?

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE**: We have already taken it up. There is some sort of correspondence every week. I went there and personally attended that meeting and placed all the facts before them. It was admitted that injustice was being done to some of the provinces. The Central Government has accepted our position that we are being ill treated. They have given us the assurance that they will do what they can for us.

Recruitment to Assam Civil Service from outside candidates

Maulavi MD. ABDULLAH asked :

65. Will Government be pleased to state :—

(a) Whether they propose to stop totally the direct recruitment to the Assam Civil Service from outside candidates ?

- (b) Why the scale of pay of the Officers to be recruited in future to the Assam Civil Service has been contemplated to bring down to the scale of the Assam Junior Civil Service ?
- (c) What scale is being introduced by Government in respect of the College Lecturers ?
- (d) Whether the duties of the members of the Assam Civil Service demand a higher scale of pay in comparison with the duties of Lecturers ?
- (e) Whether Government contemplate to open separately two services one Executive and the other Revenue in the scale of pay of the present Assam Civil Service ?
- (f) Whether there is any bar to the appointment of a permanent and qualified member of the Assam Junior Civil Service to the Assam Civil Service by competitive Examination ?
- (g) If not, whether Government propose to allow such officer the present scale of pay of a member of the Assam Civil Service ?
- (h) Whether it is a fact that the present Congress Government is contemplating to do away with the communal ratio, specially in respect of appointment to the Assam Civil Service ?
- (i) If so, why ?
- (j) Whether the recent reservation of two posts in the Assam Civil Service and three in the Assam Junior Civil Service to be recruited shortly by the Assam Public Service Commission has been done from political motives to keep the Hill tribes with the Congress ?
- (k) Whether Government contemplate to absorb the temporary Sub-Deputy Collectors in the permanent cadre as they have done in respect of temporary Extra Assistant Commissioners ?
- (l) The numerical strength of the Muslim temporary Sub-Deputy Collectors, Valley by Valley ?
- (m) Whether Government propose to absorb them permanently on the basis of communal ratio previously granted to each community ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI replied :

65. (a)—As announced in Resolution No. AAA.10/45 of the 3rd December 1946 it has been decided that direct recruitment should in future be to the Junior Service. The cadre structure is under examination in detail.

(b)—It has been a source of grievance in the past that though candidates selected for both services possess similar qualifications and direct appointment to the senior service is partly a matter of fortune depending on the number of vacancies, promotion comes very late in service. It is therefore considered fairer in future to make appointments to the Senior Service after some years' actual employment when the respective worth of the candidates can be better estimated.

(c)—The present sanctioned scale is Rs.175—175—195—15—285(E.B.)—15—375 (E.B.)—15—450.

(d)—The qualifications required, the normal age of appointment, the duties and the prospects of the two services are all different, and they cannot therefore be compared in this manner.

(e)—No.

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(f)—Not if he is within the age limit for direct appointment. But, as already stated, it is not intended to make direct appointments to the Assam Civil Service in future.

(g)—Does not arise.

(h)—Government are considering the whole question of communal reservations in respect of the superior services, but have not yet reached conclusions.

(i)—Does not arise.

(j)—No. This was done because there is a serious shortage of officers suited for employment in the hill areas, no appointments having been made for some years to meet those needs.

(k)—The claims of the temporary officers are under consideration of the Public Service Commission.

(l)—Assam Valley 3.
Surma Valley 5.

(m)—Does not arise.

Statement *re* arrangement of business of the Assembly due to absence
of the Muslim League Party Members

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI : Before we take up the next item, Sir, I would like to mention one very important fact, regarding the present situation in the House, and to seek the opinion of the Leaders of other groups whether we could not make certain arrangements for speedier transaction of business on account of the peculiar circumstances in the House. You know, Sir, that day before yesterday, this House had to break up at quarter to one o'clock, although we had a full day left for the discussion of the Budget, which in the normal course of time would not only have really taken the whole day, but such more time as the House would be disposed to give. We have seen that the Opposition, the Muslim League as a party, are absent even today and we do not know what decision they have arrived at or for what reason they have taken the decision. We do not know if they will alter their attitude. As things stand to-day, I think it means a loss of valuable time if we have to do half a day's work or a quarter of a day's work and spend the rest of the time without any work. You know very well, Sir, how busy we have to be in respect of so many things. I should therefore be obliged if you will kindly allow some kind of discussion amongst ourselves to see, whether and under what condition, if it is found that the Muslim League do not come to attend the session—what steps we should take to expedite our business. I can tell you, on behalf of Government, Sir, that if an alteration of the programme is necessary, Government will be agreeable to come to the House and you, Sir, in that behalf with suggestions. I would surely expect you also to see how we may avoid wastage of our time.

Mr. W. R. FAULL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I anticipated some such statement from the Hon'ble Premier because in the speech which I am to make this afternoon I touched on exactly the same points and I think I might leave comment until I deal with my speech *in toto*.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Yes, the speech will be in a slightly different position from what the Hon'ble Leader of the House has made out at the present moment.

Mr. W. R. FAULL : I doubt it very much, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Opinions may differ, because, here, it is not only the Leader of the European Group, who is concerned and whose opinion in this matter will be very weighty for the particular reason that they must be given full facilities for the discussion of all the subjects before the House, but also of the Leader of the Opposition. So, personally, I feel that we have to ascertain first how we stand. Having ascertained it, probably we should chalk out our programme in such a way as to afford full and free facilities for a useful discussion of all the subjects before us, at the same time, not wasting public time and public money. For that purpose might I suggest to the Leader of the House to contact, either by correspondence or on the phone, with the Leader of the Muslim League Group to ascertain their intention in the matter? That would be essential to know before we try to chalk out any other programme. After doing that probably we might sit sometime, say, at 10-30 a.m. to-morrow. If this is desirable I might request the Leader of the Muslim League Group, the Leader of the European Group and also the Leader of the House for a small informal conference to see how we can avoid wasting time and money. If we can cut down at least 4 or 5 days from April we save a lot of public money and, at the same time, we save very valuable time.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : May I suggest one thing, Sir? The other day the Muslim League Members withdrew from the Chamber, intimating the House that they would not take part in the deliberations of the House on that day; about what they would do afterwards, of course, there was no indication given in the short statement that was made by their Leader. But even that short statement of the Leader gave me the impression that they would refrain from attending the Session even on the rest of the days. In the meantime they may decide however, Sir, as to whether they could come in. We may wait for a day or two and then if we do not hear anything from them, instead of Government writing to the Leader of the Opposition, it would be better if you yourself take up the matter with the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I have no objection.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : If the Hon'ble Premier makes a reference to them they may take exception to that. We are all very anxious to have them here in this Assembly; we deplore their absence. But I feel, Sir, it would be more desirable that you yourself take up the question and point out to them that if they intend not to attend the Assembly on any other days, then a fresh programme of business of the House may be chalked out, curtailing the days of sitting of the House. It is better that they should know about that. To continue the session up to 10th April in the absence of the Opposition means a lot of expenditure and trouble for all parties in view of the fact that full days business for each of the remaining days will not be there. So, it will be more graceful if you yourself take up the matter.

The Hon'ble Srijiit GOPINATH BARDOLAI : It is exactly the suggestion which I was going to make. I think, as the custodian of the rights and privileges of all the Members of the House, it will be more appropriate for you to make the correspondence with the Leaders of the various Parties.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I shall try to ascertain the views of the Parties and I request the Leaders of different Groups to meet in my Chamber at 10 a.m. on Sunday.

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLAI : I should like to have it earlier, Sir. We are also considering as to the convenience of the Council which has been adjourned *in die* and it will be better if we meet at 10 a.m. to-morrow.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Yes, that will be suitable. I will write to the Leader of the Muslim League Party requesting him to let me know as to what course of action his party propose to take so that if they abstain from the session, the programme of the business for the session might be altered or adjusted accordingly. I shall also request him to come, if possible, to-morrow at 10 a.m. in my Chamber in the Assembly. The Leader of the House and the Leader of the European Group are also hereby requested to attend a small informal conference to-morrow at 10 a.m. in my Chamber. I will not write to them separately.

Statement *re* certain communal disturbances at Sylhet

Babu SURESH CHANDRA BISWAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, before we propose to proceed with today's business may I, with your permission, bring to the notice of this hon. House a very serious incident that took place at Sylhet? And I request the Hon'ble Home Minister to make a statement with regard to that.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : What is that serious matter?

Babu SURESH CHANDRA BISWAS : On the 10th and 11th March a judgment was going to be delivered by the Additional District Magistrate, Sylhet, regarding a case of the 16th August incident, and on that occasion some Muslim Leaguers entered into the Court of the Additional District Magistrate and created disturbances there. They hoisted the Muslim League flag inside the Court and broke the windows and glasses and the hoodligans also created some disturbances in the town. School boys and girls had to run to the neighbouring shops; shops were closed. Besides these, there were other incidents also. So, I like, with your permission, to bring this matter to the notice of the Government.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government have not as yet received any official information about what my hon. Friend Mr. Biswas has said on the floor of the House. But some informations have reached me to the effect that on the 10th or 11th March, the Additional District Magistrate was delivering a judgment in certain cases arising out of the disturbances of the 16th August. In those cases there were charges of looting, beating and other criminal acts. The Additional District Magistrate convicted about 28 persons; at the time he was delivering the judgments there was a crowd of people assembled before his Court to make demonstration. So after he had passed the judgment, there was some demonstration against the orders of conviction and the crowd paraded through certain parts of the town with slogans. There were also some brickbats thrown at some shops. These are all the informations that I have received. The Police took some precautions and nothing untoward happened. This is what I have learnt about the occurrence

but with regard to what actually happened we shall certainly be getting official information from the District authorities and when that report is obtained then necessary steps can be taken to prevent recurrences of such disturbances.

Budget discussion

Mr. W. R. FAULL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Planting and Commerce Group were greatly concerned at the large amount and complexity of the business to be transacted during this meeting of the Legislature. It was apprehended that time would be quite insufficient to enable Members to discuss with any degree of thoroughness the very important issues involved in this programme. The Budget alone is over three times the pre-war size. The Central Assembly and many other Provincial Assemblies meet much earlier and appear to be giving to their Members far greater opportunities for discharging their obligations to their constituents. We listened with attention to the statements made on Monday by you, Sir, but we still thought that the decision to adjourn the session in time to allow hon. Members to leave before the Bihu festival on the 14th and 15th April and to resume the session in June or July was one, which, in our view, required reconsideration. Public workers should always be ready to sacrifice their personal pleasures for the common good, and in any case we considered that a brief intermission of the session for a few days would be possible and the session could be continued to the end of April or even into the month of May. Why, we reflected, should important public business be transacted with such indecent haste? There was no justification for carrying out legislation at this furious tempo and we have sufficient experience in this Province of legislation undertaken in haste and repented at leisure. A cost of Rs. 12,000 was mentioned as the price for a week's adjournment but would not the cost of paying for Members to return to their residences in April and to come back in June or July have been far greater? However, Sir, unforeseen developments have caused a radical change in the situation. Except for a brief appearance one day only the Opposition Party has been absent, and if these altered conditions persist, there will be, quite unexpectedly, time for our Group to make the full contribution to the discussions. Nevertheless, we hope that in future you, Sir, will see that adequate time is allowed for the due consideration of the business of the House.

As you, Sir, have already agreed, the present programme involved a very serious deprivation of the rights of private Members. It was perhaps natural that Government should regard the Legislature as useful only for carrying out its legislative programme but all Members have responsibilities to their constituents. Parliament has been described as the grand inquest of the nation, not because it was a machine for legislation, but because it was an instrument for scrutinising the actions of the Government, and for bringing to the notice of Government grievances of the public crying for redress. Private Members' business days three months hence are a poor substitute for the notice of Government for scrutinising in the changed circumstances which have arisen, it should be possible to consider a revision of the programme of the session, and include days for private Members' business, and at the same time complete the whole of the business by the appointed date without the need of an adjourned session in June or July. Again, before turning to discussion of the Budget figures, I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Group I represent, to congratulate the Ministry, officers serving under the Ministry and the rank and file of the administration, on the successful preservation of law and order in this Province. We earnestly trust that the Leaders of the leading Political Parties in the Province will be prepared whenever occasion demands to discuss their differences in a friendly and

compromising spirit. When Provinces much stronger in material resources and seemingly better organised have been overwhelmed by the forces of disorder and anarchy, it is greatly to the credit of the Ministry and the administration that there has been no incident of large scale mob violence during the past year. I do not wish to encourage in the Ministry a spirit of complacency. On the contrary, we expect the Ministry to utilise the present time to equip their Police force so efficiently that they will be able to meet any threats from whatever directions they may come. There is still a great need for modernisation of the Police, though in some particulars a little progress is being achieved. The cost of disorder is invariably high and expenditure which will secure a higher degree of Police efficiency will represent a very sound investment. There are, for example, still many Police stations with telephone lines passing nearby which have not been equipped with telephones. It is, however, accepted that prompt despatch and receipt of information is invaluable in preventing and detecting crime. There is much to be done but we are confident that with the knowledge acquired from disaster elsewhere, the Ministry will approach the problem with renewed purpose.

There are a few salient features in the Revised Estimates of 1946-47 which merit comment. The fact that Government have been able to increase their expenditure in the current year by 179 lakhs of rupees is almost entirely due to the legacy of an improvement of 265 lakhs in the opening balance, due to a large extent to increase in Treasury Bills. There have been welcome improvements under Taxes on Income, Forests, Police and altogether revenue is up by 167 lakhs, but this includes a Grant of Rs. 95 lakhs from the Centre for Post-War expenditure. The capital accounts show very much larger recoveries from Government trading ventures resulting in an improvement of 120 lakhs on the Budget Estimates. There is also a reduction in the Capital Accounts for floating debt.

It is, however, necessary for me to express a very serious financial irregularity disclosed in the Revised Estimates of 1946-47. The Finance Department, who have a special responsibility for preparing the Budget, have been guilty of a flagrant breach of their own rules. The Budget Manual lays down that expenditure within the financial year, not contemplated in the Budget, can only be incurred when the expenditure has been newly imposed by Statute or by the order of a Court of Law or any other competent Authority, or when urgent necessity has arisen for the proposed expenditure and postponement would cause serious loss to the public service. Finance Department are required to advise whether a supplementary demand should be presented in the Assembly or whether a scheme should be postponed until the following year. It is, however, expressly laid down that where expenditure is optional a Supplementary Demand must be placed before the Assembly as early as possible. The Finance Department have betrayed their trust and an expenditure to the extent of over 100 lakhs will have been incurred without legal sanction.

I request, Mr. Speaker, that decisive action should be taken to preserve the privileges of this House. The Assembly met in September last and passed Supplementary Demands for about 22 lakhs. It is impossible to believe that Government had no plans to place before the Assembly, since in regard to Post-War Schemes it is stated that 94 lakhs are expected to be spent before the end of March though no provision has been made in the Budget. No Ministry can dissipate 94 lakhs in the space of a few days. There has been a deliberate attempt to deprive the House of its statutory right to discuss before and not after expenditure is incurred.

The thought which occurred to me after examining the Budget Estimates for 1947-48 was the biblical phrase:—"Be not a beggar made by banquetting on borrowing". The Hon'ble Finance Minister is preparing a magnificent

banquet for the province by taking loans of 205 lakhs from the Central Government and borrowing an additional 100 lakhs in the short term market. No suggestion has been made of repaying these loans or meeting future interest charges on the borrowings.

Quite clearly the Hon'ble Finance Minister believes that love of money is the root of all evils, and is hastening to save the Province by extracting what he can by taxation and borrowing and dissipating the proceeds as quickly as possible. In spite of the urgent need for countering inflation—and reduction in the level of Government expenditure is one of the accepted methods of deflating—there is to be a vast programme of Government expenditure in order to accelerate the pace of inflation. The heavy demand for goods and services involved in a five-crore programme on top of the normal expenditure will undoubtedly exert a powerful upward thrust on commodity prices. To borrow and pledge the credit of the province to accomplish this deplorable result is to say the least imprudent in the extreme.

The new financial year will open with a balance of 219 lakhs less than on 1st April, 1946. Revenue receipts show an increase of 260 lakhs, due almost entirely to grants from the Government of India of 362 lakhs. Of this, 80 lakhs represent a real gift for national highways, but the grant of 283 lakhs towards post-war schemes is apparently conditional on the province finding the balance of expenditure required for the schemes in future years. The principal revenue heads show a slight decline on the revised. Agricultural income-tax, which depends mainly on the prosperity of the Tea Industry, should produce as much at least as in the revised. Excessive caution has been exercised in framing the estimates under Forests and motor vehicles taxation. We believe that, given normal trading conditions, the demand for timber will continue at a high level, and the number of motor vehicles on the roads in the next financial year will be higher than at present.

At this stage it will be convenient to refer briefly to new taxation proposals. While we readily agree that the Province requires a larger income, we feel that in the new taxation measures too little consideration has been given to the heavy burdens which persons of the middle and upper classes are now required to carry. Even with crushing taxation on the high income groups, Government cannot secure sums comparable with those obtainable from extremely light taxation imposed on the bulk of the population. The Central and Provincial Governments, by direct and indirect taxation, are now removing a large percentage of the incomes of the richer sections of the community and unless this trend is checked, there will be little reward for enterprise and initiative. We are, however, in agreement that introduction of a sales tax is desirable, though in certain directions modifications are necessary. It is, however, impossible to justify a second income tax under the guise of a professions tax. In England, from where the 'income-tax' was borrowed, a person is not charged on the income which he makes from his profession and then taxed a second time on his profession. We hope that the Ministry will recognise the reasonableness of this argument and abandon this indefensible tax.

To return to the budget figures—Revenue expenditure shows an increase of 497 lakhs, making a total expenditure of 1,181 lakhs which is more than double the Budget Estimate of 1944-45. This is almost entirely accounted for by post-war schemes under 63B. On normal revenue expenditure there are only minor changes and the only large increase is Rs.9 lakhs on Education. State trading schemes are expected to show an excess over expenditure of 13 lakhs against 90 lakhs in the revised, but we do not know whether any of this can be regarded as profit. In the capital accounts there is an increase of one crore in floating debt, and thanks to this and the central loans, the year will close with a balance of 30 lakhs more than the opening balance.

I cannot conclude my analysis of the Budget without commenting on the failure of Government to supply full and complete estimates of expenditure in adequate time. The evening before the Budget is due to be presented we received the printed volume of the detailed estimates of the five cross post-war schemes. This is a very large appendix and it is so full of figures that without keeping the patient under observation for some days we cannot be expected to decide whether a major operation is necessary. This House is being asked to vote expenditure on new schemes which exceeds the amount of the whole Budget a few years ago. And we are offered no time to examine how this money is to be spent. After the Budget is over and money is voted, we are promised a statement from the Hon'ble Minister for Planning and Development on the post-war plan. Even then there will be no adequate opportunity to debate this. Mr. Speaker, the manner in which this Budget has been presented constitutes a serious restriction of the rights of the House, and I trust that you will examine what action is to be taken to preserve the valuable democratic privilege of free and full discussion.

It is imperative that the Ministry should pause before carrying out schemes on any large scale. First of all prove that in a comparatively small area, such as a subdivision, the scheme will work and then consider expanding it to wide areas. No private individual would ever consider embarking on untried schemes on a vast scale. He experiments, perfects his technique, and then expands his activities.

Nationalization.—We are not opposed to nationalization but are strongly of the view that public money should not be invested in industry when a more efficient service can be provided by private enterprise. I shall have occasion later to refer to the melancholy record of the Assam Government in trade. The state participates to a very large extent in the profits of every successful company and the Province's share of central income-tax and also to a great extent of agricultural income-tax is due almost entirely to the efforts of private enterprise. In addition, every new private enterprise creates employment, produces goods required by the public and in turn the employees create demands for supplies which encourage the development of further trade. Assam is industrially backward and its meagre natural resources and its geographical position have in the past been handicaps. Now when the public are prepared to invest in industry, Government have imposed an embargo on any new substantial private enterprise with the result that industrial expansion is obstructed. In other Provinces rapid progress is being made while Assam remains static. I would earnestly invite the attention of the Ministry to the statesmanlike utterance of a Minister of another Congress Province. "We have to," he said, "and we must subsidize and otherwise encourage private industrial enterprise". I will repeat "subsidize and otherwise encourage private industrial enterprise". Other provinces have already made real progress towards establishing electrical grids and initiating huge hydro-electric schemes and generally are offering generous facilities to attract new industry. It is still not too late for Government to repent and adopt a more realistic approach to this important problem. Even at the present time, technicians are being trained, at the cost of Government for whom there is no prospect in the near future of their securing any employment in Assam, and it is certain that as far as this Province is concerned their training is a sheer waste of money and manpower.

The Government's post-war development plans contain no proof of co-ordination and direction. It is not sufficient to spend vast sums of money but if the wealth of the Province is to be increased so as to support at some later date essential services commensurate with the needs of the people, it will be necessary to spend so that the production of wealth is increased. We have been promised a statement on the new post-war plan on the 11th April but we

would strongly urge that the plan should first be examined by a Committee possessing expert and technical qualifications. We would suggest that the former Economic Advisory Board, suitably expanded, might be able to give Government valuable assistance in formulating their final plan. Another course would be to follow the practice of the Central Government and have all new major schemes examined in detail by a standing Finance Committee of the Assembly. In addition, opportunities should be given to the House to have a full debate on it, since on the wise spending of these large sums of money will depend the future prosperity of the Province. After this review is complete a supplementary demand statement should be presented in the next financial year to cover the items included at present under head 63B.

Hon. Members are all too familiar with the sad history of Assam Transport. In spite of large indirect subsidies from Government by elimination of competition, by the liberal grant of petrol from the restricted provincial supplies and by carrying for Government Departments at unreasonably high rates, the enterprise is admitted by Government in their Budget Memorandum to be a failure. Its future is under consideration and our advice to Government is to leave this and other commercial undertakings to those who have the capacity to manage them efficiently.

I come now to a very hardy annual,—failure of Government to produce intelligible accounts of their undertakings—food supply, cloth and motor transport. A system of trading accounts which ignores all interest and depreciation charges and fails to make any distinction between capital and revenue transactions can be of no value. The Government of India have devised a system of commercial accounts specially for adoption by Government Departments engaged in trade. I am referring to the Manual of the Commercial Audit Branch of the Indian Accounts Department and I would commend this valuable book to the notice of the Hon'ble Finance Minister. There has been too long a conspiracy of silence about these State enterprises and it is time that the Hon'ble Finance Minister appreciated his responsibility to the taxpayers. The State demands of every company the maintenance of accounts which include the preparation of a balance sheet and a profit and loss account. The State to expect of Government that they should apply to their own undertakings principles which they have accepted as necessary in the case of companies and which have been made mandatory by company law?

I will conclude with a brief reference to the deplorable state of supplies of cloth, mustard oil and pulses. Along with other sections of the community the tea garden and industrial labourer is suffering acutely at present through the breakdown of Government supply arrangements. Employers have granted large increases in cash wages and if essential supplies were available labour would be in a very sound position. The labourers' clothing, however, is in tatters and the food stuffs (rice excepted) which Government have been able to procure do not constitute a satisfactory working class standard of diet and in consequence there is very considerable unrest at present, which may increase. The Hon'ble Finance Minister in his budget speech has given details of the imports of Gur, mustard oil, Dals, etc., into the Province in 1944-45 to show the dependence of Assam on outside supplies. I should like to give a few figures of imports through Government quotas of mustard oil in 1944-45 to show the dependence on other priorities in 1945 and 1946. Dal in 1946 was only 42,000 maunds against 121,000 maunds in 1945; and mustard oil in 1946 was only 22,000 maunds in 1945. Though 1945 was relatively a period of improved supplies compared with our present position, the failure of the Government in 1945 to make supplies available was criticised in this House in a very able speech and, with your permission, I will quote a short passage as it appears to be of

great interest today :—

“If the quota given to the Province is short, Government must try to get it increased. But they can do this only by showing that the nourishing properties of the food that people are getting are much below the level of absolute necessity. A civilised Government must find a proper dietary for the people but Government do not seem to consider that this is a subject worth bothering about at all.”

I need only add that the Member in question is now the head of the present administration.

We would, however, express our thanks to the Hon'ble Prime Minister who has very kindly consented to receive a representative delegation of this Group, and we hope that the outcome of these deliberations will be some measure of improvement in essential supplies particularly for plantation and industrial labour.

With these remarks, Sir, I conclude.

***Babu BIDYAPATI SINGHA:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, more than a year has elapsed since the Congress Ministry took office in Assam on the strength of our *populi* and people of Assam rightly hoped that a revolutionary change for the better would take place in the domain of supply, education and other vital matters of public interest. Now the Budget placed before the hon. House will justify the aspirations of the mass people and so I venture to discuss about it with the full knowledge of my shallow ideas regarding finance but only to express my humble opinion and suggestions on some items in the Budget and to beat about the bush in general.

It is a happy augury that Education has been allotted the place of first importance in the Budget of this year. Regarding direct grants to non-Government Arts Colleges, G. C. College, Silchar, has been conspicuous by omission. I congratulate the Hon'ble Minister of Education for allotting scholarships for Assam students in Jadavpur Engineering College acceding to a long standing public clamour.

Regarding direct grants to non-Government Secondary Schools, it would have been much better if the scheme submitted by the ex Director of Public Instruction Maulavi A. Lais, was properly valued. According to that scheme our high schools are to get aid at the rate of Rs.2 per pupil and also it was shown that de-provincialising Government High Schools, each High School will get a recurring grant-in-aid of Rs.500. I fail to understand why the scheme is put in cold storage. Recently at Sylhet a conference of Aided High School teachers was held with Srijut Gauri Kanta Talukdar in the Chair and the Government was requested in a resolution to grant interim relief to the economically hardpressed Aided High School teachers.

In the much-talked of Sargent Scheme also emphasis was laid upon High Schools and the simple fact is as clear as daylight that unless our present High Schools can run efficiently the post-war reconstruction of education as well as other departments would not be possible. However after a long last the high school education has been allotted the pride of place of first importance in the Educational Development Scheme of Assam.

In the last September Session of the Assembly, it was passed that the Middle Vernacular School teachers would get an increased salary by the flat rate of Rs.5 per head per mensem but as yet they are not getting it. In the present Budget a provision has been made to raise the salary of the trained Lower Primary teachers to Rs.25 each per month but it is not clear whether due respect would be paid to the cases of these teachers enjoying already near about Rs.25. Again, Sir, I find that up till now no difference has been made in the pay between the Lower Primary and Middle Vernacular School teachers. I urge upon the Government to remove this vital defect by recognising the higher status of the Middle Vernacular School teachers. My final suggestion to the Government

*Speech not corrected by hon. member.

and at the same time nurse efficiently the infant Post-War Schemes to adolescence? I venture to suggest, Sir, that it is incumbent now on Government to seriously consider the advisability of enlarging the size of the Cabinet to face the task of spending double the amount spent during the current

I do not like to comment further on various other points which have already discussed and also will be discussed on the floor of the House. I will present before the consideration of the House a few matters relating to my own District of Cachar which unluckily has not been able to keep abreast of the march of times. The Cachar people seem to be rolling in the Serbonian bog; they cannot realise whether they are living under the popular Congress Government. To this effect I beg to draw the attention of the Government to incidents which occurred in the Jamiat-Ul-Ulema Conference held at Cachar and also the article entitled "বিস্তৃত বিস্তৃত" published in the Local Paper the *Amra* in the last month and also the distribution of contracts of Public Works Department, Excise and Supply.

The Cachar district especially the Silchar subdivision has a big surplus of rice product and this is the main agricultural product on which the peasantry depends. The fluctuation in the price of rice is vital to the people. The absence of direct purchase by the Government from the cultivators has thrown them to the mercy of unscrupulous businessmen. I therefore request the Government to save the cultivators by starting direct purchase in no time. For the betterment of the general condition of the people of Cachar, the Government should adopt the following measure for the distribution of contracts—distribution of contracts in the Public Works Department, Forest, Supply, and other Departments etc., should be made on proportional communal representation basis to the bonafide natives of the district. It has been brought to my notice that the contracts of some departments go to persons mostly of that community in which the Departmental district-heads belong to. Moreover, influential persons not belonging to the district are often preferred to the natives. I invite the pointed attention of the Government to the above and expect that Government will take speedy steps in the matter.

The allotment of grant for expenditure in Cachar on Post-War Schemes should be made on the population basis. On this issue I like to make a few specific suggestions. Cachar has adequate raw materials for manufacture of sugar, paper and plywood and erection of factories for the purpose should constitute an item of the Post-War Reconstruction scheme in Cachar.

The flood havoc in Cachar is a calamity of frequent occurrence. The Post-War Reconstruction Scheme should have in its list of urgent items this problem at the top.

The Jaynagar-Katigar Road (in Cachar District) which as early as in 1939 was considered by the Road Communications Board to be the only Local Board Road to be taken over by the Public Works Department for reconstruction at a sanctioned estimated cost of about Rs. 66,000 was left over due to War, but now after the cessation of hostilities this very important Road has not been included even in the first priority list. I on behalf of my constituency insist on this Road being given the first preference and the work of its reconstruction being taken up immediately. The Silchar Local Board has passed a resolution to this effect unanimously in January last and sent copies of the resolution to the proper authorities.

The pressure on land in the district is by this time intensely heavy and Government should throw open reserves to the natives of the district for habitation and cultivation.

Mr. BENODE KUMAR J. SARWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to speak something in connection with the Budget estimates for 1947-48. Sir, though some new schemes have been provided, I feel it my duty to put forward some suggestions before this House. In the rural areas specially, I do not find, the Government have yet tried to remove their grievances. For example, the ex-tea garden labourers in the rural areas are terribly backward in education, and they are economically very poor. So the Government should have provided more primary schools in the interior villages, where they wanted, and the venture schools should have been taken up by the Government. Lists of primary schools and venture schools required were submitted to the Education Minister, but no steps had been taken to provide them. It seems to me that there has been no desire for educating the poor ex-tea garden labourers in the villages. Do we wish to keep them in their ignorance and vice?

Now, as regards public Health, I bring to the notice of Government that there are not enough hospitals and dispensaries in the villages. The hospitals and dispensaries as at present located are at great distances apart, some 10 miles, some 20 miles, even more in some cases. The poor suffering patients in the villages cannot go to the distant Government hospitals and dispensaries to get their medicine and so they suffer much and in many cases die for want of medicine. The Government should have opened more hospitals and dispensaries than we have at present. If for lack of funds they could not open them they could have at least made provisions for travelling doctors with medicines for the interior villages and thus could save the poor suffering from sickness and death in the villages.

Next important thing which I wish to bring to the notice of the Government is the proper drinking water supply both in the urban and rural areas. In the urban areas some municipal towns cannot manage to provide adequately water supply to the rate payers on account of their old and damaged water pumping machines. For instance, the Tezpur water pumping machine being so old and damaged cannot supply adequately drinking water to the rate-payers. In such cases, Government should help such municipal towns with such grants as would enable them to have some new machines to remove the scarcity of water. Sir, where the water pumping machine does not work properly, Government should allot some special grant for new machines or grant some loans; otherwise they should provide special grant for concrete ring wells. In the rural areas, Sir, there are not enough drinking wells provided by the local bodies for want of fund and so the villagers suffer much for want of drinking water. I request Government to provide some wells for drinking water in the rural areas.

Next, Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of the Government that the Supply Department has failed totally to meet the demands of the people. There has been great shortage of cloth, mustard oil, dal, etc. In the villages specially, proper distribution of these stuffs are not being made. Will the Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge of Supply please see that the people do not suffer on account of food and cloth which are absolutely necessary for their lives?

Lastly, regarding Government grant to Tezpur Municipality, I wish to remind the Minister-in-charge of Local Self-Government that in the year 1944, the Government—in spite of giving some hope to the Tezpur Municipality, on behalf of which, I moved at that time, that they would allot some grant for the extension of the Urmsan Road in the Lalmati area, Ward No. 1—Tezpur Municipality, but for some reasons probably due to the war still going on at that time—did not give any grant for this purpose, though the Tezpur Municipality submitted their estimates after surveying the extension

of the Urmson Road, as they were asked by the Government to submit the estimate, for which also the Deputy Commissioner, Darrang in his memo No. 4755—M, dated, the 16th September 1944, asked the Tezpur Municipality to submit the estimate to the Government. I hope the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge Local Self-Government would now please refer to the Tezpur Municipality regarding the extension of the Urmson Road in the Tezpur Municipality. Now that there is fund for post war Development schemes, I hope, the Government would grant money required according to the estimate submitted by the Tezpur municipality for the extension of the Urmson Road in Lalmati area Ward No. 1 which is badly needed for that locality.

In conclusion, I am sorry to say that I do not find anything specially done by the Minister-in-charge of Labour to improve the condition of the tea garden and ex-tea garden labourers.

With these words, Sir, I close my speech.

Babu NIBARAN CHANDRA LASKAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I offer my heartiest congratulation to the Hon'ble Finance Minister for the presentation of the Budget for the year 1947-48. The Finance Minister started his career with the budget speech of the year 1946-47 wherein he held out various promises for national building schemes, popular relief measures, educational upliftment and betterment of supply position. We sincerely feel that for reasons of financial stringency and the limits within which the present Government has had to exert itself, it is not possible for Government to implement all its resources and realise its cherished aims. But after the lapse of one year when there are glimpses of bright objects in the offing, not only my constituency but also the public in general must be satisfied with some pertinent answer to their very pertinent question "What have you done for us? Where is our food, our oil, our cloth?" I with impunity give the hackneyed reply that the greatest political organisation of the country is at the helm and they are to wait? Sir, men cannot wait for food and civilisation condemns nakedness.

The Budget for the year 1947-48 is indeed rich with schemes and projects—industrial, educational and post-war. But these schemes do not seem to contemplate amelioration of the immediate grievances of the voiceless suffering millions strewn over the country side. The lack of efficiency in the price control measures which is the direct outcome of the bungling of the business magnets who work in conscious unison with their satellites to baffle Government measures and also purchase the help of a number of Government officers-in-charge, is an open scandal. To my mind, and I presume I also voice the feeling of many of the hon. Members of the House in saying this that it is necessary for Government to do away with the last vestige of control or to tighten it to an extent which renders black-marketing an impossible hazard.

Sir, I am also to bring to the notice of the Hon'ble House, a very important fact which is that the general public, especially those most hard hit, as well as those in the rival camp charge us including our Hon'ble Ministers, with delinquency in the proper discharge of our duties entrusted to us. I know that those persons do not appreciate our difficulties and also do not fully realise the strain and stress under which the Ministry has to function. It pains us to hear abuses hurled at our Ministers who are trying their level best to cope with the huge amount of work, their place of position demands. It is I think, due to their ranks having been reduced by three of their colleagues joining the Constituent Assembly that each of the Ministers now working in the Cabinet have had to work with an augmented portfolio. Is it possible, Sir, for the Minister-in-charge of Supply, scouring throughout the length and breadth of the country to secure morsels for the hungry people of the country, to look after the intricate subjects of transport—a new Governmental venture

and at the same time nurse efficiently the infant Post-War Schemes to adolescence? I venture to suggest, Sir, that it is incumbent now on Government to seriously consider the advisability of enlarging the size of the Cabinet of a faces the task of spending double the amount spent during the current

I do not like to comment further on various other points which have already been discussed and also will be discussed on the floor of the House. I will present before the consideration of the House a few matters relating to my own District of Cachar which unluckily has not been able to keep abreast of the march of times. The Cachar people seem to be rolling in the Serbo-Croatian bog; they cannot realise whether they are living under the popular Government. To this effect I beg to draw the attention of the Government to incidents which occurred in the Jamiat-ul-Ulema Conference held at Cachar and also the article entitled "ফকির ফকির" published in the Local Paper the *Ulema* in the last month and also the distribution of contracts of Public Works Department, Excise and Supply.

The Cachar district especially the Silchar subdivision has a big surplus of rice product and this is the main agricultural product on which the peasantry depends. The fluctuation in the price of rice is vital to the people. The system of direct purchase by the Government from the cultivators has thrown them to the mercy of unscrupulous businessmen. I therefore request the Government to save the cultivators by starting direct purchase in no time. For the betterment of the general condition of the people of Cachar, the Government should adopt the following measure for the distribution of contracts— the distribution of contracts in the Public Works Department, Forest, Supply, and other Departments etc., should be made on proportional communal representation basis to the bonafide natives of the district. It has been brought to my notice that the contracts of some departments go to persons mostly of that community in which the Departmental district-heads belong to. Moreover, influential persons belonging to the district are often preferred to the natives. I invite the pointed attention of the Government to the above and expect that Government will take speedy steps in the matter.

The allotment of grant for expenditure in Cachar on Post-War Schemes should be made on the population basis. On this issue I like to make a few specific suggestions. Cachar has adequate raw materials for manufacture of sugar, paper and plywood and erection of factories for the same purpose should constitute an item of the Post-War Reconstruction scheme in Cachar.

The flood havoc in Cachar is a calamity of frequent occurrence. The Post-War Reconstruction Scheme should have in its list of urgent items this problem at the top.

The Jaynagar-Katigar Road (in Cachar District) which as early as in 1939 was considered by the Road Communications Board to be the only Local Board Road to be taken over by the Public Works Department for reconstruction at a sanctioned estimated cost of about Rs. 66,000 was left over due to War, but now after the cessation of hostilities this very important Road has not been included even in the first priority list. I on behalf of my constituency insist on this Road being given the first preference and the work of its reconstruction of its being taken up immediately. The Silchar Local Board has passed a resolution to this effect unanimously in January last and sent copies of the resolution to the proper authorities.

The pressure on land in the district is by this time intensely heavy and Government should throw open reserves to the natives of the district for habitation and cultivation.

In concluding this speech of mine I shall be failing in my duty if I do not say what I am feeling so strongly about the scheduled caste communities which I am to represent in the Assembly directly.

During the last election the scheduled castes electorates were imbued with the Congress tradition, ideology and cast their faith in the promises made and hopes held out in the Congress Election Manifesto. In last March the Budget for 1946-47 included almost nothing specifically for this community but then the Congress was simply taking over the administration at that time. In this Session the Hon'ble Finance Minister has presented the Budget for 1947-48 which is as gloomy a picture for my community as it was last time. The legislature of a Province like ours which is envisaging a coming year in which 5 crores of rupees in excess over the current year's expenditure of about 7 crores of rupees is expendable, should in all fitness of things consider, whether any perceptible fraction of this amount can find its way to the doors of the people of my community. If not, and if things are allowed to drift as they are at present doing, will it be unusual on the part of the scheduled caste electorates to indulge in a comparative criticism of the Government? Will they not ask themselves whether in vain did they put their faith in the mighty Congress Organisation? Can they not tack themselves with some other organisation or political camp which can deliver them the goods? Sir, the House is perhaps aware what direct charges were levelled against the Congress scheduled caste Members of this Legislative Assembly and also against is popular Government in a meeting held at Karimganj in February last under the presidentship of Mr. Jogendra Nath Mandal, the law Member of the Interim Government. There is a feeling constantly growing in magnitudes among the scheduled caste people of the Surma Valley that we, their representatives in the Assembly, are mere hangers-on satellites. I pertinently ask my Leaders in the Party, what am I to do to remove this feeling to allay their suspicions. In my own humble way I have drawn up my plan for the purpose in the following manner:—

The first and the foremost need of my community is a liberal general Education. I have studied closely the glorious new schemes of the Education Department as laid down in the Memorandum but I have failed to find out in it anything which will give some tangible benefit to the students of the scheduled castes. As for example, the Mass Literacy Campaign for adult education, the re-organisation of the Provincial Education Department, grants for Sanskrit Education etc, will not in the least further the cause of general education of the children of the scheduled castes. Unless Government give a good impetus in this direction, how can the poor scheduled caste people expect to come up to their requisite standard of companionship with their more advanced neighbours? The door of higher services which require men of high calibre will be permanently shut to them.

Regarding services, distribution of contracts, licenses, permits, quota certificates I have reports that the scheduled castes people are not getting their proportional shares. The attention of the popular Government is invited to the above facts. I don't like to dwell on these subjects any longer. Some of our grievances had been placed before the House by my hon. Friend Srijut Beliram Das yesterday, some of these will be put forth by my other Colleagues too. With a view to speak on these subjects elaborately later on as occasion demands, I beg to resume my seat.

Mr. P. M. SARWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon'ble Minister of Finance has presented the Budget for the year 1947-48. I must appreciate the great trouble and pains he has taken in surmounting the financial difficulties of this Province. He has taken into account the question of making this Province self sufficient in the matter of essential foodstuffs, agriculture, industries,

public health, medical improvement and development of rural areas. He has tried to help the various departments.

There is one statement of the Hon'ble Finance Minister which has drawn my particular attention and the people whom I represent indirectly would thank the Hon'ble Finance Minister for taking account of that. Government of Assam in the past have ignored these people and the present Government have not taken them into consideration till now. There is a large population of tribal backward people and tea garden labourers inhabiting the vast areas of Hills and plains of Assam. In spite of their anxiety they have not been able to do much for them. I refer to the anxiety of the Hon'ble Finance Minister particularly for the ex-tea garden labourers who have never been taken into consideration by the past Government. The past Government of Assam have never given a square deal, I should say any deal, to the tea garden tribes and castes of Assam and this fact would be seen from the records of the different Assemblies from year to year. What about the present Government? Will every thing end in the intentions and wishes? Or shall we expect that the present Government will do something very substantial for these neglected people of Assam—the tea garden tribes and castes. Times are moving with hectic speed. The decision has to be made within the time from now till June next year. After that many things may happen. Are these people to be left in the wilderness? Time is very short. The present Government should help the tea garden tribes and castes of Assam to make Assam their homes and turn Assam into a wealthy Province. Are these tea garden tribes and castes of Assam whose number is nearly 2 millions—the exact figure would be 19 lakhs—going to give their loyal support and co-operation to the Government? The tea garden tribes and castes are certainly not a very small section of the population of Assam.

With regard to the wealth that is being produced for the Province of Assam we note that from the agricultural income tax most of the income is obtained from tea gardens, and the annual revenue is half a crore of rupees. We are told by the Hon'ble Finance Minister that the Province of Assam is expecting 2 crores of rupees every year from excise duty from tea. If that is the case then tea will be a major source of income in the revenue of the province of Assam.

Now, is the Government of Assam going to treat these people who are concerned with this industry, as some farmers treat their cows just keeping them for the milk not taking any care of them? The tea garden tribes and castes would surely be a great asset in the production of wealth in one form or another. Even if they are treated as mere agriculturists they are the people who produce the real wealth of the Province of Assam.

As regards the primary education of these people, Government has completely neglected them in the matter of giving any primary education. This matter had been brought to the notice of the Hon'ble Education Minister time and again not only during the present Session but in the past Sessions as well. This matter was brought to the notice of the Government of Assam year after year but meeting with scant attention. The illiteracy among the tea garden tribes is unimaginable, and the House will wonder if I give the figures. It is not possible to find in the whole of Assam a hundred boys who have passed Middle English examination. It would not be possible to find 20 boys who have passed Matriculation examination. When that is the condition one can easily understand the position of illiteracy amongst the tea garden tribes and castes of Assam whose number is so huge.

Now, what about labour welfare? Surely all the Provincial Governments are trying to tackle this problem but we do not say that very much has been done during the past years towards labour welfare. The Government has a

duty towards labourers and may it be noted that Tea Industry employs labourers in Assam in such numbers as can be compared to no other country in the world.

Now, tea being one of the major resources of revenue of Assam, surely the Government of Assam will take care of the people who produce this wealth. If Government does not take care of the people who produce this wealth what is going to happen to the Province and what is going to happen to everything in Assam when such a large number of people are concerned? By June, 1948 we are going to have a new India. June, 1948 is the dead line. That is a short time for any Government to prepare to take over complete charge of governance of the country. We do not know what the position of Assam will be; whether it will be in a united India or in a divided India we do not know. But the next few months will indicate to us what the position of India will be; but whatever the position of Assam will be with regard to the other parts of India, surely the people of Assam should want to make Assam self sufficient in most respects.

Now, examine the new Budget. We do not see any sign of reorientation of policy with regard to tea garden tribes and castes. We do not know what the next Government will be but the present Government has a short time to remove the grievances of these people which they expect from the Government of Assam. May we not hope that the present Government of Assam will take greater care and show more sympathy to these people who till lately had been treated almost as foreigners to this country which they have chosen as their home? If independence of Assam is coming by June, 1948, then should not these people consider the Government of Assam as their own Government or should they consider the Government of Assam as a foreign Government?

Again, there are two or three other things that need pointing, and I wish to bring them to the notice of the Government. It is a well-known fact that corruption is rampant all over the Province of Assam. Perhaps it may be said that it is so in all other provinces of India. But we are not concerned with other provinces; we are surely concerned with the Province of Assam where we want to get rid of corruption of every sort. This is a thing which cannot be done so easily. We do not see that the Government has been able to tackle corruptions that are seen round about; take the case of the Supply Department. It is not being run efficiently. I am not making a general charge of corruption, but I can surely say that the Supply Department is the most inefficient Department amongst various departments of the Government. What is Government going to do about this? I am not bringing any charge of corruption but one is entitled to say that it is the most inefficient Department amongst the various departments of the Province.

Now, take the case of distribution of supply. Making every allowance for the short supply, we find that even the commodities that are available are not properly distributed. There is mal-distribution and this matter of mal-distribution has not been checked by the higher officers. It is surely the duty of the Government to take care of the consuming public and to see that its higher officers strictly supervise the distribution of commodities made by their lower grade officers. One of the worst districts in the matter of supply and distribution of food-stuffs is the district of Lakhimpur. I believe the Subdivision of Dibrugarh is the worst in this respect. There are many out-lying areas inhabited by tribal and ex-tea garden labourers who are denied most of the commodities except salt. Salt is the only article at present which they may expect to get but, in regard to other articles, not to present mustard oil, cloth, they are not at all available to the great majority of the tribals and ex-tea garden labourers. I have received letters after letters from

various areas of the Subdivision of Dibrugarh and I have also brought them to the notice of the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of the Supply Department but I do not know what steps the Government are taking in this behalf. For want of proper supply of commodities, discontent is rapidly growing among the people, because supply of articles is a very important thing. People can go about half-naked, they can do without many things but they cannot do without food. They surely require a piece of cloth to hide their nakedness. Now, if there is not a piece of cloth and if there is no food, surely discontentment is bound to grow.

The Revenue Department too needs attention. I have brought some facts to the notice of the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of the Revenue Department, but I am afraid, the Government is not properly supervising the works of the Circle Sub-Deputy Collectors. The Circle Sub-Deputy Collectors need particular attention. A case has been brought to my notice very recently about the mismanagement of the work by a particular Sub-Deputy Collector which I am placing before the House. In the Nowgong District there is a small grazing reserve known as Pangam grazing reserve, which is in the Lanka Mouza. The Sub-Deputy Collector for some reason or other wants to make it over to some people. The villagers who live around that grazing reserve and for whose benefit that reserve exists have raised objection to the Sub-Deputy Collector's action, but it seems that the Sub-Deputy Collector has paid no heed to their objection and for some reasons I do not know what those reasons are - he is bent on making over those lands to some people for settlement purposes. Now, who are those people who raised objection to this settlement policy of the Sub-Deputy Collector is not unknown. They are the *ex-tea* garden labourers; they are ignorant people and probably they will not be able to make any agitation against this settlement and therefore the Sub-Deputy Collector will surely brush aside their objection. I will give another instance as to how the Sub-Deputy Collectors are doing their work. I have recently brought that fact to the notice of the Hon'ble Minister concerned and he has been kind enough to take notice of that. I am not bringing any charge against the Ministry, rather I am trying to draw their attention to these facts. I would specially emphasise the need on the part of Government of greater supervision on the works of the Settlement Department, particularly the work of the Sub-Deputy Collectors in the tribal and *ex-tea* garden areas need attention. In those areas the Sub-Deputy Collectors are generally negligent of their duty. They seldom visit the places and always they discharge their duties depending entirely on the reports of the Mandals. Sometimes it so happens that a raiyot is shown a piece of land by the Mandal and he occupies the land and after he has cultivated the land for some time, suddenly some wealthy person comes there and obtains patta in respect of that land on which he has never set his foot, thereby ousting the raiyot. These things are happening all over Assam and the Government's attention is drawn to this, Sir.

We appreciate the great care which the Hon'ble Finance Minister has taken in presenting the Budget but the Hon'ble the Finance Minister is only a part of the Government. Through him I request the Government to make the future position of Assam secure. Let the Government obtain loyal support and co-operation of all sections of the House—of all sections of the people of the Province, so that the future Assam, that is in making, may be a happy and prosperous one.

In conclusion, Sir, I thank the hon. Members of the House for their patient hearing.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A.M., on Saturday, the 15th March, 1947.

SHILLONG:
The 26th March, 1947.

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